

United States Counterinsurgency Campaigns -  
Philippine-American War 1899-1902 Vs Operation Iraqi Freedom 2003-2005 -  
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## United States Counterinsurgency Campaigns

From the Indian wars that spanned three centuries to Afghanistan and Iraq theaters of operation in the Global War on Terror at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the United States Military has engaged in counterinsurgency campaigns. The United States Military and political leadership at the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom suffered from institutional amnesia of the lessons learned from past counterinsurgency campaigns. They were either forgotten, cast aside as outdated, or ignored.

The two counterinsurgency campaigns to be discussed resulted after successful, short duration major combat operations had ended. Neither campaign had planned for the advent of an insurgency much less how to conduct a counterinsurgency. Three key areas in which the campaigns differed in countering the nascent insurgencies are the basis for this paper.

### Political Institutions

*De-Baathification* – On May 16, 2003 the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) disestablished the Ba’ath party of Iraq by issuing CPA Order Number 1. It eliminated the party’s structures and removed its leadership from positions of authority and responsibility in Iraqi society. It went on to define authority and responsibility as

individuals holding positions in the top three layers of management in every national government ministry, affiliated corporations and other government institutions (e.g. universities and hospitals)...This includes those holding the more junior ranks of Udw (Member) and Udw Amil (Active Member), as well as those determined to be Senior Party Members. (CPA, Order No. 1, 2003, p. 1).

In 2003 Paul Bremer, Administrator of the CPA, thought he was banning only the top one percent of the Ba'ath party. Estimates of Baath Party membership in 2003 run from 2 to 2.5 million Iraqis, of which 75 percent were Sunni.

In Iraq the Baath party was an indigenous organization that ruled uninterrupted from 1968 to 2003. In comparison, the Philippines was ruled and governed by another country. Spanish colonization of the Philippines began in 1565, ushering in Spanish rule that would last until the end of the Spanish-American War at which time, under the Treaty of Paris, signed December 10, 1898, the United States purchased the Philippines from Spain.

*Formation of the Federal Party* – As the Philippines had been ruled by Spain for four centuries, indigenous political parties did not exist. The Federal Party became the first Philippine political party and was established by Manila Ilustrados (educated Filipinos) and former revolutionary officers and its creation was backed by Commander of United States Forces Major General Arthur MacArthur and the Governor of the Philippines William H. Taft.

The Federal Party called for recognition of United States sovereignty as a precursor to the establishment of a Philippine government. At considerable risk of their lives, Federalists visited dozens of towns and sponsored rallies to urge the acceptance of American rule. Some went into the mountains to persuade guerilla leaders to surrender. (Linn, 2000, p. 215)

The Federal Party offered an option for those Filipinos that did not back the insurgent forces led by Aguinaldo.

Proponents of De-Ba'athification argued that in order for Iraqi society to move forward the Baath Party and its officials had to be removed from all government institutions and

prohibited from ever occupying those positions again. They likened it to leaving the Nazis in charge after World War II. Unlike WWII, where a bottom up approach was used in denazification and involved interviewing those that knew the individual in question, De-Ba'athification was implemented using a top down approach. Contrast that to with the United States backing the Federal Party's creation as the first political party of the Philippines which offered former revolutionaries an alternative and played a role in keeping those not backing either side from backing the insurgency.

### Military Institutions

*Dissolution of Entities* – On May 23, 2003 the CPA dissolved the Iraqi Military by issuing CPA Order No 2. The order did allow for pension payments to be made, however it forbid any payments being made to Senior Party Members, defined as holding the rank of Colonel or above.

The CPA orders caught the Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) by surprise as no one from the CPA had briefed the military leadership on either order until they were implemented. To further aggravate the situation Phase IV post war stability operations planning had made the assumption that some form of the Iraqi Army would exist and be used by the Coalition for Stability and Security Operations.

The net effect of the CPA orders in the spring of 2003 added fuel to an emerging insurgency. According to General Petraeus, by the fall of 2003 the effect of the overall de-Ba'athification program “was that tens of thousands of former party members were unemployed, without any salary, without any retirement, without any benefits, and therefore, to a large degree, without any incentive to support the new Iraq” (Reese & Wright, 2008, p. 97).

The Philippine Revolution against Spanish rule began in 1896 and an armistice was reached by December 1897. The Philippine forces were led by Emilio Aguinaldo, who would later become the Philippine leader of the resistance that broke out against the United States in June of 1899. Conventional warfare lasted until the spring of 1900 when Aguinaldo, realizing that his forces and logistical abilities were no match for the United States Military switched strategy from conventional to guerrilla warfare.

*Recruitment of Filipino Military Forces* – While it was common practice in the field, recruitment of Filipino formations was not officially authorized until January 6, 1901 by General MacArthur. While some commanders were against the use of Filipino forces, they soon proved their worth as Aguinaldo was captured March 23, 1901. Aguinaldo had sent a message to his field commanders requesting 400 reinforcements. The message was intercepted and 80 Filipino Scouts were sent to Aguinaldo's location with four "captured" American Soldiers. Once inside the Camp's defenses they seized Aguinaldo and brought him to the American headquarters in Manila where he subsequently "issued a proclamation calling on the guerrillas to lay down their weapons and the Filipino people to accept United States authority" (Linn, 2000, p. 275).

As the year progressed it became clear that local police were "some of the most effective counterinsurgency forces the Army raised" (Linn, 2000, p. 204). "The military auxiliary corps of the Filipinos loyal to the United States grew to 15,000" (Linn, 2000, p. 128).

Dissolution of the Iraqi Military was viewed as a necessary step in reconciliation as it was the Iraqi Military that "was the hated enforcer of Saddam rule, bloated in size, exploitive of the Shiites who formed the enlisted ranks, and commanded by Sunnis who had to be removed" (West, 2008, p. 9). The second and third order effects of dissolution were 400,000 unemployed,

disenfranchised military age males that knew where stockpiles of munitions were hidden and provided insurgents a trained and armed base to fill their ranks. This also had a direct effect on Phase IV operations for the Coalition Forces as their planning called for some form of Iraqi Military to be used for security and stability operations.

#### Allied Forces Footprint

*Force Protection Versus Force Projection* - General John Abizaid, the Deputy Commanding General of CENTCOM during Phase III operations of Operation Iraqi Freedom replaced outgoing CENTCOM Commander Tommy Franks on July 17, 2003. As CENTCOM Commander, General Abizaid's "theory was that the very presence of U.S. forces in Iraq was an "antibody" in Iraqi society. Therefore, to remove the possibility that insurgents could leverage the presence of an occupation force to win popular support, a key goal was to move quickly to an "overwatch" posture" (Congressional Research Services, 2008, p. 54).

Thus began the movement of Coalition Forces from Combat Outposts and Patrol Bases to large Forward Operating Bases (FOB's) in outlying areas that would continue past 2005. Insurgents took advantage of reduction of Coalition Forces in the cities immediately as there wasn't an Iraqi Military capable of filling in where Coalition Forces had left. The effect of consolidating Coalition Forces on FOB's was units began commuting to work and returning to the outlying FOB's at the end of their patrols. For instance, north of Baghdad, a battalion was pulled out of Samarra,

"Every few months, we pushed a task force down from Tikrit, twenty miles north of Samarra," LTC Steve Miska, a battalion operations officer, said... "We'd clear the city, pull back to the FOB in Tikrit and they'd sneak back in. It made no tactical sense" (West, 2008, p. 81).

*American Garrisons Philippines* - When conventional warfare ended in the summer of 1900, the United States had approximately 50 garrisons throughout the Philippines. By the end of 1901 that number had rapidly expanded to 639. The Philippines geography, an archipelago consisting of over 7,000 islands, was a factor that led to this expansion once the insurgency began.

The Filipino insurgency's center of gravity was the towns and population as the insurgency did not have the capabilities to sustain its forces on its own. Shadow governments existed in some towns and "at its most successful, it could function as the real government, collecting taxes, recruiting soldiers, maintaining morale, and administering justice" (Linn, 2000, p. 191). Therefore American forces needed to pacify the towns in order to eradicate the insurgency.

Small remote garrisons dispersed across the Philippines became the means to implement President McKinley's policy of benevolent assimilation. Local commanders filled a dual role of both government administrator and military commander. As administrators, they established indigenous local government, police forces, schools, clinics and other forms of soft power depending on the commander and the situation on the ground. In the military role garrisons provided commanders the ability to patrol the rural areas in search of insurgents and their supply caches, gather intelligence and build rapport with locals.

A consequence of the remoteness of these garrisons, isolated from higher-echelon command and control "forced them to become well acquainted with their area and the people who lived there. This in turn gave them good intelligence, the prerequisite for effective counterinsurgency operations" (Boot, 2002, p. 127).

General Abizaid viewed Coalition Forces as the "Antibody" that needed to be consolidated on outlying FOB's, disregarding the lack of an Iraqi Military to fill the security void

left by the Coalition's departure. This was in direct contrast to the strategy American Forces effectively used in the Philippines. This strategy would later be coined the "Oil Spot" strategy after it was used successfully by British Forces in Malaysia circa 1950. This strategy takes into account that counterinsurgent forces do not have the troop strength to secure the entire country at once; therefore it must be done sequentially. "Gradually expanding outward from the secure areas by establishing enduring security in a small area enabling reconstruction, political reform and training of indigenous security elements" (Krepinevich, 2007, p. 6).

### Conclusion

While no two wars are exactly alike or lessons learned steadfast rules for all situations, history does offer a metric for judging second and third order effects of plans to be executed. As such when the CPA ordered the De-Ba'athification of Iraqi institutions and Dissolution of its military the experiences from 100 years ago in the Philippines would have provided counter points where instead of disenfranchising former antagonists, the United States formed the Federal Party and Filipino Scout units. The same can be said for General Abizaid's view of Coalition Forces as the "Antibody" and the need to consolidate forces on outlying FOB's. Small garrisons in the Philippines proved to be a deciding factor in ending the insurgency. Otto Von Bismarck was once reported to have stated "Fools say they learn from experience; I prefer to learn from the experience of others."

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