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14. ABSTRACT Detailing the historical perspective and time-line of Marine Corps participation in small wars to the inclusion of Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) into the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is important because it highlights similarities between the two current military components. Marine Corps history during the Small Wars Period (1898-1940) is filled with what would be characterized today as special operations tactics, techniques and procedures in response to both irregular and conventional conflicts. In fact, it can be argued that the small wars doctrine developed by the Marine Corps during this time period was the basis of the development of USSOCOM. Despite the cultural and organizational differences that exist between the Marine Corps and USSOCOM both organizations share similar histories in developing small unit specialized tactics to solve irregular problems. Despite a long history in developing irregular tactics to solve unconventional problems, the Marine Corps has maintained an institutional aversion to elite Marine units within the ranks which has influenced the maturation of MARSOC within the USSOCOM hierarchy.					
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**SMALL WARS PAST AND PRESENT: MARINE CORPS DEVELOPMENT OF
SPECIALIZED TACTICS IN IRREGULAR WARFARE**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: SMALL WARS PAST AND PRESENT: MARINE CORPS DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN IRREGULAR WARFARE

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Thesis: Despite a long standing institutional aversion to specialized troops within a self-described elite organization, the Marine Corps' operational history, especially during the early part of the twentieth century, is filled with what would today be characterized as special operations in response to both irregular and conventional conflicts. Now that USSOCOM is designated as the primary administrator of irregular warfare for the US military, the Marine Corps can still maintain a viable leadership role in future irregular conflicts by building upon its historical legacy through the continued development of MARSOC to help support USSOCOM's overall irregular warfare operational objectives.

Discussion: Marine Corps history during the Small Wars Period (1898-1940) is filled with what would be characterized today as special operations tactics, techniques, and procedures in response to both irregular and conventional conflicts. In fact, it can be argued that the small wars doctrine developed by the Marine Corps during this time period was the basis of the fundamental organization of USSOCOM. Despite the cultural and organizational differences that exist between the Marine Corps and USSOCOM both organizations share similar histories in developing small unit specialized tactics to solve irregular problems.

This paper will demonstrate the correlation between the Marine Corps' historical developments in small unit leadership and tactics compared to contemporary special operations in Irregular Warfare by summarizing three conflicts from the Small Wars Period. In addition to documenting the parallels between early twentieth century Marine operations in Nicaragua (1909-1933), Haiti (1915-1934), and the Dominican Republic (1916-1924) and current irregular warfare doctrine, this paper will also attempt to address the institutional aversion to elite Marine units by highlighting historical developments by the maritime component to both current Marine Corps and USSOCOM concepts and doctrine. The conclusion of this paper will summarize the Marine Corps' historical contributions to current special operations doctrine during the Small Wars Period and provide perspective on the future of irregular warfare developments of the Marine Corps through the continued maturation of MARSOC within USSOCOM.

Conclusion: In truth, the Marine Corps is more averse to having specialized Marines under the command of USSOCOM than it is to implementing specialized tactics. Despite the historical distaste to specialized units operating outside the Marine Corps control, MARSOC has flourished by embracing the lessons learned in conflicts past and applying them to current contingencies. Because of its history in developing special operations for IW doctrine, the Marine Corps is in a perfect position to make up for these types of limitations in working alongside USSOCOM in future joint environments. To meet the requirements for future irregular battlefields, the Marine Corps must fully embrace its heritage in developing irregular tactics in unconventional conflicts through the maturation and support of MARSOC within the USSOCOM hierarchy. The growth of MARSOC within the USSOCOM ranks will only serve to strengthen the Marine Corps' historical IW legacy in developing irregular warfare, further solidifying the Marines long standing prominence in leading the way in answering the nation's irregular challenges.

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PREFACE

In writing this paper, I began by focusing on the differences in organizational dynamics in the development of Irregular Warfare practices between the Marine Corps and USSOCOM based on personal experiences in serving in both organizations. As my research broadened, I realized that both organizations shared similar histories in the development of Irregular Warfare doctrine. This realization changed the scope and thesis of the project from attempting to explain the differences to stressing the similarities between the two modern day military components. Despite the noted similarities described throughout the paper, the Marine Corps still maintains an institutional aversion to specialized troops within a self-described “elite” organization that creates friction for the Marines serving in MARSOC. After writing this paper and self-reflection, I surmise this particular organizational friction felt by the Marine special operations community manifests itself into an overwhelming desire to improve the overall operational performance and culture of MARSOC within both the Marine Corps and USSOCOM. This exact friction is what keeps the Marines’ desire to continually prove their worth sharp.

I am tremendously indebted to LtCol Brian Ross, USMC, and particularly, Dr. Rebecca Johnson, PhD, for believing in and guiding me throughout this project. Without their dedicated tutelage, I would have struggled to coherently organize this project in a manner that appropriately reflected my thoughts and ideas. I extend to Col Steve Grass, USMC, and Dr. Donald Bittner, PhD, my appreciation for their mentorship on this project as well. Finally, I would like to thank my family, especially my wife Kimberly, for their support on this project. Without them, I would not have a reason for exploring my thoughts and ideas for the professional self-improvement required to complete a project of this scope.

PROLOGUE



The Marine Raiders were a maritime commando style unit formed during World War II to meet President Roosevelt's demands for a United States (US) guerilla force to harass and delay the much stronger Japanese military establishment in the Pacific Campaign.¹ President Roosevelt directed that the US military develop a commando capability to compliment the already established conventional forces in the Army and Navy based on the successes that the newly developed British Commandos were experiencing in the European theater. The Marine Corps fought the President tooth and nail over the commando concept, hoping to avoid an exclusively elite unit implemented into what was already thought of internally as an elite Marine Corps.² The Marines finally acquiesced to meet the President's demands and begrudgingly organized the 1st and 2nd Raider Battalions in 1942. The Marine Raiders became the first organized US special operations commando unit, beating the inception of the Army Rangers by four months.³

From the start, the Raiders were handpicked from the infantry regiments and recruit depots and given the Corps' best and latest equipment to train with. Syphoning off the most able bodied Marines and modern equipment further aggravated the overall discontent towards specialized troops within the Marine Corps.⁴ The Raiders had little trouble eliciting volunteers with the promise of commando style training with the opportunity to be first to fight the

Japanese.⁵ Despite the still growing anti-commando sentiments in the Marine Corps, the Raiders continued to mature under the guiding mentorship of LtCol Merritt “Red Mike” Edson and LtCol Evans Carlson, commanding 1st and 2nd Raider Battalions respectively. Both Marines had cut their teeth in irregular warfare as junior officers while fighting guerillas in Nicaragua.⁶ Each had extensive experience in leading small units with specialized tactics against much larger and more established forces. Remembering hard fought lessons in fighting Sandinistas in Central America, both Edson and Carlson concentrated on building the Raiders into a light infantry, guerilla style raid force that could harass and disorganize larger Japanese formations throughout the island chains of the South Pacific.

As the US finally began to push back against Japanese forces dominating the Pacific in the summer of 1942, the Marine Raiders scored a series of minor victories with amphibious raids throughout the Solomon Islands.⁷ LtCol Carlson’s 2nd Battalion is credited with the first significant victory for the Marine Raiders, pulling off a daring nighttime attack from submarines on a Japanese outpost on the Makin Atoll. The Makin Island Raid was the first significant tactical and strategic US military victory of World War II. The Raiders proved adept at conducting amphibious commando-style raids verses superior enemy forces, while America proved it could also surprise an unsuspecting Japanese military and inflict death and destruction.

These initial raids further emboldened the Raider Organization, who continued to harass Japanese outposts across the South Pacific before being assigned to the defense of Guadalcanal in September 1942. The disgruntled attitude towards the amphibious commandos from the overall Marine Corps somewhat subsided as the Raider battalions distinguished themselves during the campaign for Guadalcanal. 1st Raider Battalion is credited for destroying 1,800 attacking Japanese on Edson’s Ridge in protecting the airfield from being overrun, while 2nd

Raiders mounted several long range raids to disrupt enemy tempo and operations, routinely attacking Japanese supply dumps and logistical ports.⁸ In both instances, the Raider Battalions performed extremely well in the face of numerically superior enemy forces.

After distinguishing themselves on Guadalcanal, the Raider battalions saw significant action in the liberation of the Philippines, Bougainville, Peleliu, and Okinawa as the Marine Corps continued the push towards Japan. The Marine Corps eventually recognized the value in specialized amphibious raids and established the Marine Raider Regiment in 1944 with the addition of 3rd and 4th Raider Battalions.⁹ The Raider Regiment finished out the remainder of the Pacific Campaign with continuing support for ongoing Navy and Army operations with amphibious raids and attacks. The final note of distinction for the Marine Raiders culminated in clearing of a stingy enemy bunker system that had repeatedly repelled line infantry units in Okinawa before the Japanese surrendered in September 1945.

The Raider Regiment experienced many operational successes during the World War II Pacific Campaign, repeatedly proving their worth as a specialized amphibious raid force. The individual Raider battalions achieved almost mythical status with the American public for their commando exploits when the nation was struggling to strike back against the Japanese following the disaster at Pearl Harbor. Adding to commando mystique is the individual exploits of the Raider Marines. LtCol Edson went on to become one of the most decorated Marines in World War II, earning the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions and leadership on Guadalcanal before receiving a second Navy Cross, a Silver Star, and two Legions of Merit with combat distinguishing devices.¹⁰ For his role in the developing and leading Raider operations, LtCol Carlson earned three Navy Crosses and two Legions of Merit.¹¹ Overall, the Marine Raider Regiment became one of the most decorated Marine units during World War II, as individual

Marines and Sailors earned a total of 7 Congressional Medals of Honor, 137 Navy Crosses, and 21 Army Distinguished Service Crosses.¹² Unfortunately due to postwar downsizing and the Marine Corps' longstanding aversion to "elite" troops among the ranks, the Marine Raiders were disbanded and reintegrated into the 4th Marine Regiment following the war.¹³

Although the Marine Corps has generally maintained its aversion to elite Marine units within the ranks since World War II, there have been various specialized units within the Marine Corps that have filled unique tactical responsibilities and strategic roles throughout the years. Like the original Raider Battalions of World War II, Marine units like the Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalions, Force Reconnaissance Company, Marine Expeditionary Units-Special Operations Capable (MEUSOC), and Marine Detachment One have revolved around the specialized amphibious raid force concept. These various units maintained, and even further solidified, the World War II Raider legacy until the Marine Corps permanently established Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) in 2006.

Some of the most heralded and proudest traditions in the Marine Corps are the internal service legends that Marines are "America's 911 force," or more importantly, the "first to fight."¹⁴ These colloquialisms are primarily meant to inspire, motivate, and enhance unit cohesion within the ranks, but also conceptualize the Marine Corps' focus to effectively develop, maintain, and deploy forces to meet the nation's contingencies. When analyzing the growth of special operations within the US military, the Marine Corps has a long history in developing specialized units to meet non-standard contingencies. This study will explore the historical foundations of Marine special operations development from small task organized units during the Small Wars Period to the inception of MARSOC, nested inside the organization culture of the overall Marine Corps.

INTRODUCTION

How does the Marine Corps' development and execution of small unit tactics to solve irregular problems during the Small Wars Period (1898-1940) compare to the present day irregular warfare practices by the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), especially with the recent addition of MARSOC? In essence, the Marine Corps' development in small unit leadership and tactics while executing the various campaign strategies during the Small Wars Period evolved over time to become the foundation for special operations in current US military doctrine for irregular warfare. The comparison between the Marine Corps' historical developments in small wars tactics to present day irregular warfare in special operations is important because it highlights the operational continuum of irregular tactics, techniques, and procedures over this time period between the two military components. Despite a long standing institutional aversion to specialized troops within a self-described elite organization, the Marine Corps' operational history, especially during the early part of the twentieth century, is filled with what would today be characterized as special operations in response to both irregular and conventional conflicts. Now that USSOCOM is designated as the primary administrator of irregular warfare for the US military, the Marine Corps can still maintain a viable leadership role in future irregular conflicts by building upon its historical legacy through the continued development of MARSOC to help support USSOCOM's overall irregular warfare operational objectives.

This paper will demonstrate a historical correlation between the Marine Corps' early developments in small unit leadership and tactics compared to contemporary special operations in irregular warfare by summarizing three conflicts from the Small Wars Period. The background will provide a quick synopsis on the Marine Corps' small wars role as "State Department

Troops,”¹⁵ in executing the Roosevelt Corollary of the Monroe Doctrine to the development of MARSOC in response to 2005 directives by the Secretary of Defense. In addition to documenting the parallels between early twentieth century Marine operations in Nicaragua (1909-1933), Haiti (1915-1934), and the Dominican Republic (1916-1924) to current IW doctrine, this paper will also attempt to address the institutional aversion to elite Marine units by highlighting historical developments by the maritime component to both current Marine Corps and USSCOM concepts and doctrine. Finally the conclusion of this paper will summarize the Marine Corps’ historical contributions during the Small Wars Period to current special operations doctrine and provide perspective on the Marine Corps’ role in the future of irregular warfare joint operational environments through the continued maturation of MARSOC within USSOCOM.

BACKGROUND

USMC in Small Wars and US Foreign Policy

The term “small wars” does not represent the scale of an armed conflict but rather refers to unconventional tactics used by regular troops interceding in contested diplomatic affairs versus irregular forces.¹⁶ Small war describes the use of unconventional or non-standard tactics by conventional forces to intercede in foreign conflicts versus an irregular force.¹⁷ It is important to point out that the term small war has evolved over time to what current US military doctrine defines as Irregular Warfare (IW). IW is now defined as the violent conflict between state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over a relevant population.¹⁸ IW favors indirect and asymmetric approaches to conflict, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will.¹⁹ Since the American military holds huge advantages in conventional warfare capabilities over the rest of the world,

“IW has become the warfare of choice for enemy states, who employ a strategy of physical, economic, and psychological subversion, attrition, and exhaustion to undermine and erode the power, influence, and will of the US.”²⁰

The Small Wars Period, also sometimes called the Banana Wars, began with the US annexation of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines after the Spanish-American War in 1898 and ended as World War II began in 1940.²¹ The end of the Spanish-American War marked the beginning of US colonial power, primarily focused in the Western Hemisphere. Despite the victory over the Spanish, the US government was not actually capable of sustained governance in foreign territories.²² For this reason, the military assumed the role of colonial administrator, taking on the responsibility of establishing governance in disruptive states within the US sphere of influence.²³

The Small Wars Period was primarily the result of the Roosevelt Corollary to the longstanding Monroe Doctrine for US foreign policy. The Monroe Doctrine was an 1823 US intervention policy, established by President James Monroe, to limit European expansion and economic aggression across the Americas.²⁴ President Roosevelt’s policy enhanced the Monroe Doctrine by authorizing policing actions to quell unrest in Latin America as traditional European Powers retreated back across the Atlantic.²⁵ In truth, the Roosevelt Corollary provided the justification and opportunity for the US to expand economic influence and colonial territory aggressively while pushing European influence out of the Americas.

During the 42 years of the Small Wars Period, the Marine Corps conducted over 150 landings in 37 countries with some of these conflicts lasting several decades in duration.²⁶ With the exception of playing a minor role in the Samar Campaign in the Philippine Insurrection, the vast majority of the Marine Corps’ participation in small wars occurred in the Caribbean, along

with Central and South America. The Marines conducted significant operations in Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. As the Marines would come to understand during Small Wars Period, there was plenty of combat action where sociopolitical turmoil converged with diplomatic and military objectives.

As the Small Wars Period came to an end in 1940, the Marine Corps published the *Small Wars Manual* in an effort to document the hard fought lessons learned in the various conflicts since the completion of the Spanish-American War in 1898. The manual is the first published IW doctrine by the US military as the Marines noticed a recognizable difference in the conduct of small wars versus that of large conventional conflicts.²⁷ The opening passages of the *Small Wars Manual* attempts to explain the term small wars as “a vague name for any one of the great variety of irregular military conflicts.”²⁸ This distinction between IW and conventional warfare is important because every conflict the US military participated in of the twentieth century, with the exception of World War II, Korea, and Desert Storm, is defined as an irregular conflict.²⁹ Some of the more significant irregular conflicts since the *Small Wars Manual* was published include irregular conflicts in China, Vietnam, Lebanon, Libya, Granada, El Salvador, Panama, and Somalia. Although USSOCOM is now directed under Title 10 authorities as the lead US military agency in conducting IW, the Marine Corps has served in a “special” capacity in every one of these conflicts, signifying the importance of the Marine Corps’ efforts during the Small Wars Period to current IW doctrine.³⁰

MARSOC

Prior to the establishment of MARSOC, Marine Corps history is filled with what today would be characterized as special operations. Marine units such as the Raider Regiment and Amphibious Recon Battalions during World War II, Force Recon Company in Vietnam,

MEUSOCs, and the Marine Forces Detachment One in Iraq have all conducted specialized operations in support of IW objectives long before the Marine Corps was formally represented in USSOCOM with the establishment of MARSOC. Despite organizational differences between the present day Marine Corps and USSOCOM, both services enjoy similar histories in service cultural development as elite warrior organizations within the US military hierarchy.

MARSOC was established at the personal direction of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in February 2006 through an initiative to increase the overall size and capacity of US special operation forces (SOF). At the MARSOC commencement ceremony, Secretary Rumsfeld pointed out “the elite nature of the Marine Corps is a natural fit for expanding the capacity of the highly trained special operation forces in the US war on terror.”³¹ The addition of MARSOC immediately met the needs of USSOCOM to realign US military forces to meet the “ever growing” irregular nature of America’s enemies.³² Later the same year, Brigadier General Dennis Hejlik, the special operations unit’s first Commanding General, described the inception of MARSOC as “painting a car while driving 50 miles per hour,” as the first Marine SOF units deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in December 2006.³³

Today, MARSOC is roughly a 3,000 Marine command split between Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and Camp Pendleton, California, giving USSOCOM a true unified capability with representatives from all four US military components. As designated by Title 10 Authorities, MARSOC’s directed missions span the entire spectrum of IW tasks, including Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Counter-Terrorism (CT), Information Operations (IO), and Unconventional Warfare (UW).³⁴ This particular array of mission capabilities allows MARSOC teams the unique ability to train foreign

forces, collect intelligence, and apply direct or indirect strikes internally within the same small unit.

Most recently in August 2014, MARSOC was re-designated as the Marine Raider Regiment, fueling renewed consternation against special operations units within the elite Marine Corps. With noted similarities in mission and culture, current Marine Special Operators are now forever linked to the iconic Marine Commandos of World War II.³⁵ The renaming of MARSOC serves as a reminder of the Marine Corps' historical contributions to special operations in IW in support of the US strategic military objectives. Although renaming MARSOC as the Marine Raiders has been a renewed source of trepidation for Marine infantry purists, the renaming highlights the similarities in history and organizational culture between the development of the US Special Operations Command and the US Marine Corps in conducting IW in small wars conflicts.

SMALL WARS AND IRREGULAR WARFARE: NICARAGUA (1909-1933)

USMC and the Small Wars Period: Nicaragua

As the US began to assert expansive influence over the Western Hemisphere after the turn of the century, the US Army was preoccupied with ongoing missions in the Philippines, Cuba, and Mexico, leaving the Marines to take up the slack in the remaining Central American and Caribbean states of strategic importance. Nicaragua was probably the most notable nation of importance in the region because of its strategic locations between semi-hostile Mexico and the on-going interoceanic canal project in Panama.³⁶ Nicaragua was also in a seemingly endless cycle of economic, social, and political turmoil as it struggled to mature after the traditional European colonial powers retreated back across the Atlantic Ocean. The complex situation in

Nicaragua was a challenge for the Marine Corps, which was also experiencing a transitional period of becoming a stand-alone force instead of simply an auxiliary landing force for the Navy.³⁷

The 21 year Marine Corps campaign in Nicaraguan is significantly contributed to current special operations and irregular warfare doctrine through the development of foreign internal defense practices to compliment direct action and unconventional tactics. Ongoing conflict in the Central American nation allowed for plenty of opportunity to develop irregular warfare tactics as the Marine Corps conducted 10 separate operations in Nicaragua from 1912 to 1933.³⁸ These Nicaraguan interventions presented numerous challenges to Marine Corps operational planning and execution of the time period. Some of the specific challenges included peacekeeping, hostage rescue, refugee support, drug interdiction, and counterinsurgency operations.³⁹ Specific actions in solving these challenges, highlighted in the development of the *Guardia Nacional* and the *Rio Coco* Patrol, are key examples of how Marine ingenuity led to specialized tactical advances in small war execution. These specialized tactics eventually evolved into the present day MARSOC operations in foreign internal defense (FID), direct action (DA), and unconventional warfare (UW). Although little, if any, small wars doctrine existed at the beginning of the conflict, the Marines' development of creative tactics utilizing host nation forces led to innovative counter-guerilla strategies to resolve popular resistance that are now considered staples for conducting special operations in IW.

Background of Nicaraguan Campaign

Following the completion of the US war with Mexico in 1848, Nicaragua became both economically and strategically important to the US, serving as a communications and logistics layover for commerce activities between North and South America.⁴⁰ In addition to serving as a

transcontinental hub for the US, Nicaragua competed with the Panama project, sponsored by the French, for completion of an interoceanic canal connecting the Caribbean to the Pacific Ocean.⁴¹ The Nicaraguan Canal project eventually stalled once the US purchased and took over the Panama project from the French. Completion of the Panama Canal aside, Nicaragua remained an economically strategic market because of significant US investments in the fruit, textiles, and lumber industries.⁴²

Nicaragua was in a constant state of turmoil as competing social and political groups wrestled for control of the country by the beginning of the Small Wars Period.⁴³ The two main political parties fighting for control were the Conservatives, the elite class from Managua, and the working class Liberals from Leon. This sociopolitical turmoil often turned into violent outbursts as Nicaragua suffered from one civil insurrection after another. In accordance with the “dollar and good neighbor” policies under the Roosevelt Corollary, the US sought to quell Nicaraguan instability in order to ensure European powers could not regain influence in the region.⁴⁴ From the US perspective, Nicaraguan unrest not only destabilized the Panama Canal security zone, but also stunted commerce across the Central and South American regions. This type of instability invited intervention from European countries looking for an opportunity to regain a foothold in the region.⁴⁵ As a result, the State Department directed the Marines to establish a permanent post in Nicaragua in an effort to quiet local political turmoil and maintain US interests throughout the region.

It is important to note that the Marines’ presence in Nicaragua was not always up to the standards of good order and discipline. The same 100-Marine auxiliary force tasked with supporting the embassy initiatives was also the primary culprits of indiscretion and consternation amongst the locals. This legation-guarding Marine force was an ill-trained, ill-disciplined, and

ill-officered aggregate that routinely challenged the local population and police force in street and bar fights.⁴⁶ This sort of barbaric behavior frequently stoked strong feelings of resentment from the local population and contributed considerably to enduring difficulties in US foreign relations. Despite sometimes hostile feelings towards incidents in bad conduct by the Nicaraguans, the Marines were able to overcome most indiscretions to eventually contribute to stability and security by establishing effective small unit leadership among the ranks. It was some of these small unit leaders that in countering negative sentiments towards the Marines devised the creative tactics and innovative strategies in that eventually would counter the Nicaraguan guerilla rebellion.

Development of the Guardia Nacional

In February 1927, 400 Marines landed in Managua in what is known as the Second Marine Nicaragua Intervention.⁴⁷ These reinforcing troops were sent to augment the small auxiliary of Marines that were permanently stationed in the Nicaraguan capital. Once established ashore as the 2nd Marine Brigade, the Marines wasted little time in establishing neutral zones for protection of civilians and property while engineering a cease fire between the Liberal and Conservative armies.⁴⁸ US military presence eventually persuaded the warring sides to turn in their weapons and collected over 3,700 rifles and machine guns from the Liberals and over 11,000 similar weapons from the Conservatives.⁴⁹

Despite successes in establishing a peace, not all Nicaraguan parties were happy with the Marines' presence. Liberal General Augusto C. Sandino distrusted the cease-fire with the rival Conservatives and viewed the Marines' actions as foreign interference. He claimed the Marines were an imperial occupying force bent on stealing the wealth of the Nicaraguan people based on his observations of misconduct by the standing Marine auxiliary force.⁵⁰ In May 1927, after

failing to turn in his weapons, General Sandino retreated into the rugged Nicaraguan interior with 200 followers to launch a “war of national liberation.”⁵¹ His actions reignited civil unrest despite Sandino’s Liberal Party victory in the national election under the Marines’ supervision.⁵² In truth, General Sandino saw the cease fire as an opportunity to steal power and influence for himself and launched what would become a six year guerilla action against the Nicaraguan elite and the US Marines in favor of his own power grabbing interests.

Notwithstanding the rapid improvements in the 2nd Marine Brigade’s conduct, General Sandino’s rebellious actions brought Nicaragua back to the brink of civil war. In the face of initial successes in establishing security and supervising fair elections, the Marines were insufficiently manned to hold peace across the entire country. In addition, the US State Department was leaning towards a withdrawal of military forces now that a representative government had been re-established.⁵³ With another civil war looming on the horizon, the Marines took over the recruiting, training, and leadership of the *Guardia Nacional* (GN), which was both the long standing Nicaraguan law enforcement and national security force.⁵⁴

Like most Central American military forces, the GN was continually hampered by political corruption and selfish, unresponsive leadership. Nicaraguan politics during the turn of the century was a dirty business with the GN’s loyalties usually going to the highest bidder instead of protecting the general population.⁵⁵ The Marines began overhauling the GN forces by dismissing the existing ineffective leadership and implementing a Marine Corps style basic training package. Marine Non-Commission Officers (NCOs) were given the rank of Captain and placed in charge of GN platoons. Junior Marine Officers were promoted to field grade ranks and placed in senior GN leadership positions. By the beginning of 1928, the Marines’ influence and leadership had turned the GN into a respectable force.⁵⁶ The professional progress was such that

GN forces effectively marginalized Sandino influence in the capital before eventually securing the entire western coast of Nicaragua.⁵⁷

A unit of note in the renovation of the GN was the highly trained and disciplined Company M, led by Captain Lewis (Chesty) Puller.⁵⁸ Company M (for Mobile) was developed uniquely for specialized search and destroys missions that targeted the highly mobile guerilla forces that harbored deep in the Nicaraguan mountains.⁵⁹ Captain Puller recognized the rebels had advantages in terrain understanding, along with the ability to blend in the local population when the GN applied pressure. To mitigate these advantages, Company M broke down into two maneuver elements to improve speed and mobility.⁶⁰ In addition, Captain Puller lightened the personal loads of the force to the bare necessities and got rid of horses in favor of mules. The latter have more endurance and are able to move longer distances with less feed and rest. The efficiencies in improvement allowed Company M to move up to 40 miles a day, whereas normal GN units averaged 15 to 18.⁶¹ By improving efficiencies in light infantry tactics and logistical requirements, Company M sustained constant pressure on Sandino, causing the guerilla forces to push farther east into the rugged interior and from the population centers around the Nicaraguan capital.

The Marines' overall efforts in overhauling GN security forces are noteworthy because the action is one the first cases of true foreign internal defense (FID) implemented by the US military. The USSOCOM publication, *Irregular Warfare: Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies*, defines FID as “the diplomatic, economic, informational, and military support provided to another nation to assist its fight against subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.”⁶² The Marines not only addressed their economy of force issues by augmenting and professionalizing existing GN forces with American leadership, but also developed and

integrated economic and political reforms to augment the overall GN security strategy to counter the guerilla movement. The Marines' development of a sustainable and credible host nation force was important to the success of the overall security strategy through the reorganization of manpower and resources to make up for shortfalls in the overall political environment.

To further enhance their FID initiatives in Nicaragua, the Marines added an elite element into the GN by developing Company M into a specialized light infantry organization that specialized in what is now considered direct action (DA) operations. DA, which is the combination of raid, ambush, and direct assault tactics, is designed to achieve specific and well timed strategic results.⁶³ The Marines realized they needed to mitigate Sandino's "home field" advantages in terrain and population support and build Company M into an elite hunter-killer team with the sole purpose of hunting down Sandino rebels. Company M became Nicaragua's strike force, allowing the more conventional GN elements to carry out general security and political reforms. In fact, it can be argued that Captain Puller's developments in mobility and logistics are a precursor to commando oriented units like the US Army Rangers. In the end, Company M's DA initiatives applied enough pressure on the guerillas to allow the Marines to establish stability throughout the general population.

Marines' Rio Coco Campaign

Marine Captain Merritt Edson, leading the 150-man Special Service Squadron, pushed ashore from the USS Denver on the east coast of Nicaragua in January of 1928.⁶⁴ Their mission was to capture General Sandino and disrupt his terror campaign that had gained strength since moving to the eastern settlements.⁶⁵ After being pushed out by the combined Marine/GN force from the western provinces around Managua and Leon, Sandino's guerrillas began attacking the

eastern settlements of the country to sustain the movement through the requisition of food, horses, and military supplies.⁶⁶

Eastern Nicaragua was less populated than the western provinces, but had more commercial value in terms of resource procurement through the recent influx of foreign lumber and mining firms. The Miskito Indians dominated the eastern provinces of Nicaragua as one of the few tribes that had not been conquered by the Spanish. The entirety of the Nicaraguan Eastern seaboard was dominated by a massive river known as the *Rio Coco*. The *Rio Coco* was similar to the Mississippi river in the American South, providing economic opportunity and the principal transportation corridor into the interior of the country. The native Indian tribes, including the Miskito, were experts at navigating the *Rio Coco*, a skill that was noticed by both the Marines and guerillas.

Soon after landing, it became apparent to the Marines that the Sandino guerillas controlled the attention of the eastern population through both allegiance and intimidation.⁶⁷ The foreign contract workers and the Miskito Indians either overtly supported the guerillas' cause or were intimidated to the point of apathy for fear of reprisal. In an effort to counter guerilla influence, Captain Edson and the Special Service Marines began to cultivate dissent by establishing an informant network through localized work programs. The program's primary purpose was to support Marine operations ashore, but it also put money into the local economy, while facilitating the access to the local population.⁶⁸ Compared to the search and destroy tactics employed by Company M in the west, this non-aggressive program used by Edson and the Special Service Marines quickly paid off by building trust throughout the Indian tribes.⁶⁹ By initially focusing on the population instead of directly on Sandino's forces, the Marine detachment had correctly identified the loyalties of the eastern population as the key to sustained

operations against the guerilla forces. This allowed Captain Edson's Marines to build anti-guerilla resistance within the eastern population. The resistance led to widespread dissention among the Miskito Indians, openly pressuring General Sandino despite the relatively small amount of combat resources available to the Marines.

With pressure now coming from both coasts, General Sandino withdrew his forces to the isolated village of Poteca in the mountains of rugged Central Nicaragua. Although cut off from sustainable supply lines in both Pacific and Caribbean markets, the guerillas still terrorized the country by raiding the coastal population centers.⁷⁰ In addition, Poteca offered General Sandino's forces added protection through extreme isolation as the Marines could not approach the stronghold overland without being detected. Poteca's isolated location also allowed the guerillas to escape north into Honduras if conditions were not favorable to their operations.

In an effort to gain surprise on the guerillas, Captain Edson began planning a long range river raid on Poteca up the *Rio Coco* to capture General Sandino's headquarters.⁷¹ The plan called for the Marines to infiltrate 350 miles up the river to the guerilla stronghold using Indian guides with indigenous boats for transport. After suffering repeated ambushes in the six months in country, the Marines realized an overland raid had little chance for success. Also working in favor of a river infiltration, the Special Service Marines enjoyed a strong relationship with the Miskito tribe, further solidifying confidence in mission success. The source of the trust between the Marines and the Miskito tribe was the formation a Miskito constabulary force called the *Civicos*, which successfully augmented Marine forces in policing the coastal areas.⁷²

In July 1928, Captain Edson led a combined force of 46 Marines and Miskito Indians in canoes up the *Rio Coco*. After a hard month of paddling up river, living off the land, and avoiding guerilla sympathizers, the combined force successfully surprised Sandino's stronghold.

The sunrise attack caught Sandino forces totally unaware, which allowed the Marines to capture Poteca and destroy guerilla resistance virtually unopposed.⁷³ Although the overwhelmed guerillas were thoroughly defeated, General Sandino unfortunately escaped north to Honduras during the day-long battle.⁷⁴ After the completion of the battle, the Marines maintained control of Poteca as an interior outpost, effectively controlling the entire expanse of Nicaragua.

Captain Edson's effort to establish popular support and foster relationships was a model example of how patience and unconventional tactics could be effective in small wars conflicts. The Marines utilized non-standard river infiltration techniques to surprise the guerillas. The Marines correctly identifying popular support with the people as the important link to multiplying the effectiveness of limited manpower and resources. By establishing relationships with the Indians and building *Civico* forces, the Marines were able to secure indigenous guides and boats for the arduous river raid that would have otherwise been impossible for US forces alone. Utilizing the *Rio Coco* added the element of surprise that an otherwise unilateral overland raid through the jungle would have been otherwise too difficult to sustain logistically.

The Marines' *Rio Coco* campaign, along with the development of the *Civicos*, not only utilized the same successful FID and DA concepts that worked with the GN forces, but also developed an overt resistance movement against Sandino's guerillas within the eastern population. In today's SOF doctrine, establishing resistance activities through subversion, coercion, or disruption to overthrow the existing power broker in a denied area is known as unconventional warfare (UW).⁷⁵ Although formal UW doctrine would not come full circle until the commando operations of World War II, Captain Edson, with the Special Service Marines utilized the subversion and cohesion to build enough resistance to marginalize guerilla influence on the east Coast of Nicaragua. Marginalizing Sandino and his guerilla movement, combined

with the Marines' logistical, training, and security support in the *Rio Coco* campaign proved to be the unconventional solution needed to solve the irregular small wars problem in Eastern Nicaragua.

Conclusion for Nicaraguan Campaign

The Nicaraguan conflict was the most well-known and publicized conflict of the Marine Corps' small wars experience because of the unique collection of challenges presented against US foreign policy of the era. In today's military jargon, Nicaragua would be classified as an irregular conflict. The combination of social, political, and military challenges of the Nicaraguan conflict would be a difficult problem for the Marines to handle if they had not correctly identified the local population as the key to defeating the guerrilla forces. According to the Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept 2.0, "Irregular warfare is about people, not platforms. IW success not only depends on military prowess, but also on understanding of such social dynamics as tribal politics, social networks, religious influences, and cultural mores."⁷⁶ In Nicaragua, the application of combat power alone would not have been enough to solve the overall conflict without the associated civil programs geared towards developing the local population's support for the Marines' overall objectives.

What is interesting about the Nicaraguan interdiction is the unique tactics and overall strategy the Marines developed to deal with these sociopolitical challenges despite the lack of formal US doctrine in unconventional warfare. Irregular doctrine to deal with small wars or low intensity conflicts simply did not exist at the time of the Nicaraguan interdiction. Young Marines developed direct action initiatives to meet small war challenges "on the fly" by training and leading the GN and *Civicos*. Simultaneously, these same junior ranks comprehended that indirect pressure on the guerilla forces, developed through popular support, was needed to

compliment combat oriented tactics. In the end, the overall strategy of direct action through host nation forces combined with indirect pressure through the local population proved to be the winning formula in defeating guerilla belligerents.

When examined closely, the Marines' irregular tactics developed in Nicaragua included FID, DA, and UW, all of which are current MARSOC core skill sets required in the execution of modern day USSOCOM operations. Young Marine officers such as Captains Edson and Puller developed these current SOF specific techniques to solve tactical, on the ground challenges to support the overall small war campaign plan in Nicaragua. Special trained forces capable of solely focusing on irregular problems simply did not exist at the time requiring military leadership on the ground to develop solutions to small wars challenges on top of the daily assigned duties. Today, as SOF organizations, including MARSOC, continue to take the lead for IW development and execution, freeing up large component commands, such as the Marine Corps, to fully concentrate on overall operational objectives. As MARSOC continues to mature in the tactical areas of FID, DA, and UW, the Marine Corps' overall operational capabilities within the joint environment will expand with SOF specific Marines supporting and advising on IW initiatives.

SPECIALIZED TACTICS IN SUBDUING REVOLT: HAITI (1915-1934)

USMC and the Small Wars Period: Haiti

With the US already heavily engaged through the Marine Corps in Nicaragua, Haiti became an additional nation of interest under the overall regional stability plan controlling the Panama Canal security zone. Like Nicaragua, Haiti was continually torn by inept national governance through turnover from repeated political coups, making the island nation susceptible

to foreign intervention.⁷⁷ The US was especially suspicious of German imperial ambition in the Caribbean as hostilities in Europe were beginning to escalate into World War I. Germany valued Haiti as a coaling station on incursions into South and Central America, which directly challenged American dominance in the Western Hemisphere.⁷⁸ In an effort to block further European influence into the Caribbean, while also quelling further sociopolitical unrest, the US government again turned to the Marine Corps as an intervention force in order to establish stability in Haiti and security throughout the overall region.

The Marine Corps' occupation of Haiti is significant to contemporary IW practices utilized by MARSOC because of the large and varied scope in small wars mission challenges and solutions developed over the 19-year conflict. Over the length of the operation, the Marines battled an almost constant insurgency, defeated two major revolts, trained and led the national security force, and implemented social and civic reforms for governance for the establishment of peace.⁷⁹ To gain a foothold on security, the Marines developed specialized reconnaissance and direct action techniques, which later became SOF core skill sets, to specifically counter the complexity of the Haitian problem. In order to maintain the peace, the Marines were forced to redevelop the Haitian social system to address long standing racial unrest through community internal defense (CID) programs to compliment the specialized security tactics. The unique combination of social, civil, and economic reforms, along with small war tactics and strategy, mark the Marine Corps' actions in the Haitian conflict a key contribution in the development of modern day specialized tactics in solving irregular warfare problems.

Background of Haitian Campaign

The political situation in Haiti during the Small Wars Period was a continuation of racial unrest dating back to the Haitian Revolution of 1804. The revolution marked a violent end to

colonial rule as Haiti's slave population rose up and slaughtered the French population on the island.⁸⁰ Power struggles fueled by racial tension were a seemingly routine endeavor for the next 100 years as the mostly black peasant class routinely fought the lighter skinned elite in the *mulatre* for political control.⁸¹ Haiti had nine dictators after the turn of the century alone, each successively replaced by one violent coup after another. Finally in 1915, the Marine Corps occupied Haiti in an effort to deter further German intervention, while also restoring order to establish a Haitian administration sympathetic to American initiatives in the region.

The Marines landed in Port-au-Prince in August 1915 in the midst of Haiti's latest rebellion. Once ashore, the Marines quickly realized the rebels, known locally as Cacos, were a sizable and formidable movement that required immediate attention. The Cacos were descendants from runaway slaves that formed a quasi-military force originating in Haiti's mountainous interior. In times of peace, the Cacos subsisted on pure banditry, preying on farmers and travelers in the Haitian interior for money, while extorting food, livestock, and shelter from whole villages.⁸² During rebellious periods, the Cacos were hired by the political elites as mercenaries to overthrow sitting administrations.⁸³ Caco forces would fight to install any governor willing to pay them, never needing much incentive to kill the *mulatre* elite.

Severe economic inequity further exacerbated racial tensions within Haitian society. Out of 2 million people in 1915, 95 percent were illiterate peasants suffering in extreme poverty from the lack of sustainable infrastructure throughout the island.⁸⁴ Haiti had few suitable interior roads, no accessible health facilities, and no public service for clean water, electricity, or communications available to the lower class population. To further complicate both economic and racial matters that stunted Haitian progress, almost the entire population suffered from either syphilis or a variety of tropical diseases including hook worm, small pox, typhoid, and malaria.⁸⁵

The lack of a centralized health care system precluded all elements of Haitian society from a sustainable income because of frequent bouts with the various tropical diseases.

A full understanding of the complex challenges the Marines continually struggled with during the Haitian operation cannot be established without first understanding the diverse cultural and spiritual world of Haiti.⁸⁶ Haitian religion was dominated by *sevi lwa*, meaning the serving of spirits.⁸⁷ The religious roots of *sevi lwa* came about with the slave trade in West-Central Africa and intermingled with new world Catholicism once in Haiti. Modern day *sevi lwa* practices are known as voodoo magic.⁸⁸ Followers of *sevi lwa* essentially believe that the linkage between the spirit world and the living is by way of possession, meaning a spirit takes over a living person to communicate.⁸⁹ The Marines, mostly of the Christian faith, failed to understand and violently opposed *sevi lwa*, writing the practice off as a mysterious and sinister practice.⁹⁰

The Marines initial violent reaction to *sevi lwa* and other cultural practices only exacerbated pre-existing racial biases within the Marines serving in the Haitian intervention. A majority of the Haitian Marines were from the American South, where racial tensions were still simmering from the Civil War reconstruction period.⁹¹ In fact, the Marine Corps recruited and encouraged Marines from the southern states to serve in Haiti because the general thinking of the era believed that serviceman from that region could better handle racial unrest from having grown up in that environment.⁹² The combination of voodoo intolerance and preexisting institutional racism resulted in brutal, heavy handed treatment from the Marines towards the Haitian population in establishing peace.⁹³ The first occupying Marines viewed the Haitian culture with contempt, treating the population as human objects without basic rights.⁹⁴ Poor leadership and the lack of cultural understanding, fueled by racial hatred, were key inhibitors to the Marines' initial policies in securing Haitian stability. The overwhelming lack of cultural

awareness greatly hindered the Marines' overall efforts to secure peace. The overall absence of ethnic sensitivity most definitely prolonged the occupation as the Marines had to first institutionalize internal social improvements before implementing the key of social, civil, and economic reforms needed to solve the Haitian small wars problem.

The First Caco War

In August 1915, several thousand Marines landed in the Haitian capital and quickly secured ten garrisons in the surrounding countryside in an effort to establish peace.⁹⁵ There was little resistance in securing Port-au-Prince, but the surrounding countryside and supporting villages proved more difficult. The higher class citizenry, living near the capital was supportive of the Marines' presence but the distrusting peasantry in rural villages refused to lay down arms. With tension mounting to the Marines' presence, several violent clashes erupted with a large Caco army eventually marching on Port-au-Prince. The Cacos were bent on destroying both the occupying Marines along with the sitting government.⁹⁶ A brief standoff ensued as the Marines defended the capital with a brief but violent battle that sent the rebel army reeling. After failing to overtake the capital, the rebel army melted back into the rugged interior, content to fight a guerilla campaign against the Marines and the Haitian government.

Hoping to isolate the Caco leadership that was instigating the latest rebellion, Marine Major Smedley Butler devised a series of reconnaissance patrols in an effort to locate and neutralize militant strongholds.⁹⁷ Leading his men on extended patrols through rugged mountainous terrain, Major Butler's plan called for maintaining continuous pressure on Caco forces to prevent further disruptions in the capital. The initial patrolling efforts met with marginal success in locating the enemy as the Caco bands were adept at melting back into the local populace throughout the countryside as the Marines approached. The Marine's efforts were

successful in relieving pressure on Port-au-Prince as the Caco were unable to mount serious resistance on the capital but it was clear that patrolling alone would not defeat the guerilla movement. As a result, the Marines began to develop an informant network to build an intelligence picture to help focus the reconnaissance patrolling efforts.

Utilizing their informant network to track down information on Caco strongholds, the Marines discovered the rebel resistance was operating in and around the mountains in the *Grande Riviere* region. The *Grande Riviere* region, also known as the “Big River” region, is an isolated stretch of rugged mountains in the Northern provinces of Haiti. Travel through the region is restricted to a trail network along the river as this hills are too vegetated and rough for normal roads. With guerilla information in hand, Major Butler redirected his deep reconnaissance patrolling efforts throughout the region with a renewed focus on isolating the Caco leadership.

In October, a band of about 400 Caco fighters ambushed a company sized patrol of Marines while fording a large river in mountains of *Grande Riviere*.⁹⁸ Luckily for the Marines, the Cacos were undisciplined marksmen as the initial volley of fire took out most of the pack horses and injured only one Marine.⁹⁹ The surprised Marines returned fire and were able to fight their way out of the river to a nearby knoll. The now badly outnumbered Marines fortified the knoll the best they could and repelled repeated Caco assaults throughout the night. After a long night on the defensive, the now desperate Company formed into three elements and assaulted the larger bandit force across the river.¹⁰⁰ The ferocity of the Marines’ assault overwhelmed the superior Caco attackers and the remaining rebels retreated north to an abandoned colonial fort at the foot of the *Grande Riviere* Mountains. Despite losing most of the pack stock in the initial surprising moments of the ambush, the Marine Company was able to force a definitive

engagement with Caco forces. By overwhelming their attackers, the Marine reconnaissance patrol was able to follow the bandits back to *Fort Riviere*, which served as the headquarters for the Caco rebellion.¹⁰¹

The Marines' reconnaissance strategy had achieved the desired results of locating and isolating the primary agitators in the Caco resistance, Maj Butler personally led a four-man patrol to scout out the enemy position at *Fort Riviere*. The long abandoned fort was an old French bastion, with 25 foot stone walls, sitting atop a 4,000 foot mountain with inclined approaches from three directions.¹⁰² The French had selected the austere location to defend because the terrain offered a natural defense against attack. As the Marines probed the bandit position, Major Butler discovered several hundred Caco fighters manning the defensive works of the old fort. Realizing the difficulty in assaulting the Caco defenses, the patrol also located a water drainage tunnel that apparently led into the interior of the fort as a possible entry point for the Marine attack force.

Again, the Marines' reconnaissance strategy proved fruitful as the small patrol returned to the main Marine force with information needed to breach the Caco fortress. On 18 November, Major Butler's 100-man force broke into two groups and attacked the Caco stronghold at *Fort Riviera*.¹⁰³ With approximately half the Marine suppressing the Caco defensive positions with machine gun fire, Major Butler personally led the main assault force through the drainage pipe and into the old fort. The assault force burst into the courtyard of the old fort, surprising the Caco fighters manning the defenses along the parapets. The Marines' mass of fires and daring assault quickly overwhelmed the superior bandit force, leaving 70 Caco fighters dead, including the self-proclaimed bandit leader General Josephett. The remaining Caco leadership scattered

with the death of General Josephett, prompting the remaining fighters to throw down their arms, thus, effectively ending the First Caco War in Haiti.¹⁰⁴

Major Butler's development of deep reconnaissance patrolling, focused through informant networks, solidified the intelligence picture enough to isolate the primary Caco area of operations. In contemporary SOF operations, Major Butler's intelligence-driven reconnaissance operation is known as special reconnaissance (SR). According to JP3-05, Special Operations, SR is the "process of collecting intelligence through assets and systems to obtain specific, well defined, and time sensitive information of strategic and operational significance."¹⁰⁵ In this case, the SR efforts of the Marines located and isolated the main Caco force in *Fort Riviera*. Once isolated, the Marines decisively engaged the bandit stronghold with a DA attack, destroying the will and fighting spirit of Caco forces and effectively ending the rebellion. As an interesting aside to the Marines efforts in Haiti, Major Butler received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his development of tactics and subsequent leadership in the attack on *Fort Riviere*.

Development of the Gendarmerie d' Haiti

Following the first Caco uprising, the Marines' biggest concern was the establishment of a constabulary force if Haiti was going to take over its own security matters. The threat of another noire rebellion was still strong because Haitian economic inequalities still existed. In addition, there simply were not enough Marines available to keep the peace should the Cacos revolt again. In February 1916, US leadership issued orders for the establishment of the *Gendarmerie d'Haiti*, or more simply known as the *Garde*, as both a police and military force, with initial leadership requirements to be manned by Marine Officers and NCOs.¹⁰⁶

Initial efforts in establishing the *Garde* were slow, due mainly to Marine prejudices and a general lack of trust by the Haitian government official. Although significant progress had been made in subduing Caco violence, the relative peace was undercut by the Marines' general disdain for the dark skinned Haitians.¹⁰⁷ To further complicate matters, the Haitian government was apprehensive of militarizing native security forces for fear of intimidation should the *Garde* become too powerful. By May 1916, Marines eased racial tensions by improving daily conduct to the point that the island nation ratified the American-Haitian Treaty, legitimizing the *Garde* with its Marine leadership.¹⁰⁸

By 1918, the *Garde* was the principle agent of security in routine contact with the Haitian people.¹⁰⁹ The native constabulary, still under Marine supervision, also managed a wide spectrum of civic action programs from digging clean water wells in rural villages, to the construction of all-weather roadways in support of agricultural initiatives. The most notable of these programs included the building of 11 hospitals and 17 rural clinics.¹¹⁰ With medical support from the US Navy, the *Garde* helped organize 159 Haitian doctors into a public health union, significantly reducing disease epidemics that had historically plagued the Haitian countryside.¹¹¹ In short order, the *Garde*, under Marine leadership, proved successful as the principle agent in most security, economic, and social reconstruction projects.

By the time the Marines had established themselves in Haiti, they were adept at organizing and developing host nation forces to meet the overall security needs of the situation at hand. The development of the *Garde* is another small wars example where FID techniques became an economy of force measure for the Marines. Under Marine leadership, the *Garde* not only established itself as the primary Haitian security force, but also the humanitarian and civil reform organization within the island nation. Having a Haitian face on both security and civil

reform measures eased some of the tensions for the Marines, becoming a foundational tactic for both future and conventional FID operations. In today's SOF doctrine, the basic FID principle the Marines established and refined in Haiti is the "by, with, and through" concept, meaning the host nation forces take the lead with US military support in order to free and protect society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.¹¹²

The Second Caco War

Despite the progress made in both security and civil reforms, there was still a general sense of distrust from the majority of the Haitian public towards the occupation force because of continued historical prejudices in social inequity. Furthermore, the *Garde* was heavy handed in security matters of disagreement with the civilian population refueling discontent towards the native constabulary.¹¹³ Despite laws and Marine Corps orders forbidding the practice, the Marine led *Garde* continually implemented the widely unpopular *corvee* system in civil infrastructure construction projects. *Corvee* was an antiquated French law that required civilians to donate labor in lieu of paying taxes.¹¹⁴ This forced labor practice bred malcontent within the lower social classes so much that it became the primary source of agitation for the Second Caco War. The use of the *Corvee* practices is a specific example where individual Marines, through pre-existing American racial strains, negatively affected and prolonged the Haitian occupation with contempt for the host nation population. European educated Charlemagne Peralte, the principle belligerent in the uprising, capitalized on *corvee* tensions to galvanize several thousand followers against the *Garde* and its Marine advisors.¹¹⁵

Bitter fighting ensued over the next two years between the combined security forces and the Caco rebels. Under Peralte's dynamic leadership, Caco forces eventually grew to just over 5500 rebels, pressuring *Garde* garrisons throughout the Haitian frontier.¹¹⁶ Peralte's belligerent

forces were better organized than previous uprisings, growing bold enough to threaten security in Port-au-Prince, despite continued improvements in *Garde* operational practices. By 1919, the Marines had turned over almost half of the *Garde's* leadership to native born officers, despite ongoing combat operations.¹¹⁷ The Haitian government, along with its Marine advisors, became convinced that the elimination of Peralte was the key to quelling the war.

On 31 October, 1919, Peralte attacked *Grande Riviere* with several thousand Cacos with the objective of annihilating both the village and its 55-man *Garde* garrison.¹¹⁸ As the Caco force converged on the North Haiti village, Sergeant Herman H. Hannekan, along with one other Marine Corporal, was responsible for an 18 *Garde* platoon in the *Grande Riviere* garrison. Once the sizable attack commenced, Sergeant Hannekan determined that the only way to save the village, along with the garrison, was to somehow kill Peralte. Taking advantage of the chaos caused in the surrounding village, Sergeant Hannekan ordered the *Garde* patrol out of their uniforms and to dress as peasants while both he and his assistant patrol leader darkened their skin with charcoal.¹¹⁹

After disguising themselves as Cacos, Sergeant Hannekan and his platoon fell in with a band of Cacos returning from *Grande Riviere* by claiming to have information directly on a Marine patrol.¹²⁰ The Caco imposters insisted on delivering the intelligence directly to Peralte himself. With the confusion from the ongoing battle, the Cacos were fooled by the Marines' ruse and took the patrol directly to see the rebel leader. After moving through Caco defenses for most of the night, the Caco imposters arrived at the rebel headquarters and lured Charlemagne Peralte from his tent with the rebel challenge and password. Once Peralte walked into the firelight, Sergeant Hannekan promptly killed the rebel leader, ending the attack on *Grande Riviere*. In addition, the death of Peralte effectively ended the Second Caco War and the Marines took the

rebel leader's body back to Port-au-Prince for display. Word spread of the Sergeant Hannekan's exploits in thwarting the Peralte's attack on the isolated village, crushing the Caco army's will to continue the fight, as well as earning him the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The end of the Second Caco War marked the completion of a large scale rebellion even though the Marines would not leave Haiti for another 15 years. The importance of the Marines' use of irregular tactics in quelling the second rebellion is highlighted in the *Gendarmerie d'Haiti*. Development of this native constabulary, similar to current SOF FID operations, allowed the Marines to address not only Haitian security deficiencies but also address racial, economic and social injustices of Haiti as well. Establishment of the *Garde* also became a point of friction when localized authority was mismanaged with the reimplementation of forced labor. Even though the rebellion would have probably happened anyway because of residual racism and economic tensions, the miscalculated use of the *corvee* labor system highlights the influence seemingly small tactical decisions have on the overall security strategy. In contrast, the positive actions Sergeant Hannekan took in saving the *Grande Riviere* village and stalling the second Caco revolt would fall under UW operations in today's special operations environment. His problem solving initiative and the implementation of irregular small unit tactics not only saved himself and his comrades in arms, but also brought stability back to the overall Haitian security situation.

Conclusion for the Haitian Campaign

Although initially precarious because of racial stigmas and societal mistrust, the Marines' development of the *Gendarmerie d' Haiti* proved to be the economy of force needed to stabilize the Marines' security efforts. Like in the Nicaraguan campaign, the Marines' use of FID principles made up for the lack of manpower and resources to solve the irregular challenges the

Haiti conflict presented. Unlike the Central American campaign, FID alone was not sufficient in solving the complexity of the entire Haitian conflict.

The Haitian conflict tested the Marines' resolve and proved to be a wide and varied scope of civil and military operations. Haiti had previously shown several hundred years of political dysfunction, which greatly exacerbated security problems when the Marines arrived. The combination of social and economic inequalities thrust the peasant class into continual turmoil, which required Marines to engage in innovative thinking in order to develop specialized tactics to restore peace. As a result, the Haitian problem became a stark example of irregular conflict during the Small Wars Period. In contemporary terms, the Marines established and employed a system of CID, which is the establishment of capabilities that support the creation of enduring, safe, and secure environments with local participation and responsibility.¹²¹

CID focuses on a "whole of nation" (WON) approach rather than simply the internal security forces engaged through normal FID practices. By engaging the entire problem, community engagement practices not only built internal security forces, but also established programs to develop critical aspects of the local social, economic, informational, and political systems as well.¹²² Again, the Marines understood the island nation had never matured to the point of internal self-governance and utilized a CID approach to address the political and social grievances in Haiti to contain and defuse hostile support of the Caco movement.

Internal defense measures were not the only irregular techniques the Marines utilized during the Haitian conflict. The Marines' use of deep reconnaissance patrolling coordinated with focused intelligence to develop decisive combat engagements during the First Caco War proved to be the precursor to the current irregular skill of SR. The Marines recognized the importance of applied small wars reconnaissance in the *Small Wars Manual*, stipulating "the difficulties of

proper reconnaissance are nullified through the native's ability to provide information on enemy practices and to help interpret the environment."¹²³ The Marine's SR and DA practices provided the opportunity for the decisive engagement that defused Caco rebellion and allowed for nation building practices to be implemented.

Although somewhat evolved in today's SOF operations, the Marines' execution of basic irregular tactics to secure peace during these two wars in the Haitian conflict are directly attributed to SR, DA, and FID in MARSOC's current mission today. As with most irregular wars, direct combat tactics will not resolve the core grievances of a conflict alone. Proper IW practices for mission success require a combination of soft cultural awareness, language, and social mediation skills to compliment hard tactical combat skill sets. As MARSOC evolves to improve inherent competency in both of these types of soft and hard IW skill sets, the Marine Corps benefits as the overall organization is able to focus on its primary mission objectives of responding to the nation's contingencies. MARSOC, along with all SOF forces, are designed to support the overall components during these types of operations.

THE INDIRECT APPROACH: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (1916-1924)

USMC and the Small Wars Period: Dominican Republic

With the Marine Corps already actively engaged in neighboring Haiti, the US Department of State sent a combined naval force across the Hispaniola Island to Santa Domingo in May 1916 to quell the Dominican Republic's (DR) growing unrest. The DR, deep in financial debt to the US, was in the middle of a military coup as two companies of Marines landed with the goal of securing the Special Envoy at the US Consulate.¹²⁴ Within days of the Marines landing, the central government collapsed, leaving the Marines in control of the Dominican

capital. By late June, the Marines had yet to solve the insurrection problems but did facilitate a military government under US Navy Rear Admiral Harry Shepard Knapp to oversee administrative affairs. In July, rogue elements of the Dominican military were thoroughly defeated by the Marines in the Battle of *Guayacanas*, temporarily ending armed hostilities.¹²⁵ Now that Admiral Knapp and the Marines had established a hasty peace, the US fully controlled the DR in an occupation that would last eight years.

An important similarity in the DR interdiction to other ongoing small war conflicts was the Marine's primary objective to "restore internal order and formulate a relative political and economic permanency."¹²⁶ The lack of US combat troops and supplies available for the DR was the major difference from other regional efforts. Ongoing conflicts in Haiti and Nicaragua took priority over the DR, forcing the Marines to develop indirect approaches for conflict resolution to maximize the resources that were available. Some of these indirect approaches included information operations (IO), civil affairs (CA), and unconventional warfare (UW), which are staples in current MARSOC special operations doctrine. Consequently, the Marines' development in a counter-bandit campaign that focus on education, civic reform, and public works programs as an indirect means to counter irregular conflict in the DR. In the long run, lessons from the progressive small wars campaign in the DR have proven invaluable in developing IO, CA, and UW objectives in contemporary MARSOC operations.

Background of the DR Campaign

Since the days of Spanish rule, the DR has maintained a tumultuous existence on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with Haiti, 60 miles east of Cuba. The DR is twice as large as Haiti in square mileage but has traditionally been at least half as populated. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the combined population of Hispaniola was 2.3 million with just over 1

million residing in the DR. After pushing out the Spanish in 1865, the DR suffered through a succession of corrupt rulers, who maintained themselves in power by diverting the nation's limited resources for personal use. This continuous cycle of corruption caused a disproportionate amount of national debt, slowly compromising Dominican independence over time.¹²⁷ The island nation's one redeeming characteristic that countered its corrosive rulers is a fierce sense of national independence, which kept the often tumultuous racial rebellions of Haiti from spilling across the Dominican border.

By the early 1900s, the DR's extraordinary high debt to low export ratio had reached a point of international crisis. The severe lack of economic stability made the DR an easy target for exploitation by European powers looking to re-establish colonial dominance in Latin American. The US, fearing German intervention, stepped in to become the island nation's financial protectorate by buying up the majority of Dominican debt.¹²⁸ The relationship was solidified with a 1907 treaty that established US control of all DR financial matters and customs receiverships. The treaty also established a forward US naval base in the Dominican's Samana Bay, as well as stipulations for loan repayments with interest.¹²⁹ Despite US financial reforms, the treaty could not solve internal corruption and political bickering and civil war ensued as the Dominican Minister of War, General Desiderio Arias, rallied opposition for a military takeover.¹³⁰ Consequently, the US Department of State sent the Marine Corps to the DR in May 1916 to deter the military takeover and protect American investment.

Despite the ongoing problems with race in nearby Haiti, instances of racial intolerance were not as prevalent in the Marine's conduct in the DR. The Marines perceived the prevailing cultural heritage in the DR, derived more pervasively from the various Spanish, French, and Dutch influences, as less intrusive to the US centric racial biases of the time period.¹³¹ The lack

of racial tensions aside, the Marines counter-bandit efforts, while ultimately successful, were hindered from time to time with atrocities and abuses.¹³² Captain Charles Merkel was known as the “Tiger of Seibo” for his ruthless tactics in torturing suspected guerillas.¹³³ Interestingly, though, accusations against the Marines in the DR for excessively harsh methods in gaining information never provoked the same controversy or revulsion as similar tactics used in Haiti did.¹³⁴ The lack of Dominican outcry can most likely be attributed to the positive influence of the overall Marine leadership, which took an active role in fostering a positive public relations campaign from the onset of the conflict.

Anti-Bandit Campaign

It was clear from the beginning that the DR’s occupation was going to be different for the Marines because of prioritization of ongoing operations in Nicaragua and Haiti. Both Nicaragua and Haiti demanded more command attention, troops, and equipment from the Marine Corps in terms of armed resistance alone. The Marines simply had fewer combat resources available for the DR situation because most of their combat resources were already dedicated to the other ongoing conflicts. In addition, the US kept a watchful eye on Europe as hostilities with World War I were beginning to escalate. Finally, the DR situation had yet to manifest itself into a full scale war as the main belligerents were considered nothing more than armed bandits.¹³⁵ All of these factors led the Marines to initially consider the DR conflict an economy of force operation rather than a continuation of the Haitian or Nicaraguan conflicts. To make up for the lack of combat power, the Marine leadership installed a military government to develop a counter-bandit campaign that focused on educating the population and occupying Marines, along with establishing reliable civic and public works programs to address the Dominican society’s needs.

After the initial coup was repelled, the Marines' first order of business was the establishment of a military government to oversee Dominican reconstruction. The existing political system in Santa Domingo was far too inept with corruption to manage both representative elections and reconstruction. Senior Marine Officers filled cabinet level positions in Santa Domingo, while their Navy counterparts were emplaced as district governors throughout the various Dominican states.¹³⁶ The fiercely independent Dominican population initially resisted the temporarily imposed US government but the combined naval contingent functioned relatively efficiently compared to previous indigenous regimes.¹³⁷

Despite recognized deficiencies in combat power, the Marines took on the positive attitude of their popular commanding officer, General Joseph "Uncle Joe" Pendleton.¹³⁸ A veteran of the Nicaraguan campaign, General Pendleton understood the importance of gaining popular support of the local population. In an effort to minimize collateral damage, the leadership hierarchy was reluctant to engage with his full array of combat power, despite encountering armed resistance. From the beginning, General Pendleton pointed out the mission was "not one of invasion; instead, the Marines were to restore and preserve peace and order, to protect life and property, and finally to support the constituted government."¹³⁹ Overall, he stressed the importance of educating both the Marines and Dominicans in establishing civic, economic, and political reforms.

Understood from the beginning, the Marines pushed for education as part of the engagement plan for the Dominican population. Building a strong educational foundation within the population was seen as the key to limiting rebellion and established lasting self-governance. In 1916 when the Marines landed, the DR's literacy rate was a mere ten percent of the entire population.¹⁴⁰ Thus, the Marines immediately focused on establishing primary and secondary

education opportunities in rural areas. The education program gained momentum as attendance rose from 14,000 in 1916 to 100,000 in 1920.¹⁴¹ Providing the opportunity for the population to read was a huge success in quelling violence as the rural communities recognized the value that education brought over that of picking up arms.

In addition to educating the Dominican population, General Pendleton saw the importance of educating his own forces. The Marine Command understood the trouble an idle occupation force could get in and how much boredom could undermine reconstruction efforts. Life in isolated garrisons offered Marines the opportunity for corruption and abuses in power, which in turn, could undermine the overall reconstruction strategy.¹⁴² General Pendleton saw the problems Marine misconduct could manifest in Nicaragua and made an applied effort not to allow the same mistakes in the DR. As with all distributed operations, there were isolated incidences of Marine misconduct, but such instances were dealt with swiftly in order to minimize potential damages to the overall campaign. In an effort to counter misconduct, the Marine command established a military academy in Santo Domingo City for US forces to practice their core skills and address the evolving counter-bandit tactics being developed for the conflict. Each Marine company in the Dominican Republic would be assigned to the academy on a six week rotational basis to sharpen not only combat specific skills, but also receive classes on non-lethal and nation building tactics needed to win popular local support.¹⁴³

In addition to education priorities, the Marines' anti-bandit campaign put serious weight into civic and social improvements for the DR. Always mindful of civil-military relations, the Marine Colonels in cabinet level positions were specifically tasked to improve Dominican public work programs including sanitation, water improvements, and health services to improve basic living standards for the general population.¹⁴⁴ With corruption levels from the ruling elite

historically prevalent, these publicly focused areas traditionally were the first programs ignored as any available money seemingly disappeared. The attention from senior level Marine Officers in key cabinet positions insured these programs received the appropriate attention for success. The establishment of a public health system is lauded as one of the outstanding achievements of the Marines' efforts with the consolidation of medical efforts in medicine, pharmacy, and disease control.¹⁴⁵ The Marine Command recognized that by improving living standards for the common population, sentiment towards the occupying force improved, and strengthened success for the overall anti-bandit campaign.

To further improve civil-military relations to the Marine's anti-bandit campaign, the military government encouraged a variety of social programs, geared towards breaking down cultural barriers between the occupying force and the host nation. The military government started a baseball league, in which the individual clubs were integrated with both Marines and locals.¹⁴⁶ Each DR district had its own integrated team competing in the league, spurring rivalry in competition instead of armed conflict. The baseball league eventually became a symbol of Dominican unity and shared cultural integration. The league became so popular that teams from nearby countries, like Puerto Rico and Cuba would travel to play the joint DR teams in tournaments. Social programs like baseball became a shared commonality that helped blur the lines of disagreement between the Marines and the DR to allow the military government to focus on rebuilding the nation.

Overall, the Marine's anti-bandit campaign made up for the lack of combat power available to the leadership in the DR. The development of educational opportunities for all involved, coupled with applied attention to improve public works, allowed the Marines to build support in areas other than direct security measures. It is also important to note the attention

General Pendleton gave to the overall Marine conduct throughout the campaign. His efforts ensured Marine misconduct did not undermine the overall campaign strategy. Evidence for success was immediately clear for the DR anti-bandit campaign when compared to the struggles the Marines were experiencing across Hispaniola in Haiti.

The various indirect measures used by the Marines in the DR are combat tactics that eventually evolved into the SOF core competency skills of IO and CA. *Joint Publication 3-05, Special Operations* defines IO as an “operations conducted to gain/erode support of a foreign population, or gain/erode the influence of a foreign government dependent upon whose side the US government is supporting.”¹⁴⁷ SOF operations in CA are defined as “operations conducted across the range of military operations to enhance the operational environment by identifying and mitigating the underlying causes of instability within civil society or applying functional specialty skills normally the responsibility of civil government to foster stability.”¹⁴⁸ It is clear, from the joint publication definitions, that the Marines anti-bandit campaign met the indirect measures of current SOF doctrine in irregular warfare.

Bandits to Fight Bandits

The successful implementation of indirect programs within the Marines’ anti-bandit campaign was not the only factors for conflict resolution in the DR. Despite the perceived lack of manpower and combat resources, the Marines conducted plenty of combat operations to compliment education and public works programs. For the first five years of the conflict alone, a single month did not pass where a Marine led patrol was not involved in a kinetic combat engagement with bandit forces.¹⁴⁹ In 1917 alone, Marine patrols captured nearly 30,000 pistols, 10,000 rifles, 20,000 shotguns, and thousands of machetes during the conduct of counter bandit patrolling mission.¹⁵⁰

To make up for the lack of resources available to maintain a constant presence in the Dominican countryside, the Marines devised creative means to employ indirect tactics to capture or kill bandit antagonists. Through a mixture of persuasion and deception, Marines would pay bounties to surrogates, who were usually outlaws themselves, to take up arms against the more notorious bandits that caused problems.¹⁵¹ The one time bandits knew the terrain better than the Marines and were better suited to track down trouble makers more efficiently. Surrogates proved useful in capturing the most hard lined trouble makers, while also endearing themselves to the Marines.

The Marines use of surrogate forces in the DR is another example of contemporary SOF practices in UW. The primary goal of UW is to multiply the strategic effect of the overall political strategy to engender the local resistance movement to the effects of the overall campaign.¹⁵² The difference in UW in the DR campaign, when compared to Sergeant Hannekan's efforts in Haiti, is surrogates in the DR were tasked and organized independently instead of being led by Marine leadership. In practice, UW techniques in the DR and Haiti are both considered staples of irregular warfare and are utilized in current MARSOC operations under USSOCOM direction.

Conclusion of the Dominican Republic Campaign

The DR conflict is unique, when compared to the other regional small wars the Marines fought, because of the distinctive focus on complimentary indirect tactics used to balance combat strategy in the overall establishment of stability. Former USSOCOM Commander, Admiral Eric Olson explains that “to successfully deter and confront an insurgency threatening our nation today, the U.S. military must be able to employ a balanced approach to warfare, carefully blending the full spectrum of military, para-military and civil action to achieve success.”¹⁵³ The

Marines in the DR were not able to implement an overall strategy that prioritized combat operations like adjacent small wars operations because of the lack of resources available. With full blown insurgencies ongoing in other countries like Nicaragua or Haiti, the Marine Corps did not have the resources to prosecute the DR conflict in a similar fashion, forcing improvisation through information operations in implementing education and public works reforms. When examined in these terms, the Marine's use indirect tactics in the DR proved overwhelmingly successful, especially in light of not having combat resources available to directly address conflict if such resources would otherwise have been available.

The lack of resources available benefited the Marines because it forced the commanders to come up with alternate means, other than brute combat power, to solve this irregular problem. Just as in the DR conflict, MARSOC operators utilize indirect methods in the implementation of IO, CA, and UW to supplement and support the overall combat mission of conventional forces. Indirect measures in core competencies skill sets are designed to complement and balance direct combat operations and can be attributed to some of the programs and practices developed by the Marines in the DR during the Small Wars Period. Looking towards future IW conflicts, the use of indirect measures focusing on benefiting the population is one area that both the Marine Corps, and specifically MARSOC, can address in supporting the joint operational effort.

CONCLUSION

This overall historical review of Marine Corps operations during the Small Wars Period demonstrates the service's historical contributions to the conduct and execution of contemporary IW missions. Out of necessity, the Marine Corps conducted many interdictions throughout the Americas during the Small Wars Period, carrying out a multitude of military and diplomatic policies for the US Government during a time of expansion. Each of these interdictions brought

a unique set of sociopolitical challenges combined with traditional armed conflict with the local population in an attempt to build these individual nations. Although there are many examples of conflict during this era, Marine Corps interventions in Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic provide a simple overview of the wide scope of conflict along with creative, nonstandard solutions utilized to solve them. As discussed, the Marines recognized that the conventional warfare doctrine of the time did not meet the “on the ground” requirements in the various small wars conflicts of the period. Without official military guidance in these types of situations, the Marines were forced to develop unconventional solutions to tactical problems. These nonstandard military practices developed by the Marines during the Small Wars Period eventually became known as IW. These early lessons developed by the Marine Corps during the Small Wars Period are the foundation for core competency skill sets in both MARSOC and USSOCOM as a whole in IW operations today.

The general purpose of this paper is to point out that even though MARSOC was not established until 2006, the Marine Corps has developed tactics in special operations to solve irregular problems for the past century. USSOCOM did not exist during the Small Wars Period as the Marine Corps was generally considered the special operations force for the US military during the era. The lessons learned from the Small Wars Period are captured in the *Small Wars Manual* as the first US military document to organize the tactics, techniques, and procedures of IW.¹⁵⁴ The manual goes on to describe irregular problems in small wars as stated:

In small wars, the goal is to gain decisive results with the least application of force and the consequent minimum loss of life. The end aim is the social, economic, and political development of the people subsequent to the military defeat of the insurgent. In small wars, tolerance, sympathy, and kindness should be the keynote of our relationship with the mass of the population.¹⁵⁵

This particular quote from the Marines' *Small Wars Manual* can be supplanted into any of the most current IW doctrine for special warfare within current US military warfighting hierarchy.

As the Marines developed the small wars doctrine during the early twentieth century, it is important to note the internal institutional struggles with discipline, misbehavior, and racism within the ranks during the various small wars interdiction in developing irregular practices. Marine Corps social and racial prejudices, combined with low education standards, were a reflection of problems of American society and US military forces as a whole during the time period. Generally considered as morally corrupt and overall poor discipline by today's standards, the Marines poor individual conduct and racism had a profoundly negative influence and most likely prolonged the Marine Corps' small wars involvement in Nicaragua, Haiti, and the DR.

During the seemingly endless evolution of conflict during the Small Wars Period, Marine Corps leadership on the ground had to reassess their own forces, screen out conduct and personality problems, and re-educate the force on cultural sensitivity factors needed for overall conflict resolution. Unlike traditional warfare situations during the same era, discipline, misbehavior, and racism within the ranks towards the local populations had major strategic consequences on the overall campaigns. It was not until corrections in behavior and discipline standards were made that the Marines began to positively influence both the political and domestic dynamics of the various small wars conflicts to complement combat operations.

In keeping with its own historical precedence in establishing non-standard solutions for irregular problems, the Marine Corps still has a tactical responsibility to train IW capabilities within the force in order to better assimilate forces into today's joint operational environment. As directed by Title 10 authorities, USSOCOM and SOF forces are designated the primary IW force within the US military with the responsibility for taking the lead in implementing and

combating IW.¹⁵⁶ Even with USSOCOM currently directed the primary IW force, there is still plenty of opportunity for the Marine Corps to capitalize on its historical small wars roots to contribute to the current joint operational environment. Because of limited manpower and resources, USSOCOM cannot currently meet every IW challenge the nation faces. The Marine Corps, along with MARSOC, must continue to contribute to both current and future IW doctrinal developments to assist USSOCOM in its responsibility to meet the nation's IW challenges in the joint combat environment.

As described in *Joint Publication 3-05, Special Operations*, "SOF is organized into small, flexible, and agile self-contained teams that can operate without support in ambiguous, austere, and dynamic environments, routinely partnered with other government agencies such as the Department of State (DoS)."¹⁵⁷ The same publication goes on to describe the purpose of special operations as "military engagement, varying in scope, activity, and intensity, to shape the operational environment to keep day to day tensions between nations below the threshold of armed conflict and also serve to build host nation capabilities that can be leveraged in time of crisis."¹⁵⁸ Both of these doctrinal statements sum up the Marine Corps purpose, missions, and objectives both today and during the Small Wars Period, effectively linking the Marine's actions in Nicaragua, Haiti, and the DR to both contemporary Marine Corps and specifically, MARSOC operations in uncertain and irregular environments.

What is interesting about the linkages between actions during the Small Wars Period and current IW doctrine is the Marine Corps' institutional aversion to specialized troops, and MARSOC in general, despite having a long history in conducting special operations in uncertain environments. A common sentiment within the Marine Corps is that MARSOC is not needed, as specialized troops do not fill a useful purpose within the overall service. Since its inception in

2006, there have been numerous debates and articles challenging of the validity of MARSOC against the needs of the Marine Corps. The overall tone of the Marines anti-SOF dissention can best be described in the January 2011 *Marine Corps Gazette* article, “MARSOC, The Effect on the Rifle Squad.” The author’s general argument is that, “redistribution of talent and overspecialization can only be detrimental by the incredible siphoning of talent that only serves to degrade the Marine Corps.”¹⁵⁹

In truth, the Marine Corps is more averse to having specialized Marines under the command of USSOCOM than it is to implementing specialized tactics. Despite the historical aversion to specialized units within the Marine Corps, MARSOC has flourished by embracing the lessons learned in conflicts past and applying them to current contingencies. MARSOC, like USSOCOM, has many self-recognized limitations. *Joint Publication 3-05* describes special operations limitations in IW as:

... limited in scope by the size of the SOF unit; the improper employment of SOF runs the risk of rapidly depleting capacity as SOF cannot be quickly reconstituted or rapidly expanded, because of the lengthy process required to recruit, train, and educate them; SOF are not a substitute for conventional forces and should not be employed to conduct operations where CF could be used to achieve the same objectives; and finally SOF are not structured with robust sustainment capabilities, therefore, SOF must frequently rely on external support for sustained operations.¹⁶⁰

Because of its history in developing special operations for IW doctrine, the Marine Corps is in perfect position to make up for these types of limitations in working alongside USSOCOM in future joint environments. To meet the requirements for future irregular battlefields, the Marine Corps must fully embrace its heritage in developing irregular tactics in unconventional conflicts through the maturation and support of MARSOC within the USSOCOM hierarchy. The growth of MARSOC within the USSOCOM ranks will only serve to strengthen the Marine Corps’

historical IW legacy, further positioning the Marines for continued leadership in solving the nation's irregular challenges.

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