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**TITLE:**

Civil Affairs: Winning the Cognitive Battle

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## Executive Summary

**Title:** Civil Affairs: Winning the Cognitive Battle

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**Thesis:** The US Marine Corps (USMC) should institute an S-5 section at the battalion level to coordinate all aspects of information-related capabilities in order to more effectively connect tactical-level successes to operational-level goals and provide commanders with through understanding of the problem in the operating environment.

**Discussion:** USMC is missing a connection between tactical and operational-level information operations. Information operations are of significant importance to the not only the Marine Corps but also the US military as a whole. Commanders at levels are seeking tools to help them define, interpret, and shape the information environment, specifically the cognitive dimension of the information environment. Recent military policy documents, notably the USMC Capstone publication Expeditionary Force 21 (EF21), placed emphasis on developing solutions to focus and leverage information operations to create impacts in the information environment. Information operations creates opportunities to effect the information environment through the use of information-related capabilities like civil affairs. The Marine Corps has not created a coordinating link between operational-level and tactical-level information operations. As a result, tactical-level success (Battalion level) that impact the information environment are not connected the operational-level (MEF) mission end states. Miscommunication between the tactical and operational-level has the potential to result in mission failure.

**Conclusion:** A thorough understanding of the information environment enables commanders to shape operations to their will by manipulating the enemy to act in accordance with a commander's end state. A section with individuals focused on coordinating IRCs, at the tactical-level and with the operational level, (civil affairs specifically) would enable the battalion to accomplish tactical tasks through a better understanding of the operating environment and nests tactical objectives with operational goals.

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## Civil Affairs: Winning the Cognitive Battle

### *Preface*

I began the research paper as a personal project to study and analyze the history of civil affairs in the Marine Corps. I have limited experience in civil affairs. After attending the Marine Corps Civil-Military Operations School last summer, civil affairs related topics struck a chord with me. As we progressed through the Command and Staff curriculum, I noticed an extreme emphasis placed on the importance of information operations in current US military policy and doctrine. As I read historical literature and documentation on civil affairs, I noticed terms that crossed over between civil affairs and information operations doctrine, such as: inform, influence, usurp, etc. Marine Corps and US military history provided further evidence reinforcing the connection between civil affairs and information operations. Historical evidence revealed that failure to adequately plan and coordinate information operations and civil affairs at the tactical-level up to the operational-level consistently impeded mission accomplishment. As a result, I choose to explore the possibility of creating a coordination element at the battalion level to address the information environment.

First, I will acknowledge and thank my faculty advisor, Lieutenant Colonel Gil Juarez for his leadership, advice, and encouragement. I owe Dr. James Joyner a debt of gratitude for his patience, assistance, and guidance in accomplishing the Master of Military Studies program. Additionally, I thank Dr. John Gordon and Dr. Eric Shibuya for the encouragement, advice, and good sense of humor throughout the process. Finally, a special thanks to my family for allowing me time to complete the program.

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Military professionals face a daunting challenge in managing the physical and cognitive aspects of war. In evaluating relative enemy combat power and capability to fight, commanders routinely rely on physical destruction and attrition rates because they can easily account for personnel eliminated and equipment destroyed. Yet, while physical actions attrite and weaken the enemy, cognitive operations attack an enemy's will to fight and therefore account for the most important dimension in the operating environment: the human dimension.

Commanders depend on a thorough understanding of the human dimension to define the information environment, which allows them to coordinate operations to address the nature of a problem. Civil affairs (CA) are the only personnel in USMC specifically trained in defining this human dimension and fighting the cognitive domain in the modern operating environment. CA personnel study a problem from the perspective of the local inhabitants in an operating area. In order to adequately define and frame a problem, CA personnel study the culture and investigate issues by connecting with the local population that allows unique insight into the grievances and problems facing the population. As a result, CA operations provide a thorough understanding of the actual problem on the ground through understanding the thought process of individual actors that shape the culture and normal operating systems within the operating environment.

The lack of an information and Civil Military Operations (CMO) coordinating element at the battalion level impacts the both the battalion and Marine Corps in all phases on an operation. Currently, the Marine Corps does not have a planner at the battalion level to focus on the problem from the cognitive perspective; this creates a gap between battalion level operations and operational level goals at the MEF level. The MEF organizational structure includes planners

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assigned to assess operations and effects in through the perspective of the population in the operating environment via CMO and information operations.

CMO and information operations assist in framing the human dimension and defining the information environment. Commanders lean towards the physical aspect to define success and resolve problems in an operation area. However, physical aspects rarely allow a commander insight into an adversaries' will, motivations, or tendencies. Commanders require assets and tools to help define the information environment both logically and physically. CAO allows commanders insight into the operating area information environment from all perspectives and viewpoints through close interaction with the local community. A thorough understanding of the information environment enables commanders to shape operations to their will by manipulating the enemy to act in accordance with a commander's end state. This deficit would be greatly lessened with the creation of an S-5 section to provide the battalion commander with an individual focused on coordinating all aspects of information-related capabilities.

In order to define and create a tactical information domain coordinating element, this paper will first define information operations and the role CA plays as an information-related capability to understand the cognitive dimension which shapes both the information and physical dimensions of the information environment of an operating environment. This paper will then discuss a short history of CA as an IRC in support of information operations through the following case studies: impact and interconnect of CA and information operations in the Banana Wars, CA in World War II, CA integration in US Marine Corps Civil Action Platoon Operations in I Corps during Vietnam, setbacks in CA support to Bosnia and Kosovo. The aforementioned case studies will show the importance of CAO in developing, understanding, and supporting operational advantage in defining the commander's understanding of the cognitive dimension of

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information operations through coordinated planning at the tactical level. The paper will focus on the Combined Action Program (CAP) in Vietnam, which serves as an excellent example of CA contribution to information environment and cognitive operations. CAP provides proof that an S-5 section can successfully coordinate tactical successes in the information environment while connecting those successes to operational goals to achieve strategic ends. Finally, this paper will analyze current CA structure in the Marine Corps and offer a proposal for future implementation of an S-5 section that focuses on coordination of information-related capabilities to create effects on the cognitive dimension in the information environment. While the Marine Corps does not require a dedicated CA or information operations section at the tactical level, the organization needs an S-5 section to ensure coordinated information operations and related activities are nested with operational goals.

### **Definition of Information Operations and the Role of Civil Affairs**

Throughout the history of the Marine Corps, the leadership has employed CA to shape the operation environment in order to achieve mission objectives. From its early foundations and operations, Marine Corps leadership understood the importance of a thorough understanding of the human and informational aspects that impacted the specific operating environment. These experiences helped shape and form the development of CA, but failed to formulate an effective coordinating capability to maximize the benefits of CAO. CA personnel effectively supported the mission by solving local issues but tactical successes made minimal operational-level impacts. Marine Corps CAO were neither linked to information operations objectives nor coordinated with operational-level goals because the tactical unit lacked a coordinating link with understanding of operational-level end states. The Marine Corps requires a coordinating element

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at the battalion level to focus on combining the effects of information operations and civil military operations in the operating environment. Although the Marine Corps only officially defined *information operations* in 2001 with the publication of Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-36, the history of organizational operations clearly shows that information operations and CAO have long shaped Marine Corps leadership approaches to operational problems. *Information operations* is a new term to define all aspects of information the impact and drive the systems that govern, manage, and operate in an area. Information operations is made up of information related capabilities that includes CAO. While information operations and CAO were essential to accomplish mission objectives, few leaders sought to coordinate information operations and CAO to either assist in defining the operating environment or link tactical successes to operational goals. Marine Corps leaders in the Banana Wars and Vietnam understood and acted to combine CAO and information operations to create impacts in the information environment. A thorough understanding of the information environment provided those leaders with insight into systems that operated in and affect the operating environment.

CA personnel provide a perspective that analyzes the operating environment through the perspective of actors within the operating environment. Operations at the infantry battalion level focus mostly on physical actions (combat operations) in the physical domain against an opposing force but all too often fail to account for the unintended second and third order effects of those actions. Combat operations have to be measured and balanced with an understanding of the effects on the information domain in the operating environment. Right now, the infantry battalion lacks an individual to provide a perspective on the information environment for the commander. The information environment defines how individuals, actors, entities, and systems

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in an operating environment define, collect, process and disseminate information.<sup>1</sup> The information environment is further broken down into the physical, informational, and cognitive dimensions in order to support defining how those individuals, organizations, and systems interact.<sup>2</sup> Analysis of each dimension supports developing thorough understanding of how different demographics affect the enemy's decision-making process. Specifically, how human dynamics and demographics define the problem in the operating environment. The most important human dynamic that shapes the operating environment is the individual actors' thinking and decision-making process inputs into the information environment. The cognitive dimension of the information environment sets the foundation for development of the informational and physical dimensions of the information environment.

The cognitive dimension is the dimension shaped by the decisions, leaders, cultural norms and practices conducted by actors that manage the systems that govern and define the operating environment. The information environment's physical dimension is defined as "command and control systems, key decision makers, and supporting infrastructure that enable individuals and organizations to create effects" in the operating environment.<sup>3</sup> The physical dimension encompasses the actual technological equipment and systems that support the enemy's decision-making process.<sup>4</sup> Information environment is defined as "aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or act on information."<sup>5</sup> Information dimension feeds into shaping the way the physical dimension is formulated and developed to support the decision-making process. Finally, the cognitive dimension "encompasses the minds of those who transmit, receive, and respond to or act on information."<sup>6</sup> This environment consists of three interrelated dimensions, which continuously interact with individuals, organizations, and systems. These dimensions are known as physical,

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informational, and cognitive. The cognitive dimension provides a window to understand the actor's thought processes by analyzing logical tendencies that assist in countering an actor with assets in the physical and informational dimension. Understanding the cognitive dimension provides insight into the logical and physical aspects of the enemy's decision-making process.

The lack of a planner focused on the cognitive dimension at the battalion level prevents the commander from receiving insight on the perspective of actors and decision makers that shape and contribute to the systems that define the operating environment. When a commander enhances understanding of the cognitive dimension, he/she begin to understand how the cognitive informs the informational and physical dimensions of the information environment. As a result, a commander can impact the system by introducing cognitive injects to shape the operating environment to gain mission objectives. Conversely, the enemy has influence over the cognitive dimension through the use of information operations. The commander's coordination of information operations is essential to achieving intended effects in the cognitive domain.

The commander requires tools to shape and coordinate effects of information operations in the cognitive dimension. A commander enhances his/her cognitive influence capabilities by employing information-related capabilities in support of information operations. Information operations is the “-integrated employment, during military operations, of IRCs (information-related capabilities) in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own.”<sup>7</sup> Information operations provides not only a tool for influencing the enemy's decision-making process but also helps to define the system that shapes and guides that process. Information operations concepts are informed by information-related capabilities (IRC).

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IRCs are essential in developing an understanding of the operational area by defining the information environment. IRCs “are capabilities, techniques, or activities employing information to effect any of the three dimensions within the information environment to generate an end[s].”<sup>8</sup> IRCs are those assets, procedures, and techniques that influence and effect any of the three dimensions in the information environment which combined and coordinated create an effect on the operating environment by influencing individuals in the system. IRCs analyze different aspects and demographics of individuals who provide injects and inputs into the systems in the operating environment. The effected individual, population, or system is called the Target Audience (TA). JP 3-13 states, “The joint force (means) employs IRCs (ways) to affect the information provided to or disseminated from the target audience (TA) in the physical and informational dimensions of the information environment to affect decision-making.”<sup>9</sup> IRCs inform the information operations plan/concept of operations by providing inputs from the cognitive dimension of the information environment by creating impacts on TAs. In order to develop a concept of information operations, a commander requires IRCs to shape their understanding of the different TA tendencies and processes. As an IRC, CA capabilities feed into and support the information operations concept.

As an IRC, CAO provide significant input to define the individuals and systems that shape the operating environment. Civil-military operations (CMO) are “the activities of a commander that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, governmental and nongovernmental civilian organizations and authorities, and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile operational area in order to facilitate military operations, to consolidate and achieve operational US objectives.”<sup>10</sup> While information operations are the not the sole focus of CMO, CA personnel inherently influence and exploit

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relations in an operating environment in order to leverage those relations in achieving the commander's end state.

CMO develops an understanding of the tendencies, policies, interactions, inter-personal dynamics, cultural influences, and impacts of everyday life on the operating environment. CA personnel become key actors in influencing the individuals and groups and shaping understanding of the operating environment. As a result, CA personnel have unique understanding of how information shapes actions, messaging, and operations in an operating area. However, a lack of a planner focused on CA at the battalion level leads to that key IRC inputs are either left out or excluded from the planning process.

The current battalion structure does not include a planner assigned to assess information operations or CAO. In most battalions, the planner assigned to address cognitive domain aspects is assigned to the S-3 section. In many cases, the information operations and CAO planner is a collateral duty that is addressed only after the individual's primary duties are accomplished. As a result, these planners rarely allot time to developing the information operations or CAO planning capabilities within the battalion. The lack of focus on information operation and CAO reduces the importance of understanding the cognitive domain and negates the ability for the commander to thoroughly appreciate the perspective of individuals and systems within an operating environment. Additionally, the battalion lacks an individual that coordinates operations at the battalion level with the regiment, division, and the MEF level mission goals. Without this planner, tactical successes might not translate to operational successes. The S-5 section will be responsible for providing the battalion commander a dedicated cognitive domain planner. While the information operations and CAO are coordinated at the operational level (MEF), tactical-level battalion commanders lack an entity that ensures the information and civil-military

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operations tactical impacts are coordinated and tied with operational goals. Without an entity focused on connecting information operations with IRCs (like CAO), tactical-level successes will not nest with operational goals, and thus fail to support the overall mission objectives at the operational and strategic levels.

### **Case Study/Background**

From the late 1890s through the early 1930s, USMC conducted a variety of peacekeeping and nation assistance missions in which military personnel assumed control of the local national authority. The Marine Corps became the force of choice to prosecute and address the many small wars that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The *Small Wars Manual* defines these early twentieth century expeditions as follows: “As applied to the United States, small wars are operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation.”<sup>11</sup> In many cases, Marine commanders served as temporary civil authority as military governors. The Marines faced a unique challenge related to assisting a diverse culture in reestablishing legitimate government and setting conditions to transition that government back to the people. However, the diverse culture meant individuals viewed government legitimacy in a variety of ways that translated to different definitions of legitimate government. Additionally, America’s legitimacy was in question due to unethical treatment of the local populace by American corporations. As a result, the Marines faced insurgents who wanted to influence the people to counter American objectives in the region.

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The organizers and actors that rallied the incursions and insurgencies depended on the local populace support to reach the goal of the insurgency. The Marine Corps needed the capability to analyze and evaluate economic, political, or social dynamics and demographics of a society to thoroughly understand the problem in the operating area. While the operations focused on military in support of political ends, the Marines used information to counter insurgent efforts.

In these experiences, American military leadership gained invaluable insight into the importance of understanding and dominating the information environment. Marine leadership appreciated the importance of understanding the cultural and informational underpinnings of the operational environment because the adversary understood it thoroughly:

“The future opponent may be as well armed as they are; he will be able to concentrate a numerical superiority against isolated detachments at the time and place he chooses; as in the past he will have a thorough knowledge of the trails, the country, and the inhabitants; and he will have the inherent ability to withstand all the natural obstacles, such as climate and disease...All these natural advantages, combining primitive cunning and modern armament will weigh heavily in the balance against the advantage of the marine forces in organization, equipment, intelligence, and discipline, if a careless audacity is permitted to warp good judgment.”<sup>12</sup>

The enemy understood the cultural, inter-personal relationships, grievances, and issues that defined the cognitive dimension. As a result, the insurgency understood how to influence the population towards the insurgency goals. Essentially, the insurgency created injects into the informational environment to affect their TA. In this case, Marines exercised good judgement by investing in resolving the underlying grievances of the local populace. However, individual leaders at the platoon level enforced these decisions in the absence of guidance from higher authority the battalion level. Battalion level actions were not connected or nested with Regimental or Division level goals.

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The Marines associated with the Small Wars assessed that “the motive in small wars is not material destruction. It is usually a project dealing with the social, economic, and political development of the people.”<sup>13</sup> The people became the focus as ways to achieve the operational ends. The Marines realized “the campaign plan and strategy must be adapted to the character of the people encountered. National policy and the precepts of civilized procedure demand that our dealings with other peoples be maintained on a high-moral plan.”<sup>14</sup> Marines focused on the cognitive dimension and engineered plans to counter the insurgent objectives.

In the case of the Banana Wars, the indigenous people were disheartened as a result of their treatment at the hands of the large plantations run by American business owners. American businesses increased their own wealth. Although these businesses grew economically, the local community’s economy and standard of living remained the unchanged. Years of neglect that shaped environment ripe for insurgents who spread narratives of discontent with Americans and the local national government. As the force assigned to restore order, the Marines observed that “Peace and industry cannot be restored permanently without appropriate provisions for the economic welfare of the people. Moreover, productive industry cannot be fully restored until there is peace, consequently, the remedy is found in emphasizing the corrective measures to be taken in order to permit the orderly return to normal conditions.”<sup>15</sup> In order to address the underlining issue, the military leadership deduced the following:

“By analysis and study the reasons for the existing emergency may be deduced; the most practical method of solving the problem is to understand the possible approaches there to and the repercussion to be expected from any actions which may be contemplated. By this study and the ability to apply correct psychological doctrine, many pitfalls may be avoided and the success of the undertaking assured.”<sup>16</sup>

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By developing a plan to resolve the people's grievances, the Marines eroded the "American Imperialist" narrative and denied the insurgency its power source. Essentially, Marines built concepts designed to gain psychological influence over the advisory. The Marines developed a sense of security and self-assurance among the local population by building on small victories through CA employment, thus eroding the advisory's goal on manipulating the population's grievances to achieve their ends. Although the CA activities addressed grievances in the operating environment, CAO were conducted through the initiative of Marines on the ground not by formally trained professionals.

Even in the early twentieth century, Marines used CA concepts to gain a cognitive foothold over the enemy. Marines understood the basic needs of the population, but so did the advisory. As the Small Wars manual states, "Another basic instinct of man is self-assertion. This is a desire to be considered worthy among his fellow beings. Life for the individual centers around himself. The individual values his contacts as good or bad according to how he presumes he has been treated and how much consideration has been given to his own merits."<sup>17</sup> Military professionals understood that the population's self-assurance was key to achieving the operational goal of restoring order. The adversary depended on lack of trust in Americans to project his narrative and find support among the population. Marines employed local nationals in infrastructure development and trained local militia to support their own security. CA projects and investment in the local community eradicated economic frustration and social discontent among the local population. Additionally, CA personnel maintained a constant pulse on the information domain by maintaining awareness and understanding of concerns and grievances among the local population.

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As grievances changed, the Marines addressed the concerns by developing solutions in different layers of social and cultural influences in the society. As a result, the Marines set foundations for long-term success for the people by addressing grievances through local authority and national government. The people regained confidence in their government and not in the Marines alone. Indirectly, the Marines shaped the environment through using CAO to manipulate and control the cognitive dimension of the information environment. CAO connected with operational goals by applying knowledge gained through CA coordinated in messaging and operations to reinforce mission objectives. CAO became a tool to control information and deny the adversary ways (narratives) and means (populace) to achieve their ends. Although CA concepts were highly effective in manipulating and controlling the information environment, CA was not developed in doctrine until the 1930s.

Although the Marines developed a design for coordinating information operations and CAO, the organization did not officially establish a coordinating entity to capture and capitalize on successes for experiences during the Banana Wars. For the most part, the Banana Wars were characterized as a series of interventions and stabilization efforts in which Marines conducted counter-insurgency efforts to undermine US government objectives in the region. Marine leaders viewed the lessons from the small wars as lessons that applied to small wars. Large scale war presented different problem sets due to the lack of an insurgent presence. However, an individual's ability to impact the information environment is important in any scale of operation or conflict; thus, IRCs maintain significance in shaping and defining the information environment. Unfortunately, US military leadership in World War II (WWII) viewed CAO as a secondary mission used in the aftermath of combat operations. Even after CA doctrine was born, CAO was disconnected from information operations that created complications during World

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War II. CAO and information operations were organized on two separate command structures and were rarely coordinated to increase the effectiveness of both in supporting operational goals. Information operations were nested in decisive actions but not connected the CMO efforts after combat operations ceased in an area. Additionally, information operations and CAO planners only existed at the operational level command headquarters and not at the battalion level. As a result, unintended effects in the physical domain complicated efforts to transition operations in order restore the operating environment to pre-combat conditions. CAO was included in the planning process but separated and not coordinated in the overall operational planning.

CMO and CAO operations in WWII were effective in achieving tactical objectives but remained disconnected from the overall strategic goal. WWII operations focused on the physical aspects of the battlefield but failed to connect physical and cognitive considerations for maximum effect. In most cases, CAO and CMO operated in a separate structure and conducted operations independent of major offensive operations.<sup>18</sup> CAO and CMO were viewed as after thoughts and secondary considerations to kinetic operations in the European and Pacific theatres. Although the US military did not face an insurgency during WWII, information operations still played a role in achieving mission objectives. Battalion level leadership required assets to impact the enemy through influencing the cognitive domain. The US military created a Civil Affairs Division but did not incorporate planners at the battalion level. Additionally, Information operations was solely focused on psychological operations at the strategic level underneath the Office of War Information (OWI) controlled by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).<sup>19</sup> Post World War II and into Korea, the reduction of the U.S. military resulted in the disappearance of CMO structure and capability.

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During Korea, the U.S. leadership did not invest in CMO capability due to a lack of personnel and requirements for combat power. CAO personnel focused on controlling mass outbreak of infectious diseases and massive refugee problems but planners remained at the division level and above. Psychological operations organization and structure remained controlled at the national level. Again, information operations were conducted through psychological operations focused on attacking the enemy via propaganda distribution.

Operations in Vietnam required the U.S. military, especially the Marine Corps, to invest in CMO and information operations capability at the battalion level to accomplish MEF level operational goals.

During Vietnam, the Marine Corps CAP in I Corps set foundations for and exemplified the potential for a coordinating element at the battalion level in developing a better understanding of the information environment in order to address and nest tactical level success with MEF level operational goals. Although originally developed to enhance security by combining a Marine squad with local security in I Corps, III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) Commanding General Lewis Walt leveraged the CAP connection with the local population and incorporated CAO in combinations with CAP.<sup>20</sup> CA teams engaged the local population to address community infrastructure concerns and basic needs. In turn, CA personnel built on the relationships with the Vietnamese that were developed through CAP and enhanced through civil-military operations. The Marine Corps introduced the concept of the S-5 to coordinate IRC's and develop cognitive dimension planning capabilities

The Marine Corps developed the S-5 section to coordinate all aspects of the cognitive domain in addressing issues in the I Corps Area of Responsibility (AOR). Before assuming responsibility of an operating area in Vietnam, Marine General Lewis Walt, III Marine

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Amphibious Force Commanding General, organized and developed the Combined Action Platoon (CAP) concept to address the grievances of the local Vietnamese population through the use of CAO. In 1965, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Marines (3/4) assumed responsibility for an immense AOR of ten square miles. In order to address security requirements, 3/4 proposed the CAP.<sup>21</sup> The concept involved pairing a squad of Marines and squad of Popular Forces to provide security for a specific hamlet.<sup>22</sup> The Marines and PF would live and connect with the local culture in order to answer security concerns for the hamlet.<sup>23</sup> The CAP program set the foundation for developing a planning capacity to connect and coordinate cognitive tools in the AOR.

Local Vietnamese villagers provided various forms of information about the Viet Cong's logical and physical information environment to American military personnel. Simultaneously, CA personnel developed an understanding of local concerns and gained insight on Viet Cong sentiments, operations, and motivations. CA personnel associated with CAP adequately defined the human dimension, which led to nesting of capabilities to enable cognitive operations. CAP/CA successes opened the door for application of Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) that garnered a massive amount of information and intelligence about the Viet Cong from the local villagers. PSYOPS, CA, and CAP efforts converted over 15,000 Viet Cong guerillas from 1965-1986.<sup>24</sup> These Viet Cong converts were turned into scouts, referred to as "Kit Carson Scouts," and served as invaluable guides, sources of intelligence, and foot soldiers against the Viet Cong. Although policy change called for the dismantling of the CAPs in I Corps, Marine commanders boosted tangible, measurable security gains in I Corps shown by the reduction of Viet Cong activity against the local villagers/hamlets from 1965-1967.<sup>25</sup> CAP successes and overall effectiveness were due to the close coordination of CAP and CAO. In Vietnam, CA personnel and operations became a key enabler in defining the information environment.

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The successes of the CAP program called for further developing and connecting IRCs to gain control of the cognitive domain. CAP areas became essential to securing the hamlets and villages by creating influence over the local population. Marines addressed the needs of the population and instituted programs that answered those needs that translated into controlling areas through influence over the population. In turn, the Marines gained influence over the Viet Cong insurgency by creating a rift in their relationship with the local populace. The Marine Corps History Division captured the Marine successes best in the following: “As Marines expanded the areas of operations into the populated area of south of Da Nang, they soon realized that security from the Viet Cong guerillas was a decisive factor if the South Vietnamese government was to retain responsibility or control of the countryside.”<sup>26</sup> Marine commands enhanced the effectiveness of CAP by implementing the “County Fair” and “Golden Fleece” operations. “County Fair” operations incorporated CA projects and civil military relations to connect the CAP with the local populace.<sup>27</sup> “Golden Fleece” operations were physiological operations actions to influence the population towards providing for their own security and educating the population on the intent of the Viet Cong.<sup>28</sup> Both operations were a combination of CAO and physiological operations at the hamlet level with hopes of connecting those successes to operational and strategic goals. In order to ensure these successes gain the intended operational and strategic goals, III MAF created the G/S-5 section at the battalion level in I Corps to coordinate cognitive domain effects.<sup>29</sup> The connection between the G-5 and battalion S-5 ensured operational messaging tied to tactical operations that translated into connecting tactical successes into accomplishing operational goals. Due to a policy disagreement between Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) and III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF), the CAP program dissolved in 1970.<sup>30</sup> As CAP dissolved and Vietnam came to a close, the S-5 concept

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disappeared.<sup>31</sup> The lack of a battalion S-5 resulted in a reemergence of a significant planning capability gap between the operational (MEF) and tactical (battalion) level due to a lack of an information and CA coordination element at the battalion level. Actions at the battalion level created problems at the operational level because physical actions had an impact on the information environment.

The lack of a coordination element at the battalion level significantly impacted operations in Bosnia. Although not specifically a Marine Corps mission, units operating in Bosnia had similar organizational structure coupled with limitations in personnel that current Marine Corps units face. However, these units sourced solutions from internal structure to address operational short falls. Bosnia presented a unique challenge for U.S. Military leadership.

Ethnic and religious violence created a tense and violatate situation based on deep rooted grievances manipulated by both sides of the conflict. Initially, U.S. military planners defined the mission in Bosnia as strictly a security issue that only required physical presence of the military to enforce security perimeters. U.S. Planners formulated a concept to address the problem in Bosnia based solely on addressing the physical domain and kinetic operations. Leadership feared that a heavy hand was required to deal with former combatants as the mission was to enforce the regulations formed in the Dayton Accords. The planners failed to account for the cognitive dimension. As a result, the deployment included only one CA planner and almost no information operations personnel. The limitation placed on CA and information operations personnel and almost no coordination of information-related capabilities in initial operation in Bosnia impacted the effectiveness of operations during both the execution and transition phases. During the planning process the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) had only one CA planner to assist in the operations plan. This was indicative of a lack of understanding and emphasis on

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CAO and importance of the information environment. IFOR leadership recognized that “this lack of importance of CA—CIMIC—CMO planning would later be seen as a detriment to the effectiveness of IFOR (implementation force) during the transition from UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Forces).”<sup>32</sup> Soon, IFOR leadership addressed the issue by connecting IFOR operation goal through tactical implementation and coordination of IRCs.

IFOR leadership placed information operations and CA professionals at the battalion level to support the coordination of effects in the information environment. Lack of CA and information operations was impacting IFOR’s ability to connect operational messaging with tactical actions. As a result, IFOR organized and placed CA teams at the battalion level in Multi-National Division (MND) North.<sup>33</sup> The British, in MND South West, went a step further and implemented a coordination cell for all information and CAO at the tactical-level that linked to operational goals.<sup>34</sup> Immediately, units saw the effectiveness of coordinating information operations and CAO. CA personnel shaped the operational environment by creating information input to educate to population on upcoming elections. The coordination of IRCs shaped and paved the way for transition into stabilization operations in Bosnia. Coalition leadership “began to realize that the tool of choice in stabilization or peace operations was not the combat elements of the command but rather the tools of influence and information. This was mainly the CA, Information Operations, and Psychological Operations units.”<sup>35</sup> The introduction of an information coordination element at the tactical-level set conditions for success by nesting operational goals inside tactical gains.

**Recommendations/Conclusions**

The implementation of an S-5 at the battalion level is essential to coordinating information operations and IRCs in order to tying tactical-level gains with operational-level goals. The man power cost to the battalion of creating an S-5 is insignificant compared to the benefits the commander, unit, and Marine Corps will gain by introducing an entity focused on coordinating effects in the information environment. Battalion level commanders should build an S-5 section, headed by at least a first lieutenant rank, who has received training in information and civil military operations. This recommendation does not require organization structural change beyond the battalion level. A permanent battalion level S-5 will reinforce the information operation and CA structural changes already implemented at the MEF, Division, and Regimental levels.

Recently, the Marine Corps created an investment in CA by implementing a CA detachment at the MEF level. CA detachments, led by a 0530 (Civil Affairs Officer) Major, not only advise and assist the MEF on civil military operations but also augment MEF units with CA personnel and liaison elements in support of operations and exercises.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, CA detachment personnel are organized under the MEF operations section alongside the information operations coordination personnel. This organization allows MEF planners to coordinate information operations through IRCs to create effects in the cognitive dimension. Additionally, CA planners reside within all infantry regimental organizational structure that includes a Major and a Gunnery Sergeant which is also reflected in the MEU organizational structure.<sup>37</sup> While this organization creates effects closer to the MEF level, a like organization does not exist at the battalion level. However, battalion commanders have the authority to rectify that deficiency.

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A battalion S-5 structure provides the battalion commander with a capability to shape and define the information environment as well as nest operational goals and tactical objectives to shape the cognitive dimension. The battalion commander assumes very little risk and cost but a significant benefit from creating an S-5 section to coordinate IRCs at the tactical level. Battalion level commanders have the ability to formulate and organize internal structure to support mission requirements. An S-5 section would require only one (1) officer (1<sup>st</sup> Lt or above) and one (1) senior enlisted (SSgt or above) with requisite training as follows: four (4) weeks at the Marine Corps Civil Military Operations School (Civil Affairs Officer Course) plus two (2) weeks at the Information Operations Capability Course (Army school for basic Information Operations Planning) for basic CA and Information Operations Officers (of which the Enlisted pipeline follows the same path).<sup>38</sup> Cost associated with the courses are basic temporary additional duty funds required for the duration of the class period which are estimated at around 5,000 dollars total per course. Post class instruction, the battalion can establish a section able to coordinate IRC operations to assist the battalion mission objectives. A few obstacles do stand in the way of creating a battalion S-5 structure in the form organizational, structural, and personnel cost to the battalion.

The battalion commander will assume some internal and external costs associated with building the S-5. First and foremost, personnel sourcing for the section will come from internal to the battalion. Personnel limitations and staffing are always a concern at the battalion level because all too often the battalion is short on personnel. In this case, an officer will be in short supply due to the requirement to fill company and battalion level billets deemed crucial to support the organizational mission. Additionally, personnel assigned to an S-5 section face a risk of performing in billets not traditionally aligned to career progression. However, a first lieutenant

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who has already completed platoon commander requirements, and fulfilled company level prescribed career track experiences, is primed to serve on the battalion staff for further career development.

While the battalion may lose an officer at the company level from the junior infantry officer ranks, the unit's investment in an officer who provides capability to enhance the organizational effectiveness through coordinating non-lethal fires, providing understanding information operations and IRCs, and educating the unit on the importance of tying the aforementioned operations for maximum effectiveness. During Vietnam, battalion commanders sourced manning for the S-5 for internal organization that resulted in both effective coordination of impacts in the cognitive dimension and the growth of company grade officers invested in the battalion S-5 operations.<sup>39</sup> Once the officer departs for another unit or returns to the company level, they become an advocate for importance and impact of information operations and IRCs. Another counter-argument to the battalion S-5 concept is the coordination of information operations and IRCs are only important and useful to the battalion during specific phases of an operation and not necessary for planning all phases of an operation for the battalion.

An ongoing argument against the formation of an S-5 is CMO and information operations are only effective supporting the battalions in the decisive actions in operations. A standing information operations and IRC coordination element is unnecessary and not beneficial to the battalion because the effects in the operating area minimal in the shaping phase. However, the above case studies show the significant impact information and IRCs play in gaining operational advantage through an understanding the dynamics the impact in operating environment.

As both the Vietnam and Bosnia examples exhibit, IRC coordination is essential during all phases to both understanding the information environment and using that understanding to

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impact the cognitive dimension. In the aforementioned examples, leadership instituted information operations and CMO coordination after mission experiences revealed the impact CMO and information operations played in the operating environment. In both cases, leadership identified the importance of coordinated CMO and information operations early to gain insight on the systems that impact the information environment in an operating area.<sup>39</sup> Battalion level coordinating elements connected tactical objectives to operational goals. Lastly, recent Marine Corps organization guidance placed an emphasis on dominating the information environment at all levels in all aspects of operations. As Expeditionary Force 21 states “Capability development to promote partnership building should focus on.....institutionalizing and increasing engagement and Information Operations (IO) training requirements for a larger number of deployable units.”<sup>40</sup> EF21 emphasizes the importance information operations in shaping the environment before decisive actions. Battalions require a section focused on coordinating those effects to support shaping the environment.

The coordination of CA with information operations provides a unique capability to assist in framing the cognitive dimension and defining the information environment. Most often, commanders rely on the physical aspect of operations to define success and resolve problems. However, physical aspects rarely allow a commander insight into an adversary’s will, motivations, or tendencies. Commanders require assets and tools to help define the information environment both logically and physically. CAO nested with information operations allow the commander insight into the operating area information environment from all perspectives and viewpoints through close interaction with the local community. A thorough understanding of the information environment enables commanders to shape operations to their will by manipulating the enemy to act in accordance with the commander’s end state. A section with individuals

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focused on coordinating IRCs, at the tactical-level and with the operational level, (CA specifically) enables both the battalion to accomplish tactical tasks through a better understanding of the operating environment and tie tactical objectives with operational goals.

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### Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> US Department of Defense, *Joint Staff, Deputy Director, Joint and Coalition Warfighting*, JP 3-13, November 27, 2014, ix.
- <sup>2</sup> US Department of Defense, *Joint Staff, Deputy Director, Joint and Coalition Warfighting*, x.
- <sup>3</sup> *Joint and Coalition Warfighting*, x.
- <sup>4</sup> *Joint and Coalition Warfighting*, x.
- <sup>5</sup> *Joint and Coalition Warfighting*, x.
- <sup>6</sup> *Joint and Coalition Warfighting*, x.
- <sup>7</sup> *Joint and Coalition Warfighting*, ix.
- <sup>8</sup> *Joint and Coalition Warfighting*, ix.
- <sup>9</sup> *Joint and Coalition Warfighting*, x.
- <sup>10</sup> *Joint and Coalition Warfighting*, 1-2.
- <sup>11</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, FMFRP 12-15 (Washington, DC: US Marine Corps, Dec. 22, 1990), 1.
- <sup>12</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, 8.
- <sup>13</sup> *Small Wars Manual*, 18.
- <sup>14</sup> *Small Wars Manual*, 13.
- <sup>15</sup> *Small Wars Manual*, 16.
- <sup>16</sup> *Small Wars Manual*, 18.
- <sup>17</sup> *Small Wars Manual*, 23.
- <sup>18</sup> Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors*, CMH Pub 11-5 (Washington DC: Center of Military History Department of the Army, 1964), 6.
- <sup>19</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany, 1944-1946* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1975), 3.
- <sup>20</sup> LtCol Leonard A. Blaisol, et al., *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968, Volumes in the Marine Corps Vietnam Series* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 598-605.
- <sup>21</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 598-605.
- <sup>22</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 598-605.
- <sup>23</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 598-605.
- <sup>24</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 616-619.
- <sup>25</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 616-619.
- <sup>26</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 598-605.
- <sup>27</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 598-605.
- <sup>28</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 598-605.
- <sup>29</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 616-619.
- <sup>30</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 616-619.
- <sup>31</sup> *U.S. Marines in Vietnam the Defining Year 1968*, 616-619.
- <sup>32</sup> Larry Wentz, *Lessons from Bosnia* (Washington, DC: DoD Command and Control Research Program, 1998), 129.
- <sup>33</sup> Robert F. Baumann, et al., *Armed Peacekeepers in Bosnia* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 192.
- <sup>34</sup> Edward B. Lescher, "How Effective was Civil Affairs in Bosnia" (master's thesis, US Army General Command and Staff College, 2001), 58.
- <sup>35</sup> "How Effective was Civil Affairs in Bosnia", 61.
- <sup>36</sup> LtCol L. P. Simon, "Future of Marine Corps CA" (lecture, USMC Civil-Military Operations School, Washington, DC, June 6, 2014).
- <sup>37</sup> LtCol L. P. Simon, "Future of Marine Corps CA".
- <sup>38</sup> LtCol L. P. Simon, "Future of Marine Corps CA".
- <sup>39</sup> "US Marine Corps Civil Affairs in I Corps Republic of South Vietnam April 1966 - April 1967," 1970, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, Historical Division, Washington, DC, PCN 19000259100.
- <sup>40</sup> Department of the Navy, *Expeditionary Force 21*, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, DC, 4 March 2014, 31.

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