

# STABILITY OPERATIONS:

## *The Legacy of the Search and Attack*

CAPTAIN DAVID VOORHIES

**“***The U.S. strategy in the war on terrorism is to organize and help lead international efforts to deny terrorist groups systematically what they need to operate and survive, including: safe havens, leadership, finances, weapons, ideological support and access to targets. We think of our actions in the war on terrorism as falling into three categories: 1 — Disrupting and attacking terrorist networks, 2 — Protecting the homeland, 3 — Countering ideological support for terrorism (battle for ideas).”*

**— Douglas J. Feith**

Under Secretary of Defense for Policy,  
2004



**M**ilitary units currently waging war in Iraq may, at first glance, be reinventing doctrine as it has traditionally been understood. Combining combat operations with a focus on counterinsurgency and integrating civil-military operations, while protecting U.S. and host nation assets, appear to be new doctrinal approaches to warfighting. However, given a more studied approach to the war, a deeper appreciation for the “search and attack” as the modern blueprint for stability operations becomes evident.

Army doctrine provides answers for the counterinsurgency fight. Military units in Iraq are employing robust force protection measures, executing area denial missions involving information operations to prevent insurgent influence, using information collected from various sources to target enemy activity and are largely focusing on destroying insurgents and terrorists that seek to destabilize the country. By understanding doctrine, military commanders who use the search and attack technique as their guideline to plan and conduct stability operations may enjoy greater tactical success than those who do not.

### **Stability Operations: A Closer Look**

Stability operations are contemporary combat operations that may define military actions well into the 21st century. U.S. Army commanders cannot afford to focus exclusively on offensive and defensive operations, nor can military planners be fixated on stability operations as merely “a transition” in between combat operations. FM 3-0, *Operations*, states that “Army forces conduct stability operations in a dynamic environment and are normally nonlinear and often conducted in noncontiguous areas of operations.” The war in Iraq is dynamic: units fight in a noncontiguous environment against an asymmetric, nonlinear threat. Army commanders need to understand the fluidity of the contemporary operational environment to encompass offensive, defensive, stability operations, and support operations simultaneously.

Stability operations evolved significantly in the aftermath of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Arguably, our

forces have executed stability operations to varying degrees since the American Revolution; however, after 1991 and the end of the Cold War, stability operations appeared to become the norm of military employment and enabled operational continuity before, during and after major regional conflicts. Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and, most recently, Afghanistan and Iraq serve as examples of stability operations.

“In ‘cases of important interests,’ explained General (John M.) Shalikashvili, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ‘we are willing to use our military power primarily for coercive purposes in support of our diplomacy.’” (Charles W. Kegley and Eugene R. Wittkopf. *American Foreign Policy*. Boston: St. Martins Press Inc., 1996, p. 100.) FM 3-0, the Army’s capstone manual for force employment, explains:

*Combatant commanders employ Army forces in stability operations outside the U.S. and U.S. territories to promote and protect U.S. national interests ... stability operations influence the threat, political, and information dimensions of the operational environment.*

Army doctrine quantifies 10 distinct types of stability operations that Army forces may conduct: Peace Operations, Foreign Internal Defense, Security Assistance, Humanitarian and Civic Assistance, Support to Insurgencies, Counter-drug Operations, Combating Terrorism, Noncombatant Evacuation Operations, Arms Control, and Show of Force Operations. Army forces train and execute offensive, defensive, stability operations, and support operations in what has come to be known as full spectrum operations. According to FM 3-0, “Full spectrum operations are the range of operations Army forces conduct in war and military operations other than war.” In essence, full spectrum operations exemplify contemporary combat: employing military units in an offensive role, a defensive role, a stability role, and a support role oftentimes simultaneously within the same geographic area.

Success within full spectrum operations demands attention and analysis of the 11 critical variables that define specific contemporary operational environments: national will, time, technology, physical environment, external organizations,

military capabilities, economics, sociological demographics, regional and global relationships, nature and stability of the state, and information contribute to significant analysis for the application of force. “Only by studying and understanding these variables — and incorporating them into its training — will the U.S. Army be able to keep adversaries from using them against it, or to find ways to use them to its own advantage” (FM 7-100, *Opposing Force Doctrinal Framework and Strategy*). More so than any other operation, stability operations require a detailed study of the critical variables by commanders to achieve mission success. Stability operations demonstrate full spectrum operations in and of themselves; recent operations in Iraq suggest a greater need for unit commanders to explore and understand their defining characteristics.

### **Doctrinal Principles Behind the Search and Attack**

Usually executed by brigade combat teams and below, the search and attack is a technique of movement to contact, one of the four types of offensive operations. Movements to contact are primarily “used in an environment of noncontiguous areas of operation,” according to FM 3-90, *Tactics*. “Commanders conduct movements to contact in general, and searches and attack in particular, when the enemy situation is vague or not specific enough to conduct an attack” (FM 3-90). Intelligence and time are needed for Army commanders to adequately plan and execute a deliberate attack. Oftentimes, offensive operations are movements to contact, usually culminating in a hasty attack once military forces make contact with the enemy, allowing leaders to focus combat power to destroy him. FM 3-90 describes the search and attack technique as “sharing the characteristics of an area security mission that is conducted by light forces and often supported by heavy forces, when the enemy is operating as small, dispersed elements, or when the task is to deny the enemy the ability to move within a given area.” Regarding the search and attack, brigades, battalions and companies traditionally concerned themselves with the destruction of the enemy force, while preserving their own combat power through active and passive force protection. FM 3-90 stipulates that

the search and attack actually comprises four distinct principles:

■ **Protect the force:** prevent enemy from massing to disrupt or destroy friendly military or civilian operations, equipment, property, and key facilities.

■ **Collect information:** gain information about the enemy and the terrain to confirm the enemy COA as a result of the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) process.

■ **Deny the area:** prevent the enemy from operating unhindered in a given area; for example, in any area he is using for a base camp or for logistics support

■ **Destroy the enemy:** render enemy units in the AO combat ineffective.

The purpose behind protecting the force is a combination of passive security measures to preserve combat power and active measures focused on preventing the enemy force from influencing host nation services, civilian authorities, and military operations. Passive measures include: perimeter security, convoy security missions, communications discipline, operational security, and disciplined information sharing. Active measures usually take the form of patrolling, screening host nation authorities, civil negotiations, and establishing limited-duration access control points. Usually blanketed under the term, “security,” commanders oftentimes subordinate force protection in lieu of destroying the enemy in a given area of responsibility.

Army units must collect information in order to establish actionable intelligence on enemy forces. Commanders at all levels receive known intelligence from their immediate higher headquarters, but are still expected to develop their own intelligence estimates and refine what is given to them. Executing tactical interrogations, establishing observation posts, using informants, and questioning the local populace are just some ways military units accomplish this. Oftentimes, commanders employ reconnaissance patrols to gather intelligence from a particular area, route, or zone. These patrols serve a multifaceted purpose of collecting information, as well as denying specific areas and protecting key resources.

Area denial missions serve to prevent enemy influence, both in message and presence, to host nation civilians in general, and to critical infrastructure nodes within the population in particular. Robust use of information operations that target the civilian population serve to promote security and send a positive American



Specialist Jmil Watts

*Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division patrol the streets of Al-Nasr with soldiers of the 204th Iraqi Army Battalion in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom on March 21, 2005.*

message of stability and hope. These information operations take the form of handbills, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, and televised townhall meetings. Further, they serve to deny negative enemy-created propaganda from influencing the large civilian base. Again, Army patrols also prevent enemy activity and deny their influence against critical areas such as government buildings, industrial plants, and crucial economic areas.

The purpose of enemy destruction when executing the search and attack is obvious: destroy the threat to enable the restoration of stability. Army commanders traditionally trained and focused on the physical human-enemy threat as the defined “enemy.” Whether this entails an insurgent clad in civilian garb or the guerilla fighter hiding in the civilian population, military units have largely focused on destroying the enemy presence within their area of responsibility as their greatest priority. These missions historically take the form of ambushes, raids, sniper missions, and other combat patrols concentrated on finding, fixing, and finishing enemy forces.

Execution of stability operations looks oddly similar to the search and attack. The few exceptions such as U.S. and host nation security force integration, incorporation of civilian contractors, and coordination with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), as well as stricter rules of engagement may traditionally delineate the two. With those noted exceptions, however, current unit employment in Iraq resembles the planning and execution of the search and attack.

FM 3-21.20, *The Light Infantry Battalion*, highlights several missions regarding the search and attack that companies and

battalions can execute. They look strikingly familiar to certain stability missions:

- To locate enemy positions or routes the enemy travels.
- To destroy enemy forces within its capabilities or to fix or block an enemy force until help arrives.
- To maintain surveillance of a larger enemy force through stealth until reinforcements arrive.
- To set up ambushes.
- To search towns, villages accompanied by host nation representatives.
- To secure military or civilian property or installations.
- To act as a reserve.
- To develop the situation in a given area.

Army forces practice extensive active and passive measures to protect their personnel and equipment from enemy attack. Further, they extend security to Iraqi civilians and security personnel to retain support from the Iraqi people. Army signal intelligence (SIGINT) and human intelligence (HUMINT) assets, along with many U.S. civilian clandestine agencies, exercise detailed information collection to target threat activities. Army units concentrate their efforts on area denial to counterinsurgent and terrorist influence against critical infrastructure such as water plants and Iraqi governmental and police headquarters. Area denial includes conducting robust information operations to communicate a positive “American” message and working with key civic and cultural leaders of the population who have proven to be absolutely necessary for mission accomplishment. Moreover, all Army units attempt to destroy enemy insurgents and physically deny them sanctuary inside of cities, towns, and along well-used highways. These units also work to fix broken critical life support systems, which, if left in shambles, contribute to the overall threat to state stability.

### **Applying Search and Attack Doctrine to Stability Operations**

#### **Protect the Force**

The ability to protect the force, both U.S. and host nation people and assets, is the number one priority when executing stability operations. Whether establishing

forward operating bases, fixing water treatment plants or conducting combat and reconnaissance patrols, units must execute rigid force protection measures to prevent enemy attack and influence. Failures in force protection are often seen as suicide bombings inside of established forward operating bases (FOBs); improvised explosive devices (IEDs) detonated along convoy routes; and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs); destroying American Soldiers, workers, Iraqi police, and governmental officials. Other failures in security include enemy insurgents who infiltrate legitimate Iraqi authorities and practice extortion and bribery. FM 3-0 defines force protection as the following:

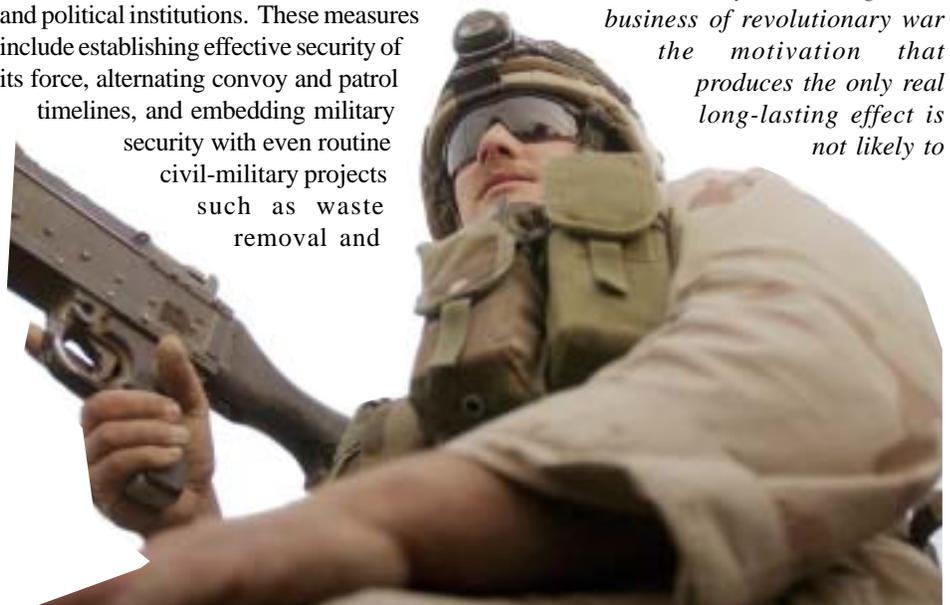
*Force protection consists of those actions taken to prevent or mitigate hostile actions against DOD personnel (to include family members), resources, facilities, and critical information. These actions conserve the force’s fighting potential so it can be applied at the decisive time and place and incorporates the coordinated and synchronized offensive and defensive measures to enable the effective employment of the joint force while degrading opportunities for the enemy. Force protection does not include actions to defeat the enemy or protect against accidents, weather, or disease.*

Force protection in stability operations involves active and passive measures. Passive measures include hard-targeting military outposts and civilian infrastructure. Active measures seek to disrupt enemy influence over Iraqi media and political institutions. These measures include establishing effective security of its force, alternating convoy and patrol timelines, and embedding military security with even routine civil-military projects such as waste removal and

townhall meetings. Army units with first-rate security can accomplish their missions in a stability environment with minimal impact from enemy threats. Moreover, the force protection used in Iraq must also extend to the host nation authorities that U.S. forces are training to govern and enforce the rule-of-law in their own country.

By demonstrating the ability to protect Iraqi security forces and its civilian population, U.S. forces can restore legitimacy and be seen as benevolent protectors and not apathetic occupiers. “This is security from the influence of the insurgents initially ... the population is then mobilized, armed, and trained to protect itself,” states FM 3-21.20. The protection enjoyed by the Iraqi people will translate to greater cooperation with U.S. forces and will result in more effective stability missions. Eventually, through detailed training, Iraqi security forces will be able to protect themselves and ensure their own welfare. As FM 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, indicates, “Effective security allows local political and administrative institutions to operate freely and commerce to flourish.” Proper force protection implemented during stability operations not only protects American forces and Iraqi security forces, but also sends an extremely important message to the easily influenced Iraqi population. In his book *Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years*, Charles Simpson made this point in reference to his Vietnam experience:

*In this dirty and dangerous business of revolutionary war the motivation that produces the only real long-lasting effect is not likely to*





Private First Class Matthew Acosta

*Corporal Christopher Chladny and Private First Class Michael Compton of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, assemble a Raven UAV in preparation for a surveillance flight.*

*be an ideology, but the elemental consideration of survival. Peasants will support [the guerrillas] ... if they are convinced that failure to do so will result in death or brutal punishment. They will support the government if and when they are convinced that it offers them a better life, and can and will protect them against the [guerillas] forever.*

Enemy insurgents and terrorists seek to win popular support and portray U.S. forces as false protectors. A RAND Corporation paper “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq” adds, “Hence, the insurgent banks on the hope that the disruption caused to daily life and commerce by security force operations countermeasures will further alienate the population from the authorities and create an impression of the security forces as oppressors rather than protectors.”

Many commanders traditionally view the search and attack as merely finding and destroying the enemy. With this understanding in mind, they sometimes fail to respect the needs of the civilian population that they are there to protect, support, and train in the first place. Because of this single-minded enemy focus and insufficient empathy for the civilian communities their unit affects through combat actions, some of these commanders often find themselves bewildered as to why insurgent activity increases, rather than decreases, in their areas of concern. In a counterinsurgency, the “people” are the center of gravity — not the insurgent. Some Army units become more successful at creating more enemies than they do with destroying them

Properly implemented force protection during stability operations protects Soldiers and civilians alike. It bolsters legitimacy and sets the conditions to gather information, denies areas to insurgent influence, and enables coalition forces to destroy the enemy. Good security is the foundation for effective stability operations and reflects a critical doctrinal principle behind the search and attack.

## Collect Information

In the asymmetric environment of stability operations, targeting threat forces requires dedicated reconnaissance and surveillance missions by echeloned collection assets. This includes “top-down” delivered assets to companies and platoons, such as integrating Special Operations Forces (SOF) and SIGINT information from satellite and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) assets. Gathered intelligence from platoons and squads that conduct daily patrols in their areas of responsibility must be analyzed quickly by battalion and brigade headquarters. U.S. forces then develop a pattern analysis for their particular area of operations (AORs) to adequately understand the trends, habits, concerns, and violence that occur within the particular geographic area. Pattern and trend analysis provide Army commanders with the data necessary to protect the civilian populace and achieve empathy for their culture, as well as target, isolate, and destroy the enemy insurgent forces that, as Mao once stated, “swim in the sea of the people.”

Oftentimes, it is the company commander’s analysis in this complex environment that provides the basis of actionable intelligence at the battalion

and brigade levels. As author Leonard Wong points out, “the OIF experience is developing in our junior officers the ability to recognize the strategic implications of their actions in a complex moral environment.” This implies a greater need for units to understand their own battle space in terms of culture, economics, and sympathies to adequately gather actionable intelligence of potential threats. As mentioned earlier, understanding the 11 critical variables that encompass a given operational environment is a must for leaders at all levels.

Since limited doctrinal templates exist for an adaptive threat, pattern analysis, which entails the detailed tracking of enemy activity over time to develop threat routines, enables commanders to make predictions commensurate with threat capabilities. As Colonel Joe Anderson, current chief of staff for the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) attests, “Intelligence products that facilitate assessments include pattern analysis by week, trend analysis by week and month, incident trackers – which become enablers to identify enemy zones of insurgent and criminal activity – and link diagrams to determine who belongs to which element and how they are interrelated.” Moreover, it is absolutely essential that these enemy patterns be historically recorded and transferred to the next rotational U.S. force to occupy that particular AOR, lest future civil-military campaigns suffer.

Effective and focused targeting processes at all command levels from company to brigade are absolutely critical. Company commanders have proven most effective in Iraq with garnering timely and accurate information. “Mostly lieutenants and captains are in the line units interacting with the local populace, conducting the raids and working with Soldiers,” said Wong. Shared targeting efforts at company, battalion, and brigade levels are the most effective means to understand the threat dimension. This is true when conducting the search and attack, and it is true of stability operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Focused targeting also includes defining human networks for civilian leadership, enemy hierarchies, and information gathering sources. For example, every particular culture and society has leaders and decision makers, as well as educated minorities that are all too willing to share vital information to make change for the better, but lack the power and authority to do so. In Iraq, school teachers, doctors, and shop keepers have little to no influence to make societal decisions but offer Army forces critical information about those who run their society and cause civil instability and corruption. Army leaders who know the cultural decision makers and the people “in-the-know” within their areas of responsibility can better focus their collection assets to target the enemy insurgent and criminal forces.

Units in Iraq actively and passively collect information. They aggressively search for the enemy while providing security and denying enemy activities for their respective areas of operations. Brigades and below actively find and fix enemy insurgents and terrorists by collecting and analyzing myriads of information. The search and attack principle of information collection serves a crucial role in stability operations.

### Deny the Area

Area denial are those actions that Army units prosecute that physically dissuade enemy activity from key areas and infrastructure, as well as information operations that seek to prevent the enemy “message” from permeating the battle space. Area denial includes active combat patrols to search for enemy Black List personnel and caches. It encompasses reconnaissance patrols that seek to collect information. It also includes route security missions performed by mechanized infantry for convoys and overflights by UAVs to confirm or deny the current operational picture. Robust use of snipers to deliver long-range precision fire against those enemy forces actively constructing IEDs along lines of communication as an economy of force mission is another excellent example of area denial. Commanders who understand the doctrinal rationale behind area denial also understand that doctrine advocates urban operations as a combined arms effort to isolate critical facilities and services from

**Area denial are those actions that Army units prosecute that physically dissuade enemy activity from key areas and infrastructure, as well as information operations that seek to prevent the enemy “message” from permeating the battle space.**

the enemy. By physically establishing a presence within the area of responsibility, commanders deny enemy forces sanctuary and influence in stability operations as they do in the search and attack.

In addition to physically guarding key infrastructure and actively patrolling key lines of communication and supply routes, area denial entails rigorous information operations. Commanders communicate the U.S. message through these operations, in hopes of “winning the hearts and minds” of the local population. Effective information operations as a form of area denial seeks to deny propaganda instigated by enemy forces and minimize what Samuel P. Huntington, in his 1993 *Foreign Affairs*’ article “The Clash of Civilizations,” described as “the breeding of animosity that interactions among peoples of different civilizations oftentimes cause.” Army forces must be able to execute “information superiority, ...or the ability to collect, process, and disseminate an uninterrupted flow of information while exploiting or denying the adversary’s ability to do the same” (FM 3-07.22).

Information Operations officers identified by unit commanders in Iraq greatly assisted in minimizing the culture clash between Army forces and the host nation. As Anderson further stated:

*You simply cannot be successful in SOSO without a means to educate and inform the local public on policies, programs, and news about their community. These activities include: writing scripts for U.S. commander-hosted radio talk shows, weekly newspaper publications, press conferences, community roundtable discussions on the roles of local indigenous political parties, religious tolerance, and the roles of women in society. My Information Operations officer developed infomercials on such topics like trash removal, propane delivery, toy guns, and celebratory gunfire...*

Effective information operations are proving their worth by advertising the positive efforts of U.S. involvement in Iraq.

News of rebuilt schools, purified water sources, and propane gas availability breeds confidence in the Iraqi population as to the true nature of U.S. intentions. Coupled with aggressive information campaigns to demonstrate the destructive and destabilizing nature of the insurgents, Army forces can prevent the enemy from influencing the Iraqi people.

Army forces must evaluate and destroy the threats in their particular AORs without creating more in the process. “A more profound understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations and the ways in which people in those civilizations see their interests” is required by U.S. commanders to effectively prosecute their particular missions in a stability operation,” Huntington said. Commanders who fail to do this run the risk of what FM 3-07.22 terms information fratricide: ... the result of employing information operations elements in a way that causes effects in the information environment that impede the conduct of friendly operations or adversely affect friendly forces.

Anderson’s adaptation in Iraq of the cordon and search termed the “cordon and knock,” sought to respect Iraqi property and civilians by integrating information operations into combat searches that demonstrate restraint. As Anderson points out: cordon and search and cordon and knock – the framework for these two types of operations is exactly identical. You isolate the area, secure the objective, and enter the home. The difference is you announce your intentions on a cordon and knock instead of kicking or blowing the door or gate in. Anderson’s unit used loudspeakers and handbills to announce their intentions.

By respecting Iraqi dignity when executing the stability operation technique of “cordon and knock” with imbedded information operations, Anderson was able to deny enemy influence and restore confidence. His brigade minimized the disruption of Iraqi homes while simultaneously denying sanctuary to Iraqi insurgents and weapons. Iraqi civilians also

understood the purpose behind the U.S. activity and responded positively.

### **Destroy the Enemy**

The threat posed in a stability operation is unconventional, asymmetrical, complex, and arguably, harder to destroy. Particularly in OIF, the physical enemy is one of multiple backgrounds, be it frustrated Shia militia, former Baathist Party insurgents, international terrorists, demoralized Iraqi nationalists, and violent criminals. The threat may also be characterized as not only the physical structure of the human dimension, but also as anything that causes instability within the particular area. Lack of an organized local government, a corrupt police force, lack of sanitation, and infectious disease can sometimes cause more instability and unrest than the most determined terrorist cell.

The unique dynamic of the human threat changed significantly in Iraq since “official combat operations” came to a close in May 2003. Since that time, U.S. forces have, in fact, seen more combat during their execution of stability operations. Recently, adaptive enemy forces composed of international terrorists, local criminals, Sunni activist jihadists, and fervently nationalistic former Ba’athist insurgents have routinely engaged U.S. forces in Iraq. This type of threat wears no uniform, hastily plans linear operations independent of other enemy forces, functions in small elements, and conducts activities indicative of guerilla warfare. It is a unique variant of a traditional insurgency. The RAND Corporation counterinsurgency article described this new variant as netwar: ...the concept of warfare involving flatter, more linear networks rather than the pyramidal hierarchies and command and control systems (no matter how primitive) that have governed traditional insurgent organizations. Netwar, as defined by the term’s originators, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, involves “small groups who communicate, coordinate, and conduct their campaigns in an internetted manner, without precise central command.”

This netwar insurgency is not easily predictable and requires detailed study and understanding prior to initiating an attack to destroy it. This notion advocates that the insurgent threat in stability operations poses as great a risk to Army forces as do the traditional conventional enemies associated with offensive and defense operations. Stability operations have, in fact, demonstrated to be more lethal to U.S. forces than recent traditional offensive and defensive operations. As Anderson noted:

*My brigade lost four members of our combat team in the fight from Kuwait to Mosul; however, we lost 31 more after 1 May 2003 when the President declared the end to major hostilities in Iraq...we also awarded close to 300 Purple Heart medals during that same time period.*

Anderson’s experiences in Iraq further underscore the enemy destruction tenet of the search and attack as it applies to stability



Edward Martens

*Soldiers from the 155th Brigade Combat Team conduct a raid on the insurgent’s Hateen Weapons Company in Babil, Iraq.*

operations. He employed many different stability missions to seek out and destroy the highly adaptive insurgent threats his brigade encountered. As Anderson continues:

*You will conduct neighborhood surges, which is another term for door-to-door searches for weapons caches and insurgents, traffic control points, security and presence patrols inside of urban areas, quick reaction forces — both by air and ground, anti-demonstration actions, Mosque engagement, and route clearance operations. But I caution you — nothing is ever routine. Never forget that the enemy is always watching and will attempt to hit you when you demonstrate weakness...*

Executing stability missions to destroy the enemy also requires Soldiers to adopt a “steely-eyed killer” look about them with clear understanding of their tasks and purposes. Colonel Kurt Fuller, the commander of the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, who recently redeployed after 15 months in Iraq, commented that “conducting presence patrols and static TCPs are great ways to get your people killed.” He added that assigning “combat and recon patrols with clear tasks and purposes are the best way to maintain presence, ensure security, and destroy the threat.” Even daily platoon and squad level routine missions need this type of fidelity.

Commanders must train their subordinates to understand the contributing factors to civil unrest, as well as second and third order effects of their actions. The RAND Corporation article also noted that, “considerable progress in Iraq has been made in the political or ‘hearts and minds’ dimension of counterinsurgency in recent months ... such efforts have included improving access to vital services (electricity, water, etc), reopening schools, establishing the Iraqi police forces, restoring the country’s oil production, and generally encouraging normal daily commerce.” Brigade and battalion commanders should allocate combat power

to their subordinates that allows for the physical destruction of the enemy, as well as the necessary resources to correct unstable conditions such as broken infrastructure and nonexistent essential services.

The threat that U.S. forces must destroy in stability operations is a human one and a conditional one. The human one entails terrorists, insurgents, criminals, and anti-coalition nationalists. They comprise what most commanders have traditionally defined as the “enemy.” The conditional threat entails nonexistent civil services, lack of civil order, and

economic depravity. Commanders who ignore conditional threats run the risk of compounding the physical ones. The human insurgencies, stagnant economic growth, negative media coverage, and inadequate health and human services define the “threat” and contribute to local and state instability. In this regard, “the opposite of war is not peace; rather, it is stability,” according to Dr. Carolsue Holland, an International Relations professor with Troy State University. (Comments from an in-class discussion, POL 6601: February 2004.) The “enemy” is anything that causes instability. Commanders who recognized this fact and incorporate multiple threat dimensions to define the “enemy” that they must destroy may enjoy better results at maintaining stability in their areas of responsibility.

### So What?

Military professionals and OIF veterans reading this article may conclude that the search and attack, though analogous to various stability operations, doesn’t change the conditions and the characteristics of the Iraq War. For example, the OIF “experience” seemingly calls for a greater emphasis on civil-military operations than traditional conflicts involving search and attacks. Many have called for new doctrine to be written to address the seemingly complex nature of the war there. Further, many of these professionals may well believe that the search and attack approach is only applicable to the current conflict in



Private First Class James Matise

*Curious civilians gather around a HMMWV and attempt to converse with a 101st Airborne Division Soldier.*

that particular region. In this regard, other military applications against differing threat nations in the Global War on Terrorism would require U.S. forces to take a different approach altogether.

First, the conditions and the variables of the operational environment will, in fact, change from region to region, culture to culture, but the principles of war and the characteristics that reflect combat at the small unit level do not. History, if nothing else, affords studied military professionals a tool in which to view the many forms of combat with unique clarity. That being said, certain absolutes are maintained and have been doctrinally codified. The search and attack clearly emphasizes protection of the civilian population, even though many military professionals oftentimes merely focus on destroying the enemy as the sole ingredient for victory. Current counterinsurgency doctrine demonstrates the need for effective civil-military operations with the host nation to garner mission success. A misunderstanding of current doctrine does not require a reinvention of it.

Second, this fight will last a while. With the understanding that the United States will continue to fight the Global War on Terrorism for an as yet undetermined amount of time, it follows that the nature of the conflict will be one involving fighting insurgencies, combating terrorism, executing foreign internal defense missions, and conducting humanitarian support and peace operations of varying forms. Success will then be gauged by our

abilities to destroy the enemy, collect information, deny areas, and promote positive information campaigns selling our vision of freedom and hope. Most importantly will be the military’s ability to protect themselves and its coalition partners and ensure the security of the particular civilian population. After all, civilians are the center of gravity in a low-intensity conflict. It is not merely winning hearts and minds; it is securing the host nation’s trust in the military’s ability to protect it and its interests. It is also the military’s capacity to “work themselves out of a job” soonest, so that the host

nation can in fact ensure its own stability.

A counterinsurgency is a movement to contact. Becoming familiar with the principles and doctrine already written and applying them to the stability missions assigned to U.S. Army and coalition forces can ensure positive results in whatever region they find themselves deployed. Doctrine affords success to those who understand it and can apply it.

### In Closing

There is not a need to “reinvent the wheel” in Iraq. Those who support the notion that no discernable checklist and “silver bullet” procedure applies in this seemingly new war may misunderstand what is doctrinally advocated or perhaps have not done the research. Arguably, the Army is now relearning the legacy of the search and attack in the stability environment of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Aggressive units that focus on force protection first, then area denial, information gathering, and enemy destruction will enjoy the greatest tactical successes, while preserving their greatest asset: well-trained Soldiers.

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