

Commandant's Note

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COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

We are an Army at war on the ever changing and complex battlefield of a counterinsurgency (COIN). Today's infantrymen are the cutting edge of a lethal, offensive force, and hence must continually and rapidly execute across the full spectrum of operations and employ the latest technology, and tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) to win the global war on terrorism. In this Commandant's Note, I want to discuss the future for our infantrymen in counterinsurgency operations, the need for adaptive leaders and Soldiers, some new innovations, and the application of the lessons we have learned thus far.

The crucible of combat has taught us many lessons. As the Army has examined past counterinsurgencies, including our own experience, a transformation has taken place in our fundamental approach to COIN. Short duration raids projecting combat power from large forward operating bases to kill insurgents will have an immediate effect. But in the long term, the absence of complementary goals only limits complete success. There is no lasting positive influence on the population, and insurgents continue their campaign of compelling support by terrorizing the population. Infantrymen are skilled at killing insurgents, but to truly defeat the insurgency we must separate the insurgents from the populace and deny them the support without which they cannot exist. We achieve this through a partnership between the population, coalition forces, and local and national security forces. Building the trust necessary to create an effective partnership involves daily interaction, mutual respect, security, and a degree of economic progress which allows the local population to see a future they can claim for their own. Infantrymen find themselves building that trust as they live among and interact with the local populace every day, integrating security forces into every action, and working to address the concerns of local leaders.

Successful counterinsurgencies have ultimately always relied on capably led, aggressive, and culturally aware small units. Today's operations are increasingly decentralized, and small unit leaders must act independently, demonstrate initiative, and not lose sight of the commander's guidance and intent. Our Soldiers are constantly spanning the full spectrum of operations as they transition from raids and patrols that destroy the enemy, to leader engagements and stability operations that influence the population. At the early stages of the war, many of our Soldiers only worked with U.S. units. Today, nearly every small unit has interaction with joint, coalition and multinational teams, many conducting daily operations as part of a combined team at the platoon level. This unified action has demonstrated unity of effort and helped to strengthen and legitimize local and national security forces.

Working with a mixed force has enhanced the need for professional conduct and cultural awareness down to the lowest level. We have realized the importance of building good working

relationships with security forces and the population, and our infantrymen are leveraging this as an important facet of information operations. As Soldiers operate longer in any given environment, they become more aware of changes and more sensitive to the needs of the area. Every Soldier truly becomes a sensor and his observations contribute to the collection of information. The Army is proactively countering the enemy's propaganda with the message of truth, influencing the population and undermining the efforts of the insurgent by clearly and quickly presenting the facts.

The enemy is constantly adapting to counter our efforts and present new, dangerous challenges to infantrymen on the battlefield. We are equipping Soldiers with the tools they need to rapidly anticipate and defeat these asymmetric threats. This new equipment, applied with the new organizations and systems available, provides a combat multiplier that enables our forces to survive, outmaneuver, and outthink our enemies. Our infantrymen are creative and adaptive in developing new TTPs to employ these systems, and share that knowledge across the force.

The U. S. Army Infantry School (USAIS) continues to man and equip our Army to win in a counterinsurgency. The Directorate of Combat Developments develops and fields the latest technologies available to support our Soldiers in the global war on terrorism. They are the lead agent for testing and fielding of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) family of vehicles. The MRAP will increase the mobility and survivability of our Soldiers and Marines in the field. We continue to collect and integrate lessons learned from the force through the Center for Army Lessons Learned, from focused collection trips, by our information sharing with Combat Training Centers, and at conferences and seminars. This keeps our instructors current and our courses relevant. The USAIS cadre is populated with combat veterans who freely share their experiences. We incorporated this experience into our course programs of instruction to meet the needs of the current fight, while maintaining the enduring skills of the warfighter. Small group instruction facilitates sharing among peers, as does shared training conducted between the courses at the Infantry School and across the Army.

Our success in COIN is due to the steady endurance and resolute effort our leaders and Soldiers have committed to the fight. Through challenging, relevant, and outcome based training, the U.S. Army Infantry School will continue to support the force with infantrymen able to adapt to the complexity of the counterinsurgency battlefield, and defeat the enemy wherever they find him.

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