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Tactical Methods For Combatting Insurgencies:
Are U.S. Army Light Infantry Battalions Prepared?

A Monograph
by
Major Gregory Heritage
Infantry



School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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ABSTRACT

TACTICAL METHODS FOR COMBATING INSURGENCIES: ARE U.S. ARMY LIGHT INFANTRY BATTALIONS PREPARED?

This monograph assesses U.S. Army light infantry battalions training for conducting counterinsurgency operations. Military forces should be trained and ready for counterinsurgency warfare because they might be committed to fight in an insurgency.

Army training doctrine requires units to identify their mission essential tasks and then train to execute those tasks. The light infantry battalions' mission essential task lists are analyzed to determine if training on those tasks prepares the infantry battalions to conduct counterinsurgency operations.

The research methodology involved studying revolutionary warfare, historical experiences, counterinsurgency theory, and U.S. doctrine for combatting insurgencies. An analysis based on the nature of the insurgency and U.S. Army doctrine determines the criteria used to evaluate the mission essential tasks of the light infantry battalions.

Although training on the light infantry battalions' mission essential tasks prepare those units for a conventional conflict, training on their mission essential tasks will not prepare those units for unconventional counterinsurgency warfare. The light infantry battalions need additional training on specified tasks and on the nature of insurgencies to conduct counterinsurgency operations. The current infantry battalions' mission essential task lists are not comprehensive for counterinsurgency operations. The battalions' mission essential task lists need additional tasks such as cordon and search, search and attack, area ambush, encirclement, movement security, civil military operations, and training of indigenous forces. U.S. Army light infantry battalions require extensive training prior to commitment into counterinsurgency warfare.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Title Page.....	i
Approval Sheet.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Nature of the Insurgency	3
Analyzing Historical Experiences.....	16
Analyzing Mission Essential Task Lists.....	27
Conclusions.....	40
Appendixes:	
A. Definitions	
B. Light Battalion METL	
C. Airborne Battalion METL	
D. Ranger Battalion METL	
Endnotes.....	42
Bibliography.....	46

INTRODUCTION

American military forces have a long association with revolutionary warfare. During the American Revolution, George Washington sent General Nathanael Greene to North Carolina in December 1780 to lead Continental troops and militia in unconventional warfare against the British. Between 1898 and 1934 the U.S. Marines fought a series of small wars in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Mexico, Guam, Samoa, China, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic.¹ From 1898 to 1902, American forces fought in the Philippines. The American military thus has an extensive history of fighting unconventional wars.

Despite this significant historical experience in unconventional warfare, American military forces were unsuccessful defeating the communist insurgency in Vietnam from 1964 to 1973. The Vietnam experience may have taught America's political leadership to avoid committing conventional forces to counterinsurgency warfare. Yet, this is a strategic lesson, not a tactical lesson. Military leaders must learn the tactical lessons of conducting counterinsurgency operations because they are responsible to ensure soldiers are trained to fight.

U.S. Army training doctrine requires units to

identify their mission essential tasks based on the commander's analysis of war plans and external directives. Units then train to execute these designated mission essential tasks.

Consequently, unit commanders allocate resources to insure units train to standard on mission essential tasks. The proper identification of mission essential tasks and training to standard helps insure military units are prepared to fight.

This monograph answers the question, does training on current mission essential tasks prepare U.S. Army light infantry battalions to conduct counterinsurgency operations? Accordingly, this monograph analyzes the nature of insurgencies and the insurgent. A historical perspective of French and American experiences in Vietnam provides insight concerning practical application of counterinsurgency tactics. Finally, the mission essential task lists of a airborne, ranger, and light infantry battalions are analyzed to determine if those tasks prepare the units for counterinsurgency warfare.

NATURE OF THE INSURGENCY

A critical analysis of mission essential task lists requires knowledge about the nature of the insurgency and the insurgent because insurgencies (see definitions

in appendix A) are different from conventional conflicts. Consequently, military units execute many different mission tasks in an insurgency.

Insurgencies are not won by defeating the enemy on the battlefield, rather they are won by alleviating the causes of discontent among the population to achieve popular support. Thus, popular support becomes the ultimate goal, because without popular support the insurgent can not survive. To achieve popular support during an insurgency, political considerations dominate strategy and tactics much more than during conventional conflicts.²

Understanding the insurgent's methods of operation remains important to analyzing mission essential tasks. Counterinsurgency forces leadership must understand the insurgent's strategies, tactics, strengths, and weaknesses. Understanding the insurgent allows military units to train more effectively and hopefully achieve fewer casualties on the battlefield.

A country becomes vulnerable to insurrection due to underlying social, economic, and political causes. Insurgent leadership will use these underlying causes to gain support for rebellion against the government. The government's ability to solve these underlying causes of discontent remains the key to success in an insurgency. The insurgency continues to develop if the

government will not or can not alleviate the underlying social, economic, and political causes of discontent.

There are three phases of development for an insurgency.³ First, is the latent and incipient phase which includes the period the insurgent organizes, prepares, and starts subversive and terrorist activities.⁴ During this phase, counterinsurgency forces may directly support police operations to defend key installations, conduct riot control operations, and conduct antiterrorist activities.⁵

Phase two is guerrilla warfare. The insurgent deploys guerrilla forces within the country and attempts to seize the military initiative. The insurgent uses both terrorist and guerrilla force operations to create an environment of instability and force the legitimate government on the defensive. During this phase counterinsurgency forces may continue to support police operations and conduct counterquerrilla operations.

Phase three is the war of movement and occurs when the guerrilla achieves the necessary strength to challenge government forces through direct military confrontation. During this phase counterinsurgency forces will conduct conventional operations to destroy organized enemy forces. The insurgent requires popular support to organize conventional forces and conduct a

war of movement.

Insurgent forces rely on popular support for success and survival. Mao Tse-Tung stated, "we must rely on the force of the popular masses, for it is only thus that we can have a guarantee of success."⁶ The insurgent depends on the population for food, housing, and intelligence information which protects insurgents from government forces.⁷ Popular support allows the insurgent to organize military forces and replace casualties. The insurgent's survival often depends upon a close bond with the population.

Success for government forces in this type of war requires separating the insurgent from the population. Isolating the insurgent from the population deprives his forces of necessary supplies and information. Without this critical support, the insurgent forces become ineffective.⁸ Consequently, counterinsurgency forces may be assigned tasks to defend the population which may include assisting police operations and training local forces. If counterinsurgency forces can win the allegiance of the population, the insurgent becomes isolated.

Gaining allegiance of the population remains essential in counterinsurgency warfare.⁹ A population that supports the government forces can provide the necessary intelligence to conduct strike operations

allowing decisive destruction of insurgent field forces. A supportive population can also provide information about the insurgent organization allowing government forces to eradicate the organization's influence. Finally, a supportive populace can deny the insurgents intelligence information and necessary logistical support.

To achieve popular support, political considerations affect military operations. Political considerations govern strategy and tactics in insurgencies. Mao Tse-Tung stated,

The fighting capacity of a guerrilla unit is not determined exclusively by military arts, but depends above all on political consciousness, political influence, setting in motion the broad popular masses, disintegrating the enemy army, and inducing the broad popular masses to accept our leadership. All the plans of a guerrilla unit, whether they be political, military, or of any other nature, are all directed toward this single end.¹⁰

The insurgent's strategy and tactics directly support the political objectives designed to gain popular support and increase political strength.

Counterinsurgency forces' military actions must support the government's political goals that solve underlying political, economic, and social issues. Counterinsurgency forces must understand that military operations by themselves will not defeat an insurgency. U.S. Army doctrine states:

The successful counterinsurgent must realize that

the true nature of the threat to his government lies in the insurgent's political strength, not in his military power. Although the government must contain the insurgent's armed elements, concentration on the military aspect of the threat does not address the real danger. Any strategy that does not pay continuing, serious attention to the political claims and demands of the insurgents is severely handicapped.¹¹

Military forces support political goals by ensuring a secure environment allowing the government to improve the living conditions for the populace. Participation by military forces in civil affairs operations can directly improve living conditions for the people. Political objectives may also dictate rules of engagement that are often necessary to win popular support. The population becomes alienated when excessive use of firepower results in civilian casualties and damage to private property.

To develop this popular support, the insurgent will use propaganda. General Giap, Commander of the North Vietnamese forces during the Vietnam War, stated,

Therefore, to make good preparations for armed insurrection, the most essential and important task was to make propaganda among the masses and organize them to develop and consolidate the organizations for national salvation.¹²

Ho Chi Minh's revolution in Vietnam began in 1946 by sending out cadres of people using propaganda to influence the people and develop a political support base. Insurgents try to rally the population around legitimate issues which especially appeal to the

younger generation. For example, fighting colonialism was the cause used by insurgents in Vietnam, Algeria, and Malaysia to encourage popular support. Insurgents attempted to influence people by developing political groups among the populace and gradually convincing people that communism could resolve political issues.

Insurgent forces develop close bonds with the population to gain popular support. General Giap issued the following instructions to his soldiers in Vietnam:

In contacts with the people: Respect the people; help the people; defend the people in order to win their confidence and affection and achieve a perfect understanding between the people and the Army.¹³

Insurgent soldiers develop popular support by respecting and helping the people, or at least creating the perception that they are helping.

Hence, the counterinsurgent must also respect the people and avoid breaches of discipline.

Insurgent forces take advantage of discipline lapses of counterinsurgency forces. Mao Tse-Tung states,

A guerrilla unit should pay particular attention to all the atrocities of the enemy, and to all the instances in which he massacres our Army or our people, and carry out propaganda...¹⁴

Any perceived or real atrocity committed by counterinsurgency forces will be used for propaganda purposes. Counterinsurgency forces must instill high standards of discipline within their forces to avoid

incidents that alienate the people.

When the insurgent cannot use propaganda to achieve popular support, then the insurgent may use terrorism to coerce support from the population. The purposes of terrorism include: coercing support from the population, demonstrating the government's weaknesses and inability to provide security, and encouraging the legitimate government to implement severe security measures that alienate the populace.¹⁵ Terrorism is effective and difficult to prevent. During the Malayan insurgency 3,283 civilians were abducted or murdered; In Vietnam, estimates of civilians abducted or murdered exceed 25,000 people just between 1956 and 1965.¹⁶ By killing so many people, the terrorist creates an environment of disorder and instability. The nation's people lose faith in a government that cannot provide security and may then support the insurgent out of fear. Thus, terrorism becomes an effective method to force people's support of the insurgency.

To prevent the rise of terrorism and instability, counterinsurgency forces require training on antiterrorist measures. They must take defensive actions to protect the population from terrorist acts.¹⁷ Antiterrorist training includes measures to protect installations, military units, and key

personnel. Counterinsurgency forces may conduct counterterrorism operations which are offensive measures to strike at terrorist organizations if Army special operation forces cannot respond immediately. Thus, counterinsurgency forces require training on antiterrorist and counterterrorist measures.

Often, the insurgent's subversive organization directs the terrorist attacks. The insurgent organization controls the population and provides insurgent forces with the necessary support to conduct combat operations. Robert Thompson, a former British military officer who gained expertise during the Malayan Insurgency and subsequently advised General Westmoreland in Vietnam, states,

Unless the communist subversive political organization in the towns and villages is broken and eliminated, the insurgent guerilla units will not be defeated. If the guerrillas can be isolated from the population, i.e. the 'little fishes' removed from the 'water', then their eventual destruction becomes automatic.¹⁸

The insurgent organization conducts the propaganda campaign, provides intelligence, logistical support, and replacements for combat losses. This organization lives among the people and directs the terrorist acts.

Therefore, the destruction of the insurgent's organization among the people remains essential for success.¹⁹ Government military forces may soundly defeat insurgent forces on the battlefield; however,

the insurgent forces will then retreat and the organization will provide logistical support and personnel to regenerate fighting capability. Thus, the insurgent's organization that controls the population requires destruction. This insurgent subversive organization provides the means to implement the insurgent's strategy.

The insurgent strategy seeks protracted war and avoids decisive battles. The insurgent attempts to gain the advantage of time by conducting protracted warfare and concurrently extending control over the population thus increasing his strength. General Giap used a protracted strategy against the French and Americans.²⁰ The North Vietnamese fought a war of exhaustion suffering extreme losses while inflicting unacceptable casualties on the French and Americans.²¹ Insurgent forces use a strategy of protracted warfare avoiding decisive combat while gradually attriting government forces.

Insurgent tactics support the strategy of protracted warfare. Mao Tse-Tung advises,

the enemy advances, we retreat,
the enemy retreats, we advance,
the enemy halts, we harass him.²²

The insurgent executes carefully planned and rehearsed operations after obtaining detailed intelligence. The ambush becomes the preferred tactic because it allows

surprise and defeats the enemy with minimal losses to the insurgent. The insurgent avoids conventional battles unless concentration of their forces allows victory.

Conventional thrusts by military forces into insurgent controlled areas are often indecisive. The guerrilla retreats and avoids contact except for delaying forces. Insurgents use booby traps to inflict casualties. By avoiding decisive battles, the insurgent conserves his forces while gradually attriting their enemy, thus eroding the will to fight. The following example illustrates the insurgent's tactics of avoiding battle by fading away while inflicting casualties on government forces. The 3rd brigade of the 1st Cavalry division air assaulted into the Bong Son plain on 28 January, 1966. The brigade suffered 82 men killed and 318 men wounded to liberate Bong Son.²³ The Viet Cong were forced out of the area but returned to Bong Son within one week of the American unit's departure. This example demonstrates that conventional tactics attempting to destroy enemy forces in decisive battles will not defeat an insurgency.

The insurgent forces are vulnerable to defeat if external military support is interdicted. External military support provided by sympathetic countries is usually necessary for the insurgent to achieve his

aims. The successful insurgencies since World War II required external support to win.²⁴ The military support provided by the Soviets and Chinese during the Vietnam War allowed the North Vietnamese Army to succeed.²⁵ During the Vietnam War, the French failed to interdict the Viet Minh supplies of arms and ammunition. Consequently, Viet Minh forces using modern Soviet supplied weapons often achieved greater firepower than French forces at the tactical level. As a result, French forces suffered higher casualties in combat while Viet Minh forces increased strength.

In contrast to their experience in Vietnam, the French successfully interdicted the insurgent's supplies of arms and ammunition during the Algerian insurrection. By 1959, the insurgent's supplies were critically depleted.²⁶ Successfully interdicting the insurgent's external supplies prevents the insurgent from developing effective forces and increasing his strength.

Insurgent forces often have several strengths that provide advantages to their forces. The insurgent strives to develop an effective intelligence network to provide information about government forces. This intelligence network allows insurgent forces to seize the initiative by attacking under favorable circumstances. Another insurgent strength often

includes knowledge of the terrain. This knowledge helps the insurgent to successfully execute tactical missions while minimizing his casualties. Insurgent soldier strengths often include motivation, discipline, and physical conditioning.²⁷ These strengths often help create insurgent forces that are tough and determined in combat.

To defeat a tough and determined opponent, the enemy's weaknesses must be exploited. Insurgent forces often have exploitable weaknesses that increase their vulnerability. These weaknesses often include limited access to technology. Specifically, a lack of modern communications capabilities often hinder insurgent operations.²⁸ This weakness deserves attention, because insurgent forces lacking communication capabilities are often vulnerable to a mobile and versatile opposing force.

Another exploitable insurgent weakness is logistical support owing to the lack of extensive popular and external support early in the conflict.²⁹ Resupply of food can become particularly difficult for insurgent forces. Che Guevara, who served as a guerrilla leader during the Cuban revolution, states,

One of the fundamental problems of the troop is food supply; in this everyone from the last man to the chief must be treated alike. This acquires a high importance, not only because of the chronic shortage of supplies, but also because meals are the only events that take place daily.³⁰

Lack of food is a weakness counterinsurgency forces can exploit by keeping military pressure on enemy field units while protecting the population's food supply.

Another insurgent weakness is the resupply of ammunition.³¹ Early in the conflict, the insurgent forces often rely on captured government forces arms and ammunition. Thus, adequate supplies become dependent on success in battle. As the insurgent forces equipment becomes sophisticated, continuous resupply of arms and ammunition becomes critical. These supplies are delivered through lines of communication. Resupply becomes an exploitable weakness because counterinsurgency forces can establish ambushes that interdict the enemy lines of communications. Thus area ambushes are essential tasks for counterinsurgency forces.

To analyze mission essential task lists, one must comprehend the nature of the insurgency and the insurgent. Insurgencies require innovative approaches because of the political nature of the conflict. The government must solve the underlying political, economic, and social problems to gain popular support. The insurgent relies on popular support for success and survival. Consequently, the insurgent must be separated from the population. To accomplish this, government

forces must defeat the enemy on the battlefield and eradicate the insurgent organization among the people. Thus, counterinsurgency forces must adapt their tactics in insurgencies. In Vietnam, French and American conventional forces fought the insurgents without significantly adapting their traditional strategies and tactics.

ANALYZING HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES

The French and American experiences in Vietnam provide a historical perspective to understand the practical application of counterinsurgency operations. Although all insurgencies are different, the experiences of French and American soldiers provide insight concerning tactical methods to combat insurgents.

France fought to dominate Vietnam from 1946 to 1954. French Union forces which included Foreign Legionnaires, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, Algerians, Moroccans, and Senegalese fought heroically but unsuccessfully for eight years. Nearly 95,000 French Union soldiers lost their lives.³² France's tragic experience provides a historical perspective for counterinsurgency forces.

French strategy and tactics sought decisive battles to destroy Viet Minh forces. French forces

fought conventionally often using armored thrusts combined with airborne assaults to envelop and destroy the Viet Minh in set piece battles. Bernard Fall, an expert and author on the Vietnam wars who was killed while accompanying an American patrol in South Vietnam, observed that,

this desperate search for the set-piece battle became an obsession of the successive French commanders-in-chief in Indochina until the end of the war.³³

Early in the War General Giap attempted to fight the French in a series of conventional battles. Giap's forces were soundly defeated. Giap then adopted a protracted strategy of guerrilla warfare and avoided large scale battles with French forces.³⁴ French conventional tactics became unsuccessful because the Viet Minh avoided large scale battles unless concentration of their forces ensured success. The powerful French war machine was shadow boxing by throwing punches at an elusive target.

The French attempted to fight a conventional war due to their training. They tried to fight the Vietnamese according to French doctrine designed to defeat an opposing conventional force. Thus, the French became a victim of their training and previous war experiences. The Viet Minh would not accommodate France by fighting a conventional war which French forces were fully capable of winning.³⁵ French tactics adapted

slowly and they lost the war before they learned how to fight it.³⁶

The French used defensive tactics to combat the insurgents and built extensive fortifications. Over 51 million cubic yards of concrete were used to build the 2,200 pillboxes in the "de Lattre Line."³⁷ These fortifications defended the eight million inhabitants of the 7,500 square mile Red River delta.³⁸

However, these defensive fortifications failed to hinder the Viet Minh forces. French defensive operations were ineffective because the Viet Minh infiltrated and bypassed French strong points. Although the French immobilized more than 80,000 troops in 900 defensive fortifications, the Viet Minh kept the initiative within the Red River Delta.³⁹

The Viet Minh subversive organization and military forces controlled the Vietnamese people in the Red River Delta. French defensive operations failed to eradicate the Viet Minh organization that controlled the population. Despite the presence of French forces in fixed defensive positions, the Viet Minh organization remained effective and hidden among the people. Consequently, Viet Minh forces used the population to provide logistical support and replacements for casualties. Thus, Viet Minh forces became stronger due to their control over the

population.

In contrast, French forces suffered attrition and became weaker. French defensive dispositions immobilized their forces and provided lucrative and isolated targets for the Viet Minh. The Viet Minh concentrated their forces and attacked the isolated French outposts at their discretion. French casualties increased as their units were attacked in detail.

French defensive operations proved ineffective because the Viet Minh kept the initiative and controlled the population. The Viet Minh control over the population allowed resupply and replacements for their forces. French forces, isolated and attacked individually, suffered attrition. Yet, Viet Minh forces continued to grow more powerful by the replacements provided through their access to the population. French offensive operations were as unsuccessful as their defensive operations.

Offensive patrolling operations proved marginally effective because the French patrols never eliminated the insurgent's influence over the population. French patrols effectively covered their area of operations, but never provided long term presence. Thus, French patrols never effectively challenged the Viet Minh's control over the population. The patrols passed through the area leaving the insurgent organization intact.

Often, when French patrols entered an area, Viet Minh field forces would leave but immediately return to the area after the French patrol left. The Viet Minh organization remained in control of the populace.

For the same reasons French large unit search and clear operations were also ineffective. Search and clear operations failed to provide a permanent presence controlling the population and allowing destruction of the insurgent subversive organization.⁴⁰ The French units advanced through the area and passed by. The Viet Minh, true to Mao Tse-Tung's doctrine, retreated while the enemy advanced. The Viet Minh returned after the French forces left. Once again the temporary presence of French forces would not eradicate the insurgent's influence over the population.

Therefore, a valuable insight from the French experience in Vietnam concerns search and hold operations. Search and hold operations are essential to successfully defeat an insurgency.⁴¹ The French aggressively projected military power throughout Vietnam attempting to destroy Viet Minh forces. However, the French failed to provide a permanent presence among the Vietnamese and eliminate the insurgent subversive organization. Search and hold operations establish a permanent presence in an area allowing the destruction of the insurgent organization.

Because the Viet Minh subversive organization controlled the population, their forces grew increasingly powerful. They finally accepted a pitched battle with French forces once they established conditions to concentrate combat power at Dien Bien Phu. Elite French forces were surrounded and decisively defeated at Dien Bien Phu. The French War in Indochina ended on 20 July, 1954. The French withdrew from Vietnam leaving a legacy of combat experience.

A decade later, strong American forces began fighting for South Vietnam. Attrition warfare became American strategy during the Vietnam War. As General Westmoreland, Commander of American Forces in Vietnam, noted, "the U.S. military strategy employed in Vietnam, dictated by political decisions, was essentially that of a war of attrition."⁴² America gradually escalated into a protracted war of attrition during the Vietnam War. American leadership accepted a strategy of attrition against a determined opponent.

The American strategy of attrition warfare proved ineffective because the American public never fully supported the long Vietnam War. The American people became unwilling to suffer the casualties from a protracted war of attrition. Lieutenant General Harold Moore states,

General Westmoreland thought he had found the answer to the question of how to win this war: He

would trade one American life for ten or eleven or twelve North Vietnamese lives, day after day, until Ho Chi Minh cried uncle. Westmoreland would learn, too late, that he was wrong; that the American people didn't see a kill ratio of 10-1 or even 20-1 as any kind of bargain.⁴³

In contrast, the Vietnamese were willing to endure great suffering to achieve final victory. Ho Chi Minh stated,

If they force us into war, we will fight. The struggle will be atrocious, but the Vietnamese people will suffer anything rather than renounce their freedom.⁴⁴

Despite the loss of a generation of men, the North Vietnamese continued to fight.

American tactics supported the attrition strategy. American units arrived and prepared to fight a conventional conflict. To minimize casualties, American tactics relied on firepower to destroy the enemy. For example, the 1st Infantry division fundamentals of infantry tactics in Vietnam emphasized that infantry, armor, and aviation find the enemy so air and artillery assets could kill the enemy.⁴⁵ American tactics supported attrition warfare using firepower to destroy enemy forces and save American lives.

American firepower effectively killed enemy soldiers. By 1972 there were an estimated at 851,000 communist soldiers killed by Allied and American forces in Vietnam.⁴⁶ The North Vietnamese field commander in South Vietnam, General Nguyen Chi Thanh, complained

bitterly that General Giap should minimize offensive operations due to excessive casualties.⁴⁷ Ironically, General Nguyen Chi Thanh was killed in an American B-52 airstrike.

Although firepower provided significant advantages to American forces, there are limitations to the effectiveness of firepower. American tactical units allowed firepower to substitute for maneuver.⁴⁸

American forces surrendered maneuver to the enemy by avoiding closing with and destroying the enemy units. Instead, American units often backed away from enemy forces and called for fire support assets. However, North Vietnamese units kept the initiative and broke contact. Firepower assists by establishing conditions allowing ground force maneuver to destroy the enemy. American forces often allowed firepower to substitute for maneuver and left the initiative with the enemy.

To survive against American firepower, the North Vietnamese adapted their military tactics. These tactics included tunnels, fortifications, and hugging American units so using firepower could result in fratricide. Another tactic involved occupying populated areas with communist forces. Often American forces would attack these communist forces with firepower assets and inflict casualties among the civilians. The communist would use the incident to serve propaganda

purposes.⁴⁹ The North Vietnamese continued throughout the war to adapt their tactics to reduce the American firepower advantage.

Another significant American advantage was air assault operations. Air assault operations allowed American forces to rapidly move and concentrate combat power. American forces could concentrate combat power to prevent enemy success and insert troops to aggressively attack enemy forces. Further, resupply and medical evacuation became more efficient. Helicopters provided a means to rapidly transport troops to combat.

However, helicopters could not substitute for maneuver. The initiative to maneuver remained with the Viet Minh despite American air mobility capabilities. Dave Palmer, an author and American military officer who served in Vietnam, writes,

Once on the ground and out of their helicopters, U.S. units were for all intents and purposes immobilized. NVA units maneuvered, attacked, broke contact, withdrew, sidestepped, and continued their march; Americans dug in, defended, and watched the enemy fade away to fight again. If the enemy chose to fight, a battle ensued and the Americans, with their greater firepower from air and artillery were almost sure to inflict disproportionately severe casualties...⁵⁰

American units failed to aggressively close with and destroy enemy forces after air assaulting into the objective area. The Americans left the initiative to maneuver with the enemy. Americans attempted to use air

assault and firepower to substitute for maneuver.

Despite attempts to use firepower to minimize casualties, American casualties gradually increased. By 1974, South Vietnamese killed in action were 254,256 with 783,602 wounded in action; American killed in action were 46,370 with 153,313 wounded in action.⁵¹

The ability to reduce friendly casualties while inflicting severe casualties on the enemy is dependent on intelligence information. The population remains the chief source of intelligence during counterinsurgency operations. A lack of accurate tactical intelligence often hindered Allied operations in Vietnam. In 1964 some typical monthly figures for minor operations were (Includes battalion, company, platoon, and squad):

<u>Operations</u>	<u>Contacts</u>
59,996	451
72,794	406
73,726	491 ⁵²

These figures show a poor rate of contact with the enemy during military operations. The ratio of contact with insurgents to military operations is .8% for the first month, .6% for the second month, and .7% for the third month. During these three months in 1964, less than one percent of military operations engaged enemy forces. A high rate of contact with enemy forces seizes the initiative from the insurgent. By gaining the

population's allegiance, accurate intelligence becomes available to conduct military operations."

In summary, both French and American efforts in Vietnam were unsuccessful. Both countries attempted to fight a conventional war. French forces fought courageously, yet suffered severe defeats which encouraged their decision to withdraw. American courage, firepower, air assault, and technological capabilities ensured the North Vietnamese suffered severe casualties. Still, the North Vietnamese were willing to suffer these casualties for ultimate victory. Neither, the French or the Americans successfully attacked the subversive organization that exercised control over the populace. The South Vietnamese government failed to correct the underlying problems creating the people's dissatisfaction with the government. The population's allegiance and willing support remained uncommitted to the fight against communism.

ANALYZING MISSION ESSENTIAL TASK LISTS

Understanding the nature of the insurgency and gaining a historical perspective establishes a knowledge base to analyze mission essential tasks and form conclusions. In fact, training on the light, airborne, and ranger battalions' mission essential

tasks will not prepare those select units to conduct counterinsurgency operations. These light battalions' current mission essential task lists (METL) are missing several essential tasks necessary for conducting counterinsurgency operations.

The analytical process used to reach this conclusion involved first developing criteria by determining battalion counterinsurgency mission essential tasks. This criteria was developed from understanding the nature of the insurgency and the insurgent, a historical perspective, and U.S. Army low intensity conflict doctrine. The next step in the process involves identifying the current mission essential tasks for a light, airborne, and ranger battalion. The counterinsurgency mission essential tasks serve as criteria to evaluate the light, airborne, and ranger battalions mission essential tasks.

Current U.S. Army doctrine uses the internal defense and development strategy (IDAD) to fight an insurgency. IDAD strategy includes all measures, political, economic, social, and military to protect a nation from subversion and improve the underlying conditions that cause discontent.⁵⁴ The IDAD principles are unity of effort, maximum use of intelligence, minimum use of violence, and responsive government.⁵⁵

Internal defense and development strategy combines military efforts with political and economic reforms to prevent subversion while remedying underlying causes of discontent.

The IDAD strategy includes consolidation campaigns and strike operations. Consolidation campaigns apply civil and military resources to establish and continue control over designated areas.⁵⁶ Consolidation campaigns secure and hold designated areas. These campaigns force the insurgents out of contested areas and destroy the insurgent's subversive organization. Local police and paramilitary forces are trained and equipped to provide security thus preventing the insurgent from returning. Consolidation campaigns isolate the insurgent from the population and eradicate the insurgent's control over the population.

Consolidation operations consist of preparatory, offensive, development, and completion stages.⁵⁷ The civil-military task force prepares by planning and gaining intelligence about the area of operations. The police and military forces train for and rehearse the operation.

During the offensive stage, the civil-military task force conducts offensive operations to destroy insurgent forces and the subversive organization. Thus, counterinsurgent forces conduct a variety of missions

to include area ambushes, cordon and search operations, and search and attack operations to destroy and disperse insurgent forces.⁸ Concurrently, police and military forces begin the process to identify and arrest members of the insurgent organization.

Civil-military forces attempt to complete the destruction of the insurgent subversive organization during the developmental stage. Civil-military forces establish government control and take action to ensure internal security.⁹ Operations continue to identify and arrest members of the insurgent organization. Military forces train local forces to provide a permanent presence thus ensuring security in the area. Concurrently, civil affairs operations improve the people's living conditions. Living conditions may improve by providing medical assistance, construction support, and education reforms.

These efforts to improve the people's living conditions continue during the completion stage as military forces begin withdrawing leaving local forces to defend the area. The local government expands control and influence allowing the civil-military task force to withdraw. The area becomes stabilized as the civil-military task force takes action to improve underlying social, economic, and political problems.

Strike operations often establish the conditions

for consolidation campaigns by attacking insurgent forces in contested, or insurgent-controlled areas.⁶⁰

Strike forces can include military, psychological warfare, civil affairs, and often host nation police or paramilitary forces. Offensive strikes missions may include area ambushes, movement to contact, search and attack, air assault, cordon and search, and encirclement operations.

A comprehensive mission essential task list that supports internal defense and development strategy, consolidation campaigns, and strike operations would include the following tasks:

Counterinsurgency Force Battalion METL

- Conduct area ambush
- Conduct attack (hasty, deliberate, night)
- Search and attack
- Cordon and search
- Defend
- Raid
- Movement to contact
- Conduct military operations in urban terrain
- Air Assault
- Conduct encirclement
- Movement security operations
- Conduct combined military-police operations
- Train indigenous forces
- Conduct civil military operations
- Protect the rear area
- Conduct combat service support operations (CSS)

The light, airborne, and ranger battalion mission essential task lists were developed by the battalion commanders after analyzing their war plans and external directives. The light battalion (appendix B) and airborne battalion (appendix C) METLs were provided by

the 25th Infantry and 82nd Airborne Infantry divisions. The 75th Ranger Regiment provided their battalion METL (appendix D). All the METLs are current as of December, 1992.

Light Battalion

Execute readiness standard operating procedures
Move tactically
Assault
Defend
Conduct Non-combatant evacuation
Fight a meeting engagement
Perform air assault
Perform CSS operations
Humanitarian assistance/disaster relief⁶¹

Airborne Battalion

Alert, marshal, and deploy
Airborne assault/Airfield seizure
Movement to contact/Hasty attack
Search and attack
Deliberate attack
Night attack
Noncombatant evacuation operations
Military operations in urban terrain
Defend in sector/Anti-armor defense
Air assault operations
Link-up operations
Man, maintain, resupply, and transport
Protect the rear area
Marshal and redeploy⁶²

Ranger Battalion

Deploy the battalion
Conduct raid
Conduct relief in place
Conduct airborne assault
Conduct air assault
Conduct hasty defense⁶³

Comparing and contrasting these light battalions' METLs to the proposed counterinsurgency METL reveals significant differences with mission tasks.

<u>Counterinsurgency METL</u>	<u>Light</u>	<u>Airborne</u>	<u>Ranger</u>
Area ambush	No*	No	No
Attack	Yes*	Yes	No
Search-attack	No	Yes	No
Cordon-search	No	No	No
Defend	Yes	Yes	Yes
Raid	No	No	Yes
Move to contact	Yes	Yes	No
Air Assault	Yes	Yes	Yes
Encirclement	No	No	No
Movement security	No	No	No
Military-police opns	No	No	No
Train indigenous forces	No	No	No
Civil military opns	Yes	No	No
Protect the rear area	Yes	Yes	No
CSS operations	Yes	Yes	No

*Yes=The task is on the unit METL.

*No=The task is not on the unit METL

Training on the light, airborne, and ranger battalions' mission essential tasks will not prepare those units for counterinsurgency operations. The battalion mission essential task lists are missing several critical tasks that directly support consolidation campaigns and strike operations.

Collectively, none of the battalions train to conduct battalion level area ambush, cordon and search,

encirclement, movement security operations, military-police operations, or training of indigenous forces. Only the airborne battalion trains to conduct the search and attack. Only the ranger battalion trains to execute a battalion raid. Only the light battalion trains for civil affairs operations. Thus, the battalions currently remained untrained to conduct many counterinsurgency essential tasks.

The battalion area ambush is an essential task to support consolidation campaigns and strike operations. The battalion level area ambush denies enemy movement through a large area and helps seize the initiative from the insurgent. General Julian Ewell, commander of the 9th Infantry Division and II Field Force in Vietnam, writes,

During the period from January through March 1969 the Division conducted over 6,500 ambushes...Trained snipers provided expertise not previously available and gave the infantrymen a new confidence in their weapons and capabilities. Thus, using intelligence, stealth, cunning, and aggressive tactics the 3d Battalion, 47th Infantry and other battalions in the division were able to take the night away from the Viet Cong by interdicting his route of communications thus upsetting his time schedule, his flow of supplies, and his personnel.⁶⁴

The properly executed area ambush effectively interdicts insurgent forces and seizes the initiative.

Although light infantry battalions train on the ambush task at squad, platoon, and perhaps company level, the area ambush requires training at battalion

level to avoid fratricide. Battalion area ambushes saturate a large area with numerous ambush patrols. There are many ambush patrol infiltration and exfiltration routes requiring time and distance separations to avoid fratricide. Each ambush patrol needs direction of fire guidance to avoid firing towards other friendly forces. All the ambush patrols require fire support from artillery or battalion mortars along their routes and at the ambush site. The properly trained battalion can integrate attack helicopters and other fire support assets including the Air Force AC-130 which provides thermal sensors and computer directed 105mm artillery support. The battalion's tactical operations center personnel need training and procedures to control the numerous ambush units. Due to the complicated planning factors, the area ambush requires training at battalion level.

Only the airborne battalion trained on the search and attack mission. Search and attacks strike insurgent forces and base camps in the field and help seize the initiative. The large scale search and destroy operations used in Vietnam often dispersed guerrilla forces rather than destroying them. Search and attack involves infiltrating squad, platoon, and company size forces to find enemy units and base camps. The battalion then moves into the area by air assault,

vehicle, or infiltration to destroy the enemy. Smaller sized units are necessary to find the enemy to achieve stealth and surprise. Aggressive search and attack operations characterized by infiltration of small search units and rapid deployment of larger forces to encircle and destroy the enemy are effective methods to fight insurgent forces.

All the infantry battalions remain untrained on cordon and search operations which are essential for counterinsurgency operations. These operations provide opportunities to identify and eradicate the insurgent subversive organization's control over the populace thus directly support the offensive stage of consolidation campaigns.⁶⁵ The cordon and search surrounds and encloses an area allowing a systematic search. Search teams assist identification of the insurgent organization members and uncover weapons.

Field manual 90-8 states,

The need for a counter guerrilla force to conduct search operations or to employ search procedures is a continuous requirement. Most search operations support strike operations or consolidation operations, or they may be conducted as the main effort in populace and resources control operations.⁶⁶

Cordon and search operations are complicated requiring extensive training. Simultaneous emplacement of all cordon units avoids gaps between units that allow the insurgent's escape. An outer cordon provides

security for the forces inside the objective area. The inner cordon prevents the insurgents escape.

After emplacing the cordons, a search force conducts the search. The search force cooperates with local police and officials to isolate the population and question designated individuals. Concurrently, medical personnel establish stations providing medical assistance to the population. Search teams must avoid enemy booby traps. Cordon and search operations requiring extensive training for efficient execution.

Again, none of the battalions train for encirclement operations. Encirclements isolate the insurgent force and provide the opportunity to destroy enemy units.⁶⁷ Encirclement operations require extensive training at battalion level for efficient execution and to avoid fratricide. Encircling forces strive for simultaneous emplacement of units to trap insurgent forces. Fire support assets can distract guerrilla forces to cover the emplacement of encircling forces. The encircling commander establishes a reserve to counter enemy breakout attempts.

After completing the encirclement, the forces tighten the circle while fire support assets destroy insurgent forces. If the insurgent unit continues to fight, the encircling forces isolate the unit into portions for individual destruction. Encirclements

provide the opportunity to destroy enemy forces decisively.

Although none of the battalions train for movement security operations, these operations support consolidation campaigns by protecting convoy movement against ambushes along lines of communication. Counterinsurgency forces are assigned missions to clear routes and escort convoys and require training to execute these missions.⁶⁸ Road clearance operations clear the road of mines while securing the route from enemy ambushes. Companies may conduct bounding overwatch while artillery units stand-by with fire support assets. Aviation assets may search the route and unit flanks to provide early warning. Movement security operations require training for successful execution in combat.

None of the battalions conduct training for integrated military-police operations. Training is required because police units may become attached to military units and military units may become subordinate to police operations. Army field manual 90-8 states,

To control the movement of insurgents or guerrillas, and their material, police-type operations are conducted. These operations are executed by host country police, paramilitary, or military forces. For various reasons, this may not be possible, and U.S. forces may have to conduct police-type operations until host country forces are available to relieve them.⁶⁹

At a minimum counterinsurgency forces require training to assist police forces to control riots and other civil disorders.⁷⁰ Further, counterinsurgency forces may train police, paramilitary, and indigenous forces in counterinsurgency operations.

Counterinsurgency forces must be prepared to train indigenous forces.⁷¹ Field manual 90-8 states,

The brigade may be required to organize, train, equip, and advise host country civil and military personnel and units to perform counter guerrilla missions.⁷²

Although Army Special Forces serve as the proponent for training indigenous forces, a large scale insurgency would exceed the training capabilities of Special Forces. There are simply not enough Special Forces advisors to train a million man army such as the former South Vietnamese Army. Consequently, regular army forces must remain ready to train and assist indigenous soldiers.

Only the light battalion conducted civil affairs training. Counterinsurgency forces will conduct civil affair operations because civil affairs remain a responsibility for all military commanders involved in counterinsurgency operations. These operations are important because they improve the relationship between the populace and the military.⁷³ Civil affairs tasks may include providing medical care, handling refugees and evacuees, providing food and shelter, issuing

essential supplies, clearing debris and rubble from streets.⁷⁴ Success in an insurgency requires popular support and every military commander must strive to win the population's allegiance.

Training on the current infantry battalions mission essential tasks will not specifically prepare those units for combat operations in an insurgency. The infantry battalions mission essential task lists are not comprehensive and require additional tasks such as area ambush, search and attack, cordon and search, raid, encirclement, movement security, military-police operations, training indigenous forces, and civil military operations. Although the U.S. Army light battalions mission essential task lists are adequate for conventional conflicts, the units need training on additional tasks to fight in an insurgency.

CONCLUSIONS

Insurgencies are different from conventional wars and require innovative approaches to defeat the insurgent. Traditional military training can hinder innovative approaches for conducting counterinsurgency operations. Military forces using traditional concepts for concentrating combat power for decisive battles may leave the insurgent organization intact and in control of the population.

The insurgent subversive organization must be destroyed. This organization provides logistical support, intelligence, and replacements for insurgent forces. Thus, the insurgent depends on the organization for survival and a protracted war of attrition can occur unless the subversive organization's control over the population is eradicated.

Allegiance of the population to the legitimate government is the key to success in an insurgency. The government's ability to gain popular support and legitimacy determines success. U.S. Army doctrine emphasizes internal defense and development to gain popular support and combat the insurgency.

Internal defense and development strategy uses the full spectrum of power to include military, economic, and political measures to correct the underlying causes of discontent. Strike operations and consolidation campaigns support internal defense and development.

A counterinsurgency force mission essential task list to support strike operations and consolidation campaigns includes tasks such as area ambushes, search and attack, cordon and search, raid, encirclement, movement security, combined military-police operations, training indigenous forces, and civil affairs. These tasks are significantly different from the tasks

currently expressed in the light infantry battalions' mission essential task lists.

The light, airborne, and ranger battalion mission essential task lists help prepare those units for conventional combat operations. However, training on their current mission essential tasks will not prepare these units for counterinsurgency operations. The infantry battalion mission essential task lists are not comprehensive for counterinsurgency operations.

Military leaders must recognize that U.S. Army infantry battalions are untrained to immediately deploy and fight in an insurgency. The light battalions require additional training for counterinsurgency warfare. Including counterinsurgency tasks on the infantry battalions' mission essential task lists would improve the units' capabilities to conduct contingency operations.

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48. Dave Palmer, p. 143.
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Kellett specifies the causes of casualties between 1965-1970.

<u>System</u>	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Wounds</u>
Small Arms	51%	16%
Artillery	36%	65%
Traps/Mines	11%	15%
Punji Stakes		2%

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Appendix A Definitions

Definitions

Consolidation Campaign-Interdepartmental, civil-military efforts which integrate counterinsurgency activities to restore government control of an area and its people. They combine military action to destroy or drive out the insurgents with programs for social, political, and economic development. (FM 100-20)

Civil Affairs-Include any activity concerned with relationships between the military forces and the civil authorities and people in the area. (FM 100-20)

Counterinsurgent-A person who fights or is trained to fight guerrilla forces. (Random House Dictionary)

Insurgency-Rebellion or revolt within a group, as by members against leaders. (Random House Dictionary)

Insurgent-A person who engages in armed resistance to a government-a rebel. (Random House Dictionary)

Internal Defense and Development Strategy-The full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and protect itself from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. (FM 100-20)

Revolution-A forcible overthrow of an established government or political system by the people governed.
(Random House Dictionary)

Strike Operations-Combat operations in zones under insurgent control or in contested zones. They are targeted against insurgent tactical forces and bases outside areas of government control. (FM 100-20)

Terrorize-To dominate or coerce by intimidation. (Random House Dictionary)

Appendix B
 Battalion METL
 25TH IN Division

TRAINING ASSESSMENT

TNG ASSESSMENT	T	P	U	01
METL				
EXECUTE READINESS SOP	HHC, A, B, C			
MOVE TACTICALLY		HHC, A, B, C		
ASSAULT	HHC, A, B, C			
DEFEND	A	HHC, B, C		
CONDUCT NEO		HHC, A, B, C		
FIGHT MEETING ENGAGEMENT		HHC, A, B, C		
PERFORM AIR ASSAULT		HHC, A, B, C		
PERFORM CSS OPERATIONS		HHC, A, B, C		
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE/ DISASTER RELIEF		HHC, A, B, C		

TB - 4 (BN)

BATTA

Appendix C

Battalion METL

82nd ABN

Division

2-505 PIR

~~2-505 PIR~~

12/04/92 13:54

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G3 ADMIN 82D ABN

002

3-PANTHER METL ASSESSMENT (CURRENT)						AS OF: 15 NOV 92		
TASK	OVERALL	A	B	C	D	HHC		
ALERT, MARSHAL, AND DEPLOY	T	T	T	T	T	T		
AIRBORNE ASSAULT/AIRFIELD SEIZURE	T	T	T	T	T	T		
MOVEMENT TO CONTACT/HASTY ATTACK	T	P	T	T	T	T		
SEARCH AND ATTACK	T	T	P	P	P	T		
DELIBERATE ATTACK	T	T	P	P	P	T		
NIGHT ATTACK	P	P	P	P	P	T		
NONCOMBATANT EVACUATION OPERATIONS	T	P	T	P	T	P		
MILITARY OPERATIONS IN URBAN TERRAIN	P	T	T	P	P	T		
DEFEND IN SECTOR/ANTI-ARMOR DEFENSE	T	T	T	P	T	T		
AIR ASSAULT OPERATIONS	T	T	T	P	T	P		
LINK-UP OPERATIONS	T	P	T	T	T	T		
MAN, MAINTAIN, RESUPPLY, AND TRANSPORT	T	T	T	T	T	T		
PROTECT THE REAR AREA	T	T	T	T	T	T		
MARSHAL AND REDEPLOY	T	T	T	T	T	T		

LEGEND : T - TRAINED
P - PRACTICE
U - UNTRAINED
? - UNKNOWN

ENCLOSURE 1

Appendix D

Ranger Battalion METL

RTC 350-1

2-3. Mission Essential Task List (METL). Definitions: The METL is a compilation of collective mission essential tasks which must be successfully performed if an organization is to accomplish its wartime mission(s). A Mission Essential Task is a collective task in which an organization must be proficient to accomplish an appropriate portion of its wartime mission(s). Figure 2-3 depicts the Ranger Regiment's METL.

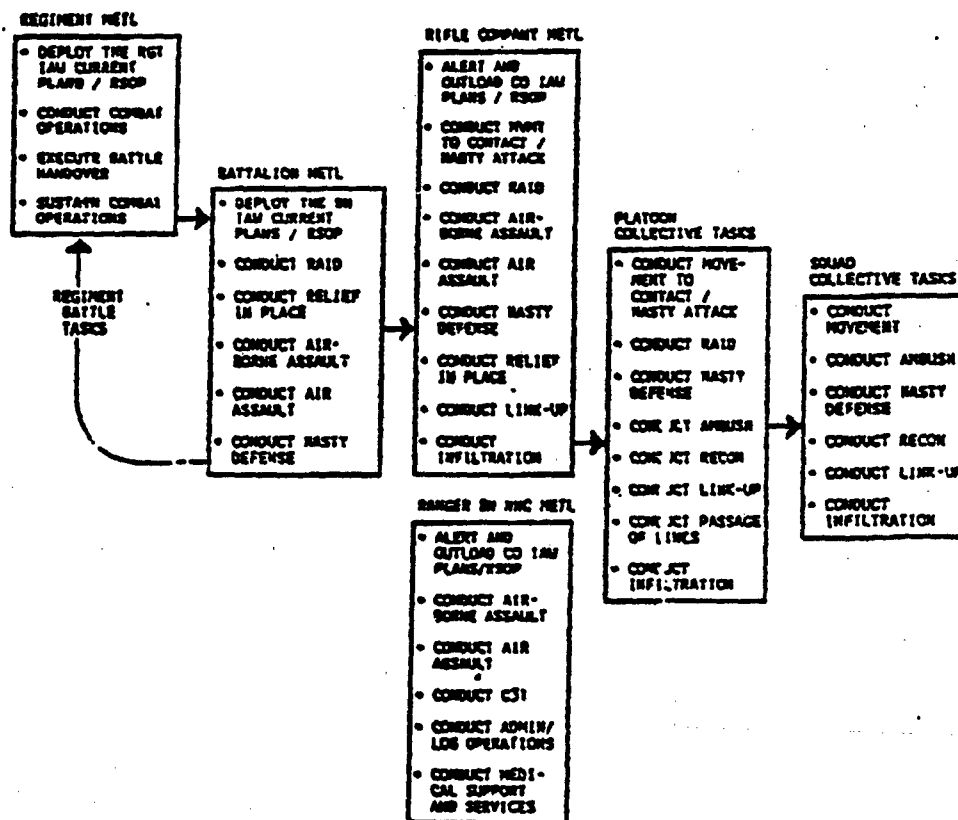


Figure 2-3. Ranger Regiment METL

**END
FILMED**

DATE:

4-93

DTIC