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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
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COUNTERINSURGENCY: WHAT ARE THE KEY LESSONS LEARNED  
FROM THE SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF WESTERN WORLD  
INVOLVEMENT SINCE WORLD WAR II

by

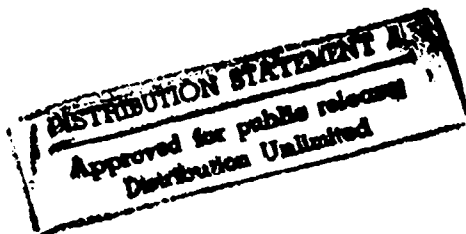
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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

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Signature: Jeffery W. Hammond

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Abstract of

**COUNTERINSURGENCY: WHAT ARE THE KEY LESSONS LEARNED**  
**FROM THE SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF WESTERN WORLD**  
**INVOLVEMENT SINCE WORLD WAR II**

As the Soviet threat decreases and regional contingencies focus on Mid to Low Intensity Conflict, greater emphasis must be placed upon conducting counterinsurgency operations. This study identifies military planning advice regarding United States involvement in future large scale counterinsurgency operations. An analysis is conducted of four different Post World War II counterinsurgency case studies to derive a set of six lessons or principles which planners may apply to future operations. Each lesson is based upon historical analysis and is reinforced by key actions which relate directly to the successful execution of counterinsurgency. The case studies reflect successful (British in Malaya and the Philippine Insurrection) and failed attempts (French in Indochina/Algeria and the U.S. in Vietnam) at large scale counterinsurgency which provide a common base for the development of this study. This study accounts for the Western World approach to counterinsurgency and ascertains that: although U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine is acceptable, efforts to develop an appropriate strategy and operational approach to planning are inadequate.

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**CHAPTER I**

**INTRODUCTION**

**"In light of recent lessons, regional powers may opt for insurgencies instead of open aggression."**

**-US Army TRADOC Pam 525-5**

This study determines military planning advice which one may provide to campaign planners regarding United States involvement in future large scale counterinsurgency (CI) operations. The basis for this study is lessons learned as derived from Post WW II CI operations involving the United States and other nations.

The methodology for this study focuses on two operational questions derived from Army Field Manual 100-5 (with minor modifications):

1. What conditions must be produced in a theater of war or operation to achieve the strategic goal?
2. What key actions are most likely to produce that condition?

My research has identified six strategic conditions (or lessons) which must be produced for a large scale CI operation to achieve a goal of success (defeating the insurgency effort). In support of each of these six lessons, I have applied the operational or tactical actions derived from four post WW II case



studies. The case studies selected include: the British in Malaya, the Philippine Insurrection, the French in Indochina and Algeria, and the United States in Vietnam. These case studies were selected because they reflect a "Western World" approach to conducting CI which provides a common base for study and analysis.

The result is that I have determined a set of principles, based on lessons learned, which provide a base for CI operational planning.

### Background

Since World War II the United States and major Western Powers have managed to avoid war at the level of High Intensity Conflict (conventional escalation to nuclear). Instead, most battles have been fought within the realm of Mid Intensity Conflict. Wars considered in this category include Korea and the recent Persian Gulf War; both limited in scope and fought clearly within the confines of conventional operations. Smaller military operations, far short of conventional war, have been waged within the spectrum of Low Intensity Conflict (LIC). Within this arena, the United States alone has been involved in more than 200 military operations since 1945.<sup>1</sup>

Although the United States (since WWII) has managed to avoid a global worldwide military conflict (through deterrence, containment or power projection), the same is untrue for the planning and execution of successful large scale CI operations. The United States is not the only nation to have failed in the



business of CI. The French have lost twice, once in Vietnam and also in Algeria. Nevertheless, history reflects some noteworthy success stories. Both the British and Philippine governments have a legitimate claim to successful CI operations.

CI is not a new phenomenon. Prior to and following World War II, numerous nations have committed military force to counter an enemy employing unconventional operations. Of the case studies that I have chosen, history reflects successful (British in Malaya: 1942, the Philippine Insurrection: 1946) and failed attempts (French/Indochina: 1947, French/Algeria: 1956, United States in Vietnam: 1963) at CI operations. There are numerous reasons for winning and losing relative to CI. Nevertheless, the cause of the outcome is never difficult to determine. Whether an over-reliance on firepower, technology or conventional operations applied against an unconventional enemy force, it is usually obvious what went wrong.

As regional crisis are the predominant military threat facing the United States in the future, it is most likely that the problems associated with LIC and CI pose the greatest challenge to military planners. As the United States Army restructures to 12 Divisions with greater emphasis upon light forces and contingency operations, future training for ground forces should orient on operations within the realm of LIC with emphasis upon CI. I must emphasize up front that US CI doctrine is sound. Unfortunately, the forces structure and organizational



emphasis clearly reside with a conventional military solution to large scale contingencies.

So what does this mean? The Western World, specifically the United States, has had a tough time conducting a successful large scale CI operation. The real problem lies not in doctrine, but rather the amount of emphasis that has been placed upon the study of Post World War II CI operations for application to unconventional warfare. Andrew Krepinevich (emphasis added by Colonel John Waghelstein) accurately stated that, "The Army's disinterest with regard to the development of CI capabilities was demonstrated not only in that mechanistic approach in which is addressed this requirement in the 1960's, but also in the manner in which once the aberration of Vietnam ended, the organization discarded what has always been an unwanted appendage to its concept".<sup>2</sup>

This study focuses on historical success and mistakes which military planners should consider in conducting future CI operations. I strongly concur with Rod Paschall when he stated, "The United States Army's last experience in this field (LIC) was not a happy one, and unless a careful review of past endeavors and lessons is made, future endeavors are not likely to be any more glorious than the recent unpleasantries in Southeast Asia".<sup>3</sup>



## CHAPTER II

### COUNTERINSURGENCY: THE UNITED STATES MILITARY POSITION

"Low intensity conflicts have been a predominant form of engagement for the military over the past 45 years. In all likelihood, this will continue to be so for the foreseeable future."

-Army Field Manual FM 100-20

-Air Force Pamphlet 3-20

LIC spans a wide spectrum of military operations relative to terrorism, subversion, the maintenance of political options for peace, resistance movement, insurgencies, etc. The scope of this study relates LIC directly to CI (vice any of the other main elements of LIC).

I make the assumption that in the future, the United States will conduct a major CI operation. This is a reasonable assumption based on the plight of the Soviet Union, increasing Third World changes and the belief by the US that it is organized and structured to handle such a contingency (Special Operations Command unified command structure). Worldwide instability makes it clear that Unified Commanders must plan for CI operations within their area of operations to attain strategic objectives relative to long term United States goals.

The insurgent may pursue a strategy that could include a Leninist, Maoist, Cuban or Urban approach and thus require United States military intervention.<sup>4</sup> A general understanding of the United States military position regarding CI operations sets the stage for this study.



According to JCS Pub 1-02, CI is defined as those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken by a government to defeat a subversive insurgency.

The US considers CI as a host nation problem, supported by a nation building solution, based on the prospects of internal defense and development. The key tenets are legitimacy of the host government and security assistance.

The strategy of internal defense and development is oriented on promoting a nations self-protection against insurgent organizations. In reality, the concept tends to integrate social and military programs to promote internal security. Howard Lee Dixon clearly acknowledges the focus upon security assistance and legitimacy of the host nation when he stated, "This is because the fundamental tenet of US strategy for dealing with LIC directed against our friends and allies is that military institutions in threatened states must become able to provide security for their own actions and government".<sup>5</sup>

The use of United States military power in support of CI operations is considered in the context of foreign internal defense (FID). FID stresses the participation of United States civilian and military forces in the action programs of the host government. It is interesting to note that the Army Field Manual and Air Force Pamphlet concede that operations by United States forces in CI may entail the entire spectrum of the use of force yet the operations will rarely be direct combat engagements against insurgents. The joint doctrine further addresses that CI



will normally be indirect operations in support of the friendly government such as security assistance training, advice and logistic support. CI operations may doctrinally include the following: intelligence operations, civil-military operations, humanitarian or civic assistance, populace and resource control, and combat tactical operations.

Conversely, the US CI program in 1964 identified in priority the following operations: combat, population and resource control and environmental improvement (political, economic and social repair). Note that the emphasis in 1964 was upon killing insurgents as the priority fix; current doctrine chooses to follow a more people oriented approach.

The joint doctrine dictates the concepts, objectives and methods that armed forces of a country exposed to insurgent operations can employ. What is most interesting is the position of the United States regarding tactical CI operations. The following doctrinal statements (FM 100-20 and AF Pam 3-20) seem to reflect a rather broad interpretation "fix" to the problems encountered in Vietnam. "Historical experience suggests that US combat operations in support of host nation's CI efforts should be strategically defensive. Responsibility for the CI program must remain with the host nation's government if its legitimacy is to survive. The host nation's military plan and the US military support plan must be combined to govern US tactical operations. Host nation, not US forces should conduct neutralization programs,



particularly coercive measures such as populace and resource control operations."

In the planning and execution of CI operations, the United States doctrine supports the employment of the full range of political, economic and military power as deemed necessary by the National Command Authority.



### CHAPTER III

#### PRE WORLD WAR II COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

"There is little evidence that the Nationalist Chinese and Japanese programs had any influence on the counterinsurgency efforts of the French, British or Filipinos, but since the British had a large resettlement program in Malaya, they may have been influenced by the Japanese protective village project."

-Ray Hillam  
The Problem of Counter-  
Measures in Malaya, Vietnam  
and the Philippines

Though this study focuses on Post WW II CI operations, it is imperative that the reader analyze the period leading up to and during the war. Consider the words of Ray Hillman (above), review the following paragraphs and ask yourself why we fail to learn from past experiences.

A review of CI efforts in China (mid 1920's to late 1940's) and by the Japanese (from the occupation of Manchuria to the end of World War II) provide an excellent insight to Post World War II Western World efforts. The focus here is upon Chiang Kai-shek and his counterinsurgency efforts to suppress Mao Tse-tung inspired Communist insurgents and the Japanese effort to conquer northern China.

From 1930-1933 Chiang Kai-shek launched four conventional campaigns to exterminate Communist insurgents. His intent was to destroy the enemy in formal combat through sheer numbers and overwhelming firepower. Unfortunately, all four campaigns were unsuccessful ending in defeat. By the fifth campaign, Chiang



adjusted his strategy (surprisingly based on advice from German military experts) to isolate rather than exterminate Mao's forces. Operations were focused on strict economic and military blockade to seal off logistic support forcing the Communists to resort to static positional warfare. The isolation effort was consuming but eventually Mao's forces were unable to resist the military and economic pressure. In short, Chiang Kai-shek developed and executed a successful cordon sanitaire operation.

Chiang chose to pursue his annihilation campaign by combining political and economic programs with military force. He attempted to control the rural population as 70% of his effort against the insurgents was political reorganization and only 30% strict military operations.<sup>6</sup> He established a working rural administrative structure designed to curb Communist control in the rural areas. In recognizing the need for peasant support, Chiang organized cooperatives, instituted economic reforms and gradually gained support from the rural population.

The key to Chiang's effort to control the rural areas was the promotion of nationalism through the establishment of rural welfare centers and the promotion of a modern cultural campaign targeted at the youth. School curriculums were reorganized and youth corps established. Nevertheless, his social control efforts were more short term than sweeping in nature and in time succumbed to the aggressive insurgents. It was a matter of too little too late.



The Japanese goal was to destroy the Communist insurgents in northern China as part of a plan for the overall conquest of China. The Japanese executed an aggressive counterinsurgency program but failed due to the shortcomings of their political programs.

The Japanese attempted to destroy the Communist insurgency via military action. In doing so, the Japanese Army resorted to a scorched earth policy which resulted in the complete destruction of villages and the execution of harmless civilians based on suspicion alone. The Japanese initiated a cultural propaganda program to inspire Asian partnership and prosperity which completely self-destructed through uncontrolled military action. The Japanese preached unity and oneness yet applied terrorism against the population.

One interesting approach of the Japanese was to pursue control of the key cities, railroads and communication lines with the belief that this effort would force the rural peasants into submission. This narrow minded effort allowed the Communists to bring the rural population of northern China under insurgent control (estimated 70% of the total population within that area).

Eventually the Japanese recognized the mistake and countered with aggressive rural area military actions such as pursuit, mopping-up and cordon sanitaire operations to destroy the insurgents. The consequences of these efforts were self-destructive. Villages were destroyed and peasants indiscriminately killed.



The one success for the Japanese was the development of protective villages (resettlements) in controlled and protected areas. Though this effort gained a measure of success, it never provided an overwhelming solution to attract the rural population.

The key lessons derived from these two examples are the need for a sound political program to attract and win over the population of "have nots", and a controlled military effort aimed at killing insurgents, not inspiring terrorism. Chiang Kai-shek seemed to grasp the need for such a program yet never fully delivered the product. The Japanese established an impressive protective village system yet continued to pursue a military solution beyond reason.

In the course of this study it will become evident that the Chinese and Japanese experiences had little effect on Post World War II CI efforts.



## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION: POST WORLD WAR II LESSONS LEARNED

"The Army's failure lay in the assumption that it could transplant to Indochina the operational methods that had been successful in the European battle theaters of World War II."

-Andrew Krepinevich  
-The Army and Vietnam

There is a great difference between CI operations and the application of conventional warfare to mid and high intensity conflict. The tenets of the Army's AirLand Battle and the application of the "Ten Imperatives for Combat" (FM 100-5) may foster success on the conventional battlefield but fail to provide an adequate framework for successful CI. Such operations are more oriented upon political, economic, social and unique military considerations which cause a reconsideration of the military approach. Current doctrine clearly recognizes the need to focus CI operations on nonviolent versus combat tasks. My findings reflect such an approach. The following 6 principles (or lessons) are drawn from an analysis of legitimate case studies and reflect an original and historic approach oriented on the unique requirements of the CI environment.

Principle: Plan for an unconventional war. Conventional warfare and massive firepower are unproductive in a CI theater of operation.



Decisive combat action employing conventional methods will not defeat guerilla operations. History is clear on this point. Mao accurately stated that, "Weapons are an important factor in war, but not the decisive factor; it is the people, not things, that are decisive".<sup>7</sup>

The French never understood this when they sent a conventional army to fight guerilla war in Algeria. As Alistair Horne accurately stated, "The French Army was altogether too much of a NATO style force, both in equipment and technology, and it was by no means clear minded about its tasks".<sup>8</sup> The consistent French over-reliance on conventional operations elicited the following response from the Governor General in Algeria: "To send in tank units, to destroy villages, to bombard certain zones, this is no longer the fine comb; it is using a sledgehammer to kill fleas".<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, the French continually tried to employ World War II conventional operations to a guerilla war in Indochina in 1947 resulting in the same "sledgehammer to kill fleas" approach.

The US Army in Vietnam clearly failed to structure forces for the CI effort. Andrew Krepenvitch observed that, "The US assumed that it could transplant to Indochina, the operational methods that had been successful in the European battle theaters of WW II".<sup>10</sup> Massive air and artillery failed to defeat an unlimited manpower source or even sever lines of communication. The Airmobile force innovation was developed with the nuclear European



battlefield in mind and served only as a technical fix to solving the CI problem.

The Filipino approach to CI reflects a "game winning" plan. The Filipino Army was reorganized into 26 Battalion Combat Teams (BCT), light infantry battalions which were self-sufficient and trained to fight and extract the guerilla. Emphasis was upon patrolling, use of hunter-killer teams and execution of operations under night conditions. The Filipinos employed limited air and artillery and instead adapted their ways to those of the enemy. The light infantry/guerilla tactics approach was adopted based on enemy capabilities rather than forcing a conventional system that just wasn't right for the situation.

In Malaya, the British employed limited conventional firepower. They recognized that massive firepower did more to support the propaganda of the insurgents than to kill the enemy. The British adjusted their combat operations to match the enemy capabilities and type of war they faced. The British adjusted their methods from the conventional operations that they had been trained for to assume an unconventional approach. They fought a light infantry, small unit war employing minimum air and artillery support. The British never concentrated their effort via conventional warfare. Instead, they decentralized the fight to the small unit level employing basic infantry tactics.

Based upon my assessment, the following actions will support the planning for combat conditions relative to unconventional war:



KEY ACTIONS: (1) Employ small unit, light infantry operations; revert to fighting a primitive form of warfare. (2) Forget the NATO way of fighting; tailor combat operations to terrain and task specialized forces (in contrast to general purpose fighters). (3) Heavy artillery, tanks and high technology weapons should not be employed in this type of war.

Principle: External support and sanctuary to the insurgent must be eliminated.

In both Algeria and Indochina the French faced the problem of fighting an enemy who was able to mount counteroffensive operations due to an open pipeline of military and economic assistance. In Indochina, the French were never able to terminate the sanctuary afforded the enemy. Red China, occupying all the provinces on the Tongking, provided the Vietminh continuous resources and sanctuary. The French fared much better in Algeria. The Morice Line was constructed as a solution. It was an electric fence which ran along the Tunisian border for 200 miles, defended by 80,000 French troops. It virtually eliminated resupply and infiltration in support of the FLN insurgency. This effort caused the French to expend a great amount of resources but served as an effective cordon sanitaire.

In the Philippines the isolation of the insurgents never allowed for any effective outside support. As an island nation, the threat created by bordering countries was absent.



The British in Malaya successfully isolated the guerrillas from their food supply through a government controlled denial program. The government controlled all food stocks and distribution virtually eliminating the ability of the guerilla support arm (Chinese villages) to collect and distribute food. As in the Philippines, the geographic location and political orientation of outside countries was not realistically conducive to sanctuary and outside support.

In Vietnam, the US was never able to sever the Communist support structure or the exploitation of sanctuary. The enemy was provided sanctuary while politically the US employed strategic bombing without an invasion of the North. The Ho Chi Minh Trail was never effectively blocked.

McNamara did propose the construction of a barrier across the 17th parallel between North and South Vietnam (ala Morice Line). The Army also proposed a plan to eliminate infiltration by positioning a four division blocking force in northern South Vietnam and Laos. Neither idea was adopted. The fact is that the guerilla forces were provided external support and sanctuary protection throughout the duration of the war.

To create a condition which eliminates external support and sanctuary, the following actions should be considered:

KEY ACTIONS: (1) Isolate the insurgent. (2) Geography may tend to create natural isolation but don't count on it. (3) There is no such thing as a "neutral" if a country is providing sanctuary and outside support to the enemy. (4) Identify the root support



structure and eliminate it early. (5) Barriers such as the Morice Line are unrealistic fixes. (6) Remember, insurgencies only survive as long as they have an outside source of help and/or protection.

Principle: Establish an effective Intelligence System to serve as a principle CI weapon.

The British coordinated all intelligence collection under the control of the civilian police force. The Malayan Police best understood the population and thus were in a position to exploit HUMINT. Douglas Blaufarb and George Tanham state that, "The government established district, province and national intelligence centers run by the police but with representatives of both the military and civilian authority. All insurgency information was stored in these centers, organized in dossiers for every known member of the insurgent organization".<sup>11</sup> The police were clearly the primary intelligence agency, integrated by the military.

The Philippine Army developed a superb intelligence base by infiltrating the Huk's during the early phases of the insurrection. "Force X" was a sophisticated operation employing small groups to infiltrate deep into enemy territory. In addition to killing Huk's, "Force X found that most of the town mayors and police chiefs were in collusion with the enemy".<sup>12</sup> "Force X" was never applied on a larger scale once Magsaysay assumed office as the Secretary of National Defense.



Robert Komer recognized the problems of intelligence gathering in Vietnam and indicated that the US Army focused efforts on finding the enemy big units to "the total neglect of the guerillas and the so called Viet Cong infrastructure, the political apparatus that was really running the war".<sup>13</sup> US combat intelligence collection was too focused on the NATO way of doing business. The Army simply placed a low priority on combat intelligence collection. The South Vietnamese Police were ineffective as they were never adequately supported.

The Phoenix Program was a viable tactic for eliminating the Viet Cong infrastructure. The program achieved modest success in locating, identifying and eliminating Viet Cong leadership. However, it came to be seen as more of an assassination system than a viable intelligence related tactic. The problem was one of corruption; the targeting of the Viet Cong infrastructure was driven by quota allocations which resulted in a negative effect on the population.

It is my assessment that intelligence is the key to success-CI. The following actions lend support to the attainment of a successful intelligence gathering network:

KEY ACTIONS: (1) Knowing the enemy is the single best link to success in CI. (2) People support serves as the base for timely and accurate intelligence gathering (HUMINT). (3) One single organization should be responsible for security intelligence. (4) Local police agencies (host nation) should be the base for



intelligence collection. (5) Infiltration is an option, only necessary if the intelligence system is broken.

Principle: Attempt to never assume the defense. CI strategy must seize the initiative inherent in the offense and integrate the military, political and psychological realms.

The French in Algeria conducted successful territorial offensive operations. The area of operations was divided into three zones of varying priority. Sparsely populated areas were designated free fire areas whereby the inhabitants settled elsewhere. The army was authorized to fire on anyone in this area. This denied the FLN access to food and supplies. Fertile and populated areas were assured total protection and provided a major effort in economic advancement, education and political indoctrination. The third area was designated a killing zone where the insurgents were relentlessly pursued. Such a plan worked well in terms of psychological warfare as comparisons were drawn between life in the killing zone and life in the other areas.

In Vietnam, the French attempted to establish and expand strategic bases with the idea that eventually the entire country would be secured. This Oil Spot Strategy failed for two reasons. The French failed to control the rural countryside and simply failed to establish secure strategic bases. The French did achieve limited success under General de Lateur but couldn't



complete the process of pacifying and regaining control of the population.

The US Army in Vietnam, unable to invade North Vietnam to destroy enemy forces, settled on a strategy of attrition. In the words of Andrew Krepenvitch, "The insurgents fought to maintain access to the population while leading the US Army on a wild goose chase inland, drawing MACV's maneuver battalions away from the people they were trying to protect."<sup>14</sup> The Army focused on the technological aspects of the war and ignored the political dimensions. Rather than defeating the enemy through population access denial, the Army oriented on attrition ignoring the fact that they were in a small unit war.

The British successfully employed the Oil Spot Strategy in Malaya. To complement the strategy they expanded the role of the Malayan Police and developed Home Guard defense units. The Briggs Plan is credited as being the cornerstone of the victory (4-Phases):

1. Dominate the population and build a feeling of complete security.
2. Break-up the Communist organization within the populated areas.
3. Isolate the enemy from their food, intelligence and supply organizations.
4. Destroy the enemy by forcing him to attack on our ground.<sup>15</sup>

The Briggs Plan was a total CI package which was expensive but successfully drew much of the Chinese population into the Malayan political system. The plan had to adjust operations from



large to small scale (company and platoon) to establish strategic bases.

The offense takes the issues to the enemy rather than allowing the enemy to dictate the pace of operations. To seize the initiative and integrate the typically nonmilitary factors, the following actions must be considered:

KEY ACTIONS: (1) Fix the political and psychological issues first; then destroy the enemy. (2) Territorial Offense and the Oil Spot Strategy offer the two best alternatives to initiating military operations. (3) Focus on small unit operations that isolate and kill the enemy; security and protection of people is the root of the mission. (4) CI operations are slow and deliberate; prepare for a protracted war. (5) A strategy of attrition usually fails to fit a CI kind of war.

Principle: The people are the Center of Gravity; they must be loyal and committed to the government.

Magsaysay demonstrated a clear understanding of this principle. He identified the Huk movement as "symptomatic of greater diseases that were threatening the country--poverty, rising social expectations and an uncaring and corrupt central government".<sup>16</sup> The Filipino Army not only killed the enemy but also assumed a social conscience sensitive to the needs of the people. Magsaysay issued a directive that every soldier had two duties: "first to act as an ambassador for good will from the government to the people; second to kill or capture the Huk's".<sup>17</sup>



Magsaysay's attraction program inspired rather than oppressed the people.

The British decision to grant Malayan independence was key to gaining the support of the people. The promise of independence made it appear that the Communist insurgency was hindering Malayan political and economic development. The insurgents were thus unable to exploit any anti-colonialism resentment and the British appeared as champions of law and order. The British also insured that Malayan civilian domination was maintained over the military throughout the entire CI operation.

The French could never overcome the nationalism web which caused them to be perceived as pursuing colonial interests. In Algeria, they played into the hands of guerilla terrorism (out of frustration at getting to the insurgent) alienating much of the population at home and abroad. Consider the words of Brazilian guerilla leader Carlos Marighela:

**It is necessary to turn political crisis into armed conflict by performing violent actions that will force those in power to transform the political situation of the country into a military situation. That will alienate the masses, who from then on, will revolt against the army and police and blame them for the state of things.<sup>18</sup>**

In Vietnam the French never understood the nature of the war and failed to attract popular support. The Vietminh were always a step ahead. Point 9 of the Vietminh soldiers Oath of Honor reflects this observation: "Respect the people, help the people, and defend the people in order to win their confidence and



affection; achieve a better understanding between the people and the army".<sup>19</sup>

The US never identified the people as the center of gravity during the Vietnam War. The emphasis wasn't on winning hearts and minds but on killing enemy and clearing territory. The Marine Combined Action Program (CAP) was marginally successful in gaining the support and good will of the people, but the focus of the program was on a small scale. The concept was to build an infrastructure which as it grew would drive the Viet Cong away from the people. A marginally successful effort, the army conceded some success to the program but refused to adopt such an approach.

Developing the loyal and committed support of the people is a critical condition for success. The following actions support this effort:

KEY ACTIONS: (1) Recognize up front that loyalty and commitment of the people are a special feature of CI operations. (2) The military must minimize and eliminate nationalism support to the insurgents. (3) Don't support a bad government; a political problem cannot be solved with a military solution. (4) The military has a dual role in CI; kill the bad guys and win the hearts of the good guys.

Principle: Civil action/pacification programs are equal if not more important than killing the insurgent.



All the case studies clearly indicate the need to protect the population through some sort of civic action defense program. The British initiated a Strategic Hamlet resettlement program which was decisive in winning the Malayan war. Resettlement was a joint civil-military effort which effectively protected the people from insurgent terrorism and intimidation. This in turn seemed to unite the people on the side of the government.

Magsaysay was equally as successful in the Philippines with his Economic Development Corps (EDCOR). Designed as a resettlement program to defeat the Huk principle of "land for the landless", it accounted for 1200 families and served as a great propaganda victory. According to Ray Hillman, "Magsaysay claimed that transplanting of a single village was of greater value than an additional battalion combat team".<sup>20</sup>

Magsaysay also used the army in numerous civil action programs. The army built over 4,000 schools, built roads and bridges and provided medical support. The expansion of the military role established that the government was interested in the needs of the have nots.

In Algeria the French created the Section Administrative Specialist (SAS) Corps to promote civil action. The SAS counterorganized the population into capable self-defense forces, local governing bodies, social organizations and generally tried to bring as many Algerians as possible into a team atmosphere. The French chose to regroup the rural population under the supervision of the SAS. Estimates are that up to two million



people were involved. In short, the resettlement effort was successful. John McCuen indicates that, "An objective view of the French experience with regroupment in Algeria would indicate that the concept is sound".<sup>21</sup>

According to the author Andrew Krepinevich, "The US Army in Vietnam focused on the technological and logistical dimensions of strategy while ignoring the political and social dimensions that formed the foundation of CI".<sup>22</sup> Failure to allocate appropriate resources and attention to the pacification programs was a major limiting factor. There were some good plans, unfortunately they were poorly executed. CORDS was the program responsible for the development and execution of all pacification operations. Civilians held most of the leadership positions in the program yet it was still a military effort. The military activity conducted by CORDS included the entire advisory effort at the provincial and district levels and the task of advising the two paramilitary militias, the Regional Force (RF) and the Popular Force (PF).<sup>23</sup> CORDS first priority was to train and improve the capabilities of the militias. According to Blaufarb and Tanham, "The impact of the effort is indicated by the fact that the RF and PF accounted for enemy casualties at a higher rate in terms of the investment in them than the ARVN".<sup>24</sup> Even though the militia forces bore the brunt of pacification security, they were granted a low priority for resources.

The US Army also had it's own Strategic Hamlet program. Andrew Krepinevich states that, "Between 1964 and 1969 over three



million people, 20% of the population, were refugees at one time or another as a result of the attrition strategy and the policy of population relocation".<sup>25</sup> The army placed little emphasis on the program and in this regard failed to protect the population. Pacification was clearly not a strength of the US Army in Vietnam.

Civil action and pacification programs serve to organize and develop the support of the population. Killing insurgents is secondary. The following actions support this condition:

KEY ACTIONS: (1) Protect the population; that is more important than killing. (2) The military must present themselves as saviors to the population; civic action programs are part of the job in CI operations. (3) Resettlement programs work but they must be carefully managed. (4) Plan to invest a major effort in developing paramilitary defense operations. (5) Pacification programs must be at the front of all CI planning.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

"It is fashionable in some quarters to say that the problems in Southeast Asia are primarily political and economic rather than military. I do not agree. The essence of the problem in Vietnam is military."

General Wheeler  
US Army Chief of Staff (1964)

Three major conclusions can be drawn from this study based upon the current world situation and past counterinsurgency operations:

First, regional powers may opt for insurgencies in the future. The Soviet Union is gone and Third World Nations provide the greatest threat to regional stability and US strategic interests. Due to this, the US must refocus attention to the Low Intensity Conflict spectrum (particularly large scale CI). Doctrine appears in order, yet the bulk of the US Army is trained, organized and prepared to fight only a High-Mid Intensity Conflict war. The mistake we appear to have made is to assume away future large scale CI operations. We must get back to the basics and study past CI experiences.

Second, the six lessons that I have derived are based on a study of historical success and failures. The lessons can be applied universally relative to large scale CI operations. Small scale CI operations were not the focus of this study nor have I particularly considered such an approach. Nevertheless, the



lessons and supporting actions offer a basic but thorough approach to CI planning.

Finally, counterinsurgency is won by breaking most of the rules relative to conventional warfare. The conditions for success must focus on winning the hearts and minds of the population. Killing insurgents is secondary and made easy when all the other elements are satisfied (civil action, pacification, external support, etc).

The US has proven virtually unbeatable in conventional warfare. Desert Storm confirmed our current state of readiness. The same is not true for large scale CI operations. The words of General Wheeler (cited at the beginning of this chapter) reflect the true nature of US failure in Vietnam. To prevent such a repeat in the future, it is critical that military planners reexamine and prepare to apply the lessons of the past.



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