



## MCoE REVISING COIN DOCTRINE

NICK DUKE

Throughout the course of the war on terror, one of the constant themes has been the need for the American military to conduct counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in environments such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Maneuver Center of Excellence's (MCoE's) Directorate of Training and Doctrine has been updating Army Field Manual (FM) 3-24.2, which deals with tactics used during COIN operations.

The effort to revise FM 3-24.2 coincides with plans to revise the Army's overall COIN field manual, FM 3-24, which is set for publication later this year.

CPT Jeffrey Johnson, a foreign area officer and COIN subject matter expert, said the main goal of a revision such as this one is to ensure that experiences gained during the last 12 years of combat are being applied to doctrine.

"We have to make sure our doctrine is both effective and timely by incorporating our lessons learned, our observations, and our insights as an operating force that has been doing this for the last 12 years, coupled with those lessons learned, observations, and insights from our allied partners," he said.

During the effort to revise FM 3-24.2, which will be published in 2015 as an Army techniques publication, Johnson has spent time developing a common language for COIN instruction that he hopes to see implemented across the MCoE.

Johnson collaborated with training specialists to develop a relevant program of instruction (POI), lesson plan, and teaching support package for a potential updated COIN instruction program for the Henry Caro NCO Academy.

Johnson presented his proposed revision to NCO Academy instructors during a four-hour session in June.

"We observed the training that was there, which was good training, but what we wanted to do was give it more robust counterinsurgent information," Johnson said. "We're widening the aperture on counterinsurgency."

He said that the major difference between the newly developed POI and the previous one is that it focuses not just on the insurgencies themselves, but rather the conditions that allow



Photo by SSG Sean A. Foley

*An understanding of the people and culture of the host country is an important aspect of counterinsurgency. Above, 1LT Jeff Harris, center, and CPT Robert Erdman from Troop A, 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment, explain to a sheik what was found in houses belonging to members of his tribe during a November 2006 cordon and search mission in Hawr Rajab, Iraq.*

insurgencies to operate in a given environment.

"It's one thing to understand an insurgent's strategies or dynamics, but it's also very important to understand what allows an insurgency to occur," he said. "That's what this does."

Johnson said one of the issues that Soldiers often have in relation to COIN is an inability to agree on what constitutes an insurgency.

"We've identified that everybody has his or her own concept of what counterinsurgency is or of what insurgency is," he said. "Sometimes individuals mistake terrorism for insurgency or criminal organizations for insurgencies."

For the purposes of doctrine, an insurgency is defined as an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.

"The part of that definition that says 'aimed' is very important," Johnson said. "It's almost more important than the insurgency itself because if an organized movement that is nefarious in nature is trying to overthrow an established government, it's not only important that you just look at the insurgency and the government. What's also important is trying to figure out how they're aiming to do that and

what gives them freedom of movement.

“That’s what we want to do and we are doing with revised, renewed counterinsurgency doctrine. We’re trying to show the Soldier why an insurgent has the ability to conduct operations and why the insurgent organization garners, uses, and maintains freedom of movement in the same operational environment we’re conducting operations in.”

Part of the need to revise COIN doctrine and instruction stems from a shift in the Army’s approach to counterinsurgency operations, Johnson said.

“What we’ve developed in counterinsurgency is this thing we used to call ‘clear, hold, build,’ but what we’re moving to and what we’re understanding more is that it’s not just ‘clear, hold, build,’” Johnson said. “I don’t just go and clear the threat away because if I do that, I haven’t identified the vulnerabilities that allowed that threat to exist in the first place. Then, the threat continues to repopulate, re-emerge, and regenerate to exploit those vulnerabilities.

“We’ve moved from ‘clear, hold, build’ to ‘shape, clear, hold, build, transition. ...What shape allows the commander to do is to try and understand that environment and either shape the current existing conditions through planning or allow that environment to adjust, modify, and create a level of flexibility with planned operations before executing.”

While the Army’s future as an active player in Afghanistan is uncertain, Johnson said there will continue to be a need for COIN doctrine and instruction to be as up to date as possible.

“In my mind’s eye, counterinsurgency is not going to go away,” he said. “I think there’s always going to be a level of traditional warfare, a level of irregular warfare, but more importantly it’s going to be trying to identify the crossover between the two and how to effectively leverage our assets to win a particular objective. Our doctrine has to support the most effective way of understanding that and showing how to employ the host of assets we have available to us in order to consolidate the gains achieved along a particular line of effort in what are very complex environments.”

*(Nick Duke writes for the Fort Benning weekly newspaper Bayonet and Saber.)*

# MCoE ROLLS OUT SELF-STUDY PROGRAM

NICK DUKE

The Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE), in support of Armywide plans for leader development, has instituted the Maneuver Self-Study Program (MSSP).

The program, which was identified by MCoE Commanding General MG H. R. McMaster as one of his initiatives in 2012, consists of books, articles, doctrine, films, lectures and practical application exercises to help educate maneuver leaders about the nature and character of war, as well as their responsibilities to prepare Soldiers for combat, lead them in battle, and accomplish the mission.

The online program includes an introduction and list of topics, as well as recommended publications for each topic, at the MSSP website at [www.benning.army.mil/mssp/](http://www.benning.army.mil/mssp/).

Participants in the program take part

in discussion forums through the use of LinkedIn, a social networking website for people in professional occupations.

MCoE staff members can moderate the discussion forums and ensure discussions are productive and on topic.

The effort to build the program began roughly a year ago, said LTC John Argue, program manager.

A pilot program went online in March, with the first students using the program in May. However, that pilot version of the program featured a major difference from the version that will be used going forward. “For a student to be able to access the program, they had to have a common access card and a computer that is CAC-card accessible,” Argue said.

“It limits so many people, such as retirees who might want to be mentors. There are retirees who have published

Figure 1 — MSSP website - [www.benning.army.mil/mssp](http://www.benning.army.mil/mssp)

**Purpose of Self Study Program**

This self study program consists of books, articles, doctrine, films, lectures, and practical application exercises to help educate maneuver leaders about the nature and character of war, as well as their responsibilities to prepare their Soldiers for combat, lead them in battle, and accomplish the mission. The intent is to enhance understanding of the complex interaction between war and politics and to improve the effectiveness of maneuver leaders in complex environments and in combat against determined, adaptive enemies. Our Army must be prepared to fight and win our nation's wars and accomplish missions across the range of military operations. A commitment to learning across your career is critical to ensuring that you continue to grow as a leader and are prepared for increased responsibility.

This series supplements the formal education you receive in our Army with a guide for self-study. ADRP 6-22 states, "Lifelong learning involves study and reflection to acquire new knowledge and to learn how to apply it when needed." Leaders do not have the time or opportunity to learn every lesson in a classroom. Soldiers must take it upon themselves to seek self improvement and gain knowledge through self study. Our Army values education and Self Study has been an important aspect of leadership development since its founding.

**Welcome Back to the Maneuver Leader's Self Study Program. Please select the Topic you wish to participate in.**

- [Introduction to the Maneuver Leader's Self Study Program](#)
- [NCO Corner \(AKO/CAC Authentication Required\)](#)

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