

THE HUMAN COMPONENT:

Treating Hidden Injuries

CHAPLAIN (MAJOR) TAMMIE CREWS

Editor's Note: *As we continue to examine the impact of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as we did in the July-August issue of Infantry, we realize that the consequences of combat and other factors can cause Soldiers and Families to give more than they have to give. This article by a seasoned officer and Family Life Chaplain addresses yet another dimension of this critical ongoing initiative to alleviate the effects of those hidden injuries and where possible to avoid the injuries through timely intervention. This article originally appeared in the August 23, 2007, issue of the Fort Irwin, California, High Desert Warrior. Reprinted with the permission of the Fort Irwin Public Affairs Office.*

An Achievable Vision: The Report of the Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health was published in June 2007. That lengthy report continues to challenge the current paradigms of mental health care within the military services. The task force recognized the evolution of the military arts and the complex advancement of military technology, noting: "The military has thus far sought to improve human effectiveness primarily through better combat tactics, more highly lethal weaponry, and powerfully developed physical strength and endurance. Future combat, however, will demand more — more flexibility, more agility, and more resilience." The latter statement reveals where the core of the study focuses — namely, on the human component.

The human component is not a mechanical, electronic, or cybernetic creation. We are not only simply a matter of flesh and blood, but are far more — human beings with physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual elements — and

needs — that come together to create our unique personalities. If any one or a combination of these elements falls out of balance, all the elements become likewise disrupted in varying degrees. How do we maintain a mission ready force when we have Soldiers and family members who come to the Army with "hidden injuries" or who receive "hidden injuries" in the line of duty?

We have the technology to remove shrapnel or to set a broken bone, but it is not so easy to heal persons who have been forced to face situations beyond their capability to handle. It is not easy to bring back individuals who are so deeply ashamed by what life has demanded that they can no longer connect to their closest intimate attachments and significant others — namely, spouses and children. How do you bring to life again the human spirit and the human soul that has died or that is deeply wounded by life generally and/or by duty in particular?

As an organization, we legislate and

implement a multiplicity of great programs. At the end of the day, what have our efforts accomplished? The caregivers across our post — chaplains, mental health providers, social workers, medical staff, and ACS and Family Advocacy staff have performed in an outstanding manner even with resources stretched to the limit. Yet, the needs and demands grow. And, the greater the demands upon individual care providers within the system to deal with the needs, the more daunting the task becomes.

The human component cannot thrive in isolation, nor can it thrive automatically. Neither can care of the human component be simply mandated in order for it to be effective. Care of the human component must be part of the core of who we are as an organization and as a community. Healing that brings wholeness is the duty of the whole community at every level. The task is to create an ethos that maintains the delicate balance between holding the individual responsible for the task at hand and providing the care that nurtures and



Adapted from a U.S. Army photo

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cultivates the agility and resilience for the individual and the family to continue in the task. What will be the desired outcome that will indicate that we as an organization and a community have reached this praiseworthy ideal? We will know we have succeeded when we see the results of mutual caregiving throughout every level of our organization and community, from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top.

When I lived in England, in the early 80's to the late 90's, the milkman still delivered milk to my door and I paid him in person. The same was the case with the window cleaner. I knew my banker, postman, and the local shopkeepers. When I was too sick to go to the doctor's office, the doctor came to my home. The local clergy, including myself, visited the homes of our parishioners and we were involved in the life of the community. Community activities and projects became times which brought individuals and families together for a common task. As I reflect back over that time, I think that there was something healing and healthy about it all. I felt that I was an essential part of the life of that community, both by my own participation and by involving others. The community and its activities gave a sense of belonging and identity even to the outsider who joined. In the presumption of health, I believe that many, though maybe not all, who faced "hidden injuries" found hope and healing in that environment because they were brought out of a sense of isolation to a sense of belonging and hope.

Within our current community, we have some individuals and families who have known nothing but isolation and disconnection for their entire lives, while others face challenges that are more temporary in nature. Professional caregivers work every day to bring healing to the "hidden injuries" of life, but professional caregivers cannot always provide all that is required for the task at hand. However, we can all work together to create organizations and communities characterized by agility, resilience, and — most of all — hope. This is how we take care of Soldiers and Families.

Chaplain (Major) Tammie Crews holds a Bachelor of Arts degree (*summa cum laude*) in Religious Studies from Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville, Tennessee, a Master of Divinity degree (*magna cum laude*) in Biblical Studies and Theology from Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, and a Master of Science degree in Community Counseling, specializing in Family Counseling, from Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia. Her military education includes the Chaplain Officer Basic and Career Courses and the Command and Service School. She has served as the battalion chaplain for the 189th Command Support Battalion at Fort Bragg, the 485th Corps Support Battalion in Hanau, Germany, and as a battalion chaplain in the 1-501st Aviation in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. She has served on deployments to Haiti and Macedonia, and is currently the Family Life Chaplain at Fort Irwin, California.

CULTURE:

Reasons for Friendly and Enemy Analysis

CAPTAIN WILLIAM AULT

Embroided in insurgencies in foreign countries, the United States is struggling with adapting to the ever-changing environment as well as adjusting the response of our forces in order to succeed. Although the United States military is adapting and learning valuable lessons while fighting the insurgency in Iraq, time is running out. The clock is ticking with regards to the American population. I contend that the national will of the American population is the Strategic Center of Gravity for the United States. Here is where the real power lies that enables the nation to be a Superpower.

What is the United States military's strategic Center of Gravity? In order to answer this, we must first define the term Center of Gravity (COG). In his book *On War*, Carl Von Clausewitz defined the term as "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends." The question that needs to be asked when trying to determine what could be a COG is, "What is it that alone could possibly cause the enemy to yield if it were attacked?" The COG represents a concentration of strength that is most vital to the overall accomplishment of the goal. This, if targeted, would be the most effective target to attack with the resources currently available. This term can be applied to any of the three levels of war, strategic, operational or tactical. Each level of war can have a different COG. Understanding what a Center of Gravity is allows the application of this term to the current environment.

The United States is currently engaged in fighting insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq. These low intensity conflicts (LIC) or operations other than war (OOTW) came about after a decisive conventional victory was achieved by the U.S. armed forces in each of these countries. The tactical and operational battle was quickly won and then the follow on operations began. The premise of these operations is to provide enough security to create a stable environment to allow regular civil and social activities to occur.

During this second phase the guerrillas or insurgents initiated a campaign of subversion to resist the stability effort. They quickly gained momentum and notoriety with the media. They resisted the forces that were attempting to secure and stabilize these countries after the collapse of the previous regimes in an indirect manner. There are many irregular groups fighting against coalition forces (CF) for various stated reasons in each nation. Focus of this article will be on Iraq for simplicity. The common immediate goal for insurgent forces is to expel the foreign forces from Iraq. Only then can they proceed with the individual plans that each group has in mind.

Based on the fact that the U.S. national will derives from an extremely impatient and isolated culture, there is a limit to how much hardship they will endure. The insurgents are exploiting this impatience and intolerance at that strategic level causing more rapid erosion of our staying ability. The military is attempting to learn and adapt at a rapid pace to achieve the

aims of our political leadership in the region. Ultimately, military forces only have staying power if they are funded and taken care of by their host nation.

The insurgents are a living and thinking enemy that has done his homework. They have seen where the United States failed in Vietnam, not because of any tactical or operational defeat on the battlefield, but because of a strategic defeat at the home front where popular support was eroded on the national and then political level. This erosion ultimately led to a reduction in the willingness to support the war effort and then the complete pullout of U.S. armed forces in that country. Ultimately this set the conditions for North Vietnamese success in invading and conquering South Vietnam.

Americans also became extremely casualty conscious after Vietnam. Resistance to the use of military units in small engagements began to proliferate. Attention and focus was emphasized on the Cold War and fighting the Soviet menace, a much more conventional threat. This emphasis tended to obscure any of the valuable lessons learned from Vietnam. Small wars were viewed as extremely undesirable and avoided for some time.

The insurgents also studied the engagements subsequent to Vietnam where the erosion of national and political will in the United States led to the removal of American presence. This occurred in Beirut where, after the Marine Corps barracks bombing, there was a clamor for the troops to be brought home. It also occurred similarly in Somalia after the engagement involving U.S. Army Rangers and Special Operations troops, now publicized in the book and movie *Blackhawk Down*.

It is this strategic attack on the very core of a large national power that eventually wins. It occurred to the Soviets in Afghanistan in a similar fashion. Even in a dictatorship, there can be similar centers of gravity. By prolonging the conflict and causing a steady but substantial cost, the enemy can be just as deadly in terms of equipment. Eventually the Afghanistan invasion and occupation caused enough loss of money and prestige that the communists went bankrupt. This assisted in the demise of the totalitarian dictatorship there. In that

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case not only did the conflict end with the eventual removal of troops, but it also became instrumental in the radical political change of the occupying country.

If the insurgents can paint a picture through the media outlets each day that this struggle will continue as long as there are troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, they are holding their own. They know that eventually the American population will grow impatient and cry for their troops to be brought back home. We can already see this happening today and the reverberations can be felt in all walks of the American way of life. Americans are not joining together as a nation in support of the war effort as in World War II. Instead, they are beginning to join in voicing opinions and dissent against the national political leadership as well as demanding that the troops be brought back home.

Eventually in a democratic society national will impacts politics and mandates some form of change. America's culture is also impatient and desires quick and preferably cheap victories in terms of both equipment and manpower. This culture does not seek or desire long wars. Insurgencies statistically are long wars, wars that last on average between 10 and 12 years. The very nature of the conflict clashes with the American culture.

The United States has become the world's last superpower. Our ability to project force and our will around the globe and sustain it is without peer at this time. No one would dare oppose the conventional forces of the U.S. in open conflict. We have also acquired a penchant and desire for the comforts that an isolated wealthy society allows. The American people are a society that has become accustomed to being removed from the immediate impact of most of the world's issues. Surrounded by two oceans and enjoying military supremacy since World War II, this comfort zone has become common.

America is a much different place than it was during World War II and even Korea. The average citizen at that time had endured the Great Depression and

experienced tremendous hardships. Endurance was common and a dedication to getting the job accomplished right was prevalent. In many ways we have lost that insight and fortitude. The generation of today would be hard pressed to achieve the same results of our forefathers given the same circumstances.

The insurgents know all of this. They have done their homework and have read Sun-Tzu. Knowing the enemy and not yourself, you will only win half of the time. Knowing yourself and not the enemy, the answer is the same. However, knowing yourself and your enemy, you will be victorious in a hundred battles. They are willing to accept minimal tactical and operational losses to achieve the strategic victory. Colonel Harry Summers recounted a conversation he had with an adversary in Vietnam at the end of the war. COL Summers said, "You know you never beat us on the battlefield!" The man thought for a moment and replied, "That may be so. But it is also irrelevant."

The United States clearly has no peer when it comes to the tactical or battlefield level. It would seem that the same is true at the operational or theater-of-war level. It is at the third, strategic or political-military level that we face our greatest challenges if we cannot sustain and maintain the national will. The United States cannot currently mobilize the entire nation and throw those considerable resources behind a war effort for extended periods of time. It would seem that although victory at the tactical and operational level has been and continues to be achieved, it will not necessarily guarantee ultimate victory in the small wars we are faced with today.

Captain William Ault is currently serving as commander of C Company, 1st Battalion, 110th Infantry Regiment (Heavy), Pennsylvania Army National Guard.
