

# 21st Century Counterinsurgency Intelligence

## Executive Summary

Insurgency and counterinsurgency are radically different sides of the same coin - a truly asymmetric conflict. The intelligence demands for both sides are equally dissimilar. Effective intelligence for counterinsurgency has historically been a great challenge for those schooled in traditional military intelligence with its emphasis on fighting peer enemies in a symmetric conflict. Even with the modern gamut of collection and analytic capabilities, successful intelligence against insurgents remains difficult. History has good examples of effective counterinsurgency intelligence, notably the British experience in Malaya and more recently in Northern Ireland. British success owes more to effective organization and information management than to technology. Integrating their proven methods with contemporary technology offers the possibility of an intelligence system possessing far greater speed and flexibility, and requiring relatively low investment in equipment and training. Employing such a system is expected to drastically skew the battlefield in favor of the counterinsurgency effort, offering faster conflict resolution.

## Nature of Insurgency

Insurgency is an armed struggle to establish a new political order. It may be offensive in nature, intending destruction of an existing regime, or defensive, seeking autonomy from an extant government.<sup>1</sup>

Insurgency differs from traditional warfare in three key ways. It is:

- Ultimately a struggle for control of the population-for legitimacy of leadership-and political in nature by definition.<sup>2</sup>
- Generally a protracted conflict.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To offer specific historic examples, the Viet Cong fought an offensive insurgency to remove the South Vietnamese government, while the United States, seeking only independence from and not to overthrow Great Britain, fought a defensive insurgency.

<sup>2</sup> The counterinsurgent effort is seeking to remain in power-it has had legitimacy in the eyes of those ruled before. The insurgents are seeking to gain power-they are seeking to increase their legitimacy to the level where they are seen as valid popular leaders in their own right. The latter must undermine the former, as there cannot be two ruling groups at odds with one another.

Legitimacy takes two forms:

- Existential – legitimacy derived by perception of some commonality or relationship between two entities
- Functional – legitimacy resulting from perceived value conferred by or actions taken by one entity upon another

. This was obtained from a lecture by Dr. Larry E. Cable, *Introduction to Revolutionary Warfare Concepts*, Revolutionary Warfare Course, USAF Special Operations School, Hulbert Field, Florida, 29 April 1996

<sup>3</sup> Power may be seized by force in three ways:

- Revolution – an explosive upheaval that is brief, sudden, spontaneous, unplanned, and essentially an accident that cannot be predicted beyond the existence of a situation favorable to revolution

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- Different for each participant, depending on their place within it.<sup>4</sup>

Insurgency is inherently an asymmetric struggle. Insurgents operate on the following assumptions:

- Defined enemy – insurgents oppose the existing political order: there is no choice of opponent. Insurgents who are unwilling to act due to existing conditions wait for a crisis or some other significant change to affect the extant regime.<sup>5</sup>
- Possess an attractive cause – a compelling reason is needed to rally people in favor of political change.<sup>6</sup>
- Promote disorder – attack the legitimacy of those in power, their ability to rule, and their appearance of control. Disorder disrupts the economy and adds to public discontent with the incumbents. Insurgents wish to incite government overreaction, causing collateral damage to the population and further alienation. Perception of government ineptitude drives those affected to deal directly with insurgents.<sup>7</sup>

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- Plot or coup d'état – a clandestine effort against the top leadership, a gamble that cannot and does not involve the population as a whole
  - Insurgency – a protracted struggle with intermediate objectives ultimately aimed at changing the existing political order

Of these, only insurgency is a long-term proposition, unless the insurgency is defeated quickly. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964) pp. 2-6. Armed insurgency is the essentially second of Mao's three phases of guerrilla warfare (respectively the organization, guerrilla, and mobile phases), which implies that an insurgency started as a political movement for some time before taking violent action. Mao Tse Tung, trans. Samuel B. Griffith, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1961) pp. 52-53.

<sup>4</sup> In conventional war, the experiences of uniformed combatants in all participating armies possess certain similarities. So, too, do the experiences of civilian populations at war or under foreign occupation. Not so in an insurgency, where insurgents, counterinsurgents, and even different demographic groupings of the civilian population have drastically different experiences over the course of the insurgency. Galula, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> If the incumbents have strong counterinsurgency capabilities, the insurgents may wait until the government is weakened, a foreign power becomes interested in changing the political order, or some other circumstance alters the relative balance of power. Galula, p. 22. This situation tends to allow totalitarian governments to deter insurgencies. For example, Ba'athist "scorched earth" counterinsurgency methods in both Syria and Iraq, in Hama and in the Shiite communities, respectively, convinced would-be insurgents to wait for significant changes in situation.

<sup>6</sup> Without a compelling reason for disgruntled people to rally, insurgents are generally viewed as nothing more than troublemakers or worse. Galula, pp. 11-16. Ironically, membership in an insurgency (or a gang) is attractive to young men who have nothing and no prospects in life. Their situation is improved by being a member of an armed group that offers them greater status, respect, and resources than they could possibly achieve on their own. This underclass is discussed in general terms in Ralph Peters, "The New Warrior Class" *Parameters* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: 1994)

<sup>7</sup> Galula, p. 6. This is the principle on which protection rackets are organized. If the authorities cannot provide protection, it is often seen as easier to comply with those causing the disruption and avoid the hassles involved in resisting.

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- Require few resources – being offensive in nature, insurgents choose when and where to act. Creating the appearance of disorder does not require much support; a great deal of disruption can be caused by threats or random-seeming incidents.<sup>8</sup>
- Propaganda favors insurgency – proof is not necessary. Insurgents may claim almost anything they wish about the government. The objective is to separate the incumbents from the population, and any statement proffered, whether true or false, places the burden on the counterinsurgency to rebut or refute the statement. Government overreaction and resulting collateral damage to perceived innocents is prime fodder for insurgent propaganda.<sup>9</sup>
- Offer alternative order – building complicity among the population leads to victory.<sup>10</sup>
- Offensive, fluid posture – lack of infrastructure confers the ability to attack and to refuse battle at will, as there is nothing fixed to defend.<sup>11</sup>

Counterinsurgents, by contrast, have the following parameters:

- An insurgency must exist – counterinsurgency only occurs in opposition to insurgency.<sup>12</sup>
- Must address grievances - support of the population is equally important for counterinsurgents as for insurgents. It is easy to defeat insurgents in combat and to disperse their political infrastructure, but popular support is needed to keep them out of a given area on a long-term basis.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ironically, there comes a saturation point where more activity by insurgents makes elaborate security schemes more effective on a cost per incident basis, as the counterinsurgency effort must defend everything all the time, and while this is an expensive practice, it frequently has an upper limit of expenditure. Galula, pp. 6-7.

<sup>9</sup> Effective propaganda may be enough to allow an insurgency to win, even without any kind of positive policy, if enough of the population can be swayed. Galula, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> The legitimacy of any government, whether run by the insurgents or the incumbents, requires the implicit or explicit approval of the population, or at least their submissiveness. Galula, pp. 4-5. Mao Tse Tung described guerillas as “fish swimming among the sea of the people,” a relationship which demands some degree of complicity by the population. Mao Tse Tung, p. 93.

<sup>11</sup> An insurgency can give away this particular advantage by attempting to organize itself into larger groups. When an insurgent group starts to resemble a professional army, it is preparing itself, intentionally or not, to wage conventional war. Galula, pp. 7-8. Certain demographic situations may also reduce this advantage, such as when a population favorably disposed towards the insurgency is in a unitary and isolated block geographically.

<sup>12</sup> Counterinsurgency can only happen if insurgency exists. This does not mean that the insurgents must attack first-preemptive action against them when possible is an acceptable option. Without an insurgency, any discussion of counterinsurgency is an academic exercise. Galula, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, a government must address the causes that have convinced people to join an insurgency. Otherwise, the insurgency will never truly be defeated. Galula, p. 52. In some cases, where dissatisfaction with the current order is due to a lack of existential legitimacy, such as a different tribe or ethnic group being in power, there may be

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- Must maintain order – a counterinsurgency effort is undertaken to preserve existing establishments from changes sought by insurgents, and this demands the maintenance and protection of those systems that support the society in question. Pains must be taken to avoid overreactions to insurgent activities that undermine the continued ability to maintain order. Those in power may drive change themselves, and presumably means exist to do so. This also presumes that sufficient order exists.<sup>14</sup>
- Insurgents are not a conventional armed force – conventional warfare calls for destruction of enemy forces and occupation of territory. Insurgents lack the structure of traditional armies, occupy no ground on an official basis, and most rank-and-file insurgents require little training beyond conviction in the cause. If faced by overwhelming military strength, insurgents will go wherever a sympathetic local population can be found. Conversely, the insurgent strategic objective is not necessarily destruction of counterinsurgent forces (and they need not do so), it is change of the political order.<sup>15</sup>
- Propaganda is a secondary tool – as those in power, the burden of proof is on the counterinsurgency effort. Propaganda can inform effectively but cannot mitigate poor or nonexistent policy or actions, and must be supported by accurate knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

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no possible resolution, a situation aptly summarized by former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's quote (describing the Arab-Israeli conflict): "The Arabs want us dead, we want to live: there is not much room for compromise."

<sup>14</sup> Counterinsurgents possess four means of maintaining order. These are:

- The political structure – a totalitarian system that does not tolerate (and actively suppresses) dissent makes starting an insurgency more difficult. A responsive political system that enacts change may make an insurgency irrelevant by offering inherent mechanisms to address legitimate grievances.
- The administrative bureaucracy – government bodies that run a society's day-to-day life effectively is a major buffer against insurgency, regardless of the quality of higher leadership. Inept bureaucracy and an absence of effective government interaction with local populations is a boon to an insurgency.
- The police – as a government's eyes and ears on matters pertaining to internal order, this is the first counterinsurgency organization. As insurgents break laws the police have to do much of the work to cope.
- The armed forces – these need significant changes for effective counterinsurgency as opposed to facing peer enemies. A vital concern will be the loyalties of members of the armed forces and their degree of sympathy with the insurgent movement.

It is these four means that enable government control, and adjustment of these will affect the ability to mount an effective counterinsurgency campaign. Galula, pp. 17-22.

<sup>15</sup> Intelligence is vitally important to find insurgents. Most intelligence will come from the population, who will be reluctant to come forward unless they feel safe from insurgents and feel some loyalty to the government. It is possible to deny all areas to insurgents with sufficient forces, an approach that is usually prohibitively expensive. Mobility of counterinsurgency forces is also vital, both to be able to quickly isolate insurgents and to reinforce those areas requiring greater physical security. Galula, pp. 50-51.

<sup>16</sup> The incumbents have a history as rulers, and are judged on their actions. As the insurgency is presumably rallying around a perceived failure to address grievances, the burden of proof is on the government to either prove how such grievances do not exist or are, in fact, being addressed. Galula, p. 9. In short, the incumbents must explain to their public "what they have done for them lately."

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- Defensive, rigid posture – governments are responsible for organizations, installations, and the population itself that must be protected.<sup>17</sup>

Insurgents are starting from nothing but an ideology, working towards holding power by co-opting a sufficiently large minority. Counterinsurgents start out in charge, with the danger of losing control if insurgents can convince enough people to stop supporting the existing order.<sup>18</sup>

Counterinsurgency strategy is characterized by two methods:

- Direct Approach – Defeat of the insurgents, usually in military terms.<sup>19</sup>
- Indirect Approach – Separating the insurgents from the population.<sup>20</sup>

Regardless of the chosen strategy and the resultant balance of approaches, intelligence is vital, in the former approach to find insurgents, and the latter approach to identify exploitable seams between insurgents and the population. Further work is needed to assess the moods of the population and the effects that the insurgency and the counterinsurgency effort are having on various public systems, such as the economy, transit systems, and communication. Basic operating intelligence support (such as maps, terrain studies, and weather forecasts-bread and butter for competent intelligence organizations) will be required for all counterinsurgency activities.

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<sup>17</sup> Counterinsurgents have both responsibilities and resources by virtue of being in power, while insurgents have neither one. Counterinsurgents also have far more conflicting demands, such as balancing security requirements against those of maintaining the economy, most of which do not burden an insurgent organization. Along those lines, a counterinsurgency demands far more elaborate organizations to plan, coordinate, and discharge these duties than an insurgency needs to disrupt them. Galula, pp. 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> In this situation, there will be an active minority for the insurgency, a neutral majority, and an active minority for the existing order. The better a side's cause and the situation, the bigger its active minority will be and the easier its task. The victor will be the side that gets an active minority that can rally the passive majority to their side. Galula, pp. 53-54. In essence, insurgency (and counterinsurgency) is about building or rebuilding a political machine from the population up. Galula, p. 95.

<sup>19</sup> This approach is summarized by Harry Summer's phrase: "A war is a war is a war," and is characterized by a focus on defeating enemy forces. In this case, that means the insurgents themselves. Given that insurgents are closely associated with the population, this complicates target identification, especially when compared to a conventional army. One approach, practiced any number of times throughout history, is treating everybody involved in a given area as an insurgent. John Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002) p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> Expanding on the Maoist parallels between insurgents and fish, and populations and water, this approach seeks to separate the fish from the water. This may be a case of manipulating the water to make for easier fishing. It may be a case of studying the water and the fish to determine what locations the fish tend to prefer. The presumption is that insurgents are not difficult to defeat once found. The real trick is keeping them from returning endlessly. Nagl, p. 28.

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### Counterinsurgency Intelligence

Intelligence needs to map the population, to assess trends, and to determine intentions and leanings of different groups. Counterinsurgency, being a largely political phenomenon, blurs the lines between the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of conflict.<sup>21</sup> Thus, an unorthodox grouping of intelligence disciplines (compared to traditional tactical intelligence) is warranted, to include:

- Human Intelligence (HUMINT) – The oldest form of intelligence, HUMINT involves gathering information from people by using people.<sup>22</sup> As insurgents must be associated with the population, this is the best information source for the counterinsurgency effort. This can be further subdivided into:
  - Contact HUMINT - Information gathered from all low-level contacts between counterinsurgency forces and the population.<sup>23</sup> Every census taker, patrol, checkpoint, purchaser of supplies from a local economy, or tavern visitor is a source—all friendly personnel are effectively sensors for this type of information.<sup>24</sup>
  - Source HUMINT - “Traditional HUMINT” gathered from controlled and vetted agents.<sup>25</sup> It also includes interviews and detainee interrogations.<sup>26</sup> Essentially, it embodies individual human contacts under controlled conditions.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Because of the political nature of the struggle, small tactical actions that may go unnoticed in a conventional conflict can have strategic implications in persuading the population, particularly when brought to public attention by the press or the insurgents. Conversely, the intelligence expertise on personalities, intentions, and interactions that characterize the strategic level in conventional warfare has relevance (indeed, is necessary) at the tactical level of a counterinsurgency effort.

<sup>22</sup> Some claim the oldest HUMINT mission on record was Joshua sending spies into Jericho. Joshua 2:1-21.

<sup>23</sup> To draw an analogy with police work, this is the type of information collected by routine patrol work. Although the average beat cop probably does not document all of the activity on any given patrol, he (or she) does get very familiar with normal behaviors and patterns within his (or her) usual area. Infractions of the law and other irregularities (such as traffic accidents) encountered on patrol are documented, and may serve as the basis for follow-on investigations (whether by detectives, insurance companies, or others).

<sup>24</sup> “Many systems can be devised for the purpose, but the simplest one is to multiply opportunities for individual contacts between the population and the counterinsurgent personnel, every one of whom must participate in intelligence collection (not just the specialists). The census, the issuing of passes, the remuneration of workers, etc., are such opportunities.” Galula, p. 84.

<sup>25</sup> Use of controlled agents and handling by case officers has been practiced throughout recorded history. Sun Tzu categorized “secret agents” into five categories that are instructive on the practice of gathering information using agents:

- Native – ordinary people from the enemy’s population, similar to the “snitches” used by police detectives.
- Inside – enemy officials who have been co-opted.
- Doubled – enemy spies that have been caught and convinced to send select information to their handlers on the other side. Such agents also have intelligence value by revealing enemy agent communications methods, other agents, and collection requirements sent them by their enemy handlers.
- Expendable – friendly spies that are deliberately given fabricated information.

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- Reconnaissance -Information gathered by observation of specific point targets or lines of communication, embodying such overlapping methods as surveillance, stakeouts, observation and listening posts, and their supporting optics and other sensors.<sup>28</sup>
- Communications Intelligence (COMINT) – This goes beyond interception of wireless point-to-point communications from the electromagnetic spectrum, and includes wiretaps, news media evaluation, graffiti study, and consideration of numerous low-technology communications methods-anything that may convey information or intentions being transmitted or otherwise expressed.<sup>29</sup>

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- Living – friendly personnel who have spent time in what are called today “denied areas” and have first-hand familiarity with them. Such time may have been prior to such places becoming “denied” or afterward in an undercover capacity.

This was obtained from Sun Tzu, trans. Samuel B. Griffith, *The Art of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963) pp. 145-146.

<sup>26</sup> Interrogation is best defined “as obtaining what you want from someone who possibly has it, who has not admitted to having it, and who knows who you are and why you want it. Most often, an interrogation is session is adversarial in tone as well as in character; indeed it’s often deliberately structured to appear that way,” from John Nolan, *Confidential* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999) p.17. Intelligence gleaned from detainee interrogations has some very real limitations. First is that there is a definite end time to the value of the information, as the detainee’s knowledge only extends to their capture time. Second is that the detainee’s absence from their normal environment is obvious to all familiar with it, and an astute insurgent group will attempt to render as much of the information captured irrelevant by changing operations, procedures, and other practices as feasible. Third are the deceptive abilities of the detainee-an individual with a good cover story or skills at fabrication can waste a lot of resources attempting to verify accuracy of information. Lastly, memory limitations, possibly complicated by injury, will hamper what can be revealed by the detainee, even when cooperative.

<sup>27</sup> To carry on with the police analogy, this is akin to detectives working their “snitches” and other sources on the street; people who are well-placed to gather information of recurring value (often about “the usual suspects,” that is, the known criminals and associated shady characters). Interviews describe the type of questioning that detectives might use on witnesses to a specific crime or other event. While still controlled by the detective, the interviewee often does not become a recurring source, although nothing stops a detective from trying to develop such a relationship. Interviewing is best defined “the process of obtaining information from someone who probably has it, who has more or less admitted to having it, and who knows who you are and why you want it. Typically, interviewing is non-adversarial in tone, although it might be in character,” from Nolan, p.18.

<sup>28</sup> Continuing with the police analogy, reconnaissance work is similar to stakeouts against specific locations, in an attempt to discover which people and activities are associated with the location. Another variation includes following a specific individual or vehicle to determine its whereabouts and activities over a given time period. Any such activities may be augmented by cameras or other optics or sensors, for ease of surveillance, visibility in invisible spectra, or documentation. In any case, reconnaissance implies a degree of organization of effort, a lack of interaction with the observed subjects, and some amount of discretion intended to avoid surveillance detection. Some argue that sensors mitigate the need for human involvement in reconnaissance, but a specialty placement of sensors will require some human activity, while a standard placement-such as a traffic camera at an intersection-will require much less. A good overview of the basics is provided in ACM IV Security Services, *Secrets of Surveillance* (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 1993) pp. 2-14; a discussion of sensors is presented at pp. 38-49.

<sup>29</sup> American national level and military COMINT, harking back to the overwhelming successes of the Second World War, tends to favor interception of electromagnetic communications and, more recently, exploiting the Internet. The former is discussed well in James Bamford, *The Puzzle Palace* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) pp. 122-131, the latter in Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006) pp.181-189. In contrast, law enforcement COMINT often takes the form of wiretapping. Additionally, many larger police

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- Supporting Intelligence – The balance of intelligence collection and assessment methods, the former characterized by reliance on technical means, including traditional aerial reconnaissance and imagery intelligence (IMINT), mapping, charting, and geodesy (MC&G) support, and measurement and signature intelligence (MASINT).<sup>30</sup> Also embodied are efforts aimed at multidisciplinary fusion, creation of usable products for consumers, and record keeping and coordination.

In the realm of HUMINT, use of sources and reconnaissance are mature fields practiced by dedicated specialists.<sup>31</sup> COMINT is also a developed field, particularly in the realms of exploiting networks in general and communications over wire (to include fiber-optic and other physical lines) and in the electromagnetic spectrum in particular.<sup>32</sup> IMINT and MC&G, while both developed and comfortable intelligence means, will yield much less standalone information (as is the norm in traditional warfare) rather than enabling HUMINT, COMINT, and other

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forces, notably the Los Angeles Police Department, also have units that specialize in gangs and gangsters. These units tend to include experts on graffiti, gang tattoos, clothing styles, and all manner of other anthropological- and cultural-type insight that can “read” the communications within and between gangs, described in Bill Valentine, *Gang Intelligence Manual* (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 1995) pp. 7-14. These cultural skills tend not to be resident in most conventional armed forces, depriving counterinsurgents of a large percentage of useful COMINT when conducting operations in foreign places. One practical solution to this shortage is employing natives that are familiar with such cultural nuances.

<sup>30</sup> Imagery and maps are generally well understood; not so MASINT. MASINT embodies a range of technical disciplines that gather information by detecting and evaluating physical signatures. This includes a broad spectrum of signatures from thermal, to acoustic, to radiation, to seismic, and many more. This field opens the door to some fascinating counterinsurgency intelligence technologies. For example, dye that is visible with infrared light but invisible in visible light, and can be sprinkled where insurgents are known to meet-suspects for further investigation are those with invisible dye on their footwear. Some first-rate summaries of various MASINT sensors and principles are depicted in Julie K Petersen, *Understanding Surveillance Technologies* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2001) ch. 2-5, 7,10-12, 16.

<sup>31</sup> In many police forces, detectives tend to be a specialty apart from patrol work. Many law enforcement organizations also have dedicated stakeout teams that do nothing else but support investigations, discussed in ACM IV Security Services, pp. 51-63. In the military and intelligence world, case officers or agent handlers are their own specialty akin to detectives. Case officer skill sets are reasonably standard, and similarities between former Soviet and American training methods can be noted by comparing Viktor Suvorov, *Inside the Aquarium* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986), pp. 95-120 and T.J. Waters, *Class 11* (New York: Dutton, 2006). Reconnaissance personnel, whether described as scouts, scout-snipers, long-range reconnaissance teams, or any number of other variations on the theme, are carefully picked and trained to discretely observe and report on activities within named areas of interest or survey routes in support of an intelligence collection plan for their unit. It is instructive to consider the similarities and differences between the United States and the former Soviet Union in training and employment of military reconnaissance resources as described in Daniel P. Bolger, *The Battle for Hunger Hill* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1997) pp. 207-211, Viktor Suvorov, *Inside the Soviet Army* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1982) pp. 111-120, and Viktor Suvorov, *Spetznaz* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987).

<sup>32</sup> COMINT and HUMINT are natural complements, as the former emphasizes the links (communications paths) within a network while the former focuses on the individual nodes (people themselves).



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activities.<sup>33</sup> Analysis and production, too, are established fields, with digitization offering greater opportunities to collate and present data than ever before.<sup>34</sup>

The field which has shown the greatest weakness historically has been contact HUMINT. The sheer volume of contacts creates a vast amount of data to be collected, sorted, and analyzed. The value of possessing and exploiting this information is hard to overstate. Tactically, it allows “street-level” counterinsurgents to identify norms and patterns in local populations conferring greater efficiency and effectiveness.<sup>35</sup> At the operational level, clear insight into societal networks and interactions within and amongst them is gained from a solid foundation of systematic contact HUMINT, reinforced by other collection means. This clarity identifies critical links and nodes to be targeted by more precisely directed intelligence operations, and the most practical ways to do so.<sup>36</sup> Strategically, demographics collated with products of other intelligence disciplines assist in evaluating counterinsurgency progress, apportioning resources, and crafting strategic communication to speed separating the insurgents from the population.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> IMINT and MC&G are described as “comfortable” forms of intelligence due a degree of tangibility: people tend to prefer pictures and maps over amorphous reports of intercepted communications or sketchy information from human sources, both of which may require consideration with other raw data or previous analytic work to instill relevance or context. While IMINT is particularly strong in conventional warfare, particularly for detecting and assessing military formations (especially unit deployments and prepared positions) and platforms (particularly military vehicles, such as tanks, warships, and aircraft on the ground), it is much less effective against insurgents who look no different from the civilian population in and amongst whom they reside. An excellent discussion of the capabilities and limitations of IMINT is presented in Roy M Stanley II, *To Fool a Glass Eye* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998) pp. 12-15. Mapping is essential to all planning, including urban and demographic products covering economic and cultural considerations beyond the scope of traditional military operations.

<sup>34</sup> Digitization has made the sorting and presentation of data easier for the analyst, but it has not replaced human understanding. Large databases are better mined through more powerful search engines, trends may be identified, and more correlations may be drawn automatically, but the criteria for such data manipulations must come from a person looking for answers as to motives, intentions, and preferences of other people. Insurgency, being all about people and less about quantifiable military capabilities, thus places higher demands on and requires different skills from intelligence analysts than conventional (and often platform-centric) warfare. The human dimension to intelligence analysis is discussed at length in Ralph Peters, *Beyond Terror* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002) pp. 193-208.

<sup>35</sup> The classic example of the efficacy of a high degree of familiarity is the small-town sheriff who knows everybody in his town, recognizes all the normal habits, behaviors, and patterns, and is quick to spot anything amiss.

<sup>36</sup> This is characterized by furnishing intelligence for several kinds of operations, the most obvious being locating and eliminating insurgents and their supporting political infrastructure. Less obvious is keeping insurgents out, protecting the local population, and identifying and addressing those grievances that made the population susceptible to insurgency in the first place. Galula, pp. 75-94.

<sup>37</sup> Intelligence at the strategic level will necessarily be concerned with more political and economic concerns than military ones. Although knowing where to focus resources on defeating insurgent is valuable, keeping tabs on the political and economic efforts that keep insurgents from finding new homes and willing supporters is more important still. Having knowledge of how different demographic bodies relate and interact is crucial to predicting success and intentions of insurgents. Additionally, having a good command of events and trends allows timely formulation of accurate communication, which must come from the highest level possible, to aid in the persuasion of the population. Galula, pp. 61-74.

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### **British Contributions**

One hallmark of the British Empire was superb organization of information. This effectiveness demonstrated itself in many fields, and was particularly pronounced in intelligence work.<sup>38</sup> This penchant for organization resulted in arguably the best contact HUMINT system yet devised, which in turn provided a backbone for efficient use of both source HUMINT and reconnaissance resources.<sup>39</sup>

British efforts in the Malayan campaign and in Northern Ireland resulted in a system that capitalized on the British cultural penchant for organization and established procedures. The system requires all counterinsurgents to provide entries into a master database by use of standard reporting formats.<sup>40</sup> All unique low-level contacts are entered.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> One of the best examples of British acumen in intelligence was the Double Cross System, in which every German agent infiltrated into the United Kingdom during World War II was identified and turned into a double agent. The creed under which this was practiced is worth mentioning as solid guidelines for effective counterespionage (Sun Tzu's "doubled" agents):

- To control the enemy system, or as much of it as we could get our hands on
- To catch fresh spies when they appeared
- To gain knowledge of the personalities and methods of the German Secret Service
- To obtain information about the code and cipher work of the German Service
- To get evidence of enemy plans and intentions from the questions asked by them
- To influence enemy plans by the answers sent to the enemy
- To deceive the enemy about our plans and intentions

This was obtained from J.C. Masterman, *The Double Cross System* (New York: The Lyons Press, 1972) pp. 5-9.

<sup>39</sup> Once a network is mapped, depicting whom in the population is associated with whom, source HUMINT practitioners figure out who will likely make a useful source and what approach is likely to work. It also confers such specialists an idea about the biases and the realistic limitations of a potential source's knowledge. For example, recruiting the secretary to the chairman of the board of a company will yield different information than a disgruntled researcher in the company's laboratory. Similar information aids the reconnaissance effort. For example, observing the brother of an insurgency's financier will produce different information than following the financier's business rivals.

<sup>40</sup> To use a Northern Ireland example, this system meant that the British Army, Royal Marines, SIS, MI6, Royal Ulster Constabulary, Scotland Yard, Home Office, and all other relevant organizations fed and used a single database and common reporting formats. From a discussion with Major R, British Army, with author, April 2003, Iraq.

<sup>41</sup> These unique contacts include individuals and vehicles encountered. The British Army issued a single form called a "Charlie One" to all soldiers, in a book akin to a policeman's citation book. The form itself is extremely simple (involving a number of multiple choice options to describe vehicles, for instance), allowing any soldier to fill one out quickly and precisely. In addition to describing the contact and its activity, the location and time of contact was included on the form. Whenever a patrol encountered people, a patrol member filled out by a report on each person, and the same was done for any vehicles encountered. When the patrol returned to their base, the information on all of the "Charlie One" forms was entered into the database. From a discussion with Major R, British Army, with author, April 2003, Iraq.

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Analysis and operational planning centers on the master contact database.<sup>42</sup> The database quickly becomes very large, and provides a ready supply of information for mining and pattern analysis.<sup>43</sup> This allows:

- Local units a ready history of events, activities, and individuals within their area of operations.<sup>44</sup>
- Specialized intelligence activities good starting points from which to employ their resources, in turn providing greater depth of information collection on key subjects of interest that guide operations and enhance the direction of contact HUMINT.<sup>45</sup>
- A common intelligence picture for an entire campaign, allowing for seamless sharing of basic information across unit, geographic, or agency boundaries, and between different hierarchical levels.<sup>46</sup>

By maintaining strict discipline on reporting, the system effectively eliminates the seam between operational activities and intelligence collection. Every counterinsurgent becomes a low-level

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<sup>42</sup> This unitary standard database is vital. The degree of technology applied is less important than the fact that all participants, regardless of military or police service, intelligence agency, or other activity, can query the database and make appropriate entries into it. In the aforementioned British system in Northern Ireland, the database involved was based on 1970s technology, yet proved reliable and more than equal to the requirements levied upon it. From a discussion with Major R, British Army, with author, April 2003, Iraq. Counterinsurgency intelligence is a textbook case, to quote Kipling, where “the strength of the wolf is in the pack and the strength of the pack is in the wolf.”

<sup>43</sup> Consider, for sake of example, a battalion area of operation. This battalion has three companies, each with three platoons. Each platoon sends out three patrols a day. If each patrol averages only twenty unique contacts (which is not many for an urban area), the battalion is adding 540 ( $= 3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 20$ ) contacts to the database daily.

<sup>44</sup> This ready information is vitally important for newcomers to a particular operation or area of operation. Astute insurgents learn when counterinsurgent organizations and personnel turn over, and exploit the ignorance of the new arrivals. As experienced by many, unfamiliarity with local custom and environment leads to tourists being frequent targets of petty criminals and paying inflated prices.

<sup>45</sup> Specialized intelligence resources are, by definition, limited. Many of them focus on individuals (in the case of source HUMINT or surveillance), telephone lines (in the case of wiretaps) or other specific items. Having an elaborate database enables the link analysis and relationship mapping that allows specialists to target the geographic areas, nodes, connections, or subsets of larger networks that will yield the best results possible.

<sup>46</sup> This common picture, despite being something of a “Holy Grail” for the US armed forces (but which is done quite well in conventional, platform-centric warfare, particularly in the naval and air arenas), has never existed during current operations in Iraq. This lack of capability is eloquently bemoaned by Owen West and Bing West, “The Laptop is Mightier Than the Sword” *The New York Times* (2007). Having a common picture in which all can share the same data has the added bonus of allowing different echelons to analyze the data in contextually relevant ways while minimizing pestering of those at other levels of the effort for information. It also effectively eliminates the seams created where different unit areas of responsibility meet, which makes it much more difficult for insurgents to hide by merely crossing inter-unit boundaries. In police terms, it means that different jurisdictions share the same information.

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collector, and all involved have access to all reporting.<sup>47</sup> Two-way communication between collectors and analysts offers greater flexibility and responsiveness to emerging situations on the ground.<sup>48</sup> In planning operations, this system offers counterinsurgents:

- Ease of targeted collection – gathering information about a specific location or area merely requires sending people in to look around.<sup>49</sup>
- Ancillary collection – reporting on all contacts makes movement to and from an objective a useful collection opportunity, as is the intended target's immediate surroundings.<sup>50</sup>
- Ambiguity of intentions – collection targets of greatest interest are easily disguised.<sup>51</sup>

This system of contact HUMINT results in extremely detailed information on a population that is easily analyzed to determine relationships, habitual interactions, and movement patterns. This information may be grown as simply as increasing counterinsurgent activity in a target area. Other intelligence methods may be directed based on results gleaned, which will, in turn, aid in directing the contact HUMINT effort.

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<sup>47</sup> This is the practical embodiment of the cliché: “Every Soldier is a Sensor” as depicted in Association of the United States Army, *ES2: Every Soldier is a Sensor* (2004). Military counterinsurgent forces are only a starting point; such a collection capability must also be resident with police, civil servants, and all others agencies that have any contact with the population, many of which will have opportunities to collect more detailed information by virtue of their regular work. Consider the contact HUMINT possibilities that exist in any office that provides licenses, permits, or travel documentation, for example.

<sup>48</sup> Nothing prevents “hot” information from being called in to headquarters. Similarly, analysts can easily make specific collection requests if counterinsurgents are in the vicinity of the desired target. Ambiguity in an information request may be cleared up by direct communication with the requesting agency.

<sup>49</sup> Police departments regularly do this by increasing numbers of patrols during peak times of criminal activity in affected neighborhoods. If more information is needed on a defined area or during a specific time period, a counterinsurgent force can plan a greater frequency of activity or greater concentration of people to be present as appropriate.

<sup>50</sup> This is particularly beneficial in light of incomplete information or inaccurate analysis. A set of clues may result in targeting that is close but not completely accurate. The degree of collection done automatically by participating counterinsurgents may make “close enough” adequate. Additional valuable collateral information that was not specifically sought at an objective may be obtained that would otherwise be overlooked by other, more precisely aimed collection methods. For example, a wiretap against a given telephone line may provide no information of value if it was another line that was the desired target. By contrast, visiting the wrong house will reveal an error in target analysis, and the information collected from its street-the cars and pedestrians present-may provide a fresh link to discovering the correct one.

<sup>51</sup> This is as simple as visiting five houses, only one of which may be of interest. Other variations on a theme include setting up several random checkpoints in conjunction with one meant to monitor traffic over a chosen bridge. This is limited only by the imagination of those planning such operations, and all of these efforts disguise the true collection intentions to the insurgents, to say nothing of what information prompted such decisions and allocations of resources.

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The only defense an insurgent has against this system is to have no contact with counterinsurgents and no known associates who do.<sup>52</sup> The only major systemic weakness is the lag time between information collection and its entry into the database.

### Yankee Ingenuity

The British approach to contact HUMINT, which resembles police work more than conventional military intelligence, is easily translated to the American context, keeping in mind some uniquely American cultural distinctions, specifically:

- Technologic affinity – Americans generally like technology and the current generation of military age tend to be comfortable with it.<sup>53</sup>
- Self-expression – this is illustrated best by America's recent obsession with "reality television," blogs, and social networking websites.<sup>54</sup>

Americanizing the British system can be accomplished by first instituting a standard database for a given counterinsurgency campaign.<sup>55</sup> As with the British system, the database must be fed by all counterinsurgents using standard reporting formats. Where a 21<sup>st</sup> century system gains a significant advantage is in the mechanisms for submitting reports and analyzing the contents of the database.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Such a defense creates a variety of complications for insurgents. In being forced underground, insurgents have a much harder time interacting with the population they must win over to their cause. In avoiding the contact HUMINT effort, they open themselves up to detection by COMINT or must create elaborate communications schemes that are inherently slow.

<sup>53</sup> The American military preference for technology is well articulated in Daniel P. Bolger, pp. 44-48. The comfort of Americans of military age with technology in general and video games and mobile telephones in particular is well described in Heather Chaplin and Aaron Rudy, *Smartbomb* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005) pp. 200-201, 214-219.

<sup>54</sup> This affinity for blogging and digital photography is a source of much consternation in military circles. Troops in Iraq, through self-publication, have caused a great deal of discussion and thought in, amongst others, the operational security, public affairs, and legal communities within the US Department of Defense and the different armed services. While the focus has been on how best to regulate such practices, the question seldom asked is how best to harness this tendency and make constructive use of it. Regulation of self-publication, blogging, and digital photography were major topics of discussion at the US Marine Corps 2007 West Coast Media Symposium, 16-20 April 2007, Los Angeles, California.

<sup>55</sup> As previously stated, the platform and precise technical characteristics of the database are far less important than the fact that all entities involved in the counterinsurgency effort use the same one. A recurring problem for US forces in Iraq is the lack of a common database even at the battalion level. Not only is there a lack of data compatibility across unit borders, unit rotations often result in newcomers "reinventing the wheel" and having to start from nothing when entering a previously occupied zone due to their predecessors having their own proprietary means of collecting and collating data. Even worse, the data so collected may not be easy to integrate into a database.

<sup>56</sup> Use of paper reports and a paper filing system, while effective, is not particularly fast. Such systems have been in use since the beginning of the industrial age, once public education provided sufficient literacy for the rank-and-file to fill out necessary forms. The absolute necessity for thorough record keeping is addressed in Masterman, pp. 27-

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The solution to report submission is to issue each counterinsurgent a camera phone and establish a cellular communications network for the counterinsurgency effort.<sup>57</sup> Reports may be composed on preformatted Short Message Service (SMS) and sent directly to the database as contacts occur.<sup>58</sup> Use of Multimedia Message Service (MMS) allows digital photographs to be attached to reports.<sup>59</sup> A counterinsurgent needs only to take a digital picture, fill in an accompanying report, and send it.<sup>60</sup>

As for analysis, several automation features may be incorporated into the database, including:

- Face and pattern recognition algorithms – such programs allow faces to be compared with pictures already in the database for matches.<sup>61</sup> This also enables matching of foreign text or symbols.<sup>62</sup>

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28, where thirty- to fifty-volume files on individual counterespionage cases were maintained and used, albeit slowly and deliberately, and introduction of new personnel into any given case was by necessity a time-consuming process. Use of paper reports and a digital filing system, while much faster, still involves lag time in entering the reports into the database and the attendant delay in employing the data. This latter system required the development of automated data processing—a decidedly 20<sup>th</sup> century invention, which began to see widespread use only in the 1970s.

<sup>57</sup> Cellular telephone networks and camera phones are relatively cheap off-the-shelf technology that could be deployed with little modification for counterinsurgency use. As described by a senior manager at Motorola to the author in 1994, the Israeli Army uses a tactical cellular telephone system. The biggest modification is likely to be incorporation of encryption into the phones (to keep insurgents from compromising the database), which could be loaded through a recharger back at a base facility, while recharging the camera phone batteries between excursions amongst the population. At a cost measured in tens of dollars per camera phone, such a system is several orders of magnitude cheaper, more versatile, and far less intrusive than many specially build biometric systems presently available. A specific example is the “Snake Eater” system—a laptop computer with a digital camera and a fingerprint reader—with a cost upward of ten thousand dollars per unit, cited in Bill Roggio, “Deploying the Snake Eater in Khalidaya” *The Long War Journal* (2007)

<sup>58</sup> SMS is nothing more than the ubiquitous “text messages” familiar to any contemporary teenager. Multimedia Message Service (MMS) is a “text message” able to include a digital photograph or movie.

<sup>59</sup> Digital photography helps to solve two problems involved in contact HUMINT. First, use of aliases and pseudonyms may complicate use of a text-only database, particularly across organizational borders where the alias user may be traveling and using false papers. Similar complications stem from names that may be transliterated with multiple spellings. A person’s picture is much easier to match with previously taken ones. Second, digital photographs are much better for documenting text in foreign languages, graffiti, tattoos, or other visual communications than a textual description or sketch.

<sup>60</sup> An integral Global Positioning System in the phone allows each report to be automatically sent with time and location information included. This saves the sender from having to figure out his location at the time of the report and broadcasts all messages with common geographic references.

<sup>61</sup> Facial recognition software has been in existence since the late 1990s. Petersen, p. 1:55, 13:15.

<sup>62</sup> This allows counterinsurgents unfamiliar with the local language to provide accurate reporting on graffiti and other symbolic communication and get the benefit of “reach-back” to low-density experts that cannot be physically omnipresent. This has the added bonus also of providing a check on indigenous translators who may be present.

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- Smart search agents – these associate incoming reports and build discrete files on specific contacts.<sup>63</sup>
- Alerts – “wanted” contacts may be flagged for action or notification to other individuals upon receipt of a report containing specific information.<sup>64</sup>

As each counterinsurgent is carrying a camera phone, automation makes for a tight feedback loop. A report that meets designated search criteria triggers an immediate SMS reply providing instructions on appropriate handling of the contact.<sup>65</sup> Using a camera phone simplifies contacting the reporting counterinsurgent for extensive two-way communication.<sup>66</sup> It also confers each counterinsurgent with another means of communication requiring a minimum of specialized training to use.<sup>67</sup>

Employing the British system for information organization with modern digital technology eliminates many seams internal to the counterinsurgency effort and eases passage of useful information from the lowest level. A standard information framework means that for the first time, contact HUMINT becomes a powerful and responsive resource extending far beyond the immediate collector, and that each counterinsurgent has a direct conduit into the collective intelligence expertise and analytic power of the whole effort. In doing so, it allows better interaction with the local population, reduces the prospect of gratuitous alienation, and enhances the ability to separate insurgents from that population.

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<sup>63</sup> For example, every time a report is submitted about a specific vehicle, a smart agent associates it with a digital file for that vehicle. A query on the vehicle will reveal all of the contact reports on that vehicle, which will give a history of known locations and movements, individuals observed riding in it, and who reported each unique contact, amongst other things.

<sup>64</sup> This may be an SMS response to the reporting counterinsurgent dictating specific action to be taken with the contact. It may be a notification to another entity within the counterinsurgency effort that has interest in the contact in question. For example, if a reported contact is an agent reporting to source HUMINT operatives within the counterinsurgency effort, his handlers may wish to be notified whenever the agent encounters other counterinsurgency forces.

<sup>65</sup> For example, a contact report that includes a digital photograph of the face of a known terrorist enters the database. A face recognition algorithm matches it with previous pictures of this individual, and an alert on the terrorist's file may send an immediate SMS message to the phone that sent the report indicating that the individual in question should be taken into custody on the spot.

<sup>66</sup> One virtue of a cellular telephone network is that it allows point-to-point communications between any two members of the network. Thus, the capability exists for the soldier manning a checkpoint to call the top analyst on a particular threat when an SMS message comes in. Likewise, the analyst can call the passport clerk who just interviewed a suspicious applicant. Protocols must be established to prevent the whole network from bothering a policeman in the middle of an important arrest. Aside from the need to manage distractions and “research projects from afar,” the capability offers tremendous value to all involved.

<sup>67</sup> Most people of military age know how to use a telephone, and these days, use of cellular telephones, for voice, SMS, and MMS communication is commonplace. Most training would be on filing the appropriate reports digitally (eased by preprogrammed formats) and techniques for better photography with the built-in camera. As for backup communication, any Marine can be taught to “call his squad leader” if his tactical radios are not working, as can any other counterinsurgent.

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### **Conclusion**

The key to any counterinsurgency strategy is finding insurgents and exploiting the seams between them and the population. Time-tested structural organization and procedures combined with cheap, off-the-shelf, and easy-to-use technology confers unprecedented capability to sift through a population. By turning all counterinsurgents into an integrated contact HUMINT system, augmented with other intelligence disciplines, the opaque sea of the population is turned clear. This overwhelming intelligence edge allows counterinsurgents to focus their own asymmetric strengths efficiently while minimizing the overreaction and collateral damage that aids insurgents. The resultant cleaving of insurgents from supporters and the protection of innocent lives equates to faster resolution of these most brutal of human conflicts.



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