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Failures vs. Insurgency

Morris Anderson

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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SGM Bob Hurst

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Abstract

Under international law, the United States has legal authority to provide assistance to foreign governments in their battle to fight insurgency. The US committed numerous counterinsurgency failures in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both Afghanistan and Iraq invasions lack the right strategy, security, intelligence, support, and soldiers. The US planned for the wrong type of wars and selected unilateral actions in Iraq. Our senior leadership endorsed operation plans that sent our soldiers into Afghanistan and Iraq prepared to fight a conventional war and unprepared to provide counterinsurgency and nation building operations.

Failures vs. Insurgency

Under international law, the United States has legal authority to provide assistance to foreign governments in their battle to fight insurgency. The United States counterinsurgency program does not deny foreign people of their rights to choose their own government, but to ensure that foreign forces will not deny them that right. The US counterinsurgency operations will not serve as a tool of foreign governments to instigate or overthrow another government (Douglas, 1964). The United States has had limited success battling insurgency over the last thirty years because the Army's training and doctrine was based on a Cold War scenario. Since the conclusion of the Vietnam War, the United States Army's training and doctrine addressed only what it felt was the greatest threat to our nation, and did not prepare for counterinsurgency operations. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to identify the US counterinsurgency failures versus the insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2001 until current. The counterinsurgency operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq lack the right strategy, security, intelligence, support, and soldiers.

Afghanistan

In Afghanistan after the initial campaign, the US immediately placed its priorities on Iraq. What was first an initial success is becoming a possible strategic failure. First, the Bush administration prematurely considered Afghanistan a success after collapsing the Taliban regime in a quick decisive battle. Secondly, the failure of the administration to increase the military force in Afghanistan to secure the country and control the flow of insurgents entering the country. Thirdly, the failure of the Bush administration to continue talks about a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan, and the strategic planning and adequate funding it would entail. Finally, the low

priority assigned to the mission with majority of all the military, economic, and intelligence resources directed towards Iraq (Rubin, 2007).

The Taliban in Afghanistan have resurged since 2001 and have committed hundreds of suicide attacks against members of parliament and innocent civilians. Due to the lack of security along the borders, insurgents continue to come across and attack NATO forces to disrupt the efforts toward establishing a democratic government (Boone, 2007).

Iraq

There are numerous failures and lessons to learn from Iraq. First, the United States strategy did not analyze all the factors that were involved before entering the war. The military planned for a symmetrical war when indeed it turned out to be asymmetrical after the initial campaign. They fought a conventional war that dismantled the Iraq regime in a matter of months, but hundreds of thousand Iraq's still went home with their guns. The military also did not bring enough soldiers to secure the borders and now insurgents are flowing in from everywhere. Instead, the military reverted to old doctrine from the Vietnam era to resolve the problems from the insurgents. Bottom line, the US planned for the wrong type of war. A second factor is that the US selected unilateral actions in Iraq and did not have enough soldiers to conduct counterinsurgency operations (Smith, 2007).

The US counter insurgency operation thus far is failing to ensure that the insurgents do not win over the populace. Although they have not won the populace, the US inability to provide the people of IRAQ basic needs such as food, security, and safety is not helping the situation. The insurgents need the populace to accomplish their mission so they can set up there terrorist

tactics without being compromised. If the counterinsurgency operations cannot provide or establish security in the region, the US will have a very hard time winning the populace in Iraq. Third, instead of nation building and assisting the government in forming a democracy, Iraq has turned into a killing ground for insurgence. Statistics show that on average more than one hundred Iraq's die every day. Two Factors, the legacy left behind by Saddam Hussein and his secret police, and the relationship between the ethnic group of Sunni's and Shiites is affecting operations in Iraq. The Bush administration did not take into consideration how thirty years of fear would affect the people of Iraq and was naïve to think that they could form a democratic government among people who have been fighting against one another for over a thousand years (Smith, 2007).

Lastly, the Bush administration sent our forces into Iraq without full and accurate intelligence of the battlefield. Due to the advancement of technology in the intelligence field with sophisticated computers and UAVs, the reliable human intelligence has taken a back seat. Human intelligence is very important in winning a war especially against insurgents. Computers and UAVs cannot get inside the head and understand the mind of the enemy as a human can. The military relied so heavily on technology and did not rely enough on human intelligence to fight an asymmetrical war (Corum, 2007).

The insurgents carried out well-organized attacks against American soldiers in IRAQ. They have used such tactics as suicide bombings, gunmen dressed as police officers or soldiers, mortars, machine guns, and roadside bombs. The estimates on US soldiers killed in Iraq as of 30 May 2007 is around three thousand five hundred and twenty six thousand wounded. The estimates on Iraq civilians killed since the US invasion are around seventy two thousand dead.

The insurgents are responsible for killing or injuring over twenty thousand American soldiers from Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) alone. IEDs were the cause of at least fifty percent of the deaths in IRAQ. They have created so much fear within certain communities of Iraq that basic services have collapsed causing unemployment. The insurgents recruited local volunteers to assist in setting up roadside bombs just for money. The US failure to provide security and basic needs for the Iraq people in areas of unemployment has benefitted the insurgents (Cordesman, 2007).

Conclusion

Our senior leadership endorsed operation plans that sent our soldiers into Afghanistan and Iraq prepared to fight a conventional war and unprepared to provide counterinsurgency and nation building operations (Barnett, 2007). Fighting a counterinsurgency war by the Rules of War requires a long-term commitment by the US. Counterinsurgency operations on average take about ten years to be effective. The US never had any intentions of fighting an insurgency and definitely did not plan to stay in Iraq for over ten years. The US military is now stuck in Afghanistan and Iraq where they cannot afford to leave anytime soon. If the US were to leave prematurely, the country would collapse and become a haven for terrorist. Again, the US failures in IRAQ were similar to the failures from past wars. They trained and prepared for the wrong type of war (Smith, 2007).

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