

Running head: BATTLE SUCCESSES OF COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGNS

Battle Successes of Counterinsurgency Campaigns

SGM Mark Ishmael

United States Sergeants Major Academy

Class #58

SGM Feick

18 Mar 08

Abstract

History has a way of influencing leaders to produce a proven battle plan. This paper will explore the success of battles during the Philippine Insurrection and the Vietnam War and provide contrast between these wars exposing three critical points and the importance of achieving tactical success in achieving strategic goals.

Battle Successes of Counterinsurgency Campaigns

The Counterinsurgency Operations (COIN) of the past has contributed to tactical success for the future because it delayed the insurgent's progression for their strategic goals. As we studied military history we learned of the battle in Mindanao, Southern Philippines and Ia Drang Valley, Vietnam (Stewart, 2005). The battle in Mindanao was a testing ground for the United States Army to engage in COIN. The Moros of Mindanao often had the support of the local populace because of their blood relationship as well as their power of intimidation (CD Military Course Reader). In contrast, the Vietnam War had insurgents from two local groups the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army. The Vietnamese insurgents were also more deadly due to advance weaponry such as rocket propelled grenades and mortars compared to the Filipino swords and a few firearms stolen from U.S. Soldiers.

The first critical factor of success in battle is to know the enemy and to determine their ideology. The Filipinos wanted a Sovereign Nation independent of Spain. They were not aware of the United States acquisition of their Island Nation (Stewart, 2005). By lacking this critical knowledge, they didn't understand the intent of the Americans massive build-up. In contrast, the North Vietnamese Army wanted to unify their country to a Communist Nation this ideology met resistance from the South Vietnamese Army of the Republic of Vietnam (Stewart, 2005).

During the Philippines Insurrection, Major Bullard knew his enemy because he successfully conducted counterinsurgency operations during the battle of Mindanao. He was able to gain this knowledge by conducting pacification operations with the villagers. He started by having an interest in their culture and studying and learning their language. He engaged in civil affairs projects involving rebuilding of a major road and employing local host nationals paying them for their labor. He also validated his efforts to gain respect by riding horseback between

two warring Datos (Moro Leaders) without incident quelling the battle that almost occurred. Pacification operations gain the respect and support from the locals who provided inside intelligence of the identity of the insurgents and their ideology. MAJ Bullard was able to win the hearts and minds of the local population (CD Military Course Reader).

In contrast, during the battle of the Ia Drang Valley, LTC Moore focused on a war of annihilation. LTC Moore's orders were to seek and destroy the enemy by bringing the fight to him. He performed his mission by proving a new concept of warfare. This concept called Air Assault Operations proved to be successful by providing air mobility to ground forces. LTC Moore had an edge over his enemy he can rapidly insert troops and navigate through the jungle canopy and mountainous terrain of the Ia Drang Valley (Moore, 1992). The success of this battle was due to LTC Moore's tenacity to overcome his enemy with air mobility, artillery and air strikes. His knowledge of the enemy and their ideology came from his studies of past battles of the NVA and French Army (Moore, 1992).

As we look at MAJ Bullard and LTC Moore we can conclude that both had different techniques to identify the enemy and determine their ideology. Which technique was the most effective? MAJ Bullard's pacification operations took time and involved a lot of patience while LTC Moore's war of annihilation was fast hitting using the element of surprise without concern of the welfare of the local populace. One may argue that MAJ Bullard was more effective because he was able to gain support of the local people but this cost time and can affect the morale of his troops to persevere.

Another may argue that LTC Moore was more effective because he brought the fight to his enemy. His knowledge first came from reading books of past wars then turned into living knowledge from the volleys of bullets and mortar rounds coming from enemy attacks. His men

killed the enemy, persevered and won the battle. Both techniques are successful because we can use the lesson learned to better our chances of surviving in the asymmetrical war of today.

The second critical factor of successes of battle is the fact that the United States Army can cripple their enemy and defend against him due to their superiority of weapons and tactics. By comparing the two leaders we learned MAJ Bullard was capable of defending against his enemy because of the use of firearms. LTC Moore had artillery, air assets and was brilliant in command and control of these assets. Advance technology enables combatant commanders to destroy their enemy decisively and give the ground troops the confidence to win in battle.

The third critical factor of success is the ability to sustain operations by gaining political support from American Policy Holders. This support was due to the U.S. efforts to expand trading power to the Pacific region. The Moros on the other hand were limited in resources and could never sustain a conventional war. They had to resort to guerrilla warfare.

The Spanish occupation of the Philippines also took its toll on resources as Moros fought to maintain their sovereignty. The Moro's lack of resource to sustain war gave the advantage to MAJ Bullard who had the freedom to conduct pacification operations with minimal resistance (CD Military Course Reader).

In contrast, the North Vietnamese Army were better resourced but lacked the tactical expertise to counter the air mobility of the U.S. and its Joint Military Strike Force consisting of the Army, Air Force and Navy. This ultimately led to their defeat in the battle of Ia Drang.

The importance of achieving strategic goals is dependent on the support from the people and Government Officials. The strategic goal for the United States during the battle of Mindanao was to rebuild the road to Lake Lanao and to control the Moros from gaining total control of the region. In contrast, the strategic goal of the United States during the battle of Ia Drang Valley

was to seek and destroy the NVA and to establish and maintain Landing Zone X-Ray (Moore, 1992). MAJ Bullard and LTC Moore accomplished their strategic battle goals although they both shared losses in America achieving political goals for these campaigns. By comparing the two, we find that America eventually gave the Filipinos their sovereignty by returning the land to the people. America also pulled out of Vietnam and was unable to maintain the status quo of a divided Vietnam.

In conclusion, the successes of battles in our past counterinsurgency operations have influence our battles of today. Success through technology, pacification operations and support of the American People will determine the outcome on the Global War on Terror. It is important to learn Military History to avoid future failures. Combatant commanders have the diversity of putting to use the knowledge of the past. Leaders are also providing the foundation of a free and self governing Iraq through civil affairs projects, re-establishing infrastructure and encouraging democratic election of officials. These activities prove our continued success in current COIN operations. Finally, our Soldiers can apply these historical lessons as they engage in their daily operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. To apply these lessons a Soldier must be culturally sensitive, polite, professional and deadly. NCOs must be the moral compass that ensures Soldiers are heading on the right path and held accountable for their actions.

References

Stewart, R.W. (2005). *American Military History Volume I The United States in a Global Era, 1917-2003*, Center of Military History United States Army Washington, D.C.

Stewart, R.W. (2005). *American Military History Volume II The United States in a Global Era, 1917-2003*, Center of Military History United States Army Washington, D.C.

United States Sergeants Major Academy CD Military Course Reader

Moore, H.G. and Galloway, J.L. (1992). *We Were Soldiers Once... And Young*, Random House Publisher, New York, New York