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Compare two Counterinsurgency Campaigns

MSG Peter J. Schimmel

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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Abstract

In this new day and age of unconventional battle field we must adjust are focus to a different kind of fight. The history the U.S. Army clearly shows that we have spent the majority of our training to be prepared for the conventional battlefield. Relatively little doctrine has been wrote on the unconventional battle field; Even though the U.S. has been fighting counterinsurgency since the beginning of this nations establishment. We must learn from our history and let it show us what we need and how we should prepare for future battles.

Counterinsurgency Campaigns

World War II: North Africa became an active theater of operations in 1940 when the Italians attacked the British there. For over a year the British would push the Italians back until they outran their supply lines and then the Italians would do the same. Neither made significant gains of controlled territory during these seesaw operations. In 1941, to help Mussolini, Hitler sent General Erwin Rommel's Africa Corps to North Africa. This enabled several German Divisions to augment several mobile Italian divisions and become Panzer Group Africa.

The United States stayed out of the war until Pearl Harbor was attacked in Dec 1941. The United States then declared war on Japan and their allies. The army needed to more manpower to fight this war, and Americans volunteered by the thousands. The Soldiers were trained quickly to get them to the battle. Allied forces landed in three places in North Africa in November 1942, this was called operation Torch. The allied forces came into contact with the French and defeated them with little effort. The French joined the allied forces and moved east into Tunisia. While the Allies were conducting operation Torch in Morocco and Algeria, axis forces were entering Tunisia from Italy and building defenses to protect the cities of Tunis and Bizerte. With that move it would give the axis the eastern seaboard of Tunisia. To keep the port cities under their control, the axis needed to control thee passes in eastern Dorsal Mountains ranges. This desire by the axis to control the passes developed into the battle of Kasserine Pass.

Dawn 14 Feb, the battle began during a sandstorm when 200 German tanks, half-tracks, and guns of both Panzer Divisions came through Faid. American forces inexperience permitted German forces easy and quick success. The bad weather also prevented the Americans from identifying the German elements and they held their fire. The Germans were better seasoned forces and did not encounter these problems. Additionally, German planes continuously harassed

American positions and America's repeated requests for air support, was only answered with one sortie.

The American forces spent their time shifting forces to cover their losses at Faid on the evening of February 14. The significant movement of forces in and around Sbeitla, caused some units to begin to destroy depots and supply points so they did not fall into German hands. The end of day one did not bring much success for the American forces.

The battle went on with the axis having the upper hand, on the 21st the allies finally moved their artillery guns into place and started firing. This caused the Germans to delay. The Germans called off the attack to fortify positions in the Eastern Dorsal. Allied forces moved cautiously forward on the 23rd. They found that the Rommel had cancelled his attack. The battle for Kasserine Pass was a disaster for the U.S. Army.

General Eisenhower was furious with the lack of leadership and the lack of cooperation between the senior leaders. This caused an unnecessary loss of equipment and loss of the life of many young Soldiers. Eisenhower relieved General Fredendall of II Corps, General Ward of 1st Division, General McQuillin of Combat Command A, 1st AD, and Col Stark of 26th Brigade.

The inexperience Soldier was the biggest factor of why the Americans failed. The US participants in the Battle of Kasserine Pass were those who had engaged in almost no active operations. Americans were conducting battle with seasoned German forces. This was particularly evident during night operations. Overconfidence beforehand prevented the Americans from adequately preparing. This leads us to the next weakness, which was proficiency in newly assigned weapons. For example, the bazooka could have played a larger role if the Americans would have worked harder to get the equipment into their training. The North Africa campaign at the start showed the dysfunction in the communication and

cooperation between air and ground forces. This determination would cause the issue to be examined and fixed for future battles.

There still were some strengths. Squad leader leadership in the 1st AD was solid and these experiences would be valuable in the European battles yet to come. The equipment and weapons turned out to be battle worthy. In particular, the .50 cal antiaircraft machine gun and Sherman tank worked very well when utilized properly. Lastly, the bazooka proved to be a combat multiplier. The senior leaders realized that infantry and armored combined-arms training were not adequate. This caused for more training time for Soldier and better training on new equipment. By the end of the war these mistakes made here in North Africa, help the American forces become better trained for the rest of the war. The U.S. Army ended the war with over five million Soldiers, and then came the draw down.

VEITNAM: The United States foreign policy at the time of the Cold War was driven by a fear of the spread of Communism. With the thought of entire country of Vietnam falling under a Communist government the United States became involved with Vietnam. The American policymakers thought Communism would spread throughout Southeast Asia. This belief was known as the “domino theory.” The U.S. government, therefore, helped to create the anti-Communist South Vietnamese government. This government’s repressive policies led to rebellion in the South, and in 1960 the NLF was formed with the aim of overthrowing the government of South Vietnam and reunifying the country (Stanton, 1985).

President Eisenhower sent 800 advisers to Vietnam in the late 50’s. By November 1963 with a new president in the office, John Kennedy, there were 16,700 American advisers in Vietnam. President Kennedy was assassinated on 22 November 1963, Johnson then took over,

and he raised the total of advisers to 27,000. His thought was that they would scare North Vietnam into thinking that the United States was going to call for a full-scale war. He was planning on a conventional battlefield in Vietnam. Johnson had also ordered Navy ships to the area and on 2nd of August 1964, North Vietnamese gunboats fired on the destroyer USS Maddox which was in the Gulf of Tonkin, in the boundaries of North Vietnam territory. Johnson then ordered more ships to the Gulf, and on 4 August North Vietnamese fired on them. Johnson then ordered air attacks on North Vietnam.

With President Johnson strategy to overwhelm the enemy the U.S. troop's level grew from 80,000 in December of 1965 to 543,000 troops in 1969. The thought was we would wear down the enemy by inflicting the highest death toll possible. Young men were being drafted for the army, then trained quickly, sent to war. Once again we let our troop level down, now we are in a conflict that we don't have the Soldiers trained for the fight. Westmorland the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the largest search and destroy operation in the Communist stronghold near Saigon, the Iron Triangle.

This was largest operation of the war. It was intended to find and destroy North Vietnam strongholds and headquarters. The American used Agent Orange and napalm before troops went in. Communist forces had been recruiting from South Vietnam; American Soldiers did not know exactly who the enemy was. U.S. forces enter with 16,000 American Soldiers and 14,000 South Vietnamese. North Vietnamese Soldiers were in hidden tunnels and came out with squad level attacks against the American forces. Sniper fire picked off Soldiers, and Soldiers encountered booby traps. This was not the conventional battle field that the army was being trained for. The ground war reached a stalemate in 1967. The air war was inflicted damage to everything in

Vietnam. 150,000 sorties were being flown a year by 1968. With this many sorties a lot of civilians were being killed, this help to fuel the American people to be against the war. Soldiers lost sight of what they were fighting for. When they returned home from war they were treated like killers. The war ended with the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975.

Operation Iraqi Freedom: After the United States was attacked by terrorists on 11 September 2001, President Bush spoke to the nation that we were entering a war on terror. We first went into Afghanistan looking for Bin Laden, the master mind behind the attacks, and to eliminate terrorist cells within that country. Iraq was soon designated as one of the axis of evil countries. In March 2003 American and coalition forces invaded Iraq looking for weapons of mass destruction. The ground war in Iraq was won quickly, but pockets of resistant were left over looked throughout the county. The occupation phase of the war soon grew to 220,000 American troops. The main comparisons of these three conflicts are economy of the force, Soldiers not trained and informed about new equipment and weapons, squad level leadership, and support of the American people.

The United States reduced the troop's level by 300,000 in the 1990's. When we found ourselves engaged in the occupation phase in Iraq it came crystal clear we didn't have the manpower needed to support the effort needed in Iraq. Soldiers have found themselves being mobilized two or more times. This has been a problem in all these conflicts. The economy of the force, we reduce troop levels after every conflict, and then we scramble for troops after we get involved in a major conflict. A substantial amount of ground combat forces are necessary for the stabilization efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. "Technological advances made transforming U.S. forces ever more combat effective against conventional forces, but could not yet substitute for all

the manpower needed in the unconventional and asymmetric environments of stability operation” (Bruner, 2004). The United States must readdress what troop levels should be at and maintained that level of readiness.

Throughout history we have developed new equipment and weapons systems for the war fight, but the Soldiers were not always trained on the new equipment. In the battle of Kasserine Pass new Sherman tanks and bazookas were introduced to the battlefield. The Soldiers were not trained on the use of the bazookas or the Sherman tanks. In Vietnam the introduction of Agent Orange to the battlefield killed a lot of Americans. OIF has seen a changing battlefield, in prior operations transportation personnel have been treated like dogs. In this war the transporters were the ones getting killed by improved explosive devices (IED). The introduction to the up armor vehicle to help protect Soldiers from an IED blast was soon introduced. But the lack of drivers training on a heavier vehicle was not given to the Soldiers until multiple vehicle rollovers that hurt Soldiers or killed them in some cases. We can't just employ new equipment without giving training on the equipment.

The most important leader in all these conflict is at the squad level. The NCO's in all the conflicts I described have been the ones in the action. These junior NCO's have lead their Soldiers in many faces of danger. We are promoting Soldiers faster than ever, and we are overlooking the importance of leadership training for these young NCO's. Sergeants have been getting promoted to Staff Sergeant without having the necessary leadership training to be a Sergeant. We must prepare these young NCO's for success not failure.

To win on the battlefield is not only to defeat the enemy but to when the hearts and minds of the people you are trying to protect. The attacks on Pearl Harbor brought us into World War II. The United States was coming out of the depressing and the American people supported the

war. The American people at the start of Vietnam were looking at the big picture, which was Russia. They supported the government because they were scared that Russia was going to control both North and South Vietnam and Communist would keep spreading west. After a few years at war and the media showing the pictures of dead Americans and the killing of civilians, the attitude of the American people changed. They didn't support the war and they didn't support the Soldier. The 911 attacks on America brought the nation back together. The American people supported the war in Afghanistan and then in Iraq. Once again after a few years of media showing the death of young American Soldiers, the attitude changed. The support of this war has been getting less and less. We as a people are impatient, we think things should be done on impossible timelines, and so soon we forget what we are fighting for. Some Soldiers are now starting to question, what they are really there for.

In conclusion we must learn to do a better job of managing are personnel, to be effective in the War on Terror we must maintain a fully equip and trained force. We must give are young NCO's all the tools needed for them to be able to complete any mission. The American people must remember what we are fighting for and support the Soldiers even if they don't support the war. The most important thing we must do as leaders is take lessons learned from history and implement them.

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