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**The Urbanization of Insurgency:
A Continuing Challenge for the American Way(s) of War**

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Abstract

This research paper contends that military operations in urban terrain are becoming the norm rather than the exception, and urban insurgency has become the tactic of choice of many insurgent movements. These movements are implementing a strategy that uses both the asymmetric characteristics of the urban environment to negate the superior conventional military capabilities of their opponents and the urban population as a base for their insurgent operations. The urban battle space, and the exigent tactics and strategy of urban insurgency, are two of the most pressing military problems facing the US military. A key to solving this problem is learning to understand insurgency warfare theory and its adaptation to the urban environment, and how the American Way of War (AWOW) adapts to this unique conflict environment.

The purpose of this paper is to assess how the AWOW has changed over the 1990s and how these changes relate to the urbanization of insurgency. The analysis will also include the impact of US conventional warfare doctrine on US counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. The first section will introduce the topic at hand and lay the foundation for the remainder of the paper. Section 2 will discuss how insurgent groups are moving into urban areas to attack the ruling regime's economic, political and security infrastructure as they gain cover and concealment from the government security and military forces. Section 3 will focus on the AWOW at the end of the Cold War as it relates to counterinsurgencies and urban warfare specifically. Section 4 will expand upon the analysis from section 3 to outline the problematic nature of the AWOW and counterinsurgency operations in the urban environment. Specifically, lessons learned from the Battle of Mogadishu – the 3-4 October 1993 battle between Task Force

Ranger and the militia of Farah Aidid – will be developed for use in subsequent sections. Section 5 will consider the AWOW in 2006, how it came about and how and why some of the lessons previously mentioned were not implemented. Penultimately, section 6 will assess the lessons learned from Iraqi Freedom II, specifically, the Battle of Fallujah, as an example of the problematic nature of the current AWOW and COIN operations in the urban environment. Lastly, section 7 will articulate the concluding comments and offer suggestions for further research on urban COIN initiatives. The final assessment of the paper is that the urbanization of insurgency continues to challenge the AWOW as the US military has yet to develop and implement a viable COIN doctrine. Since the purpose of this research paper is to analyze how the urbanization of insurgency is a continuing challenge to the AWOW, rather than to define policy, the only recommendations will be to indicate what the future avenues of research are. The issue of comparative historical research will be left to future commentators.

1. Introduction

*America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.*¹

The American Way of War – a phrase attributed to military historian Russell Weigley – refers to the US propensity to employ “grinding attrition strategies through a direct action doctrine of firepower-intensive modalities in battle.”² And, as the US fights its large wars, so does it fight its small wars.³ This over-reliance on technology and firepower, under-reliance on intelligence, and over-emphasis on direct action doomed Task Force Ranger to strategic failure in 1993 and it is dooming US forces to inevitable defeat if a new course is not charted for subsequent counterinsurgency operations in Iraq.⁴ Thus far, the lessons from Somalia have not been realized by the US military. This paper will argue that the US military does not prepare nor train for unconventional counterinsurgent operations in urban operations but inappropriately relies upon its conventional American Way of War (AWOW) to address this threat, and the experience in Somalia and Iraq, thus far, shows that this technique is inadequate to defeat an urban insurgency.⁵

¹ United States, Office of the Press Secretary, “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>; Internet; accessed 28 February 2006. 2.

² Max Boot, “The New American Way of War,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, issue 4 (July/August 2003): 41.

³ The *Small Wars Manual* 1940 defines small wars as operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation. Small Wars Journal, <http://www.smallwarsjournal.com/>; Internet; accessed 04 March 2006. 1.

⁴ FMI 3-07.22 *Counterinsurgency Operations* defines counterinsurgency as those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency. Leaders must consider the roles of military, intelligence, diplomatic, law enforcement, information, finance, and economic elements. United States, Department of the Army, “Field Manual Number 3-07.22 Counterinsurgency Operations,” (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters Department of the Army, October 2004), vi.

⁵ Bard O’Neill defines urban insurgency as insurgents who pursue political aims through violent acts that have been compelled to locate in cities and to operate on a small scale in order to survive. Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Dulles: Brassey’s, Inc., 2000), 45-46.

In the aftermath of the events of 9/11, the US realized the dangers of state failure to national security. This is a component of the new threat environment that will require the participation of the US military for the foreseeable future. Failed and failing states pose an international threat that is recognized in US national security circles as a strategic problem almost equal to state competitors. In fact, Frank Hoffman cites a CIA estimate that predicts a “perfect storm of intra-state conflict caused by demographics, youth bulges, higher unemployment, ethnic strife and religious intolerance.”⁶ This is the human context of future conflicts.

The second component is the setting of future conflicts. The era of the rural insurgency is being replaced by the urban insurgency.⁷ The mountainous hideout, dense forest and wild jungle are being discarded for the complex terrain of the city.⁸ With the migration of the rural populace to the urban setting, in search of a higher standard of living, the insurgent has followed to be where the money is, to where the best cover and concealment is, and to where the seats of economic, political and security power reside. Thus, the urban areas of failed and failing states will be the future battlefield, and this is whence the US will be threatened and where the US must intervene to prevent further attacks on American soil.

The US has shown a preponderance to address challenges to its security via a distinctly American military stratagem. In the face of a security threat, the tendency for the US military is

⁶ Frank G. Hoffman, “Small Wars Revisited: The United States and Nontraditional Wars,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 28, no. 6 (December 2005): 922-923.

⁷ Bard O’Neill defines insurgency as a struggle between a nonruling group and ruling authorities in which the nonruling group consciously uses *political resources* (e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and *violence* to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics. O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism...*, 13.

⁸ Hoffman, *Small Wars Revisited...*, 923.

to adhere to the Clausewitzian priority of destruction of the enemy in the field. In fact, Russell Weigley contends that Clausewitz is the author of American military strategy.⁹ The Clausewitzian way of war focuses on using military means as the “shortest route to attaining political objectives-achieving victory through maximum concentration of force in decisive battle.”¹⁰ The US military equates this dictum with the requirement that it is the military power of an enemy that must be destroyed in order to assure ultimate victory.¹¹ Although Clausewitz acknowledges the importance of other means, for the US military and its AWOW, they are subordinate to military means.¹²

The AWOW is a reflection of its comparative advantage in military power, and the US military and political leadership rely heavily upon this advantage to address threats to US national security. This is in line with the seminal work of Arnold Wolfers who posits that national efforts to achieve greater security are a function of the power nations possess of reducing the danger by their own efforts.¹³ With this in mind, it is reasonable that the US will use its overwhelming military superiority in technology and firepower to address any threat to US national security, and historically, overwhelming firepower is the predominant tool in the US military’s toolbox.

⁹ Wray R. Johnson, “Warriors without a war: Defending OOTW,” *Military Review*, vol. 78, issue 6 (December 1998-February 1999): 68-69.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹¹ Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 282-283.

¹² Johnson, *Warriors without a war...*, 69.

¹³ Arnold Wolfers, “National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol,” *Political Science Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (December 1952); <http://www.jstor.org> ; Internet; accessed 28 February 2006. 4.

Given this institutional orthodoxy, US military doctrine has concentrated on the principles of war as derived from Clausewitz.¹⁴ Johnson contends that US Army Field Manual (FM) 100-5, Operations, the Army's basic combat doctrine, has always been Clausewitzian to its core.¹⁵ In addition, Johnson argues that US Air Force doctrine has emphasized such Clausewitzian principles as mass, offensive action and economy of force to the extent that critics such as historians Larry Cable and Earl Tilford claim American defeat in Vietnam was a direct result of Army and Air Force inability to shed their conventional Clausewitzian traditions.¹⁶

The problem is that small wars doctrinal adherents and large war traditionalists are in constant battle over the mind-set of the US military. Larry Cable contends that the formulations of Clausewitz are ineffective in combating insurgencies because success in COIN operations is not contingent upon the killing of insurgents.¹⁷ However, this is not the contention of the senior leadership of the US military. The conventional mind-set of the US military is consistently reaffirmed by its conventional victories, thus, reasserting its Clausewitzian principles, and the theory and doctrine of small wars – along with any COIN lessons learned - recedes into a “doctrinal backwater until the next foreign internal conflict demands center stage and restarts the cycle.”¹⁸

During the 20th century, the US focused on preparation for war with other great powers, and although it did fight small wars against lesser powers, it fought those conflicts as

¹⁴ Cable, *Conflict of Myths...*, 285.

¹⁵ Johnson, *Warriors without a war...*, 69.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

¹⁷ Cable, *Conflict of Myths...*, 282-283.

¹⁸ Johnson, *Warriors without a war...*, 69.

conventional wars writ small.¹⁹ However, the AWOW does not serve the US military well for COIN, where the emphasis is on light infantry formations, not heavy divisions; on firepower restraint, not its wholesale application; on the peaceful resolution of political grievances within the nation state targeted by insurgents, not closing with and destroying the insurgent's forces.²⁰ This lesson has been learned, and relearned, over and over by the US military. According to Russell Weigley: "Each new experience with irregular warfare has required then that appropriate techniques be learned all over again."²¹ This has meant that before the lessons are re-learned the US military consistently implements conventional war strategies to unconventional scenarios, often to disastrous results.

The way the US military applies conventional strategies to unconventional scenarios is indicative of the problem with the American approach to Iraq and the utility of force as an instrument of COIN. The path to defeating an insurgency is traditionally understood to run through the population, without whose support insurgents will be forced to fight in the open.²² Gaining the support of the population depends on guaranteeing its security and – through developmental programmes – winning its "hearts and minds."²³ However, the present American approach is to rely too much upon applying military firepower to counter insurgencies, and thereby, risk alienating the civilian population.

¹⁹ Jeffrey Record, "Collapsed Countries, Casualty Dread, and the New American Way of War," *Parameters*, (Summer 2002): 10-11.

²⁰ Lawrence F. Kaplan, "Clear and Fold," *New Republic*, vol. 233, issue 25 (December 2005), 12.

²¹ Hoffman, *Small Wars Revisited...*, 915.

²² Kalev I. Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, vol. 85, issue 1, (May/June 2005): 9.

²³ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 14.

An attritional approach that simply relies on killing insurgents will never eliminate an insurgency because new recruits from a supportive population can fill losses, and this is even more inevitable if the security forces employ a heavy hand during COIN operations. Unfortunately, conventional operations, and not COIN operations, are the US military's specialty. The US military is most comfortable conducting aggressive, direct approach actions that seek the singular decisive battle that utterly defeats the enemy. It is least comfortable waging a war of constrained means that require a series of indeterminate actions in pursuit of nebulous objectives. This is especially evident in Iraq where the US military has spent three years launching big battalion sweeps, relying upon on overwhelming firepower, and using conventional tactics against an unconventional enemy.²⁴ The US finds has yet to solve the challenge of formulating a sound COIN policy.

In addition, the situation is compounded by the new threat environment the US military finds itself operating within – the urban insurgency environment. As the world's urban population has multiplied from roughly half a billion in 1950 to more than three billion today, cities such as Fallujah are posing daunting demands on the resources of US commanders who do not have the requisite COIN expertise or doctrine to enable them to competently combat the insurgent threat. In many respects, the fight for Fallujah – Operation al-Fajr 08 November to 20 November 2004 – epitomizes the urbanization of conflict in Iraq and around the world, as insurgents increasingly operate concealed in sprawling population centres in a bid to survive against militarily superior coalition forces.²⁵

²⁴ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 12.

²⁵ Ann Scott Tyson, "US Tests New Tactics in Urban Warfare," *Christian Science Monitor*, vol. 96, issue 242 (November 2004): 1.

Significance

In the US, there was an aversion to fighting guerrilla wars after Vietnam and an aversion to engaging in small wars after Somalia. The US military has a tendency to actively expunge its collective memory with regard to bad experiences and enemies who are difficult to defeat, and instead concentrate on good experiences and the enemies who are soundly defeated. As Max Boot argues, the US military prefers to focus on what they do best: defeating conventional opponents on the open battlefield.²⁶

However, the US military cannot determine the nature of future conflicts; future adversaries will obviously have a say and, as Anthony Cordesman comprehensively details, the insurgents in Iraq, and other potential enemies must be taking note; they must be learning from the American experience in Iraq. Therefore, as the US fails to defeat the strategy and tactics of the urban insurgency, so that strategy is very likely to be repeated by future enemies.²⁷ The danger is that after the Iraqi conflict the lessons of Iraq will be lost in the cycle of US transformation only to be relearned, at tremendous cost in American lives and treasure, in subsequent conflicts. The significance of this paper is to provide the impetus for future commentators to maintain the study of COIN strategies in urban operations because as Bernard Fall contends: “If it works, it is obsolete.”²⁸ The study of COIN in urban operations must not be allowed to wither on the vine.

²⁶ Max Boot, “The Struggle to Transform the Military,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, issue 2 (March/April 2005), 103.

²⁷ Anthony H. Cordesman, “Iraq’s Evolving Insurgency: The Nature of Attacks and Patterns and Cycles in the Conflict,” (Working Draft Paper for Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), 8-9.

²⁸ Thomas Erik Miller, “The Efficacy of Urban Insurgency in the Modern Era,” (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Masters of Military Art and Science Thesis, 2002), 1.

2. The Urbanization of Insurgency

*Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy;
Next best is to disrupt his alliances;
The next best is to attack his army.
The worst policy is to attack cities.
Attack cities only when there is no alternative.²⁹*

This chapter argues that future insurgencies will gravitate from the rural setting to the urban setting because of the advantages insurgent movements will derive from operating in cities. The urban environment will be shown to degrade the intelligence, technology and firepower capabilities of military forces while the insurgents are able to exploit a city's complex terrain, increase their logistics and improve their information operations. In their contest against security and military forces, cities will level the playing field for the insurgents.

Trends in global population demographics portend a massive transformation from predominantly rural-based to urban-based societies. The world's urban population is growing faster than the total population of the world.³⁰ Today, forty-eight per cent of humankind are living in urban settlements.³¹ This population trend means the fifty per cent mark will be crossed in 2007 and, for the first time in history, the world will have more urban dwellers than rural ones.³² The increase in the number and size of urban areas throughout the world increases the likelihood that many future conflicts and military operations will occur in the urban environment.

²⁹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Translated by Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 77-78.

³⁰ United Nations, "World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision," (Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Population Division, United Nations, 2004), 13

³¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

³² *Ibid.*, 17.

According to the United Nations, almost all population growth expected for the world in the next thirty years will be concentrated in the urban areas. The world's urban population is expected to rise to five billion by 2030 and the proportion of the population that is urban is expected to rise to 61 per cent by 2030.³³ The greatest urban population growth will occur in developing countries. Migration from rural to urban areas and the transformation of rural settlements into urban settlements are the reasons for this growth. The urban areas of the less developed regions will absorb almost all the growth of the world's total population between 2000 and 2030. By 2017, the number of urban dwellers will equal the number of rural dwellers in the less developed regions.³⁴

The following statistics outline the global projections for 2030:

1. Latin America and the Caribbean will be highly urbanized, with 85 per cent of its population; and
2. Africa and Asia will experience rapid rates of urbanization, 54 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively, of their inhabitants will live in urban areas.³⁵

The countries experiencing the greatest population increases are among the poorest, least developed, and most economically deficient in the world and therefore are incapable of feeding and providing for their increasingly impoverished populations.³⁶ Problems of population growth, poverty and hunger have long been the nexus for war, revolution and insurgency. The newest

³³ United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects...*, 20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁶ Jennifer Morrison Taw and Bruce Hoffman, "The Urbanisation of Insurgency: The Potential Challenge to US Army Operations," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 68.

factor is the rapid growth in the developing world's urban population; the developing world is acquiring the world's largest population share, and the world's largest urban population.³⁷

Developing countries are experiencing an urban population growth twice the rate of the world's total population growth. Approximately 260 of the world's 410 million-plus cities are located in the developing world. Africa, the poorest continent, has more than 50 such cities, up from 19 in 1980, and by 2025, Africa is expected to possess an urban population that is three times the size of North America.³⁸ Asia has approximately 160 million-plus cities. Overall, by 2025, the developing countries will have four times the urban population of the industrialized world.³⁹

The problem with such a rapid urbanization is that urban economic capability is not keeping pace with the population growth. Migrants from rural settlements, ostensibly to escape the hunger, poverty and despair of their rural existence, are finding conditions that are worse than what they left behind.⁴⁰ Slums and shantytowns that form a perimeter around most developing cities are growing twice as fast as the cities themselves. These squatter settlements exist beyond the protective reach of the local government.⁴¹ Lacking access to basic government services, proper accommodations, and living wages the rural migrants, who inhabit these slums and shantytowns, form a "large, expanding, and increasingly restive pool of idle, frequently uneducated and unskilled young people bereft of hope and unemployment."⁴² The large number

³⁷ United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects*..., 15.

³⁸ Taw and Hoffman, *The Urbanisation of Insurgency*..., 69.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴¹ William G. Rosenau, "Every Room Is a New Battle: The Lessons of Modern Urban Warfare," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, (1997): 371-394.

⁴² Taw and Hoffman, *The Urbanisation of Insurgency*..., 69.

of disenfranchised young men and women have ample opportunities to engage in crime and other social pathologies. According to William Rosenau, the underclass of young people, “with little education and few marketable skills, could form a pool of potential warriors...eager for camaraderie and conflict.”⁴³

The underclass of young people will find their opportunity to wreak havoc upon society because, as Robert Kaplan argues, there will be many opportunities brought about by environmental scarcity, overpopulation, disease, crime and tribalism.⁴⁴ These factors will cause states to fail because, as Kalevi Holsti argues, the affected state’s vertical and horizontal legitimacy will be weakened such that the fabric of society will disintegrate and the chance for conflict will increase.⁴⁵ The Somalia experience, for instance, demonstrates Robert Kaplan’s contention as corruption in government and an absence of social services led to a polity that relied upon a survival of the fittest mentality.⁴⁶ Somali warlords and their black market activities dominated commerce, while both the vertical and horizontal legitimacy of the government was eroded because of its inability to provide a safe and secure environment for a market economy. In many other failed states, tribal, ethnic, racial and economic enclaves have developed that only served to segregate and alienate the populace, and violence and lawlessness became the norm. Under these conditions, hope for the inhabitants dissolves into desperation, the survival instinct

⁴³ Rosenau, *Every Room Is a New Battle*..., 374.

⁴⁴ Robert Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy,” *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 273, issue 2 (February 1994): 45.

⁴⁵ Kalevi Holsti states that state strength is derived from the capacity of the state to command loyalty and two critical aspects of this capacity are vertical and horizontal legitimacy. Vertical legitimacy deals with authority, consent and loyalty to the idea(s) of the state and its institutions, and horizontal legitimacy deals with the definition and political role of the community at large. Kalevi Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 84.

⁴⁶ John R. Groves, “Operations in Urban Environments,” *Military Review*, vol. 78, issue 4 (July/August 1998): 34.

borne of desperation becomes prime, and anarchy ensues.⁴⁷ Insurgents will be able to flourish in the anarchical situations brought on by such strife.

Currently, insurgents are readily able to transfer their rural strategies to urban settings. Cities offer insurgents the opportunity to control territory, to achieve the allegiance – coerced or otherwise – of a subset of the urban population, concealment from security forces, and a secure base of operations around the “heart of the government and its administrative and commercial infrastructure.”⁴⁸ Insurgents are taking their fight to the ruling regime given the lack of government presence in the rural areas. Insurgents will seek to nullify the government’s authority over the slums and then move into adjacent neighbourhoods until the city is completely subjugated; insurgents will take power first in the cities and then in the rest of the country.⁴⁹ Ultimately, the “warren-like alleys and unpaved roads” of the slums and shantytowns are impregnable to the government’s security forces and they can even negate the capabilities of modern armies.⁵⁰ Urban terrain dramatically limits the capabilities of modern armies whose sensors, weapons, vehicles and communications equipment were designed to operate in the relatively open terrain of the Cold War battlefield of Western Europe.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Groves, *Operations in Urban Environments...*, 31.

⁴⁸ Taw and Hoffman, *The Urbanisation of Insurgency...*, 73-74.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵¹ G.J. Burton, “Urban Operations Training Capability for the Canadian Army,” (Toronto: Canadian Forces College Command and Staff Course Masters of Defence Studies Paper, 2005), 11.

Problems with Intelligence

Intelligence requirements in urban environments are far tougher to meet than they are on traditional battlefields. The utility of the systems that paid off so richly in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm disappear in urban warfare and the importance of human intelligence (HUMINT) increases exponentially.⁵² According to FM 3-06, Urban Operations, the urban environment adversely impacts the intelligence system through degraded reconnaissance capability and increased importance of credible HUMINT.⁵³ Buildings provide nearly complete cover and concealment for insurgents because electronic signatures are defused and current sensors cannot penetrate the interior of most buildings.⁵⁴ Therefore, the degradation of technical intelligence capability in urban environments requires more emphasis on HUMINT. However, Jennifer Taw and Bruce Hoffman contend that US intelligence organizations have emphasized highly technical battlefield intelligence capabilities at the expense of HUMINT capabilities.⁵⁵ Ralph Peters argues that this is the case because “military intelligence is perhaps more a prisoner of inherited Cold War structures than is any other branch.”⁵⁶ The AWOW, and its emphasis on conventional operations, focuses intelligence towards combating the enemy in the open field and not in the urban environment.

⁵² Ralph Peters, “Our Soldiers, Their Cities,” *Parameters*, (Spring 1996): 48.

⁵³ United States, Department of the Army, *Field Manual Number 3-06 Urban Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1 June 2003), 5-16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-16 – 5-17.

⁵⁵ Taw and Hoffman, *The Urbanisation of Insurgency...*, 74.

⁵⁶ Peters, *Our Soldiers, Their Cities...*, 48.

Problems with Technology and Firepower

Urban environments are three-dimensional, consisting of sub-surface, surface and above-surface space.⁵⁷ Within the urban battle space defenders have the advantage of cover and concealment; the screening effects that buildings have on radio signals, lasers and electro-optic sensors, protect insurgents' positions.⁵⁸ These effects hamper target acquisition and the height and concentration of buildings significantly reduce the effects of ground and air launched weapons.⁵⁹ Rubble and other obstacles can be especially dangerous, causing military forces to canalize or compartmentalize their movement through the urban environment, thus, creating the opportunity for insurgents to ambush units at close quarters.⁶⁰ Subterranean passages allow insurgents to maneuver without detection to attack the flank or the rear of the military force. Communication infrastructure, especially underground communication cable, provides insurgents with means of communication that are difficult to detect.⁶¹ Ultimately, technology can be overcome in the urban environment and operations become labour-intensive. The first thought for a technologically superior military, like the US, is to avoid operating in urban areas. Thus, the focus of the AWOW is to train to fight in open terrain and to avoid being drawn into urban operations.

⁵⁷ United States, *Field Manual Number 3-06 Urban Operations...*, 2-4.

⁵⁸ Burton, *Urban Operations Training Capability...*, 11.

⁵⁹ United States, *Field Manual Number 3-06 Urban Operations...*, 5-21.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-19.

⁶¹ Burton, *Urban Operations...*, 12.

Problems with Direct Action

Just as urban operations are labour-intensive, this concentration of people increases the degree of contact with the civilian population, and the existence of so many non-combatants dramatically increases the chance that innocents will become casualties. Kalev Sepp writes upon failed counterinsurgencies that reveal unsuccessful operational practices and the American experience in Vietnam is an example of a misguided COIN programme consisting of large-unit sweeps that cleared but then abandoned communities to allow insurgents to re-occupy the area.⁶² The American focus was on killing and capturing insurgents rather than on engaging the population. The Clausewitzian intent was to defeat the insurgents by attriting them to the point of culmination.⁶³ Unfortunately, large-unit sweeps such as these inflict collateral damage, as the emphasis on direct action in conjunction with an urban environment places many innocent civilians in harm's way.

Direct action is problematic because the clutter of buildings creates unlimited fighting positions for insurgents, while making it harder for US forces to see, communicate, and acquire targets correctly.⁶⁴ The close quarters require quick movement and decisions, and this raises the risk of killing innocent civilians. Another challenge for military forces is that some civilians will aid and abet the insurgents while maintaining the façade of non-combatant status.⁶⁵ Determining whom the enemy is is exceedingly difficult in urban COIN operations, and thus, historically, civilians have suffered several times the casualties of US forces in urban battles such as the case

⁶² Sepp, *Best Practices in Counterinsurgency*..., 11.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁴ Tyson, *US Tests New Tactics in Urban Warfare*..., 1.

⁶⁵ Burton, *Urban Operations*..., 11.

in Mogadishu in 1993.⁶⁶ This is important for military forces because, as Bard O'Neill contends, violence incurred by military forces provides the "greatest impetus for supporting insurgencies among uncommitted citizens."⁶⁷ This is the prime rationale for the principle of minimum force during urban COIN operations because successful counterinsurgencies rely upon the support of the local populace.

Insurgent Threat

Historically, the most successful insurgencies have followed the guerrilla warfare tenets of Mao Tse-Tung. A Maoist people's war is a struggle for power between a class-based insurgency claiming to "represent the interests of the oppressed populace and a ruling regime portrayed by the insurgents as defending entrenched privilege."⁶⁸ Using a mix of coercion and inducements, the insurgents and the government competed for the allegiance of the masses.⁶⁹ This was the most successful insurgent strategy of its kind and nearly all victorious insurgencies – Vietnam, Cambodia, Angola, Zimbabwe, Guinea Bisseau, Namibia and Algeria – followed some variant of Mao's people's war doctrine.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ US, UN and Somali National Alliance (SNA) estimates put the number of Somali casualties at 312 militia and civilians dead and 814 injured. Tyson, *US Tests New Tactics in Urban Warfare...*, 1.

⁶⁷ O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism...*, 81.

⁶⁸ Steven Biddle, "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon," *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 2006): 5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁰ Steven Metz, "Counterinsurgency: Strategy and the Phoenix of American Capability," *U.S. Army War College* (February 1995): 4-5.

According to Steven Metz, the defining characteristics of a Maoist people's war are the following:

1. the primacy of political organization over military operation;
2. the development of extensive political undergrounds and common fronts of 'progressive' organizations and movements;
3. protractedness; and
4. emphasis on rural areas.⁷¹

The key requirement is an ideological programme - these were wars of ideas as much as they were killing wars.⁷² These insurgencies were successful because they targeted the key vulnerabilities of most developing countries: limited vertical and horizontal legitimacy and shaky control of the rural areas. The tenets of Mao's guerrilla warfare are still relevant today because they are readily transferable to the urban environment, and thus, urban guerrilla warfare will have to be confronted by US military forces.

Urban Insurgent Threat

Most urban insurgencies contain the following elements:

1. exploitation of the complex terrain of the urban setting;
2. increase in urban logistics;
3. exploitation of propaganda and the media; and
4. discriminate targeting.⁷³

⁷¹ Metz, *Counterinsurgency...*, 5.

⁷² Biddle, *Seeing Baghdad...*, 5.

⁷³ Miller, *The Efficacy of Urban Insurgency...*, 133-137.

These elements are evident in successful urban insurgencies because urban insurgents use modern technologies to enhance their security, employ discriminate economic targeting and conduct information operations in order to advance their goals and objectives.⁷⁴

Complex Terrain

As Ralph Peters contends, cities are incredibly complex organisms and they are exceedingly difficult to operate within; historical studies show that even in the simplest operation, “cities consume troops; in combat, they devour armies.”⁷⁵ Urban environments are dangerous to armies because they share three main elements that favours the insurgent:

1. a complex man-made physical terrain that is superimposed on existing natural terrain that reduces the advantages of a technologically superior force;
2. a population of significant size and density that results in large ratios of civilian to military casualties;
3. an infrastructure upon which the area depends and provides human services and cultural and political structure for the urban area, perhaps for the entire nation so that the city cannot be evacuated.⁷⁶

In addition, Bernd Horn argues that complexity comes from the asymmetric tactics insurgents will employ because of the Western (read American) way of war: as military superiority increases, insurgents will work in complex networks of small cells; they will disperse to live separately and they will come together to fight at the right time and right place. Because urban insurgents will operate in multiple nodes with no centralized command and control structure,

⁷⁴ Miller, *The Efficacy of Urban Insurgency...*, 131-132.

⁷⁵ Ralph Peters, “The Human Terrain of Urban Operations,” *Parameters*, (Spring 2000): 11.

⁷⁶ Lester W. Grau and Jacob W. Kipp, “The Challenge of Urban Warfare,” *Military Technology*, (8 September 2003): 86-88.

they will be more difficult to locate. Small cells and dispersal will make it very difficult for COIN forces to bring superior force to bear.⁷⁷

Urban Logistics

Small cells and dispersal also make the urban insurgent easier to sustain. There is greater access to potable water, foodstuffs, equipment, weapons, personnel and medical care. The urban insurgent has more opportunity to gather funding for the insurgent movement. The urban insurgent can engage in fund raising efforts through loans or legitimate business ventures or the urban insurgent can run extortion rackets or loan sharking or even resort to robbery or kidnapping to gain funding illegally.⁷⁸ In sum, the ability to fund and sustain the insurgent is enhanced in the urban environment and is another reason for the rural insurgent to move to the city.

Information Operations

Insurgents will also find it useful to move to the city in order to engage in information operations. Urban insurgents use information operations to gain and maintain popular support while attacking the legitimacy of the ruling regime. In addition, information operations are integrated with insurgent attacks in order to maximize the impact of the action. Urban centres possess greater media presence and focus.⁷⁹ Urban insurgents will attempt to provoke retaliatory

⁷⁷ Bernd Horn, "Complexity Squared: Operating in the Future Battlespace," *Canadian Military Journal*, (Autumn 2003): 8-9.

⁷⁸ Miller, *The Efficacy of Urban Insurgency in the Modern Era...*, 133.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

action by police and military forces in order to gain valuable news coverage of the illegitimacy of the reaction. Depending on how tightly controlled the local media is, the insurgent group hopes that the coverage reaches the target audience. Coverage casting the ruling regime in a bad light, especially if there were civilian casualties caused by security forces, is more valuable to the urban insurgent than news coverage of the how and why the insurgents were able to carry out the provocation attack. Insurgents will also derive great benefit from the internet utilizing their own websites and blogs.

Discriminate Targeting

Insurgents will also engage in discriminate targeting in which targets are carefully selected for greatest information operations effect. According to Thomas Erik Miller, discriminate targeting is an essential element of most urban insurgencies.⁸⁰ Just as in Maoist insurgency doctrine, the support of the people is critical to the survival, and the ultimate victory, of the insurgent movement.⁸¹ Insurgents will be very careful not to alienate their core base of support. Graff cites Mao Tse-Tung when he reports, “the support of the people is to the insurgent as water is to a fish.”⁸² Thus, unless they wish to incite terror in the local population, insurgents will be judicious in their selection of targets to manage unintended consequences and minimize collateral damage.

⁸⁰ Miller, *The Efficacy of Urban Insurgency in the Modern Era...*, 136-137.

⁸¹ Jonathon K. Graff, “United States Counterinsurgency and Implementation in Iraq,” (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Masters of Military Art and Science Thesis, 2004), 17-18.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 18.

Summary

The combination of intense population growth and rapid urbanization, particularly in developing countries, continues to dramatically reshape the global security environment. Insurgents, who rely upon the rural population for food, information, concealment and support, will follow the rural migrants to the cities in order to continue their insurgent operations against the government. In addition, when faced with a vastly superior military opponent, insurgent survival will be enhanced through the advantages of urban operations. Thus, it is reasonable to contend that urban terrain shall be the battlefield of the future.

Cities are vulnerable to urban insurgency because they are the focus of economic and political power. Public utilities and services can be disrupted, giving the appearance that the government has lost control of the situation. Successful insurgent attacks discredit the civilian police, military forces, and the local government in order to show that they cannot provide the requisite security to maintain public morale and civil order.⁸³ The local population will lose faith in the government and begin to support the insurgency as the viable, at least locally, alternative to the ruling regime.

The population density of cities provides excellent opportunities for insurgents to hide, often in plain sight. Individuals and small groups are very effective in urban settings because it is easier to avoid capture. Thus, urban insurgents can act more audaciously, as reflected by their tactics of improvised explosive devices, mortar/rocket attacks, ambushes, snipers, and small

⁸³ Marshall V. Ecklund, "Task Force Ranger vs. Urban Somali Guerrillas in Mogadishu: An Analysis of Guerrilla and Counter guerrilla Tactics and Techniques used during Operation GOTHIC SERPENT," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 15, no. 3 (Winter 2004): 52.

independent force attacks and their ability quickly blend into the local populace. In addition, large numbers of people are available to gather crowds quickly and foment violent demonstrations. Compounding this issue is the danger of COIN forces inflicting innocent casualties, through a careless or instinctive reaction, providing the insurgents with a favourable propaganda piece. Publicity is easily attained in an urban area because no incident can be concealed from the local population, even if it is not widely publicized by the local media. In the end, the urban environment protects the insurgent from the security and military forces.

The *Economist* reports on a Special Forces captain in Afghanistan who mused about his Taliban adversaries: “They’re cowards. Why don’t they fight like men?”⁸⁴ This is indicative of the incomprehension of some US warfighters, who do not consider how they would fight against the military might of the US if they did not have comparable military technology to level the playing field. With little or no hope of attaining technological superiority over western armies, it is to be expected that insurgent forces will be compelled to use urban terrain to their advantage.⁸⁵

3. The American Way of War at the end of the Cold War

Reporter: “General Westmoreland, how do you intend to defeat the insurgency in Vietnam?”

General Westmoreland: "Firepower."⁸⁶

This section contends that the American experience in Vietnam sparked both the US military’s disdain for COIN and the development of the Powell Doctrine that influenced the AWOW during the

⁸⁴ Special Report, “How to do better,” *The Economist*, vol. 377, no. 8457 (17 December 2005): 24.

⁸⁵ Burton, *Urban Operations...*, 11.

⁸⁶ Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 294.

1990's. The US military was successful in winning all of the big battalion battles in Vietnam, but it was unsuccessful in winning the small war in Vietnam.⁸⁷ Consequently, US military leaders would choose to focus on their strength – winning conventional wars through direct, decisive action employing overwhelming force – and simply manage their weakness – fighting unconventional wars. Instead of developing a distinct American way of unconventional war, the US would inappropriately apply its conventional warfare tenets to fight their small wars.

Powell's American Way of War

After the Vietnam War, the US military reviewed its performance and concluded that instead of learning better strategy and tactics in insurgencies it would, à la Jomini, avoid fighting them altogether.⁸⁸ The bitter experience of winning all of the battles but losing the war significantly affected the mindset of officers who were Vietnam veterans. Max Boot quotes one Vietnam veteran:

Many of my generation, the career captains, majors and Lieutenant colonels seasoned in that war vowed that when our turn came to call the shots, we would not quietly acquiesce in halfhearted warfare for half-baked reasons that the American people could not understand or support.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ The US big-battalion attrition strategy is credited to General William C. Westmoreland, Commander of Military Assistance Command in Vietnam (MACV). General Westmoreland's attrition strategy was in direct opposition to a pacification and population protection strategy; he aimed to fight large-scale set-piece battles against the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, based largely on his experiences as an infantry commander in the Second World War. Under Westmoreland's direction the US aimed to fight a war of attrition, seeking to kill North Vietnamese troops more quickly than they could be replaced. At the same time, he forbade operations by units smaller than battalion size, approximately 750 men. His over-formalized attrition tactics did not work against an elusive enemy like the North Vietnamese. Andrew Krepinevich in his 1986 book, *The Army and Vietnam*, is critical of Westmoreland's conventional big-battalion strategy arguing that a pacification and population protection strategy would have been more effective. Jeffrey Record, "The Vietnam War (continued)," *Parameters*, (Winter 1998): 158.

⁸⁸ Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace...*, 318.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 318.

That Vietnam veteran was General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and it was his collaboration with Caspar Weinberger, US Secretary of Defense, in 1991, which produced the Powell Doctrine that transformed the AWOW at the end of the Cold War. The tenets of the Powell Doctrine are as follows:

1. the US should not commit forces to combat overseas unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to its national interests or that of its allies;
2. if the US does commit troops, it should do so wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning;
3. the armed forces should have clearly defined political and military objectives;
4. the relationship between ends and means must continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary;
5. there must be some reasonable assurance the US military will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in the Congress;
6. the commitment of US forces to combat should be a last resort; and
7. all US deployments must have an exit strategy.⁹⁰

The effect of the Powell Doctrine was to entrench the US military's distaste for small wars and counterinsurgencies. The nebulous nature of fighting insurgents would be replaced by an all-or-nothing approach to warfare with a conventional adversary.

The US military's preference for the direct approach over the indirect approach was formalized as the Powell Doctrine. This doctrine strives for the swift victory through decisive action rather than the slower approach of isolation and containment. The ideal war for practitioners of the Powell Doctrine is one in which the "US wins with overwhelming force, suffers few casualties, and leaves immediately."⁹¹ Thus, the US military operating under the Powell Doctrine resorts to overwhelming firepower and technology to overcome all adversaries, and there is also the strong aversion to casualties, as Jeffrey Record argues,

⁹⁰ Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace...*, 318 -319.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 319.

Americans value the individual much more than they do the state, and they have always sought—and with considerable success it might be added—to substitute technology for blood in battle.⁹²

The Powell Doctrine emphasizes overwhelming force to ensure swift victory while incurring fewer US casualties. The casualty aversion of US military leaders is a remnant from the Vietnam conflict and it has led to an excessive reliance on force protection where direct action and technology collaborate to defeat the enemy.

Additionally, the emphasis on technology adversely impacts upon the military intelligence forces because there is little need for HUMINT as US forces rely upon technical intelligence to acquire the enemy targets for US weaponry. The high technology weaponry that was so effective during the first Gulf War was found to be ineffective during close quarter fighting in urban areas. This is a challenge for the AWOW because, as a 1994 Pentagon study concerning the Battle of Mogadishu concludes, the US military arsenal was developed for a “massive, rural war... [and] since the future looks much different, new capabilities will have to be developed.”⁹³ Even the arsenal of the AWOW is not compatible with the urban environment.

However, instead of developing new capabilities or acquiring the requisite expertise in combating insurgencies, the US military relied upon the Powell Doctrine tenet that US deployments must have an exit strategy. COIN operations are inherently complicated and lengthy, and exit strategies are exceedingly difficult to articulate because they require criteria for success, and politicians do not like to advertise any criteria for success. Criteria for success provide opportunities for politicians to be criticized when standards are not met. Therefore, the US government was reticent to engage in any

⁹² Jeffrey Record, *Collapsed Countries...*, 11.

⁹³ John Barry, “The New Urban Battlefield,” *Newsweek*, vol. 135, issue 8, January 2000, 36.

international conflict that might have required the military to engage in COIN operations. The US military, knowing it was highly unlikely that it would be asked to fight a small war, concentrated on preparing for the next big battalion battle. The military leadership allowed COIN doctrine to become almost irrelevant to US military operations. However, this need not have been the fate of the US military as there were many opportunities to develop the requisite COIN tactics and techniques from other sources.

Counterinsurgency Doctrine

It was the US Marines who first formalized a viable US COIN document into their Small Wars Manual in 1940. Their experience in suppressing insurrections in the first half of the 20th century was distilled into the following COIN tenets:

1. build up indigenous police forces;
2. employ limited amounts of force; and
3. maintain constant pressure on insurgents through small mobile patrols.⁹⁴

Yet, according to Frank Hoffman, there is little evidence that the American experience in COIN after World War II was consolidated or formalized into the corporate memory. For instance, the US applied an intensive firepower approach to its strategy during the Vietnam War and this proved to be counter-productive during the COIN campaign. The extensive use of artillery and air power could not separate the Viet Cong from its base of popular support. Indeed, the destruction suffered at the hands of the US

⁹⁴ Hoffman, *Small Wars Revisited...*, 918.

forces increased the popular support for the Viet Cong.⁹⁵ The US military appears to have ignored the available lessons from its own experience or that of other nations.

Certainly, the US did not learn from the success of the British COIN operations in Malaya against Maoist guerrillas. The British stressed strict unity of effort between the military, economic, political and police sectors. In addition, they relied upon effective political and psychological operations, and “the limited use of firepower in military operations.”⁹⁶ Civilian officials remained in control of emergencies and were responsible for the broader political strategy and for propaganda.⁹⁷ The British Army operated under civilian control and accepted the requirement of employing minimum force. The British Army used small-unit operations with decentralized control when it became evident that large-scale sweeps did not succeed. Thus, the British approached insurgency with the critical assumption that insurgency was not principally a military problem. The key to the British Army's success in COIN conflicts was, therefore, its integrated civil-military approach. The British lessons from their experience in Malaya are widely acclaimed as the gold standard in case studies.⁹⁸ However, as COIN was not deemed to be a required field of study for the US military nor a core US military task, there has been a significant disinterest in studying or replicating the lessons learned by the British experience in COIN operations.

⁹⁵ Thomas G. Mahnken, “The American Way of War in the Twenty-first Century,” *Democracies and Small Wars* [paper on-line]; available from <http://www.sais-jhu.edu/programs/ir/strategic/mahnken/TheAmericanWay.pdf>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2006: 77-78.

⁹⁶ Steven Metz, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq,” *The Washington Quarterly* vol. 27, no. 1 (Winter 2003-04): 33.

⁹⁷ Robert M. Cassidy, “The British Army and Counterinsurgency: The Salience of Military Culture,” *Military Review* (May-June 2005): 56.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 55-57.

This lack of interest in COIN was driven by the drawdown of the US military after the Korean War that left the US military with few assets to fight a guerrilla war.⁹⁹ So, as is its tendency, the US military ignored guerrilla war and focused on conventional warfare. The Americans trained their allies to defend against Korean-style external invasion instead of internal threats. The US military did not re-examine the threat of insurgencies until it was confronted with an insurgency during the Vietnam conflict.¹⁰⁰ By that point in time, and due to an active neglect, the US military did not possess a viable COIN doctrine so it reverted to its expertise and capability in conventional warfare to combat the Vietnamese insurgency. The US military that fought in Vietnam was structured, equipped and trained for conventional warfare on the battlefields of Europe; it was not prepared to confront the likes of the Viet Cong.¹⁰¹

Vietnam looms large in how the US military views warfare. The dichotomy of a conventional North Vietnamese Army and an unconventional Viet Cong component complicated the American war strategy.¹⁰² The Americans, without a coherent doctrine on COIN warfare, relied upon what they knew best – how to employ advanced technology and overwhelming firepower. The US dependence on artillery and aerial bombardment assisted the insurgents in their efforts by pushing potentially friendly civilians into becoming either internally displaced persons or insurgent supporters.¹⁰³ The American advantage in technology and firepower also served to teach the insurgents in Vietnam, and around the world, to not assemble their forces in large concentrations; the winning formula for insurgents was to implement – small cells and dispersal – allowed the Viet Cong to take the fight to the US forces.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Metz, *Counterinsurgency...*, 6.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰¹ Cable, *Conflict of Myths...*, 282.

¹⁰² Special Report, *How to do better...*, 22-24.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁰⁴ Cable, *Conflict of Myths...*, 283-284.

The US experience in Vietnam, and its failure to win the small war, caused the US military to refocus its perspective on the spectrum of conflict. The US narrowed its perspective to the “fighting and winning of the Nation’s wars” and it expunged the doctrine of COIN inherent in small wars from its collective mindset.¹⁰⁵ Similar to its experience after the Korean War, this self-imposed ignorance manifested itself in a lack of investment in doctrine, concepts and education in the domain of COIN.¹⁰⁶ In fact, the 1976 edition of Operations, the standard US military manual of best practice in warfare, did not mention COIN at all.¹⁰⁷ For many years the US military would resist including the subject of COIN within its doctrine and training manuals.

It was not until 1986 when Field Manual (FM) 90-8 was published that COIN doctrine returned to the US military psyche. In actuality, FM 90-8 was the only US Army manual that addressed COIN operations.¹⁰⁸ A promising development occurred when the Marine Corps adopted it as Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 3-33A, thus making FM 90-8 the first joint publication. This led to FM 90-8 to be adopted as the doctrine for all US ground forces engaged in COIN operations.¹⁰⁹ However, COIN doctrine was still not consolidated within the military culture, and thus, the US military did not incorporate COIN operations as one of its core tasks. Expertise in COIN was considered to be the responsibility of select groups, such as SOF, and not conventional US forces. COIN was to remain segregated to the periphery of the US military.

The reason the COIN doctrine was not consolidated within military culture was that the military was eager to put the painful experience of Vietnam behind it and many senior leaders were convinced

¹⁰⁵ Special Report, *How to do better...*, 23.

¹⁰⁶ Taw and Hoffman, *The Urbanisation of Insurgency...*, 24.

¹⁰⁷ Special Report, *How to do better...*, 24.

¹⁰⁸ Ecklund, *Task Force Ranger...*, 48.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

that its conventional operations actually succeeded in Vietnam. The US military returned to preparing for conventional warfare instead of correcting its deficiencies in unconventional warfare. COIN all but disappeared from the US military's lexicon to such an extent that, according to a report by US Army War College scholar Conrad C. Crane, instructors at the Army's Special Operations School during the 1980s were ordered to destroy their COIN files.¹¹⁰

The return to the conventional paradigm was fostered by emphasis on the US military's mission to defend Europe from the armoured thrusts of the Soviet combined arms armies. Lawrence Kaplan argues that because of the vision of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, and the doctrine of overwhelming force named after him, the US military kept training for that mission, even after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989.¹¹¹ FM 100-5, for instance, which was published in 1993, skims over insurgencies in just three paragraphs.¹¹² This is indicative of the continuing disinterest of the US military in engaging in small wars with the result that the requirement to be proficient in COIN doctrine, tactics and techniques is always wanting.

Summary

According to Marshall Ecklund, there was no universally adopted joint publication specifically written on the conduct of low-intensity conflict (LIC), guerrilla/counterguerrilla operations, or insurgency/counterinsurgency operations, and this would have significant consequences on the inevitable American deployments into failed and failing states.¹¹³ As much as the US military eschews

¹¹⁰ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 15.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹² Taw and Hoffman, *The Urbanisation of Insurgency...*, 24.

¹¹³ Ecklund, *Task Force Ranger...*, 59.

the validity and viability of American forces intervening in small wars, it must be prepared to successfully prosecute the bidding of the political administration. As Frank Hoffman argues,

A reluctance to study and prepare for the full spectrum of conflict, coupled with the unwillingness to institutionalize the lessons of past irregular conflicts, accounts for most of the planning failures and operational missteps in Iraq.¹¹⁴

This is a recurring component of the American military psyche – to rely, exclusively, upon its strengths, and ignore its weaknesses. There is a reticence to train and prepare for the full spectrum of conflict.

Ultimately, the US military did not consolidate the lessons learned from Vietnam nor did it develop the requisite doctrine for COIN operations because it sought, á la Jomini, to simply avoid any future small wars requiring COIN capabilities. Jennifer Taw and Bruce Hoffman, writing in 1993, described how US military doctrine did little to prepare US troops and how the only tactics, techniques and procedures related to COIN were only disseminated in June of 1993, and there were no references to combating urban insurgencies.¹¹⁵ The senior leadership fully expected that soldiers trained in the AWOW could use the inherent superiority in the US military arsenal to overcome any future insurgency. This perspective would inflict dire consequences on US forces in Somalia.

4. Lessons learned from the Battle of Mogadishu

*What's the use of killing Aidid? Everybody is Aidid. If he goes tomorrow you will see a million Aidids around.*¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Hoffman, Frank G. "Small Wars Revisited: The United States and Nontraditional Wars." *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 28, no. 6 (December 2005): 915.

¹¹⁵ Taw and Hoffman, *The Urbanisation of Insurgency...*, 24.

¹¹⁶ Jonathon Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing U.S. Policy in Somalia* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 71.

This section contends that US setbacks during urban COIN operations in Somalia occurred because the US forces were operating without a viable unconventional warfare doctrine and they resorted to their conventional AWOW. This is a direct result of the fact that, at the strategic level, US military leaders chose to focus on their strength – winning conventional wars through direct, decisive action employing overwhelming force instead of developing a distinct American way of unconventional war. The lack of a COIN doctrine would require the US military to inappropriately apply its conventional warfare tenets to fight its small war in Somalia and, as was the case in Vietnam, conventional warfare tenets will be shown to be dysfunctional in an unconventional conflict. The AWOW in 1993 was not a viable strategy to combat an urban insurgency.

Historical Context

In 1990, after decades of conflict and the fall of Somali dictator Siad Barre, civil war broke out and numerous clans were fighting over Mogadishu.¹¹⁷ Eventually one clan proclaimed Mohammed Ali Mahdi as president, and another clan considered Mohammed Farah Aidid to be president.¹¹⁸ The intense and violent struggle for power between these rival clans destroyed many parts of Mogadishu in 1991-1992 and an intense drought-induced famine that ravaged rural Somalia and threatened to kill millions of Somalis.¹¹⁹ The UN responded to requests from international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to intervene by sending humanitarian aid to Somalia.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ United States. *Field Manual Number 3-06 Urban Operations...*, C-1.

¹¹⁸ Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu...*, 36.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹²⁰ United States. *Field Manual Number 3-06 Urban Operations...*, C-2.

The UN began UN Operations in Somalia I (UNOSOM I) in April 1992 to ameliorate the interclan violence and provide food aid to the starving population.¹²¹ However, the violence continued unabated – in particular, food shipments were being hijacked by the militias – so, in November 1992, the UN authorized a stronger military response to secure the food relief efforts.¹²² A contingent of US Marines landed near Mogadishu on 9 December 1992 to spearhead the deployment of more robust UN peacekeeping forces and secure the food delivery routes and distribution points.

In May 1993, UNOSOM II was activated because interclan violence and interference with humanitarian aid distribution was still unchecked, and thus, a peace enforcement operation was deemed necessary by the UN.¹²³ The UN sought to disarm the warlords to establish law and order and enable the establishment of a transitional government. However, supporters loyal to Aidid, in a well-organized attack, ambushed and killed twenty-four Pakistanis UN peacekeepers.¹²⁴ As a result, the UN placed a bounty on Aidid. Retired US Navy Admiral Jonathon Howe, the UN Secretary General's personal representative in Somalia, called in four hundred Rangers and Delta-force commandos, Task Force (TF) Ranger, to hunt down Aidid and bring him to justice.¹²⁵ The US forces in Somalia began a systematic effort to capture the senior leadership of Aidid's ruling regime.

On 3 October 1993, US forces attempted to capture two of Aidid's lieutenants. Although the mission was successful, two Blackhawk helicopters were shot down during the battle, causing about 100 US soldiers to be pinned down in the city. This action is known as the Battle of Mogadishu, in which,

¹²¹ United States. *Field Manual Number 3-06 Urban Operations...*, C-2.

¹²² Rosenau, *Every Room Is a New Battle...*, 378.

¹²³ United States. *Field Manual Number 3-06 Urban Operations...*, C-3 - C-4.

¹²⁴ Rosenau, *Every Room Is a New Battle...*, 379.

¹²⁵ Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu...*, 82.

Somali insurgents killed 18 and wounded 75 US soldiers.¹²⁶ US, UN and Somali National Alliance (SNA) estimates put the number of Somali casualties at 312 militia and civilians dead and 814 injured.¹²⁷ Due to the negative reaction of the American public, President Bill Clinton withdrew American forces from Somalia soon after this incident. According to Jonathon Stevenson, President Clinton did not have the political currency to maintain the American presence in Somalia.¹²⁸ Though the equivalent firepower of a big battalion won the day, the US military, lacking a cogent COIN strategy, lost the small war. Ultimately, a tactical failure for Farah Aidid was manufactured into a strategic victory.

Somali Insurgent Tactics

The city of Mogadishu was Somalia's strategic centre, and whoever controlled the city, controlled the country. Mogadishu was a dense warren of poorly constructed, concrete buildings and, like most cities in failed states, Mogadishu had swelled from a population of 500,000 to 1.5 million.¹²⁹ The rapid growth in Mogadishu's population occurred during the 1980s and early 1990s. The terrain and demographics of Mogadishu were an advantage to Farah Aidid. This was Aidid's home turf and his force, the SNA, were locals who could be called upon to pick up arms on short notice and carry out raids, ambushes, and other swarm operations.¹³⁰ The challenge for the US forces was they were not familiar with the urban environment and they could not readily discern who the enemy was. There was a real danger of innocent Somalis being killed or injured during any military operation.

¹²⁶ United States. *Field Manual Number 3-06 Urban Operations...*, C-4.

¹²⁷ Rosenau, *Every Room Is a New Battle...*, 379.

¹²⁸ Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu...*, 106.

¹²⁹ Rosenau, *Every Room Is a New Battle...*, 379.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 381.

TF Ranger's mission in Somalia was to implement military operations to capture General Aidid, in addition to his principal lieutenants.¹³¹ The primary objective was the capture of Aidid, the secondary objective was the capture of blacklisted personnel and the tertiary objective was the neutralization of critical C2 nodes.¹³² Direct action was the preferred modus operandi for US forces engaged in the COIN operations, and this played into Farah Aidid's hand.

It is conceivable that Aidid's objective was to bait the US forces into a direct action operation, vis-à-vis the killing of 24 Pakistani soldiers by ambush and the killing of four US Marines in two separate remote-controlled land mine attacks.¹³³ When the Americans retaliated, Aidid would then mass a large crowd in hope of creating an incident whence innocent Somalis would be killed or injured by US forces. In a report to the UN Security Council on 1 July 1993, Jonathon Howe stated there was increasing evidence that Farah Aidid deliberately and personally directed the use of women and children for attacks on UNOSOM II soldiers; and that he directed his militia to shoot into the crowd on 13 June 1993 in order to create casualties and embarrass UNOSOM II before the world press.¹³⁴

In order to provoke US overreaction, the main insurgent tactic in Mogadishu was the ambush. Burning roadblocks would be set up during the night and militia members would lay in wait for the military forces to arrive to clear the obstacle.¹³⁵ When the obstacle clearing operation was underway, the insurgents would ambush the US troops from their attack positions in nearby houses and disused factories. According to Mark Doyle, the insurgents would fire bullets and rockets at the US troops, who

¹³¹ Ecklund, *Task Force Ranger...*, 51.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 51.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

¹³⁵ Doyle, *A Dangerous Place...*, 36.

could do little but fire back at unseen insurgents.¹³⁶ The indiscriminate nature of the returning fire of the US troops was the desired effect of Somali ambushes. Civilian casualties would occur because sometimes crowds of civilians became involved, and often US helicopters from the American Quick Reaction Force (QRF) provided air support for the ground forces.¹³⁷ The lack of discernible targets did not prevent the US forces from applying overwhelming force to protect themselves, and the consequent Somali casualties led to a growing discontent amongst the Somali population.

US COIN Tactics

In the end, the US forces employed their Clausewitzian conventional paradigm inappropriately within an unconventional scenario and this laid the groundwork for their ultimate failure to overcome the Somali urban insurgency. The US leadership focused on Farah Aidid as their operational objective and, as Larry Cable argues,

Insurgent forces are not as susceptible to destruction in the field or demoralization at the command level as the conventional armies considered by Clausewitz and his American successors.¹³⁸

At the tactical level, the foundation for the disastrous result of US COIN operations in Somalia were laid in the lack of intelligence capabilities, the over reliance on technology and the over emphasis on direct action. The AWOW during the early 1990s was incompatible with the exigencies of an urban insurgency.

¹³⁶ Doyle, *A Dangerous Place...*, 36.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹³⁸ Cable, *Conflict of Myths...*, 283.

Lack of Intelligence Capabilities

It is the responsibility of the force commander to ensure, through the intelligence services, that he possesses the requisite understanding of the threat in order to protect the troops he sends into harm's way. However, according to FM-3-06, US forces failed to properly identify Aidid's intent and the impact that the urban environment would have on his strategy, operations and tactics.¹³⁹ The US forces failed to understand their enemy because they lacked the requisite intelligence capabilities in Somalia. HUMINT was unavailable, and thus, the US forces possessed little knowledge of the SNA.¹⁴⁰

The American forces underestimated the SNA by considering them to be "intellectually primitive, culturally shallow, and militarily craven."¹⁴¹ Aidid's force was, in actuality, well-led and heavily armed - a legacy of the Cold War.¹⁴² During the Cold War, Somalia was inundated with foreign advisers eager to offer their warfare skills and weapons inventories.¹⁴³ Aidid benefited from the arsenal of weapons and the training from the Soviet military academy.¹⁴⁴ Relying upon his Soviet training, Aidid proved to be a master of urban insurgent warfare; lacking vast firepower, sophisticated communications, and a highly trained and disciplined force, he instead utilized the advantages of the classic irregular force.¹⁴⁵ Aidid did not seek a decisive battle: he preferred to engage in ambushes after which he would retreat to fight another day. Thus, he kept his casualties down, while inflicting casualties on a casualty-averse opponent.

¹³⁹ United States. *Field Manual Number 3-06 Urban Operations...*, C-5.

¹⁴⁰ Rosenau, *Every Room Is a New Battle...*, 381.

¹⁴¹ Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu...*, 115.

¹⁴² Rosenau, *Every Room Is a New Battle...*, 379.

¹⁴³ Doyle, *A Dangerous Place...*, 36.

¹⁴⁴ Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu...*, 115.

¹⁴⁵ Rosenau, *Every Room Is a New Battle...*, 381.

The Somali ability to shoot down Blackhawk helicopters was the biggest intelligence failure for the Americans. The US forces were unaware that Aidid had brought in Sudanese fundamentalist Islamic soldiers, who were experienced in downing Russian helicopters during the conflict in Afghanistan, to train his insurgent forces in anti-helicopter rocket propelled grenade (RPG) firing techniques.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the US was unaware of the vast number of RPG caches Aidid possessed. This lack of granularity placed the American forces at significant risk when they deployed on COIN operations.

Over Reliance on Technology and Firepower

Intelligence, specifically signals intelligence (SIGINT), was adversely impacted by an over reliance on technology. The Americans possessed very capable SIGINT equipment. However, it was negated when Aidid, after learning that the US forces were eavesdropping on his radio communications, simply switched to word-of-mouth communications.¹⁴⁷ This mode of communication was workable because of the urban environment Aidid's forces operated in. The reliance of US forces on precision-guided munitions and wide-area jammers when intervening against C4ISR assets, and the inability of these high technologies to neutralize a low-technology opponent, was highlighted very effectively in Mogadishu. This placed the US forces at risk because they had poor situational awareness in the urban environment, and the danger to the troops increased.

As has been outlined, after Vietnam, there was a reticence to suffer casualties and there was a tendency to overemphasize force protection through the use of overwhelming firepower. However, during COIN operations, this approach is not always advisable. Contrary to successful COIN doctrines,

¹⁴⁶ Mark Bowden, *Blackhawk Down: A Story in Modern War* (New York: New York Penguin Books, 2000), 110.

¹⁴⁷ Rosenau, *Every Room Is a New Battle...*, 381.

the US forces were inclined to apply kinetic solutions and, on numerous occasions, they inflicted significant collateral damage and killed innocent civilians. For example, during a 17 June 1993, attack US forces pounded a suspected Aidid stronghold with 105 mm rounds from helicopter gunships killing sixty Somali civilians.¹⁴⁸ The indiscriminate use of firepower such as using anti-tank guided missiles to root out snipers alienated the civilian population and served to turn the Somali populace against the US forces.

Over Emphasis on Direct Action

The US penchant for direct action also alienated the citizens of Mogadishu, and alienating the people, more often than not, leads to defeat in COIN operations. As Robert Blackstone argues, the people are the center of gravity in COIN warfare.¹⁴⁹ TF Ranger never addressed controlling the population or winning their hearts and minds, because it was given a very specific mission: targeting the hierarchy of the insurgency, and thus, the US forces neglected a critical part of any successful COIN strategy. TF Ranger did nothing to separate the insurgents from their center of gravity or base of support, and it did less to win the support of the population by contributing to the idea of an effective, equitable and responsive government. As a result, TF Ranger never gained the initiative against the insurgents because of its extremely poor information and intelligence collection networks mainly from the lack of support from and its limited contact with the citizens of Mogadishu.¹⁵⁰ There was a gulf between the troops of TF Ranger and the local population because, as Alice Hill contends, the normal

¹⁴⁸ Rosenau, *Every Room Is a New Battle...*, 380.

¹⁴⁹ Robert C. Blackstone, "Somalia: Soldiers in SOSO," *Military Review* (March/April 2005): 43.

¹⁵⁰ Ecklund, *Task Force Ranger ...*, 63.

concerns for the Somali civilians and casualties became unimportant.¹⁵¹ Joshua Hammer recounts the experience of Sgt. Richard Knight, a member of the US 10th Mountain Division's QRF,

The veterans will organize a militia of kids, arm them and tell them what they want done. I've returned fire on kids 10, 11, 12 years old. I've got no fucking choice.¹⁵²

Dealing with child soldiers is indicative of one of the many dangers inherent in direct action in urban COIN operations. Urban insurgents can use child soldiers and place the US military forces in the horns of a dilemma: either suffer military casualties and lose popular support on the home front or kill a child, even if that child is an illegal combatant, and risk losing the support of the local populace.

Outcome in Somalia

Overall, the US military possessed a way of war, characterized by the Powell Doctrine that would decisively defeat, as evidenced by the first Gulf War, any enemy in conventional warfare. However, that AWOW did not translate well to combating an urban insurgency, as evidenced by the Battle of Mogadishu, and the US did not possess sufficient heritage in COIN operations to overcome the gap. In sum, the COIN capability had atrophied with the neglect of the US military leadership and it proved unable to cope with the mission in Somalia. Aidid proved himself to be a master of urban insurgent warfare, and the Americans proved they did not possess the knowledge of the proper indirect tactics and techniques of COIN warfare. The US forces did not view the Somali population as the centre of gravity for Farah Aidid and they did not seek to separate the civilian population from the insurgents.

¹⁵¹ Alice Hill, "Hearts and Minds or Search and Destroy? Controlling Civilians in Urban Operations," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 13 no. 1 (Spring 2002): 15.

¹⁵² Joshua Hammer, "Lone Rangers," *New Republic*, vol. 209, issue 21 (November 1993), 10.

Instead, they relied on the attrition approach: decisive, direct action and the application of technology and overwhelming firepower.

In the end the US forces failed in overcoming the urban insurgency in Mogadishu because they lost the support of the Somali people. The mindset of the US forces was overly aggressive, as Robert Blackstone recounts, soldiers in the QRF saw their mission solely in terms of fighting the insurgents.¹⁵³ He also provides accounts of how a senior officer found one of his main tasks was to be “curbing the endless enthusiasms of ... subordinates to find trouble.”¹⁵⁴ In the end, the divide between the Somali people and the US forces, it can be argued, was consolidated on 9 September 1993 when a large crowd of Aidid’s supporters attacked American and Pakistani soldiers attempting to clear a roadblock.¹⁵⁵ In order to disperse the mob, US Cobra gunships fired 20-millimetre cannon shells into the crowd killing dozens of Somalis, including women and children.¹⁵⁶ This almost certainly irretrievably drove the majority of the Somali people to the camp of Farah Aidid, and ensured the continued support for the insurgency. Thus, the AWOW in 1993, and its emphasis on overwhelming firepower, has been shown to be incompatible as a COIN doctrine and it is a poor strategy for combating an urban insurgency.

5. The American Way of War in 2006

*The United States is fighting the Global War on Terrorism with a mindset shaped by the Cold War. That mindset helped create today’s joint force that possesses nearly irresistible power in conventional wars against nation-states. Unfortunately, the wars the United States must fight today in Afghanistan and Iraq are not of this variety.*¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Blackstone, *Somalia...*, 44.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁵⁵ Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu...*, 91.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁵⁷ Nigel Aylwin-Foster, “Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations,” *Military Review* (November-December 2005): 8.

This chapter contends that the US military is transforming to gain the most benefit from its comparative advantage in air power, computers and communications equipment, weapons systems and special operations forces (SOF). However, this transformation will not realize more emphasis being given to American COIN capabilities because the US military culture still does not view COIN as a core military task. Contemporary US military leadership expects US forces to win the short-term conventional fight while relying upon the host nation to ultimately win the long-term unconventional fight. The Rumsfeld Doctrine promises that a high technology military will achieve swift victory through the deployment of fewer, but, highly-trained troops using the power and accuracy of the latest munitions decisively aimed at the enemy's centre of gravity.¹⁵⁸ However, still lacking a distinct American way of unconventional war, the US expects the new AWOW to be a viable COIN doctrine.

Rumsfeld's American Way of War

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld is the champion of the most recent doctrine of warfare that stresses air power, computer communications, and small, highly trained ground forces.¹⁵⁹ The Defense Secretary developed a campaign plan for the second Iraq War that relied upon American technological prowess. This campaign plan was facilitated by Secretary Rumsfeld's transformation of the US military to realize a leaner, more technologically driven force. Secretary Rumsfeld's efforts were met with some resistance from within the Pentagon general officer staff who as defenders of the status quo and, as the successors of Clausewitz, they contended that future wars would be "won the old-fashioned way -- with lethal firepower and plenty of US grunts on the ground."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Richard B. Meyers, "The New American Way of War," *Military Technology* (June 2003): 71.

¹⁵⁹ Stan Crock, Paul Magnusson, Lee Walczak and Frederik Balfour, "The Doctrine of Digital War," *Business Week*, issue 3827 (April 2003), 30.

¹⁶⁰ Crock, *The Doctrine of Digital War...*, 31.

Secretary Rumsfeld wants to win future wars with a new AWOW. The Iraqi Freedom campaign plan relied heavily upon SOF. The Rumsfeld Doctrine envisages more SOF participation to go behind enemy lines to knock out targets, thus lessening the need for more Regular US Army troops.¹⁶¹ In 2003, Secretary Rumsfeld, therefore, significantly increased Special Operations Command's (SOCOM) authority by changing it from a supporting command, which can only contribute to other combatant commands' missions, into a supported command, which can plan and execute its own independent operations.¹⁶² By deploying highly-trained, but fewer, troops who rely upon high technology munitions delivered by US air forces, Secretary Rumsfeld hoped to re-shape the US military into a leaner, more flexible military force. Secretary Rumsfeld ensured that the Iraqi Freedom campaign plan contained joint strikes, a rapid advance to Baghdad, and extensive use of SOF. This was the litmus test of the new AWOW.

The tenets of the Rumsfeld Doctrine are as follows:

1. employ high technology weapon systems, such as drones and satellites, to soften resistance in advance of US ground forces;
2. rely on air forces with an emphasis on precision-guided munitions to disrupt command and induce surrenders while limiting civilian casualties; and
3. deploy small, more agile, better-equipped ground forces that engage in lightning-fast attacks deep into enemy territory.¹⁶³

Thus, bolstered by advances in information technology, the US military has adopted a new AWOW that “eschews the bloody slogging matches of old.”¹⁶⁴ It seeks a quick victory with minimal casualties and its hallmarks are speed, maneuver, flexibility, and surprise. It is heavily reliant upon precision firepower,

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁶² Jennifer Kibbe, “The Rise of the Shadow Warriors,” *Foreign Affairs*, (March/April 2004): 110.

¹⁶³ Crock, *The Doctrine of Digital War...*, 31.

¹⁶⁴ Boot, *The New American Way of War...*, 42.

SOF, and psychological operations, and it attempts to seamlessly integrate naval, air, and land power into a single entity.¹⁶⁵ This is the doctrinal framework for conventional warfare in which the US military will prosecute future wars. However, the US military does not possess a comparable doctrinal framework for unconventional warfare, and this is a weakness of the current AWOW.

Counterinsurgency Doctrine

The current AWOW has its genesis in the late 1990s. After becoming Army chief of staff in 1999, General Eric Shinseki moved the US Army toward becoming a lighter, more agile force that could better tackle a full spectrum of operations, from conventional war to peacekeeping. However, Lawrence Kaplan argues that many senior leaders in the US military do not see COIN in terms of full-spectrum operations.¹⁶⁶ Major General Peter W. Chiarelli, commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division, contends that the US military's experience in Iraq is finally forcing senior leaders to reconsider the present COIN doctrine in light of the AWOW.¹⁶⁷ The common COIN paradigm was outlined in FM-3, the US Army's doctrinal cornerstone, which covers the subject in a single page.¹⁶⁸ This was wholly inadequate to prepare US leaders in how to combat an urban insurgency.

US Army leaders in Iraq had a choice. They could have relied on conventional US Army doctrine and the application of military power in countering insurgent movements, or they could have learned how to apply the full spectrum of national power. Those who chose the current AWOW, like Central Command chief General John Abizaid and theatre commander General Ricardo Sanchez,

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁶⁶ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 13.

¹⁶⁷ Peter W. Chiarelli and Patrick R. Michaelis, "Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations," *Military Review* (July-August 2005): 4.

¹⁶⁸ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 12.

viewed the attainment of security as a function primarily of military action. General Sanchez, for instance, dismissed the insurgency as “strategically and operationally insignificant.”¹⁶⁹ As such, senior leaders such as these took an essentially conventional attritional approach, one that favoured big-unit sweeps, targeted raids, and active force protection measures consisting primarily of overwhelming applications of firepower.¹⁷⁰

General George Casey, General Sanchez’s successor as theatre commander, has continued this strategy, only at a quicker pace and with body counts.¹⁷¹ According to Lawrence Kaplan, General Casey follows the attritional approach tested and found wanting in Vietnam, rather than pursuing traditional COIN operations, such as the oil-spot strategy.¹⁷² The oil-spot strategy advocates securing limited areas of the country before spreading out to others, like an oil spot. Securing the support of the local population is vital to this strategy. However, General Casey’s attritional perspective appears to be systemic as shown when during a press conference, one of Casey’s subordinate commanders, Lieutenant General Thomas Metz, the land component commander, explained how he intended to combat the insurgency in Iraq:

I don't think we'll put much energy into trying the old saying, win the hearts and minds, I don't look at it as one of the metrics of success.¹⁷³

This quote is indicative of the lack of understanding of the importance of winning hearts and minds – the centre of gravity of all insurgencies. Bruce Hoffman cites Major John Nagl, an expert in COIN and an

¹⁶⁹ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 13.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁷³ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 14.

instructor at West Point, who told a reporter in December 2003 the critical civil side of insurgency “is not being applied in Iraq as well as it could be.”¹⁷⁴

The central problem is that there is a paucity of written doctrine. Researchers have looked into the performance of the US military in COIN operations and they have found that there was no doctrine, no standard operating procedures and no manuals.¹⁷⁵ The US Army has only just recently published an interim field manual on COIN – Field Manual-Interim 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations* dated 01 October 2004 – in response to the performance of the US Army in Iraq.¹⁷⁶ It is for this reason that Junior commanders do not possess a tradition or a doctrine to guide them during COIN operations and this is producing poor results in Iraq.

Without substantive guidance from higher headquarters, junior commanders have had to rely upon their own experiential learning. As Bruce Hoffman reports,

some of these commanders have paid close attention to the lessons learned over the years [about counterinsurgency] and are applying them in theater but it is not division or battalion wide. It often is up to the individual commanders.¹⁷⁷

Lawrence Kaplan recounts the discussion of a group of battalion commanders during a seminar at the US Army War College in Fort Leavenworth, and how they felt they had to improvise on the fly in Iraq.¹⁷⁸ Commanders, for example, rely heavily upon the exchange of pearls of wisdom on unit websites like the 1st Cavalry Division's Cavnet. Further afield, Lieutenant Colonel Jim Schultz of the Center for

¹⁷⁴ Bruce Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, June 2004), 4.

¹⁷⁵ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 14.

¹⁷⁶ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 9.

¹⁷⁷ Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency...*, 5-6.

¹⁷⁸ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 15

Army Lessons Learned at Fort Leavenworth, which responds to requests from Iraq, has fielded over 4,000 queries about COIN tactics.¹⁷⁹ The sheer number of queries is evidence that the US military does not possess the requisite COIN doctrine and tradition to properly prepare its troops for deployment to Iraq.

Brigadier Aylwin-Foster, Deputy Commander of the Office of Security Transition in the Coalition Office for Training and Organizing Iraq's Armed Forces, also argues that US forces in Iraq were ill-prepared for COIN operations. This is surprising because as he contends the majority of operational time since the Cold War for the US military has been in COIN and OOTW, including the requirement for the Global War on Terrorism, yet, the US military still does not consider these as core roles.¹⁸⁰ Brigadier Aylwin-Foster provides the example of the deployment of 3 Corps to Iraq in 2003. The pre-deployment training for the corps focused solely on conventional operations.¹⁸¹ Hoffman also provides evidence of how little emphasis is placed on COIN training, and when training does occur it consists of practicing outdated and ineffectual COIN tactics and techniques.¹⁸²

One such tactic taught is that of cordon and search, which has been long discredited since the British experience in Palestine in the late 1940s because it disrupts daily life and commerce, and it sparks anger and resentment from the local population. As Bruce Hoffman argues,

that US military forces in Iraq have similarly applied this tactic with similar results – alienating the Iraqi civilian population – underscores the overwhelming organizational tendency not to absorb historical lessons from previous

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸⁰ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 8-9.

¹⁸¹ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 9.

¹⁸² Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency...*, 6.

counterinsurgencies when planning and conducting this particular mode of warfare.¹⁸³

The US military leadership must become charged with the critical need to address this capability gap. The US forces still train to manuals that provide little guidance on COIN tactics and techniques, and there appears to be little impetus focused upon this issue.

There is an organizational gap in the US military mind-set when it comes to incorporating COIN into the doctrine and training syllabi of the US military. Lieutenant Colonel Scott Eagen, an instructor at West Point, and quoted by Brigadier Aylwin-Foster, states,

the United States has never excelled at fighting insurgencies. In particular, our most disastrous effort, Vietnam, has left a bitter taste for irregular warfare on the historical palate of most Americans.¹⁸⁴

This has manifested itself in an ambivalence that borders on ignorance. Lieutenant Colonel Eagen contends that nowhere in the Department of Defense (DOD) Joint Professional Military Education system is there a course that is solely dedicated to the study of COIN.¹⁸⁵ In interviews with Combined Arms Center staff and Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) staff, Brigadier Aylwin-Foster found that the first were not *au fait* in how to enhance US Army COIN capabilities, and the second, did not include COIN in any of their programmes of instruction as a type of operation that stands on its own as a core US Army task.¹⁸⁶ The training organizations, lacking strategic direction stressing the importance of COIN operations, have not sufficiently incorporated the subject of COIN within the US training establishment curricula. Even during the 21st century this problem has persisted.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸⁴ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 8.

¹⁸⁵ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 9.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

In 2000, Leonard Wong, a retired Lieutenant Colonel and a research professor of military strategy at the US Army War College, was charged by Army Chief of Staff General Shinseki to determine the effectiveness of US Army training.¹⁸⁷ In April 2004, Professor Wong went to Baghdad to find out how American junior officers were performing amid the insurgency. According to Dan Baum, the junior officers had been trained and equipped to fight against mechanized Warsaw Pact regiments in conventional warfare.¹⁸⁸ In addition, they had been taught to avoid fighting in cities at all costs, and few had received pre-deployment training in improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the main threat. Lastly, only a handful of the junior officers had received any kind of instruction in the Arabic language or in Iraqi culture.¹⁸⁹ The US military has yet to crack the COIN nut.

Summary

Future operations will remain threatening across the entirety of the spectrum of conflict: from unconventional warfare on the left to the threat of thermonuclear warfare on the right. The Rumsfeld Doctrine will allow the US to gain an even more secure hold on the middle because the American dominance in precision joint strike and the ability to see the battlefield with increasing granularity will prevent even a peer competitor's armed forces from winning a conventional set piece engagement.¹⁹⁰ However, the more dominant the US is in the middle, the more future enemies will move to the left into the realm of unconventional warfare – and the city will be king and the insurgent the queen, to use a chess analogy. The ways of war for all nations and non-state actors are dynamic and, as Robert Scales

¹⁸⁷ Dan Baum, "Battle Lessons: What the generals don't know," *The New Yorker*, (17 January 2005) [periodical On-line]; available from http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?050117fa_fact; Internet: accessed 26 March 2006. 1.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁹⁰ Robert Scales, "Fighting on the Edges: The Nature of War in 2020," [paper on-line]; available from http://www.cia.gov/nic/PDF_GIF_2020_Support/2004_05_25_papers/edges.pdf; Internet; accessed 05 March 2006. 1-2.

identifies, America's potential enemies will continue to internalize the lessons from recent conflicts in which the US was surprisingly challenged, and even defeated, by unconventional warfighters.¹⁹¹

Brigadier Aylwin-Foster states that the US military has been a “victim of its own successful development as the ultimate warfighting machine.”¹⁹² The present problem for the US military is that there is a limit to how much technological dominance can achieve against an insurgent. Robert Scales expands on this point,

Recall the ineffectual cruise-missile strikes on targets in Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998, which served only to highlight U.S. weakness. Defeating terrorism, as Washington has learned in Afghanistan, requires putting boots on the ground and engaging in nation building. Yet it is precisely those areas in which the United States remains weakest and that Rumsfeld's high-tech defence transformation agenda has neglected.¹⁹³

Possessing an uncompromising focus on conventional fighting – and the AWOW - will only serve to leave the US military ill-prepared for COIN operations because conventional doctrine does not provide the requisite guidance to defeat insurgent forces.

6. Lessons learned from Iraqi Freedom II

*We know we're killing a lot, capturing a lot, collecting arms. We just don't know yet whether that's the same as winning.*¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹² Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 14.

¹⁹³ Scales, *Fighting on the Edges...*, 7.

¹⁹⁴ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 14.

*They searched my house. They kicked my Koran. They speak to me so poorly in front of my children. It's not that I encourage my son to hate Americans. It's not that I make him to want to join the resistance. Americans do that for me.*¹⁹⁵

This chapter argues that the urbanization of insurgency continues to be a challenge to the AWOW. Specifically, the incompatibility of the AWOW in prosecuting unconventional warfare is evident in the American experience in Fallujah during 2003. It will be shown that reliance upon an attritional approach that emphasizes technology, firepower and direct action remains an unviable strategy to defeat an urban insurgency.

Historical Context

The outcome of Operation Iraqi Freedom was never in doubt. A decade of sanctions and attacks by US/UK warplanes patrolling the no fly zone over northern and southern Iraq denuded the conventional military capability of President Saddam Hussein's regime.¹⁹⁶ In contrast, the US possessed an irresistible force as a direct result of Secretary Rumsfeld's transformation efforts, which created an expeditionary package of light, mobile forces supported by air power with an emphasis on SOF. The land and air operations occurred simultaneously while SOF seized key crossing points for the advancing land forces. Incredibly, the land forces numbered only 115, 000 US troops, and still, Baghdad was entered in just three weeks.¹⁹⁷ The dropping of 30,000 munitions, in which seventy per cent were

¹⁹⁵ Carl Conetta, "Vicious Circle: The Dynamics of Occupation and Resistance in Iraq," Research Monograph for Project on Defense Alternatives (Cambridge: The Commonwealth Institute, 18 May 2005), 9.

¹⁹⁶ Max Boot, *The New American Way of War...*, 46.

¹⁹⁷ Alistair Finlan, "Trapped in the Dead Ground: US Counter-insurgency Strategy in Iraq," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 16, no. 1 (March 2005): 7.

precision-guided, facilitated this casualty-averse warfare.¹⁹⁸ The conventional Iraqi forces never had a chance.

However, the campaign plan did not provide for all contingencies. The sudden disappearance of Saddam Hussein just as US forces entered Baghdad created a power vacuum that precipitated the civil disorder that occurred between US military conquest and control. According to Alistair Finlan, the lack of sufficient land forces to control the country of 25 million inhabitants allowed Iraq to plunge into a state of heightened violence, looting and insecurity.¹⁹⁹ Alistair Finlan contends that, “US actions or rather inactions at this critical stage actually fanned the flame of insurgency.”²⁰⁰

An insurgency is born when a governing power fails to address social or regional polarization, sectarianism, endemic corruption, crime, various forms of radicalism, or rising expectations.²⁰¹ The critical component was the policy of de-Ba’athification and the demobilization of the Iraqi Army (as well as canceling their pensions).²⁰² Many moderate Iraqis, such as educators and administrators, were Ba’ath party members because they were forced to take out membership as a way of getting on in Iraqi society. Unfortunately, their capabilities were not used to help reconstruct Iraq. The lack of US consideration in maintaining the Iraqi civil service was vital to the insurgency as the alienation of the 400, 000 strong Iraqi Army, all of whom, possessed the skills that would be valued in an insurgent movement – technical knowledge of explosives and tactical training.²⁰³ Thousands of bitter Iraqis would return to their home cities, and some would be amenable to joining an insurgent movement.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰¹ Metz, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*..., 26.

²⁰² Finlan, *Trapped in the Dead Ground*..., 9.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 9.

Fallujah is a large town of approximately 300,000 people 72 km west of Baghdad and according to Michael Ware, Fallujah was a point of transformation in many ways for the conflict in Iraq.²⁰⁴ This city is where the coalition forces were met with a fierce and well-organized urban insurgency. In 2003 and 2004, Fallujah was the most violence prone area in Iraq and it was the scene of many violent crowd control incidents, murders and bombings.²⁰⁵ The US commanders in Fallujah had not authorized the use of non-lethal munitions in their rules of engagement (ROE); instead they relied on shoot to kill orders on the sighting of an AK-47 or RPG in the hands of someone outside of a private home to effect force protection.²⁰⁶ The urban insurgency resisted the US force's draconian approach until the insurgents gained control of Fallujah and enjoyed complete freedom of movement within the city.²⁰⁷

The aforementioned misguided draconian approach emboldened the insurgency and weakened the US position in Fallujah. As Brigadier Aylwin-Foster contends, US officers believed that “the only effective, and morally acceptable, COIN strategy was to kill or capture all terrorists or insurgents.”²⁰⁸ This strong moral authority also extended to the support for the delivery of democracy to Iraq. US personnel considered the justness of this goal to be so powerful that they believed Iraqis would forgive any destruction or fatalities that occurred during the implementation of that ideal. This was a fatal error. The anger and resentment engendered by the US approach rallied the insurgent movements to oppose the coalition forces. According to Michael Ware, the previously disparate insurgent movements within Fallujah coalesced into a single entity.²⁰⁹ The insurgent groups began by deconflicting their operations

²⁰⁴ Public Broadcast System, “The Insurgency: An investigation into the people who are fighting against the U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq,” *Frontline* (21 February 2006) [report on-line]; available from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/insurgency/>; Internet: accessed 26 March 2006.

²⁰⁵ Global Security, “Fallujah,” [report on-line]; available from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/fallujah.htm>; Internet: accessed 26 February 2006. 1.

²⁰⁶ Global Security, *Fallujah...*, 1.

²⁰⁷ Public Broadcast System, *The Insurgency...*, 1.

²⁰⁸ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 5.

²⁰⁹ Public Broadcast System, *The Insurgency...*, 1.

or operating together, and soon, Fallujah became a melting pot – a unifying point – for the Iraqi insurgency.²¹⁰

The most significant period in Fallujah was the coalition call to arms that was sparked by the 31 March 2004 murder and mutilation of 4 US Blackwater contractors. Brigadier Aylwin-Foster argues that the April 2004 clearing operation of the city, Operation Valiant Resolve, was in response to the killings.²¹¹ He suggests that, as per classic insurgency strategy, the insurgents hoped to provoke the US forces into a disproportionate response in order to drive a wedge between the US forces and the local population.²¹² In the final tally, as will be seen in later sections, the insurgents operating in Fallujah were successful.

As Michael Ware argues, Fallujah was a point of transformation for the Iraqi insurgency.²¹³ The alliances and hierarchical structures that formed to make new insurgent hybrids were then transferred to other parts of Iraq. It was in Fallujah that the insurgent groups were coalescing into much more organized units. Insurgents established their hierarchical command structures with enhanced coordination and more effective methods of war fighting.²¹⁴ This insurgent adaptation was also identified by General John Abizaid when he commented that the Iraqi insurgency is “getting more organized, and it is learning; it is adapting, it is adapting to our tactics, techniques and procedures.”²¹⁵ In the final assessment the criticality of Fallujah is that it was the genesis of a national insurgency in Iraq.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

²¹¹ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 6.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

²¹³ Public Broadcast System, *The Insurgency...*, 1.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²¹⁵ Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency...*, 6.

Operation Valiant Resolve

The 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment and the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, with supporting Army and Air Force special operations units, were ordered to enter Fallujah and capture or eliminate the insurgents responsible for the deaths of the four US Blackwater contractors and five US soldiers killed by an improvised explosive device. This was not to be a conventional stability and security operation because of the expectation of intense insurgent resistance and the nature of the urban environment; Operation Valiant Resolve was to be a deliberate assault on prepared defences.²¹⁶

When the attack commenced on 5 April 2004, well-armed and organized insurgent groups using hit-and-run urban warfare tactics quickly resisted lead Marine units. The Marines relied on air support from Cobra attack helicopters, AC-130 gunships, and fixed-wing aircraft dropping precision-guided munitions on insurgent targets.²¹⁷ This display of overwhelming firepower would serve to alienate the civilians that remained in Fallujah. Jonathon Keiler quotes the ironic contention of a Marine squad leader from 1st Platoon, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment,

we will win the hearts and minds of Fallujah by ridding the city of insurgents.
We're doing that by patrolling the streets and killing the enemy.²¹⁸

Even the military service with the most impressive record in COIN operations, the US Marine Corps, can lose sight of the true centre of gravity when combating an urban insurgency. This lack of focus would spell defeat for the coalition forces during Operation Valiant Resolve.

²¹⁶ Jonathan F. Keiler, "Who Won the Battle of Fallujah?" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, vol. 131, issue 1 (January 2005): 57.

²¹⁷ Keiler, *Who Won the Battle of Fallujah?...*, 58.

²¹⁸ Global Security, *Fallujah...*, 1.

According to the 1st Marine Division, by 13 April 2004, 39 US Marines and soldiers had died in the battle, along with approximately 600 enemy fighters.²¹⁹ The Marines could not penetrate to the heart of the city and after a few more days of active combat, the Marines cordoned off the area and the establishment of the Fallujah Brigade resolved the matter politically. US leadership explained that the Fallujah Brigade would assume security duties in the city and ultimately accomplish the mission. However, on 1 May 2004, Iraqi insurgents took to the streets of Fallujah to declare victory over the Marines. Fallujah became an insurgent stronghold and a base for further attacks that would cost the coalition dearly as a militarily superior force was defeated by a group of unconventional warfighters.²²⁰

Operation al-Fajr

Between April and November 2004, both sides busily prepared for the inevitable re-commencement of hostilities in Fallujah. Iraqi insurgents dug tunnels, emplaced mines and booby-traps, and improved their defences.²²¹ Meanwhile, most of Fallujah's civilian population fled the city. The usual technique for the US Army was to use air strikes and artillery in hope of intimidating the insurgents before the outset of an operation.²²² Thus, before Operation al-Fajr, US warplanes and artillery launched attacks, weakening insurgent defences and hitting insurgent leadership targets. According to Jonathon Keiler, insurgent strength before Operation al-Fajr was as high as 5,000, however, many of them, including most of the leadership, fled Fallujah before the battle.²²³

²¹⁹ Keiler, *Who Won the Battle of Fallujah?...*, 58.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

²²¹ Keiler, *Who Won the Battle of Fallujah?...*, 59.

²²² Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency...*, 9.

²²³ Keiler, *Who Won the Battle of Fallujah?...*, 59.

Overall, the coalition force for Operation al-Fajr was larger than the force employed in Operation Valiant Resolve. The assault element employed in Operation al-Fajr comprised about 6,000 US troops in four Marine battalions and two Army battalions. 2,000 Iraqi troops were also part of the coalition force, which was supported by coalition aircraft and several Marine and Army artillery battalions.²²⁴ Opposing the coalition force was an enemy force estimated at 2,000-3,000 insurgents entrenched within the city.²²⁵ The coalition force attacked the Iraqi insurgents in Fallujah on 8 November 2004.

Operation al-Fajr was an attempt to regain control of the city from the insurgents in preparation for national elections scheduled for January 2005. With Fallujah cordoned off, the assault force struck from the north, quickly breaching insurgent defences and reaching the heart of the city. According to Jonathon Keiler, the US forces decided to employ more firepower, in accordance with the AWOW, to defeat the insurgents.²²⁶ US artillery batteries fired at least 800 rounds into the city and the US air force flew 24 sorties over Fallujah on the first day of fighting.²²⁷ By 20 November, the coalition had routed the remaining insurgents and taken the city. Coalition casualties in Operation al-Fajr were 51 killed and 425 seriously wounded; Iraqi government troops suffered 8 dead and 43 wounded; and as many as 1,200 insurgents were reported killed.²²⁸ The US forces were able to enter the city, but this did not equate to defeating the urban insurgency.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

²²⁶ Keiler, *Who Won the Battle of Fallujah?...*, 60.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

Iraqi Insurgent Tactics

Fallujah offered the insurgents the opportunity to control territory, to achieve cover and concealment from coalition forces, and operate from a secure base of operations around the administrative and commercial infrastructure of a large city centre. Additional benefits were enhanced access to media coverage and international attention. The freedom of action offered by the urban environment allowed the insurgents to concentrate on attacking the critical centres of gravity in the insurgency.

According to Andrew Krepinevich, three centres of gravity are present in this insurgency: the Iraqi people, the American people and the American soldier.²²⁹ The insurgents have the advantage of only having to win one centre of gravity while the coalition forces must win all three. Insurgent tactics will secure the support of the Iraqi people by undermining the ruling regime by showing that the government cannot provide for the basic security needs of the population. In addition, the killing of American soldiers will deprive the US forces of the support from the American people, and if the US deploys more troops to improve the security situation in Iraq, internal support from American troops, themselves, will be eroded as the increase in operational tempo adversely impacts the US troops.²³⁰ Ultimately, the degradation of civil order in urban centres will impact all three centres of gravity for the insurgents.

²²⁹ Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, Issue 5 (September/October 2005): 89.

²³⁰ Krepinevich, *How to Win in Iraq...*, 89.

The Iraqi insurgency in Fallujah followed a common pattern of attacking the ruling regime or occupying power.²³¹ General Abizaid described the conflict in Iraq as a classic “guerrilla-type campaign.”²³² According to Michael Ware, the urban warfare tactics insurgents engaged in were

hit and run, hit and run, classic guerrilla stuff. The insurgents never allow you a time to really get hold of them... combating these insurgents is like trying to hold water in your hand. Just when you see the window that they're shooting from and where they're coming from, and you're closing your hand on that, it all just seeps out through the cracks. That's how this battle was fought with these men from the 1st Infantry Division day after day after day as they progressed south through Fallujah.²³³

The insurgents used the following techniques against coalition forces: sniping, ambushes using IEDs or RPGs, small arms fire and mortar/rocket attacks.²³⁴ The insurgents knew they could not defeat the US forces militarily so their best chance of success was to create the conditions for a premature US withdrawal. Toward this end, the insurgents hoped to undermine the ruling regime and the US forces to instill disorder and prevent the establishment of a capable Iraqi government.²³⁵ Basing their operations in a city such as Fallujah provided them with the advantages they required to implement their strategy.

Anthony Cordesman studied the nature of attacks and patterns in the Iraqi insurgency and he details how the Iraqi conflict followed an approach expected of an urban insurgency. Similar to most urban insurgencies, the Iraqi urban insurgency contained the following elements:

1. exploitation of the complex terrain of the urban setting;
2. increase in urban logistics; and

²³¹ Metz, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*..., 26.

²³² Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*..., 6.

²³³ Public Broadcast System, *The Insurgency*..., 1.

²³⁴ Finlan, *Trapped in the Dead Ground*..., 10.

²³⁵ Krepinevich, *How to Win in Iraq*..., 88.

3. exploitation of propaganda and the media; and
4. discriminate targeting.

Thus, the Iraqi insurgents were able to use these elements in order to attack the regional centre of power and to exploit the conditions inherent in the urban setting.

Exploitation of the Complex Terrain of the Urban Setting

According to Anthony Cordesman, Iraqi insurgents were able to create sanctuaries like Fallujah and take shelter in mosques, shrines, and targets with high cultural impact.²³⁶ Jonathon Keiler states that Fallujah is sometimes called the city of mosques and that insurgents made extensive use of Fallujah's mosques as command posts, arms caches, and defensive positions.²³⁷ For instance, it took a company of soldiers 16 hours of house-to-house fighting to capture the Muhammadia Mosque, during which time the company was attacked with everything from RPGs to suicide bombers.²³⁸ In another example, four insurgents were heavily outnumbered and outgunned by US marines, but armed with only assault rifles and grenades the insurgents resisted an entire company for hours.²³⁹ Fighting from such locations and hoping the US would retaliate thereby damaging or destroying the site, the insurgents sought to exploit Iraqi religious, cultural, and political sensitivities. As coalition operations in Fallujah showed, this tactic raised the insurgency's media profile and made the US seem anti-Islamic or that the US was attacking Iraqi culture and not the insurgent movement.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Anthony H. Cordesman, "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency: The Nature of Attacks and Patterns and Cycles in the Conflict," Working Draft Paper for Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington, D.C.: Strategic and International Studies, 2006), 16.

²³⁷ Keiler, *Who Won the Battle of Fallujah?...*, 60.

²³⁸ Keiler, *Who Won the Battle of Fallujah?...*, 60.

²³⁹ Scott Peterson, "In Pockets of Fallujah, US Troops Still Face Harsh Battles," *Christian Science Monitor*, vol. 97, issue 1 (November 2004), 10.

²⁴⁰ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency...*, 16.

Jonathon Keiler argues that Fallujah's narrow streets, mosques, and ancient neighborhoods made it an “archetype of an insurgents' redoubt.”²⁴¹ The insurgents were able to use their intimate knowledge of the urban terrain to gain advantage over the coalition forces. In addition, Colonel H.R. McMaster, a COIN expert, writes that cities such as Fallujah gave insurgents the safety so that they could organize, they could train, and they could equip insurgent cells for deployment throughout the region.²⁴² Even after the coalition forces had occupied Fallujah, city residents told a *New York Times* reporter that insurgent forces were still seen to have freedom of movement, and the insurgents were still able to move around the city to reinforce areas attacked by coalition forces.²⁴³ Ultimately, it can be argued that military occupation of Fallujah did not subdue the urban insurgency.

Increase in Urban Logistics

Based in Fallujah, insurgents were able to better sustain their operations. This is indicative of urban insurgencies, as Lieutenant Colonel Ross A. Brown, commanding officer of 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment contends, because the insurgents normally have increased access to people that they can go to for money, for ammunition, and for resources.²⁴⁴ One thing Lieutenant Colonel Brown noticed is that there were a lot of attacks at the beginning of the month because that is when people received their pay cheques.²⁴⁵ In addition to access to resources from local civilians and companies, insurgents could establish depots to stockpile their materiel. Inside the Saad Abi Bin Waqas Mosque in central Fallujah, coalition forces found small arms, artillery shells, and parts of missile systems.²⁴⁶ Lastly, during battles

²⁴¹ Keiler, *Who Won the Battle of Fallujah?...*, 59.

²⁴² Public Broadcast System, *The Insurgency...*, 1.

²⁴³ Global Security, “Operation al-Fajr.” [report on-line]; available from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oif-phantom-fury-fallujah.htm>; Internet: accessed 26 February 2006, 1.

²⁴⁴ Public Broadcast System, *The Insurgency...*, 1.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 .

²⁴⁶ Global Security, *Fallujah...*, 1.

with coalition forces, many homes would be abandoned by the inhabitants and insurgents would occupy the houses for looting purposes or use as defensive positions.²⁴⁷

Exploitation of Propaganda and the Media

Another successful tactic for the insurgents was the exploitation of propaganda and the media. The Iraqi insurgents exploited how the media tends to focus on incidents with numerous casualties. The media gives these incidents significant publicity, and media pundits spend little time analyzing the details disadvantageous to the insurgency, deciding instead to focus on the spectacular details of the attack.²⁴⁸ Insurgents also exploited Arab satellite television as well as regional media, and they became adept at how to use the Internet. Insurgents paid close attention to media reactions, and tailored their attacks to high profile targets that made such attacks weapons of mass media.²⁴⁹ They exaggerated and falsified the results of US actions, and how these US actions caused unnecessary civilian casualties and collateral damage, and any other incidents in which the US could be blamed for being anti-Islamic. Insurgents learned to become very adept at information operations.

Insurgents are able to win many information dominance battles because, as Anthony Cordesman argues, the US military fights conventional battles “without proper regard for the fact it is also fighting a political, ideological, and psychological war.”²⁵⁰ Real incidents of US misconduct such as the harsh

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴⁸ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency...*, 19.

²⁴⁹ Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al Qa'ida's No.2, describes the conflict as taking place “in the battlefield of the media” and admits that the Al Qa'ida is engaged in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of Muslims with the West. Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency...*, 8.

²⁵⁰ Global Security, *Fallujah...*, 1.

treatment of detainees and prisoners in Abu Gharib prison provide plausibility for additional charges of misconduct. The advantage the insurgents possess over the US forces is that the insurgents are not fighting to influence Western or world opinion; they are fighting a political and psychological war to influence Iraq, and the Arab and Islamic worlds.²⁵¹

The insurgents in Fallujah found that attacks planned for maximum political and psychological effects often have the additional benefit of provoking over-reaction.²⁵² As an example, members of the Iraqi Governing Council strongly criticized the US military over the number of civilian casualties in Fallujah during Operation al-Fajr; Council members said the US use of overwhelming firepower and direct action had been disproportionate and indiscriminate. The insurgents were successful in pushing the American “hot button” by employing forms of attack, such as remotely triggered improvised explosive devices (IED) that would provoke disproportionate fear and terror to force the coalition forces into costly, drastic, and provocative responses.²⁵³

Discriminate Targeting

The Iraqi insurgency transformed into a sophisticated campaign of IEDs and attacks with multiple weapons systems, including shoulder-held anti-aircraft missiles.²⁵⁴ From September 2003 through October 2004, there was a rough balance between the three primary methods of attack, namely IEDs, direct fire, and indirect fire, with a consistent but much smaller number of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED).²⁵⁵ US military spokesman Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt said insurgents in Fallujah were firing weapons specifically at US forces from inside schools, mosques,

²⁵¹ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency*..., 9.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 9-10.

²⁵³ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency*..., 9.

²⁵⁴ Metz, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*..., 26.

²⁵⁵ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency*..., 21.

and hospitals.²⁵⁶ Another example of specifically targeting US troops was the insurgent tactic of wiring IEDs behind posters of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, rigged to explode when US troops tore them down.²⁵⁷ The goal was to inflict US and coalition casualties, and not Iraqi civilian casualties.

The use of roadside IEDs remains a major problem for coalition forces. The total number of IED attacks nearly doubled from 5,607 in 2004 to 10,953 in 2005.²⁵⁸ During 2005, there were 415 IED deaths out of a total of 674 combat deaths and IEDs accounted for 4,256 wounded out of a total of 5,941.²⁵⁹ From July 2005 to January 2006, IEDs killed 234 US troops out of a total of 369 total combat deaths and they accounted for 2314 wounded out of 2980 total combat wounded.²⁶⁰

However, the numbers of US troops killed or wounded by IEDs are not the only measure of insurgent success. Casualties may have dropped but the number of attacks has gone up and IED attacks tie down manpower and equipment, disrupt coalition operations, disrupt economic and aid activity. The insurgents have been able to create insecurity in the lives of civilians and the security forces and at the same time create dissatisfaction in the performance of the ruling regime to provide essential services. According to Anthony Cordesman, insurgents have sown disorder by attacking the urban infrastructure, utilities, and services in order to show that the ruling regime cannot provide essential economic services or personal security.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ Global Security, *Fallujah...*, 1.

²⁵⁷ Baum, *Battle Lessons...*, 1.

²⁵⁸ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency...*, 21-22.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁶⁰ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency...*, 22.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

US COIN Tactics

Similar to their experience in Somalia, the lack of success for US forces engaged in urban COIN operations is a direct result of US forces operating without a viable unconventional warfare doctrine and commanders have resorted to the conventional AWOW based on direct action using technology and overwhelming military force.

Lack of Intelligence Capabilities

As in Somalia, US forces lacked the intelligence capabilities, especially HUMINT capabilities, to effectively counter the insurgent threat. According to Bruce Hoffman, senior intelligence officials claimed that they achieved very little in their attempt to penetrate the Iraqi insurgency.²⁶² Anthony Cordesman, in a November 2003 report on the 1st Armored Division, writes,

The division has had to change its whole operating style after 20 years of focusing on fighting conventional heavy forces. It has had to develop HUMINT procedures and turn away from reliance on technical intelligence sources. Even now it needs twice as many HUMINT teams as it has.²⁶³

The problem is the US Army as a whole does not have the MPs, civil action, intelligence, and trained counterinsurgency assets it needs.²⁶⁴ In addition, the inadequacies in intelligence on the insurgents can also be attributed to the focus on the search for Iraqi stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)

²⁶² Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*..., 23.

²⁶³ Anthony H. Cordesman, "The Current Military Situation in Iraq," Center for Strategic and International Studies, (Washington, D.C.: Strategic and International Studies, 14 November 2003), 18.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

instead of addressing the more pressing issue of the increasingly effective insurgency.²⁶⁵ The insurgency was allowed to grow because of the lack of urgency, indeed a lack of recognition, on the part of the Americans.

The inexperience of American forces in COIN operations and the failure of pre-invasion plans and post-invasion policy to take into account the possibility of violence and resistance firstly occurring, much less escalating into insurgency, is likely another reason for the intelligence failure. Brigadier Aylwin-Foster contends that the US forces put little emphasis on HUMINT and relied upon technological assets, like SIGINT instead of HUMINT, to gather intelligence.²⁶⁶ With regard to HUMINT, US forces were slow to fully organize and create suitable databases, learn how to run sources, find out what sources were reliable and what sources worked. According to Anthony Cordesman, the insurgents were able to exploit weaknesses in US HUMINT because the insurgents learned that US intelligence was structured around counting and targeting things, rather than people, and that the US possessed a weak ability to measure and characterize insurgent numbers, intent and tactics.²⁶⁷ Because of this US weakness, the insurgents were able to disperse into the local population and conduct their swarming technique of attacks without being detected beforehand.

But perhaps the most important reason that the American intelligence was inadequate concerns the lesser-included contingency status with which COIN in the US military has long been accorded.²⁶⁸ The result of lesser-included contingency is that tens of thousands of US troops received on-the-job training under fire. An adverse consequence of on-the-job training occurred when these experienced

²⁶⁵ Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency...*, 10.

²⁶⁶ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 6.

²⁶⁷ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency...*, 27.

²⁶⁸ Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency...*, 10.

soldiers were replaced, often en masse, by green troops who had to start all over again. The new troops would have to figure out where they were, what they were attempting to do there and who the insurgents were.²⁶⁹ The critical intelligence in Iraq was the determination of insurgent identity and numbers—two of the most basic criteria, and according to the head of a European intelligence service monitoring developments in Iraq, the Americans and Brits knew very little about their enemy.²⁷⁰

Over Reliance on Technology and Firepower

Just as in Somalia, the US possessed extremely capable SIGINT and COMINT capabilities, but the urban environment obviated the capabilities of these technologies. The insurgents created informal distributed networks for C4I.²⁷¹ They stopped using their most vulnerable communications assets, and started to use messengers, direct human contact, coded messages through the Internet, and propaganda web pages.²⁷² The insurgents began to use less technology to overcome the propensity for the US forces to rely too much on technology.

As well as being overly technical in its outlook, Brigadier Aylwin-Foster recounts the opinion of non-US interviewees writing that the US military was considered too kinetic in their COIN operations.²⁷³ This means that the US was predisposed to using direct action and overwhelming firepower in the destruction of an insurgent as the preferred solution to any given situation.²⁷⁴ Brigadier Aylwin-Foster provides the example of a preparatory action in November 2004 prior to Operation al-

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁷¹ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency*..., 24.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁷³ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations*..., 4.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

Fajr when forty 155mm artillery rounds were fired into a small sector of Fallujah. The local commander did not report this during the battle update brief because he considered this to be a “minor application of firepower.”²⁷⁵

During Operation al-Fajr, heavy armour was employed, and air and artillery strikes were more liberally authorized than during Operation Valiant Resolve. Because of the increased application of firepower the insurgents were successful in getting media stories that entire city blocks were leveled.²⁷⁶ The US military argued that the truth was far less stark. However, perception is everything, and the Iraqi civilian perception was that the US and coalition forces used excessive force and inflicted injury and death on innocent Iraqis.²⁷⁷ Military commanders admitted that troops generally entered houses only after tanks rammed through walls or specialists used explosives to blast the doors open.²⁷⁸ Many journalists reported stories such as the following excerpt:

What had been houses were now piles of brick and glass, demolished by 500-pound bombs. Whole city blocks were leveled, the rubble and mangled carcasses of cars pushed to the sides of the streets by the force of Abrams tanks. In crushing the Sunni insurgents who had laid claim to the streets, U.S. and Iraqi forces left Fallujah looking like a city ripped asunder by a hurricane.²⁷⁹

Bringing security to Fallujah was a difficult challenge for US forces stretched thin across the Sunni Triangle. The US Army's 1st Infantry Division, lacking the number of soldiers necessary to search every house, used its integral armour to fire tanks rounds to counter snipers, and mortar fire to suppress

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁷⁶ Keiler, *Who Won the Battle of Fallujah?...*, 60.

²⁷⁷ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency...*, 14.

²⁷⁸ Global Security, *Operation al-Fajr...*, 1.

²⁷⁹ Ilana Ozernoy, Amer Saleh and Julian E. Barnes, “Destroying it to Save it?” *U.S. News & World Report* vol. 137, issue 19 (November 2004), 31.

insurgent positions in a bid to prevent American casualties. According to Staff Sergeant David Bellavia , US Army, 1st Division, “you never want to destroy someone's city like this. These people have worked hard for what they have, but this was the only way to eliminate those fanatics.”²⁸⁰ Whole swaths of the city were made virtually unlivable, especially on the eastern side of Fallujah, which suffered some of the heaviest fighting.²⁸¹ The use of technology on such a scale only served to alienate the civilian population from the US forces. The US forces were seen as oppressors not liberators, and this is a direct result of using too much military force.

Over Emphasis on Direct Action

COIN doctrine generally identifies the population as the centre of gravity for all successful COIN strategies. Gaining and maintaining the support of the populace in order to isolate the insurgent group is the key goal. Therefore, it is critical that military actions do not serve to alienate the civilian population. The destruction of property, infliction of injuries and loss of life must be kept to the barest minimum in such a COIN framework. An attrition approach wherein the destruction of the insurgent is the prime goal of any military action is fraught with challenges. The critical risk of such an approach is that, too often, the population is “at best a distraction to the primary aim, and in extremis a target for repression.”²⁸²

Similar to the COIN strategy in Somalia, the US forces in Iraq relied too much on direct action against the insurgent groups instead of concentrating on supporting the Iraqi population. The propensity for direct action was facilitated by the formation of camps that kept the US troops isolated from the Iraqi

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁸² Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 4.

people. The draft Quarterly Defense Review Irregular Warfare notes that US forces lived in fortified garrisons separate from the local population and that most face-to-face contact with the civilian populace occurred during cordon and search or vehicle checkpoint operations.²⁸³ This detachment between the US forces and the civilian population served to make it easier for US forces to apply firepower in an urban environment as the troops lacked the requisite connection with the population that might temper the troop's reaction when they engaged insurgents in local neighbourhoods.²⁸⁴ Thus, US troops were separated from the local population and were seen as a distant, impersonal occupying force that took no interest in the daily plight of the Iraqi people.²⁸⁵ The garrisoning of forces denied an avenue of nurturing local support.

The following passage speaks to the ferocity of the combat in Fallujah and how it would be easy to accuse the US and coalition forces of employing excessive direct action,

The climax of the firefight came when the team from Alpha Company finally entered the last redoubt of the insurgents - a burning house that had already been hammered by rockets, explosive charges, and tank rounds - they had every reason to believe any remaining gunmen were dead...US commanders say that such costly battles are taking place across Fallujah...the final blow came with heavy fire from a Spectre AC-130 gunship, which destroyed four houses used by the insurgents with 40 Howitzer shells.²⁸⁶

Even after a battle of such severity, the marines returned to find two very young boys emerge from a house across the street; a woman in a black shroud and an older man followed the boys. A cardboard sign on the wall, invisible during the firefight the night before, read: There is family.²⁸⁷ In addition, US

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸⁴ Conetta, *Vicious Circle...*, 11.

²⁸⁵ Aylwin-Foster, *Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations...*, 4.

²⁸⁶ Peterson, *In Pockets of Fallujah...*, 10.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

Marines used explosives, axes, and even their boots to break down doors and storm houses. They searched rooms and destroyed food stores when they found them to deprive insurgents moving from house to house of support. However, this would also deprive the families that live in the houses the food stores.²⁸⁸ The risk of such actions by the US forces is that similar families caught in the crossfire will resent the danger the American forces put them in and they will become more open to supporting the insurgency – a tactical victory becomes an operational defeat. In the end, the American attritional approach to COIN did not enhance the security of the Iraqi people, and thus, the American forces lost one of the three centres of gravity identified by Andrew Krepinevich.

Determining what the US Army's attritional approach has accomplished, and why it should be continued, is not clear. According to Scott Peterson, in an interview with a US Army commander in Iraq, "It's a pretty constant spiral. To eliminate the insurgents, you rely on force. But too much force alienates the population even more."²⁸⁹ This is a founding principle of minimum force in contemporary COIN doctrine, but the US military still relies upon the teachings of Clausewitz and the focus on the annihilation of the enemy much to the detriment of US forces in Iraq.

Outcome in Iraq

On 10 November 2004, U.S. Military officials announced they controlled 70 percent of Fallujah and that coalition forces had captured important sites including the mayor's office, several mosques, a commercial centre and other major civic objectives.²⁹⁰ However, the insurgents learned they could deny the coalition and the ruling regime local victory. Insurgents found they could disperse and re-infiltrate into many towns and parts of cities the moment coalition forces left and thus deny the coalition and the

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁸⁹ Peterson, *In Pockets of Fallujah...*, 10.

²⁹⁰ Global Security, *Operation al-Fajr...*, 1.

government the ability to either deploy police or govern.²⁹¹ In addition, the insurgents, flushed from their hideouts in Fallujah, descended upon Baghdad and Mosul, taking with them a mission to avenge Fallujah and spread the lessons learned in Fallujah to other insurgent groups.²⁹² The insurgents began to concentrate their basing in larger urban areas because they were more anonymous and could be more confident that coalition forces would not launch massive offensive assaults, as they did in Fallujah.²⁹³ The insurgents' new tactics suggest that Marine Lieutenant General John Sattler spoke too soon in December 2004 when he boasted that his troops had "broken the back of the insurgency" by rolling up the Fallujah sanctuary.²⁹⁴ The insurgents merely adapted to the US tactics.

Summary

Bruce Hoffman writes that a truism of COIN is that a population will give its allegiance to the side that will best protect it.²⁹⁵ Thus, the goal of the insurgent is to deprive the people of a sense of security. Through attacks on the security forces, the government services and the urban infrastructure, the insurgent seeks to create a climate of insecurity by demonstrating the ruling regimes' inability to provide essential services, such as maintain order, and thus emphasize ruling regimes weakness. The principal advantage, as Hoffman argues, the Iraqi insurgency has over the coalition forces is that the insurgency does not have to defeat the coalition forces militarily; they just have to avoid losing.²⁹⁶ The paradox for the coalition is that the more conspicuous the US forces become and the more aggressive its

²⁹¹ Cordesman, *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency...*, 27.

²⁹² Aparisim Ghosh, Maher al-Thanoon and Mark Thompson, "Melting into the City," *Time*, vol. 164, issue 23 (December 2004), 296-297.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 297.

²⁹⁴ Ghosh, *Melting into the City...*, 298.

²⁹⁵ Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency...*, 15.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

operations, the stronger the insurgency appears to be.²⁹⁷ In the end, the present AWOW has yet to prove itself the equal of the strategy of urban insurgency and this is the continuing challenge the US military finds itself facing over, and over again.

The expectation is that most of the future military operations will be conducted in and around large urban areas. Cities--and those connected clusters of cities called conurbations - are the “political, economic, social, and cultural epicenters around the world.”²⁹⁸ Failed and failing states, not strong ones, are the primary sources of international instability, and they attract US military intervention because they are shelters and breeding grounds for terrorism, drug-trafficking, environmental degradation and political and religious extremism.²⁹⁹ Therefore, the US military must be prepared to engage in wars against competent, regular and irregular, enemy forces that will conduct operations from within large cities.

Tasked with urban operations, soldiers think of buildings. The initial impression of the neophyte urban tactician is of physical forms--skyscrapers or huts, airports and harbors, size, construction density, streets and sewers. Ralph Peters warns that the focus on physical terrain leads to the assumption that military operations would be “more challenging in a Munich than in a Mogadishu.”³⁰⁰ But Mogadishu defeated the most powerful military in the world while Munich submitted easily at the end of the Second World War; the difference between the two cities is not in the strength and resilience of the physical architecture, but in the human architecture.³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁹⁸ Record, *Collapsed Countries...*, 8.

²⁹⁹ Record, *Collapsed Countries...*, 8.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

While the physical characteristics of cities are of great importance, the key variable is the population. According to Peters, the issue is whether the people are “hostile, indifferent, or welcoming.”³⁰² Ralph Peters continues,

Too often, the evaluation of the flesh-and-blood terrain, of the human high-ground, ends there. Yet few populations are ever exclusively hostile, or truly indifferent, or unreservedly welcoming. Man's complexity is richer than any architectural detail. It is, finally, the people, armed and dangerous, watching for exploitable opportunities, or begging to be protected, who will determine the success or failure of the intervention.³⁰³

This is a salient point because the centre of gravity for the insurgent is the people – and the insurgents know this very well, much better than the Americans at this time. The civilian base provides the insurgents with the will to fight through moral support, with the weapons to fight through donations of money and with the protection from capture through silence and non-cooperation with police/military authorities.

The US military’s experience in Somalia and Iraq highlights its persistent failure to prepare for the full spectrum of conflict. The US military is superb at defeating conventional forces--as its three-week blitzkrieg from Kuwait to Baghdad in the spring of 2003 demonstrated--but not nearly as good at defeating insurgencies.³⁰⁴ Max Boot contends there is a real danger American policymakers and military officers will react, as has been their wont, to the problems in Iraq by eschewing COIN operations in the future and reverting back to preparing to defeat conventional enemies with technology and overwhelming firepower.³⁰⁵ However, there is a limit to how much the AWOW can achieve against

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁰⁴ Max Boot, *The Struggle to Transform the Military...*, 103.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

future enemies who will invariably concentrate their attacks on American weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Strengthening the American capabilities to fight and win against unconventional threats in the urban environment should be the goal for the next military transformation.

7. Conclusion

*You must know something about strategy and tactics and logistics, but also economics and politics and diplomacy and history. You must know everything you can know about military power. You must understand that few of the important problems of our time have, in the final analysis, been finally solved by military power alone.*³⁰⁶

The speed and indomitable momentum generated by the US coalition during Operation Iraqi Freedom portended of an unexpected military success that would bring a better peace to the Iraqi people. However, the US coalition did not restore law and order nor nurture popular support quick enough to prevent the germination of Iraqi discontent, and thus, Iraq is in the throes of a vicious and, seemingly, indefatigable insurgency. This new insurgency, centred in the urban areas of Fallujah, Najaf and Baghdad, epitomizes the urbanization of insurgency in internal conflicts, and the US military is yet to determine a viable strategy to defeat this type of insurgency.

The Battle for Fallujah was a tactical victory for the US forces but in the final tally it could end up as a strategic defeat for the coalition. This possibility is presciently outlined within the Marine Corps' military operations in urban terrain doctrine where it is recognized that tactical success does not

³⁰⁶ John F. Kennedy, "Remarks at Annapolis to the Graduating Class of the United States Naval Academy," [speech on-line]; available from http://www.jfklink.com/speeches/jfk/publicpapers/1961/jfk232_61.html; Internet: accessed 01 April 2006.

necessarily translate to strategic victory. Even if US forces rout the insurgents in a given area, insurgents, who have left, come back to sow the seeds of a fresh insurgency campaign. In addition, the insurgents from Fallujah also quickly spread the lessons they learned on the Internet to other insurgent groups. The US forces faced a formidable urban insurgency composed of highly unpredictable, loosely networked, and chaotic groups who learned to come together to attack and then disperse. In the short run, the weight of American firepower allowed the US forces to occupy the city. However, in the long run, the central question was whether physical control of Fallujah equated to its eventual pacification – it did not.

Any given population will give its allegiance to the side that will best protect it. Thus, the goal of the urban insurgent is to deprive the people of a sense of security. Through attacks on the security forces, the government services and the urban infrastructure, the insurgent seeks to create a climate of insecurity by demonstrating the ruling regimes' inability to provide essential services, such as the maintenance of law and order, and thus emphasize the ruling regimes weakness. The principal advantage the Iraqi insurgency has over the US forces is that the insurgency does not have to defeat the US forces militarily; it simply has to avoid losing. This makes the challenge for the US forces all the more difficult as it must win the fight, while protecting all three centres of gravity, whereas, the Iraqi insurgents need only win one centre of gravity to continue their struggle.

Unfortunately, the Clausewitzian attritional approach of over-reliance on technology and firepower, under-reliance on intelligence, and over-emphasis on decisive, direct action, that doomed Task Force Ranger to strategic failure in 1993, continues to belabour US forces in Iraq.

The current AWOW is not a compatible solution for combating an urban insurgency and a new course, perhaps utilizing British COIN Doctrine, should be charted for subsequent COIN operations in Iraq. Thus far, the US COIN strategy has only served to create an urban warfare laboratory for the Iraqi insurgency, and with the inevitability that future conflicts will occur in the urban environment against increasingly adaptive and capable insurgents, it is critical for the US military to develop a distinct American Way of Unconventional War (AWOUW) that is directed specifically at the problem of combating the urban insurgent.

This paper has shown that the US military does not properly prepare nor adequately train for unconventional COIN operations. The US military inappropriately relies upon its conventional AWOW to address this threat, and the experience in Somalia and Iraq provides evidence that this technique is inadequate to defeat an urban insurgency. The AWOW merely emphasizes its comparative advantage in conventional warfare. However, the tenets of the AWOW are not useful in every type of conflict, and indeed, they are counterproductive in combating insurgencies. It is now incumbent upon other interested commentators to continue the work started by this paper to discover possible solutions to this continuing challenge to the AWOW.

Recommendations for Research

*Insurgents don't rotate out [of Iraq], they just get better and better.*³⁰⁷

The following recommendations are derived from sources not necessarily used in the research paper proper. This section is similar to the final assessment of a literature review.

The first area of study could be the feasibility of the COIN strategy of Andrew F. Krepinevich: the oil-spot strategy. He sees the current US strategy as a repeat of the failed search-and-destroy missions of early Vietnam. Andrew Krepinevich advocates the application of an oil-spot strategy in Iraq. The strategy, in concert with Vietnamization, which dates back to the late stages of the Vietnam conflict, calls for securing limited areas of the country before spreading out to others, like an oil spot. In addition, former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird argues that Vietnamization was working fine until Congress cancelled this support for South Vietnam in 1975.³⁰⁸ However, Andrew Krepinevich concedes that this strategy would require US forces to stay in Iraq for longer than the American public may permit.³⁰⁹

The second area of study could be the feasibility of the COIN strategy of Robert Scales – the indirect approach. Major-General Robert Scales proposes a concept based completely on isolation in his indirect approach. This concept would have friendly forces establish a loose cordon around a city thereby controlling the surrounding countryside. The cordon would eventually result in complete isolation of the city from the outside world. The city's population would be encouraged to leave and occupy protected camps established by humanitarian organizations. Through a combination of time and

³⁰⁷ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 15.

³⁰⁸ Biddle, *Seeing Baghdad...*, 3.

³⁰⁹ Kaplan, *Clear and Fold...*, 15.

precision engagements on key nodes, conditions would be created that would lead to destroying the insurgent's will to continue the struggle.³¹⁰

The third area of study could be the feasibility of the urban warfare strategy of Wayne E. Eyre – the urban web concept. The concept focuses on the elective domination of key city areas based on an intelligence assessment of where the enemy has concentrated and what is deemed critical for controlling the city.³¹¹ Beginning with the traditional method of offensive urban operations—the three stages of isolation, lodgment, and clearing—this concept would rearrange the order without fundamentally changing the philosophy. During insertion (lodgment), forces insert and establish mutually supporting nodes at selected locations within the urban area. Next, during isolation, the nodes are connected using sensors, barriers and lethal and non-lethal fires to effectively seal the zone. Finally, the zone is cleared using a variety of options. Simple in theory, this concept is akin to a conventional cordon and search operation.³¹²

The fourth area of study could be the feasibility of the COIN strategy employed by the British during the Malayan Emergency—the Draining the Swamp strategy. According to US Army Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl and others, British authorities in Malaya took some time to realize that they were beset with communist alligators before realizing that only draining the swamp could eliminate them. The British did this by systematically concentrating the Chinese squatter population, roughly 500,000 of Malaya's 1950s population of approximately 5,000,000, into fortified and tightly controlled villages. Denied effective access to supporters and supplies, the insurgency melted away. Physical control and security

³¹⁰ W.D. Eyre, "The Urban Web: An Operational Concept for Offensive Operations in the Urban Sprawl of the 21st Century," *Canadian Army Journal*, vol. 7.1 (Spring 2004): 68.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 69.

thus put the British in an advantageous position for their military and intelligence operations to exploit. Over the period between the implementation of the Briggs Plan in 1951 and the granting of Malaya's independence in 1957, this strategy of population control broke the back of the communist insurgency.³¹³

³¹³ Wade Markel, "Draining the Swamp: The British Strategy of Population Control," *Parameters* (Spring 2006): 39.

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