

LESSONS LEARNED BUT SOON FORGOTTEN: THE OSS AND INSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

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USAWC CLASS OF 2011

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				<i>Form Approved</i> OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 25-03-2011		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Lessons Learned But Soon Forgotten: The OSS and Insurgency Operations in World War II				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Miles A. Davis				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Captain Steven W. Knott Department Military Strategy, Planning and Operations				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT This project will analyze institutional memory and the failure of the United States Army to capture Lessons Learned by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II in the conduct of insurgency and counterinsurgency operations against the Germans and Japanese. Specifically, institutional expertise regarding the characteristics of insurgencies, cultural understanding, and information operations atrophied following the Second World War; consequently, the significance of human terrain nuances and information operations to insurgency or counterinsurgency success had to be re-discovered in formulating counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Cultural Awareness, Information Operations, Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, and Office of Strategic Services					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 28	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PAPER

**LESSONS LEARNED BUT SOON FORGOTTEN:
THE OSS AND INSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II**

by

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AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel Miles A. Davis

TITLE: Lessons Learned But Soon Forgotten: The OSS and Insurgency Operations in World War II

FORMAT: Strategy Research Paper

DATE: 25 March 2011 WORD COUNT: 5,229 PAGES: 28

KEY TERMS: Cultural Awareness, Information Operations, Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, and Office of Strategic Services

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

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LESSONS LEARNED BUT SOON FORGOTTEN: THE OSS AND INSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

Our aim is not to provide new principles and methods of conducting war; rather we are concerned with examining the essential content of what has long existed, and trace it back to its basic elements.¹

—Carl Von Clausewitz

The past decade of persistent conflict has witnessed the United States Army publicly acknowledge that a “new kind of insurgency” threatens the stability, legitimacy, and very survival of the fledgling democratic governments of Iraq and Afghanistan.² A kind of insurgency that “seeks to impose revolutionary change world-wide,” “transform the Islamic world,” “reorder its relationship with other regions and cultures”, and “execute suicide attacks” to achieve its ends.³ In response to this threat, the United States Army initiated the most comprehensive revision to its counterinsurgency doctrine in the last twenty years.⁴ The fruits of that labor indeed turned the tide against radical Islamic insurgent forces in Iraq and remain the strategy of choice in Afghanistan.

In a 2006 issue of *Military Review*, then Lieutenant General David Petraeus, who is today largely regarded as the United States Army subject matter expert on counterinsurgency, concluded that the “insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan were not, in truth, the wars for which we were best prepared in 2001; however, they are the wars we are fighting and they clearly are the kind of wars we must master.”⁵ During the United States Army’s efforts to master the insurgency threat in Iraq and Afghanistan it became very clear that cultural awareness, of both the local populations and the belligerents, as well as information operations were critical to the development of a

successful counterinsurgency strategy and that the United States Army needed a comprehensive revision to its counterinsurgency doctrine.

In his article, entitled “Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq,” Lieutenant General Petraeus presented fourteen observations of the challenges “of conducting counterinsurgency operations in a vastly different culture than our own.” In his ninth observation he identified cultural awareness as a force multiplier and stated that “people are, in many respects, the decisive terrain, and that we must study that terrain in the same way that we have always studied the geographical terrain.”⁶ Of his fourteen observations, cultural awareness clearly stood out above the rest. The strategic importance of cultural awareness to a successful counterinsurgency strategy resonated with every commander on the ground, in every lesson learned, and in professional publications and newspapers. Not only was cultural awareness training desperately needed, it had to be tailored to the specific country. Cultural training for soldiers deploying to Iraq did not necessarily prepare them for a deployment in Afghanistan. Afghan ethnic diversity and complex tribal dynamics are much different than that of Iraq. The United States Army had to address the issue of cultural awareness for the units and soldiers deploying to Afghanistan and Iraq.

Consequently, the United States Army began incorporating cultural awareness-driven scenarios into its major exercises at the National Training Center and Joint Readiness Training Center, emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness throughout the unit deployment process, developing language tools (e.g., Rosetta Stone) through Army Knowledge Online, modifying doctrines to recognize the importance of cultural awareness and publishing “lessons learned.” Cultural awareness

became the foundation upon which the United States Army was building its counterinsurgency strategy for both Afghanistan and Iraq.⁷

As the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan continued, it became apparent that Information Operations was another strategic weakness in the United States counterinsurgency strategy against this new threat. The enemy was clearly winning the information battle and the United States Army needed to develop effective counterinsurgency information operations measures and empower commanders to communicate directly with the local public.⁸ In March of 2009, United States Special Representative Richard Holbrooke told journalists "the information issue--sometimes called psychological operations or strategic communication" has become a "major, major gap to be filled" before U.S.-led forces can regain the upper hand."⁹ Consequently, cultural awareness and Information Operations came to the forefront of the strategic lessons learned from coalition counterinsurgency operations against the new insurgency threat in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result of all the lessons learned and "discovery learning," the United States Army conducted the most comprehensive overhaul of its counterinsurgency doctrine in the previous twenty years.¹⁰

This project will analyze institutional memory and the failure of the United States Army to capture lessons learned by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during the conduct of insurgency and counterinsurgency operations against the Japanese and Germans in World War II. Specifically, institutional expertise regarding the characteristics of insurgencies, cultural understanding, and information operations had atrophied following the Second World War. Consequently, the significance of human terrain nuances and information operations to insurgency or counterinsurgency success

had to be re-discovered in formulating counterinsurgency strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Office of Strategic Services

The OSS brought together actors, authors, politicians, athletes, titans of industry, and numerous others to accomplish a single objective – to merge operations with intelligence with great effect. “Wild Bill” Donovan’s “glorious amateurs” were hand-selected recruits from across the American landscape who were encouraged to improvise and innovate.¹¹

Admiral Eric T. Olson
Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command

The OSS was originally created as the Office of Coordinator of Information under Executive Order 8826 on July 11, 1941. The Executive Order was signed by President Roosevelt, and William J. Donovan--retired Army Colonel, Medal of Honor Recipient and millionaire Wall Street lawyer--was designated as the Coordinator of Information. On June 13, 1942, under President Roosevelt’s Executive Order, the Office of Coordinator of Information was renamed the Office of Strategic Services and transferred under the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹² The OSS was designated to collect and analyze strategic information, and plan and operate such special services, as directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The OSS was the only true centralized intelligence and unconventional warfare organization in the United States government during World War II. It combined intelligence, special operations, and information operations all in one organization.¹³

The OSS grew to almost 13,000 employees during the war, equaling the size of an infantry division. For the purposes of this paper, only the Research and Analysis Branch and the Morale Operations Branch of the OSS will be examined. The Research and Analysis Branch was located within the OSS Intelligence Services directorate and

the Operational Group Command was located within the OSS Operations directorate. These were the two largest nonsupport directorates in the OSS.¹⁴ The OSS Research and Analysis Branch, which had the responsibility for collecting and analyzing intelligence data on Axis activities and producing “scholarly reports for strategists within the O.S.S., White House, and the War Department,” actively recruited historians, anthropologists, economists, political scientists, geographers, psychologists, and diplomats.¹⁵ According to the Central Intelligence Agency, the OSS Research and Analysis branch “virtually invented the discipline of non-departmental strategic intelligence analysis” and its personnel roster “reads like a Who’s Who of two generations of scholars,” including “seven future presidents of the American Historical Association, five of the American Economic Association, and two Nobel Laureates” and one past president of the American Anthropological Association.¹⁶

In December of 1942, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the OSS to develop Operational Groups to conduct direct and indirect actions deep behind enemy lines. Direct actions were largely kinetic and involved disrupting Axis military capability, through capturing, destroying, and interdicting Axis networks, resources, and lines of communication, and assisting with the Allied invasion or other Allied offensive operations.¹⁷ Indirect actions involved building the capacity of the indigenous resistance groups through advising, training, and equipping. Each Operational Group consisted of 15 soldiers, two officers and 13 enlisted personnel. They were locally grounded in their area of responsibility and experts in specialized tactical skills. Their training included physical conditioning, parachute training, land navigation, patrolling and reconnaissance, demolitions, special weapons, hand-to-hand combat training, survival

techniques, and hit-and-run commando tactics.¹⁸ In each Operational Group one of the enlisted soldiers was a radio operator and one was a medic. In terms of organization, duty descriptions, and training, the Operational Groups “presaged the basic operational detachment adopted by the Army’s 10th Special Forces Group upon its creation in 1952.”¹⁹

With the conclusion of World War II and Executive Order 9621 signed by President Harry S. Truman, the OSS officially expired on October 1, 1945.²⁰ During its short existence, the OSS proved that it “was unlike any other government agency in American history.”²¹ With innovation, adaptation, and audacity, the OSS merged “operations with intelligence with great effect” and set the stage for the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency and United States Special Forces Command.²²

New Kind of Insurgency

Today’s operational environment also includes a new kind of insurgency, one that seeks to impose revolutionary change worldwide. Al Qaeda is a well-known example of such an insurgency. This movement seeks to transform the Islamic world and reorder its relationships with other regions and cultures. It is notable for its members’ willingness to execute suicide attacks to achieve their ends.

-United States Army Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency

Long before the birth of Osama Bin Laden or the rise of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan or Iraq, there existed an insurgent movement so revolutionary and so audacious that it attempted to transform the entire Islamic world into a single, unified Muslim ethno-religious fanatical front, with ambitious goals of achieving world hegemony.²³ An insurgency movement “awake to the limitless potentialities of a harness Islam” and so fanatical that members were willing to execute suicide attacks to achieve their ends.²⁴

Though a familiar refrain to modern readers, similar assessments of radical Islam can be found in OSS reports dated 1944!

The OSS Research and Analysis Branch produced several classified reports during World War II following the efforts of the Japanese Empire to influence the Islamic world to assist in its fight against the United States, Great Britain, Soviet Union, and China. One of the reports the OSS produced on the Japanese efforts to transform the Muslim population was entitled “Japanese Infiltration among the Muslims throughout the World.”²⁵ The report detailed a series of elaborate efforts by the Japanese Empire to build a world-wide Japanese and Muslim alliance. These efforts included having a leading Egyptian scholar and Imam from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the most well-known mosque and oldest university for religious studies in the Muslim World, sent to Tokyo (this was highly publicized in the Arabic press) to: recruit students from the Egyptian Al-Azhar University to attend Japanese universities, entertain and indoctrinate Afghan businessmen and students in Japanese culture, provide aid to Muslim ethnic groups revolting in China and the Soviet Union, and conduct information operations to disseminate rumors that Islam will become a Japanese state religion and that “Japan was building Mosques and Islamic centers in preparation for a surge of Japanese Muslim converts.”²⁶

The OSS asserted that the Japanese Empire was both “awake to the limitless potentialities of a harnessed Islam” and achieving success in their efforts to recruit Muslims throughout the world.²⁷ Reports within the OSS documented that the Indonesian Muslims “call in their prayers upon Allah to bless the Imperial Japanese Army and the Imperial Palace.”²⁸ Tangible signs of Japanese progress in these efforts

caused great consternation within the OSS; many analysts believed that “Islam had an unusually high potential as a mobilizing force for political movements” and that there was an “outstanding significance of Islam as a theater for psychological warfare,” and that any potential alliance between Japanese and the Muslims would be viewed as “combining two threatening and powerful elements in “an ominous alliance between fanatical Japanese patriotism and Muslim ethno-religious fanaticism.”²⁹ Moreover, the potential alliance between the Japanese and Muslims outside of Islamic minorities inside the Soviet Union and China represented perhaps the principle concern to the OSS analysts; “In the Philippines, Malaya, and particularly Netherland Indies, regions of immense economic importance, vast numbers of Muslims have lived under Western Powers. Political discontent in these territories could not but further avow Japanese policy. India’s huge Muslim minority would form the largest single group in the united Islamic front.”³⁰

As characterized by the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, suicide attacks are not new to the history of insurgencies. In fact, numerous Japanese suicide attacks were documented by the OSS and other organizations throughout World War II. In 1945, the Research and Analysis Branch of the OSS studied the culture of the Japanese people and produced a report titled “Japan’s ‘Secret’ Weapon: Suicide.” In the report, the OSS concluded that the “Japanese were culturally drawn to suicide” and that the uniform conditioning of the Japanese people to sacrifice their lives in their country’s interest was based on their early indoctrination to the Japanese time-honored tradition of Hara-Kiri and a strong sense of Japanese nationalism.”³¹

The Japanese conducted massive suicide campaigns in the Marianas, “where soldiers dove off cliffs to their deaths or killed Japanese field-hospital patients to avoid capture.”³² At Okinawa, Japanese Kamikaze pilots intentionally attempted to crash their aircraft, often laden with explosives and full fuel tanks, into enemy ships. Pilots of the 19-foot long Yokosuka MXY-7 Ohka miniature suicide rocket planes, with 2,500-pound explosive warheads, launched from Japanese bombers at high altitude and attacked military targets. Sailors aboard the 48-foot long Kaiten-human guided torpedoes, with 3,400-pound explosive warheads, launched from submarines to target enemy ships. Human mine swimmers “had explosive charges strapped on their backs” or “carried grenades, booby traps, and small explosive charges” to conduct suicide attacks against Allied shipping.³³

Neither the characteristics nor the target audience of the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan are new to the conduct of insurgency. The OSS documented approximately seventy years ago efforts of the Japanese Empire to foment unrest within the Islamic world in the service of Tokyo’s interests. In the pursuit of these ends, Japanese leaders sought to reorder its relationship with the Islamic culture. Moreover, Japanese willingness to execute suicide attacks further demonstrates a harmony of cultural acceptance in executing extreme tactics to achieve political-strategic objectives.

Culture

Observation Number 9, cultural awareness is a force multiplier, reflects our recognition that knowledge of the cultural “terrain” can be as important as, and sometimes even more important than, knowledge of the geographic terrain. This observation acknowledges that the people are, in many respects, the decisive terrain, and that we must study that terrain in the same way that we have always studied the geographic terrain.³⁴

-General David H. Petraeus

Cultural awareness underpinned all operations conducted by the OSS. From its recruiting process to its organizational structure to its tactics, techniques, and procedures, cultural awareness was a part of the DNA of the OSS. The Research and Analysis Branch was headed by noted Harvard historian William Langer and employed more than 900 scholars in pursuing cultural studies.³⁵ It actively recruited noted historians, anthropologists, archeologists, economists, political scientists, geographers, psychologists, and diplomats. The personnel roster of the Research and Analysis Branch included noted anthropologists “who were authorities on native tribes in the theater to which they will be assigned and who knew various tribal leaders in the theater as a result of their scientific research.”³⁶

The Operational Groups actively recruited military candidates with foreign-area knowledge, and a working knowledge of the native languages and customs of the countries within which they would be operating.³⁷ The Research and Analysis Branch also produced many reports on the cultural impacts of World War II on the populations of the various countries in OSS theaters of operation. Furthermore, the Research and Analysis Branch analyzed information on the Japanese and German cultures to monitor changes in morale and determine the best methods to conduct conventional and unconventional warfare against Japan and Germany. It analyzed the role of the emperor in Japanese society, the potential impacts of bombing the Imperial Palace, potential impacts of food shortages, and what actions might prompt mass Japanese suicides.³⁸ In a classified report entitled “Japan’s ‘Secret’ Weapon: Suicide,” the Research and Analysis Branch analyzed the willingness of the Japanese citizens to sacrifice their life for their country’s interest.³⁹ Analysts believed that because suicide

was so easily induced, the United States Army might be able to leverage suicide “as a weapon against the Japanese.”⁴⁰

The Research and Analysis Branch studied the efforts by the Japanese to influence the Muslim population and produced a report entitled “Infiltration among the Muslims throughout the World.”⁴¹ In the report, the Research and Analysis Branch demonstrated its cultural understanding of the Islamic faith and its potential vulnerabilities to manipulation. The report indicated that “because Islam is not only a creed but also a social and political body, Muslim solidarity is much stronger than Jewish, Christian, or Buddhist solidarity.”⁴² This is due to a variety of factors. “Islam is eminently a ‘lay religion’, free from the restrictive influence of a clerical hierarchy,” as well as “untroubled by racial and social bias.”⁴³ It was believed that Islam had an “unusually high potential as a mobilizing force for political movements and that there is an outstanding significance of Islam as a theater for psychological warfare.”⁴⁴ The OSS viewed these efforts as “combining two threatening and powerful elements in an ominous alliance between their fanatical patriotism and Muslim ethno-religious fanaticism.”⁴⁵ Consequently, OSS analyst concluded that the Japanese are “awake to the limitless potentialities of a harnessed Islam.”⁴⁶

Probably one of the more interesting reports that the Research and Analysis Branch produced was on the impact of the Japanese defeat of the European colonialists in Southeast Asia. The OSS believed that the Japanese break-up of former colonial occupied Southeast Asia had advanced the cause of nationalism and injected a new confidence in Southeast Asians that would make it “next to impossible to go back to

their old way of life.”⁴⁷ The OSS seemed to have accurately foreshadowed the events of the Cold War in Southeast Asia.

Once behind enemy lines, the Operational Groups demonstrated their understanding of the cultural importance of ethnic groups, tribes, political parties, and other social groups to effective insurgency operations. When an Operational Group officer observed a lack of coordination and support, because of “political reasons,” between the various French resistance groups within his sector, he would gather the French Resistance chiefs and conduct a joint conference to iron out the various points of dispute.⁴⁸

Inattention to cultural awareness is accepted only at extreme risk to achieving political-strategic objectives. History is filled with examples of great military strategists with imposing conventional forces that have failed because they preemptively invaded countries without understanding or even seeking to understand the cultural environment of the battle space upon which they occupied. The OSS clearly understood and appreciated the strategic importance of cultural awareness to the successful prosecution of insurgency and counterinsurgency operations in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous operational environments. Cultural awareness was a force multiplier for the OSS and a key factor to its success.

Information Operations

Effective counterinsurgents use information operations (IO) to exploit inconsistencies in the insurgents' message as well as their excessive use of force or intimidation. The insurgent cause itself may also be a vulnerability. Counterinsurgents may be able to "capture" an insurgency's cause and exploit it. For example, an insurgent ideology based on an extremist interpretation of a holy text can be countered by appealing to a moderate interpretation of the same text. When a credible religious or other respected leader passes this kind of message, the counteraction is even more effective.

-United States Army Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency

As a testament to its early recognition of the strategic importance of information operations to the successful execution of insurgency and counterinsurgency operations, the OSS developed the Morale Operations Branch as a part of its organizational structure. The purpose of the Morale Operations Branch was to provide the OSS with the essential information operations core capabilities of military deception and psychological operations. The Morale Operations Branch conducted both covert strategic and tactical level information operations in all OSS theaters of operation. Its products included subversive leaflets, stickers, slogans, news sheets, newspapers, and radio broadcast messages.⁴⁹ In order to understand the cultural terrain and influence the behavior of its target audiences, the Morale Operations Branch actively recruited both anthropologists and archeologists, with first-hand field experience in regions in which they were operating, to provide critical linguistic and cultural skills necessary to conduct insurgency and counterinsurgency information operations.⁵⁰

In its counterinsurgency role, the Morale Operations Branch studied Japanese insurgency efforts on Muslim populations and recognized opportunities to exploit the inconsistencies in the Japanese message as well as their excessive use of force and intimidation. In 1942, OSS analysts detected Japanese efforts to influence Latin

American countries, similar to efforts designed to influence Muslims, with radio broadcasts entitled “The Bible has now become the Book of the Japanese.”⁵¹ To counter these efforts, the Morale Operations Branch developed an effective information operation countermeasure that “recommended that American policy makers and intelligence operatives counteract these Japanese efforts by publicizing statements of prominent Islamic clerics denouncing totalitarian governments, distributing first-person accounts of Japanese oppression by prominent Muslims, exposing the duplicity of similar Japanese campaigns to attract Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians, and launching a publicity campaign examining how similar claims of coming widespread Japanese conversions in the early 1900s did not lead to massive numbers of converts....”⁵² These recommendations demonstrate that the OSS clearly understood the tenants of effective counterinsurgency information operations and the power of a message from a credible religious or other respected leader as a counteraction.

The OSS was so highly skilled at counterinsurgency information operations because it was highly experienced at conducting insurgency information operations. The Morale Operations Branch placed covert operatives, with cultural and linguistic expertise, in Morocco and Gibraltar to conduct pre-invasion propaganda operations for the Allied invasion of North Africa. The Morale Operations Branch translated President Roosevelt’s message to the Moroccans into Quranic Arabic (classic Arabic); the message characterized the American invasion into North Africa as the “great Jihad of freedom” and called American troops “Holy Warriors.”⁵³ The Morale Operations Branch also translated President Roosevelt’s Flag Day speech into Arabic in such a way that it resulted in “a piece of poetry which might come out of the Koran.”⁵⁴

The OSS operated many radio stations around the world to support its information operations activities. In Burma, the Morale Operations Branch utilized another one of its anthropologists to help operate its radio station that was covertly operating as an official Japanese radio station: JOAK. The station's mission was to perform the information operation core capability of Psychological Operations for the OSS. They operated on a radio frequency adjoining that used by Tokyo radio station JOAK to undermine Japanese propaganda and influence Japanese behavior.⁵⁵ The radio station conducted several successful operations. In one of their broadcasts "Beamed to Siam," they reported on the results of a fictitious Allied bombing raid on Japan and the instability that it created in the Japanese markets.⁵⁶ The radio broadcast was so persuasive that it was reprinted, with a credit to JOAK, in Bangkok papers.⁵⁷

The OSS Operational Groups repeatedly demonstrated their ability to successfully perform the information operation core capability of Military Deception in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous operational environments. During operation "Nancy," the Operational Group was tasked with strengthening the resistance movement and impacting German communications on the French-Italian border in the vicinity of Montgenevre Pass. During one of their missions on the Italian side of the border, the Operational Group found itself operating in the area of a village that had been heavily terrorized by the Germans. Just the day prior to their arrival, a 22-man German patrol came through the valley and advised the locals that they "would be up in force tomorrow and burn villages."⁵⁸ The Operational Group integrated information deception operations into their mission. They carefully spread rumors throughout the civilian population that exaggerated the size of the American Army presence in the

valley and the proximity of additional American follow-on units. When a portion of the Operational Group came under fire from a significantly larger German force, the partisans panicked and fled. The operational group expected the significantly larger German force to continue their attack; instead, however, the Germans withdrew to the mountains and took up defensive positions. Even though the German force held a geographically dominating position in the mountains and could see the village, they did not attack the Operational Group. The lack of a German follow-on attack was attributed to the Operational Group's deception operations. The reports had gotten back to the Germans that "5,000 Americans were marching up the valley."⁵⁹

During Operation "Lafayette," another Operational Group was tasked with harassing enemy columns and cutting off enemy lines of communication in the Ardeche region in occupied France. After interrogating two German prisoners, the Operational Group was able to confirm the strength and disposition of five German battalions that were operating in the area. An officer from Operational Group "Lafayette", along with an officer and Sergeant from Operational Group "Nancy" and the two German prisoners, proceeded in a vehicle to make contact with the Germans and advised them that the Americans have arrived and are "willing to talk terms."⁶⁰ Upon meeting with the German Colonel in charge of the five battalions, the OSS officer "informed the Colonel that they were completely surrounded by American and French forces (keeping our fingers crossed at all times), and that if he did not surrender the circle would be drawn tight and no prisoners taken."⁶¹ The Operational Group members noticed the concern in the voice of the Colonel regarding the situation on the Russian front and they informed the Colonel that the "Russians were deep in Germany and that all Germans in France

were cut off on both sides on the Rhone.”⁶² The German Colonel asked to see the senior American commander. They told him that it would take some time during which they returned and contacted Major Cox, the Commander of the French Operational Groups; simultaneously, they had the section moved “within sight of the Germans in hopes that the Colonel would see some American troops, believe our story, and quickly come to a decision.”⁶³ They were also able to get a French armored vehicle in position. This was enough to convince the German Colonel to surrender a total of 3,824 soldiers, including 30 officers.⁶⁴

The OSS understood the need to win the information operations battle through effective information operations measures and empowering commanders to communicate directly with the local public. Its Operational Groups were a perfect example; because the OSS actively recruited candidates for their Operational Groups with foreign-area knowledge and language skills, Operational Group members had an exceptional understanding of the culture and the ability to communicate with the local populace.

The Operational Groups of the OSS clearly understood the need for swift communications responses to combat potentially counterproductive messaging by the enemy. This was especially true in time-critical situations that could have strategic implications, such as friendly fire resulting in civilian casualties. They spoke the language, had an understanding of the culture, and were empowered to communicate directly with the local populace. During Operation Alice, when the Operational Group was conducting insurgency operations with the Maquis in occupied France, they observed the American Army Air Corps accidentally destroy a portion of the town of

Crest, killing 38 civilians and wounding 100 others. The two officers in charge of the Operational Group went into the town and “talked with the people, visited the hospital and encouraged the people that the bombing was a mistake and would not occur again.”⁶⁵ This quick action preempted any German information campaign, allowed the Operational Group to continue their work with the local populace and conduct its insurgency operations with the Maquis.

The Morale Operations Branch successfully conducted covert strategic and tactical level information operations in all OSS theaters of operation through understanding the cultural terrain necessary to influence the behavior of its target audiences, utilizing all available forms of communication, and decentralizing its civil-military information operations. In situation after situation, the OSS clearly demonstrated that it understood and appreciated the strategic need to win the information operations battles through swift and effective information operations. The Morale Operations Branch provided the OSS with the critical information operations core capabilities of military deception and psychological operations, while its Operational Groups provided the OSS with the information operations supporting capability of Civil-Military Operations. Together this provided the OSS with the critical capabilities to effectively operate in the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous operational environments of World War II. From its recruiting process to its organizational structure to its tactics, techniques, and procedures, the OSS clearly understood the strategic importance of information operations to the successful prosecution of both insurgency and counterinsurgency operations.

Conclusion

You cannot fight former Saddamists and Islamic extremists the same way you would have fought the Viet Cong, Moros, or Tupamaros; the application of principles and fundamentals to deal with each varies considerably.⁶⁶

-United States Army Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency

Though you cannot fight former Saddamists and Islamic extremists in the same manner as the Viet Cong, Moros, or Tupamaros, you can, however, conduct current operations using the counterinsurgency principles and techniques pioneered by the OSS in World War II.⁶⁷ Neither the characteristics nor the target audience of the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan are new to the conduct of insurgency. Long before the birth of Osama Bin Laden or the rise of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan or Iraq, the OSS combatted the efforts of the Japanese Empire to transform the entire Islamic world into a single, unified Muslim ethno-religious fanatical front with hegemonic aspirations.⁶⁸ Through combining intelligence and unconventional warfare capabilities with extensive knowledge of the cultural terrain and the ability to develop swift, effective, and localized information operations, the OSS was able to contribute to the successful defeat of the insurgency efforts of the Japanese Empire. From its recruiting process, to its organizational structure, to its tactics, techniques, and procedures, the OSS clearly understood and appreciated the strategic importance of cultural awareness and information operations to the successful prosecution of insurgency and counterinsurgency operations in World War II.

As we continue to go forward into operating environments of ever increasing volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, coupled with ever diminishing resources, it is imperative that we avoid the unnecessary loss of blood and treasure

associated with subjecting our Soldiers to “discovery learning.” The United States Army must capitalize on the relevant experiences contained within the numerous lessons learned, after action reports, and intelligence reports Iraq, Afghanistan, and other conflicts around the world. The daunting challenge facing the United States Army is the development of its institutional memory. The Army must ensure that its knowledge management systems not only capture all of the past and present classified and unclassified reports, lessons learned, and after-action reviews, but instead ensures that information remains readily accessible and user-friendly so that future operations gain the observations, experience, and expertise from those who have gone before us. The Army established its Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) in 1985 to address the issue of capturing lessons learned and doctrine for knowledge management. However, the Army still failed to glean the insurgency and counterinsurgency lessons learned from the OSS during World War II before it began operations in Afghanistan or Iraq, 16 and 18 years respectively, after the establishment of CALL. Though the challenges of developing an effective institutional memory may be great, the opportunity cost in blood and treasure are far greater.

Endnotes:

¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 389.

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³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., Forward.

⁵ Lieutenant General David Petraeus. “Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq.” *Military Review* (Jan-Feb 2006), 2.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁸ Greg Bruno, "Winning the Information War in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 11, 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/winning-information-war-afghanistan-pakistan/p19330>, May 11, 2009 (accessed November 15, 2010).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Petraeus. "Learning Counterinsurgency," 2.

¹¹ OSS Reborn, "Remarks by Admiral Eric Olson, USN", October 1, 2010, linked from the *OSS Reborn Home Page* at <http://www.ossreborn.com/index.html> (accessed December 15 2010).

¹² John Whiteclay Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad in World War II* (U.S. National Park Service: Washington, D.C. 2008), 31, http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/oss/index.htm; Central Intelligence Agency, *The Office of Strategic Services: America's First Intelligence Agency* (Public Affairs: Central Intelligence Agency Washington DC), 2, 3; Central Intelligence Agency, "Historical Intelligence Documents: From COI to CIG" August 30, 2010, https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol37no3/html/v37i3a10p_0001.htm (accessed January 5, 2011).

¹³ Central Intelligence Agency, *From COI to CIG* August 30, 2010, https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol37no3/html/v37i3a10p_0001.htm (accessed January 5, 2011).

¹⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, *America's First Intelligence*, 9.

¹⁵ Chambers, *OSS Training National Parks*, 44, 45, http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/oss/index.htm; David H. Price, *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War* (Duke University Press: Durham and London 2008), 222.

¹⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, *America's First Intelligence Agency*, 12.

¹⁷ Chambers, *OSS Training National Parks*, 41, http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/oss/index.htm.

¹⁸ O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 41, http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/oss/index.htm.

¹⁹ Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *US Army Special Warfare, Its Origins: Psychological and Unconventional Warfare* (University Press of the Pacific: Honolulu Hawaii 2002), 34.

²⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, *From COI to CIG*, https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol37no3/html/v37i3a10p_0001.htm (accessed January 5, 2011).

²¹ OSS Reborn, Admiral Eric Olson, <http://www.ossreborn.com/index.html> (accessed December 15 2010).

²² Ibid.

²³ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 234, 235.

²⁴ Ibid., 234, 232.

²⁵ Ibid., 234.

²⁶ Ibid., 235.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 234, 235.

³¹ Ibid., 235.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Petraeus, "Learning Counterinsurgency," 8.

³⁵ Chambers, OSS Training National Parks, 44.
http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/oss/index.htm.

³⁶ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 249.

³⁷ O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 58.

³⁸ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 222.

³⁹ Ibid., 232.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 234.

⁴² Ibid., 235.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid., 234.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 235.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 238.

⁴⁸ Major Alfred T. Cox, Company "B", 2671st Special Reconnaissance Battalion, Separate (Prov), *Commanding Officers Report*, Operations Lehigh, 2

⁴⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, *America's First Intelligence Agency*, 18.

⁵⁰ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 235.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 236.

⁵³ Ibid., 249.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 239.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ CPT Arnold Lorbeer, Company "B", 2671st Special Reconnaissance Battalion, Separate (Prov), *Commanding Officers Report*, Operations Nancy, 12

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ 1LT Odilon J. Fontaine, Company "B", 2671st Special Reconnaissance Battalion, Separate (Prov), *Commanding Officers Report*, Operations Lafayette, 3

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 4

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ 1LT Ralph Barnard, Company "B", 2671st Special Reconnaissance Battalion, Separate (Prov), *Commanding Officers Report*, Operation Alice

⁶⁶ U.S. Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Forward.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 234, 235.

