

Running Head: IS IT IMPORTANT FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS TO STUDY  
MILITARY HISTORY?

Is it Important for Military Professionals to Study Military History?

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## ABSTRACT

Today's military is facing enemies in both Iraq and Afghanistan that are practicing guerilla type insurgency tactics that are far from standard war doctrine. Our military forces have faced this sort of enemy before and adjusted, albeit painfully and slowly, in order to confront and defeat this enemy. If today's military leaders, especially NCOs, study tactics and counter tactics used in other insurgency operations they will be better prepared to understand and react to the current insurgency threat.

History is filled with accounts of all nations, at some point, being involved in so-called "small wars". Although the term "small wars" has been replaced with insurgency and counter-insurgency operations it still refers to the same type of conflict. The United States military has been involved in these types of operations since its formation at the start of the Revolutionary War and we have faced these operations during and after every major conflict since. At some point one would think that we would have come to expect it and made counter insurgency plans a part of our war planning technique.

Many books, papers, and reports, have been written on the subject and understanding this subject is more important now than it ever was. Our nation, and the world, is entering a time when this type of conflict will be more prevalent than ever and we need to understand the concepts that support these insurgency conflicts in order to avoid situations like we are currently facing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Before I begin any actual comparisons of past insurgency operations or conflicts involving insurgencies I will look at the some of the root causes of insurgency. Insurgencies are usually the result of a sudden change in political structure and power, economic power, ideology (from a religious perspective), or culture that has the potential to have an ill effect on a majority of the population. These changes may also affect the few who have risen to power as a result of one illegitimate government replacing an already illegitimate government. This was the case with Iraq. Iraq's tradition of rule by those best able to seize power through violent struggle is why the Shiites and Kurds feel forced to maintain their militias (Krepinivich 2005). Should the United States suddenly decide to withdraw it's Troops both the Shiites and Kurds feel they should be prepared to attempt to seize power.

The United States faced a similar situation during the Reconstruction era following the Civil War. Reconstruction after the Civil War seemed to be working its way towards success. Even though the Southern Democrat hardliners were still taking steps to ensure its failure. (Fleming 1906) The fight for Civil Rights for Blacks was nowhere near an end. After all it would be hard for the Southerners at this point to adapt to a lifestyle that allowed their former slaves the same rights as they enjoyed during the Antebellum period. Reconstruction also made it clear that the Southern Plantation owner's standard of living would suffer greatly if it was a success.

The United States Government at the time decided that it would leave federal troops in the South in order to ensure the success of Reconstruction and to also fight the insurgency type efforts of the Ku Klux Klan and the White League. This, at the time, seemed to be a solid plan and was working despite the Southern Democrats covert support of the Ku Klux Klan and the White League. (Benedict 1980). Of course all of these efforts were to come to an end due to the election of President Rutherford B. Hayes.

The election of 1876 placed Republican Rutherford B. Hayes in the running for office against the Democratic Representative Samuel J. Tilden. The results of the polls showed that Tilden had won the majority popular vote however the ultimate outcome would be decided by the electoral votes received by each candidate. The end result was Tilden with 184 electoral votes and Hayes with 165 electoral votes with 20 electoral votes in the balance. (Polakoff 1973) These 20 electoral votes in dispute were from Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana. Coincidentally these 3 states were still occupied by Federal Troops who were there to support reconstruction efforts. The actions taken that lead to Hayes benefiting from these votes came to be known as the Compromise of

1877. The compromise itself was a hotly disputed event that many felt was the ultimate end of reconstruction. (Polakoff 1973). The compromise essentially stated that the Southern Democrats would acknowledge Hayes as president if 4 key points were abided by. (DeSantis 1982) These were:

1. The removal of all Federal Troops from the former Confederate States. (At the time Federal Troops only remained in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina)
2. The appointment of at least one Southern Democrat to Hayes' administration. (This ended up being David M. Key of Tennessee who was appointed as Postmaster General)
3. The construction of another transcontinental railroad.
4. Legislation to help industrialize the South.

Unfortunately all that was necessary for Reconstruction efforts to fail was point 1 being supported and this happened immediately after the Compromise was accepted (Polakoff 1973). The current Iraqi Government, which was established with the support of the U.S. Military, faces a similar situation at this time. If the United States were to withdraw all of its Troops from Iraq the current Iraqi Government and all the positive changes it has established would be lost in another battle for power. It is also important to consider that in the Middle East the population looks to Islam in order to form a political ideology. Whichever side can convince the majority of the population that it's ideology and purpose is legitimized by Islamic fundamentals usually wins support (McAllister 2005). William S. McCallister also pointed out that in order to create the impression that Islam won the war and the new Iraqi Government is not a puppet regime of the United States the U.S. may need to appear defeated.

So the situation that we are currently facing in Iraq eerily parallels the situation that we faced during reconstruction that led to the Compromise of 1877. Should we agree to withdraw our forces all the good that was done up to this point will probably be lost. In saying this it is clear, to me at least, that we have no choice but to stay the course.

In most cases the insurgent's very existence relies on the active support, or at least passive attitude of, the civilian population (Kitson, 1971). The U.S. Military has learned this in every conflict we have been involved in from the Victorio Campaign and the Phillipines to the Vietnam War. This is also the case with both the insurgency conflicts effecting Iraq and Afghanistan right now. And in both cases these reasons for support exist in both theaters. Although I believe that the insurgency in Afghanistan may be supported more by the passive role of the civilian populations in the tribal areas where the insurgents seem to be able to operate freely. This may be due to the regions being less civilized and the remoteness has left the local populations uneducated to real world events. To them this may seem to be just another Civil War and regardless of the outcome their lives will go on unchanged yet they feel bound to support it for religious beliefs or because it is culturally expected of them to support the insurgents.

In January 2007 President Bush announced the Troop Surge that would send 20,000 additional Troops into the fight, most of these Troops would be going to Iraq. These Troops would support the Iraqi military in actions against the insurgency. In dealing with the Iraqi and Afghanistan insurgency conflicts the United States current strategy is killing them faster than the insurgents can get replacements (Corum 2006). The Army is also taking necessary steps to "win the hearts and minds" through various

civil projects and training programs in order to sway the population's support of the insurgents.

A large part of the success against the insurgency is due in part to intelligence gained from captured insurgents. Some of this intelligence may have been the product of torture techniques used by the Army or other government agencies when they were questioning the captured insurgents. Regardless of how the intelligence was gained the public became aware of some of the techniques that we were using and this caused a great deal of debate as to it being acceptable action by the United States. There is also the continued investigation into so-called "Secret CIA Flights". In the course of this investigation the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency is accused of flying captured or kidnapped insurgents to countries that allow torture and they are holding these individuals captive in these "Secret Prisons" and torturing them.

Now the United States has developed a reputation for benevolence and justifying itself both ethically and morally in all its actions. So with that being the case we leave ourselves wide open for complete scrutiny on any act that the world sees as immoral or unethical. However what the world seems to be missing in this case is the fact that the same organizations that support the insurgents, Al Qaida and the Taliban in particular, also pose a threat to all other Western countries. If the world would consider the use of these techniques and the supposed actions of the United States from a Utilitarianism standpoint these actions are justified in that the Western world would benefit from these actions.

This course of action has been proven effective already by the French General Paul Aussaresses and it is plainly outlined in *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and*

Counterterrorism in Algeria, 1955-1957. This portion of the course reader provides sufficient supporting evidence that certain torture techniques and treatment of insurgents, to include justified killings, are extremely effective in crushing terrorist and insurgent groups. The author of this piece, General Aussaresses, states that, "Once a country demands that its Army fight an enemy that uses terror, it becomes impossible for that Army to avoid using extreme measures", (Aussaresses 2002). To put this in layman's terms the best way to fight this kind of war is to fight fire with fire. General Aussaresses proved, through his actions in the Casbah, that the quickest way to defeat a terrorist force is by using brutal techniques to gain knowledge of anyone affiliated with the terrorists. Once these individuals are captured, whether they are terrorists themselves or just sympathizers, and they have served their purpose then they will be killed and by killing key figures in a very brutal fashion the killings can be used to convey a very strong message to the rest of the terrorist group that will ultimately crush their will and the will of those who support them.

Are these techniques extreme? Yes most definitely however they are also very effective. In the same article Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz agreed that the use of torture is justified in certain drastic circumstances and in his words, "Circumstances change our conceptions of right". My question is why does the rest of the world not understand this. Again, from a Utilitarianistic viewpoint the greater good of this action would benefit all of the Western world as opposed to the effect it has on the one individual who has already proven himself to be a threat to our Western ideals and way of life.

Instead of looking at the United States as an enemy of Islam maybe the other nations, who persecute us for these actions, can help Islam to understand that in order for those who practice this religion to not be considered a threat to the Western world maybe they should police up themselves. As long as terrorist organizations continue to act in this manner in the name of their religion, their religion will always be considered as violence provoking and intolerant to change. It is also this attitude that will prevent the Iraqi government, or any government established with the aid of Western nations, as being accepted as a legitimate government. Although the United States Army is justified in its actions against the insurgents and is doing a fine job in its efforts to build support through civil actions its main adversary in this on going battle remains Islam itself.

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27 January 2008
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