

THE TWO SIDES OF COIN

Applying FM 3-14 to the Brigade and Below Counterinsurgency Fight

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Units that deploy to Fort Irwin, California, to conduct training expect a world-class experience, and that is exactly what the National Training Center (NTC) offers. At any given time of the year, one look at the terrain provides inspiration, harsh beauty and a common thought: this is the place to train for war in Afghanistan and Iraq. The days of fighting the communist hordes at the NTC are long gone, replaced by the complexities of an asymmetric battlefield infinitely more challenging for every echelon of leadership. However, some units find it difficult to take full advantage of all that the NTC has to offer.

LETHAL AND NON-LETHAL OPERATIONS

Counterinsurgency (COIN) is about conducting both lethal and non-lethal operations (formerly referred to as “kinetic” and “non-kinetic”) in an equally successful and balanced manner. Most units arriving for a rotation have already spent time training lethal operations at home station. Upon arrival at the NTC, units seem to focus exclusively on training leaders and Soldiers for the non-lethal fight because of an inability to replicate

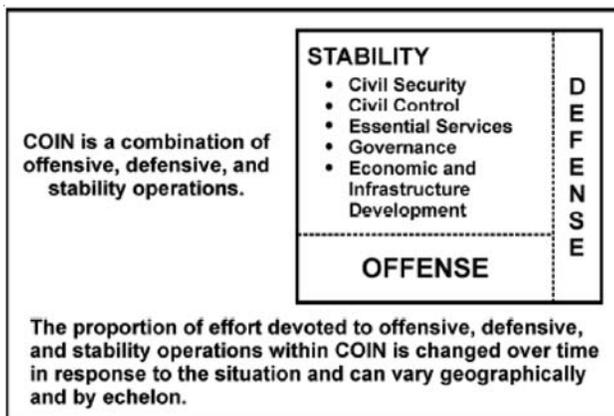


Figure 1 — Aspects of Counterinsurgency Operations

these aspects of the contemporary operational environment (COE) at home station. By disregarding their lethal lessons from home-station training and focusing completely on non-lethal operations, units tend to miss the point.

This article attempts to provide:

- * Understanding of FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*;
- * Recommendations for the integration of appropriate combat operations in a COIN environment at the brigade level and below; and
- * Recommendations to adjust doctrine as it applies to the current

and future fight.

This discussion is the result of a two-year evolution of coaching, teaching, and training company commanders and battalion staffs on the tip of the spear. Their experiences and input remain invaluable.

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, conduct a patrol in a simulated town during training at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, November 15, 2006.

Master Sergeant Johancharles Van Boers



DOCTRINAL BACKGROUND

FM 3-24 is a good starting point for Soldiers and leaders attempting to understand and plan COIN operations. It effectively compiles older doctrine; selects important tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) from across the Army; and applies new lessons and thoughts from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). It is important to understand that much of the doctrine already existed.

As already discussed, units at NTC often neglect the lethal fight in terms of planning

Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment refer to a map during a mission in Taji, Iraq.

Senior Airman Steve Cxyz, USAF

and execution. By doing so in training, units run the risk of making the same mistakes in-country. As we seek to understand the non-lethal fight, we must also understand how to integrate it with the lethal fight. Understanding doctrine helps units achieve that goal. While doctrine is flexible and continuously evolving, leaders and planners should refrain from modifying or disregarding it until they understand the basics.

For a complete list of the doctrine and external sources that contributed to the development of FM 3-24, simply reference the book's extensive bibliography. A few of the more important references for company commanders and battalion staffs include:

- FM 3-05.201, *Special Forces*

Unconventional Warfare Operations, 30 APR 03;

- FM 7-98, *Operations in a Low Intensity Conflict*, 19 OCT 92 (specifically Appendix C);

- FM 3-05.202, *Foreign Internal Defense: Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Special Forces*, 20 SEP 94;

- FM 90-8, *Counterterrorism Operations*, 29 AUG 86;

- FMI 3-34.119 / MCIP 3-17.01, *Improvised Explosive Device Defeat*, 21 SEP 05 (exp 21 SEP 07)



Insurgency. FM 3-24 and the other FMs listed above also do a good job of providing a basic understanding of all the different aspects of insurgencies. The doctrine provides a solid background for the development of insurgent thought and strategy, as well as providing historic and contemporary examples of insurgencies. For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to understand two things about an insurgency:

1. **The purpose of an insurgency** is to destabilize and delegitimize a government in order to force a radical change in that government in favor of an insurgent ideology.

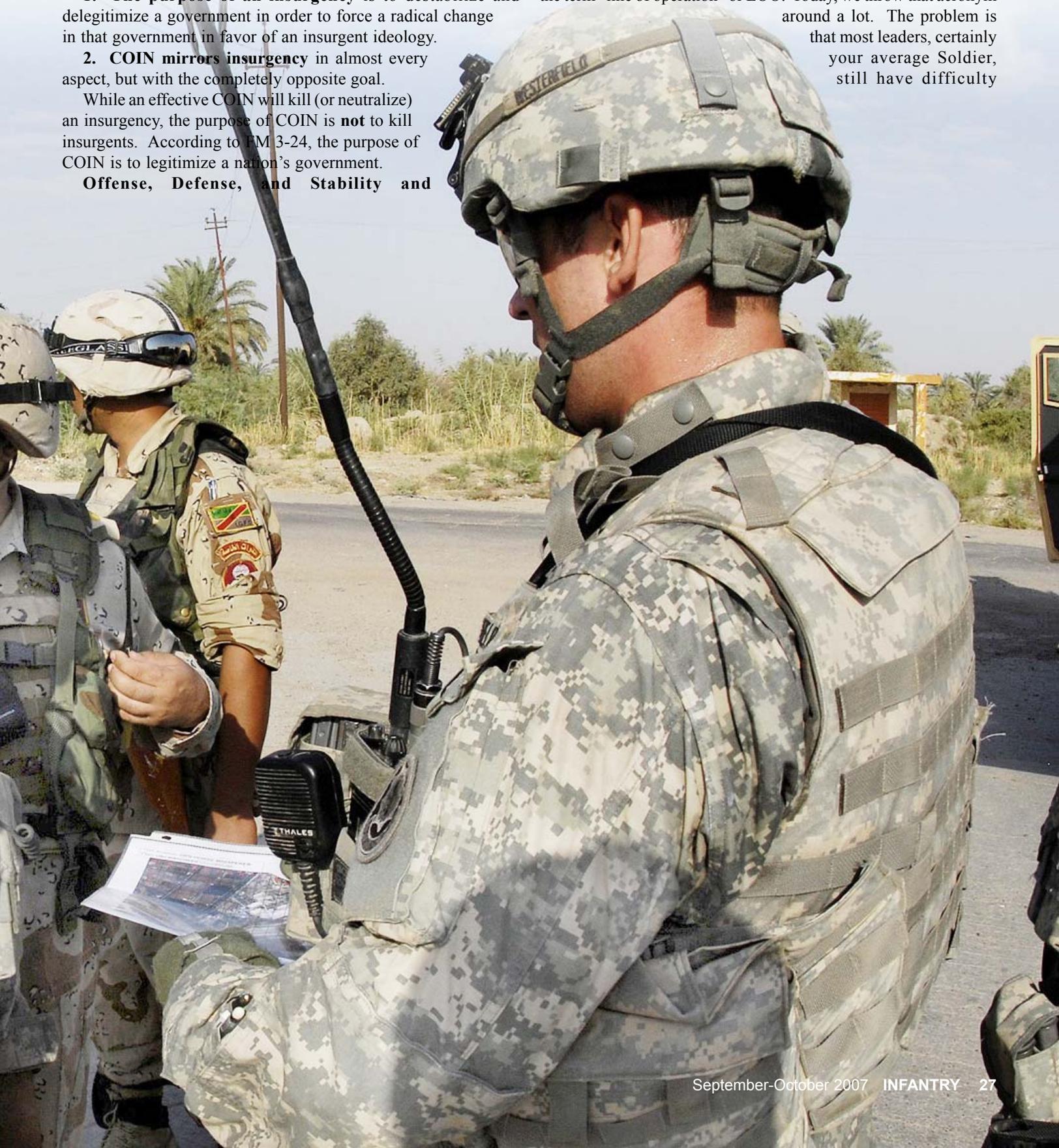
2. **COIN mirrors insurgency** in almost every aspect, but with the completely opposite goal.

While an effective COIN will kill (or neutralize) an insurgency, the purpose of COIN is **not** to kill insurgents. According to FM 3-24, the purpose of COIN is to legitimize a nation's government.

Offense, Defense, and Stability and

Reconstruction Operations (SRO). FM 3-24 defines COIN as a full spectrum operation (FSO). "COIN is a combination of offensive, defensive and stability operations," and units must adequately plan for all three to achieve success.

What is a LOO? Two years or so ago, when the conventional Army really started talking seriously about COIN, most Soldiers and leaders at the NTC and in rotational units had never heard the term "line of operation" or LOO. Today, we throw that acronym around a lot. The problem is that most leaders, certainly your average Soldier, still have difficulty



understanding the concept of a LOO and its applications. According to FM 3-24:

- A LOO is a logical line that connects actions on nodes and/or decisive points related in time and purpose with an objective (JP 1-02).

- A LOO is an operational framework/planning construct used to define the concept of multiple, and often disparate, actions arranged in a framework unified by purpose.

In layman's terms, one can think of a LOO as a theme that helps to shape non-lethal and lethal operations to achieve both political and military victories against the insurgency. It consists of a group of sub-objectives that are not necessarily sequential but definitely related. A unit identifies and defines these sub-objectives that it sees fit. If adequately seized or realized, success of these sub-objectives will link directly to success of the overall LOO.

NOTE: The irony behind this entire discussion is that it is somewhat of a moot point. The term "LOO" traditionally referred to physical lines of operation, generating a lot of confusion among military professionals with respect to its recent context in the sense of COIN. Army doctrine has since separated the physical concept from the abstract, no longer referring to "LOOs" in COIN, but instead referring to lines of effort (LOEs). We will use this phrase from here on out.

Referencing FM 3-24, it becomes clear that an understanding of LOEs is critical for success. Initially, FM 3-24 (Draft)

identified three separate types: LOOs, logical lines of operations (LLOs), and common logical lines of operations. Though FM 3-24 (Final) simplified the language and refers to all LOOs as LLOs, units need to be aware of (and focus on) appropriate LLOs/LOEs. Figure 2, extrapolated from the discussion in FM 3-24 (Draft), summarizes how LLOs/LOEs can relate to different echelons of command and control.

Note how the importance or ranking of combat operations changes as one approaches the tactical level. Combat operations are no less important at corps level than at battalion or company level. As an LOE, combat operations rank lower at the corps level because higher commands have the resources to greater affect the other LOEs compared to a battalion or company. Joint task forces (JTFs) have both the money and the people to help stand-up new host nation (HN) forces and field equipment. JTFs have the resources to contract organizations that can jump start

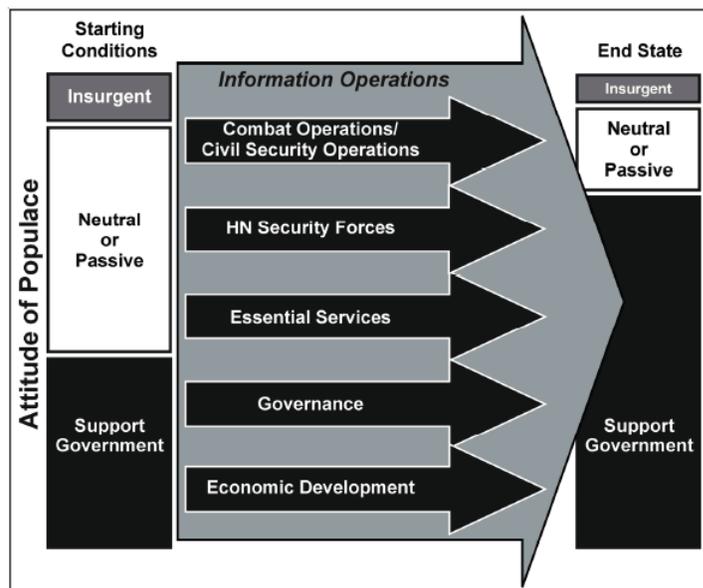


Figure 3 — Example Logical Lines of Operations for COIN

and improve essential services.

Now take a look at Figure 3, which was taken from FM 3-24 (adapted from Major General Peter W. Chiarelli's and Major Patrick R. Michaelis's article "Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations," *Military Review*, July-August 2005). This diagram succinctly illustrates how success along the LOEs will yield desired results in COIN.

Take another look at Figure 3 and flip all of the arrows around. It becomes readily apparent that the enemy will work along the same LOEs to achieve his desired results.

Mission Statement as a Reflection of a Solid COIN Plan. Company commanders derive their mission and intent from two levels up (brigade combat team [BCT] level). Because of this fact, a unit's mission statement (BCT, battalion or company level) is the first place to look when determining a unit's level of understanding of COIN and the amount of analysis in the plan. Here's an example of a typical, generic mission statement for a maneuver unit (BCT) at the NTC:

The 1/52d BCT conducts stability and reconstruction operations (SRO) in AO Bear NLT 01 0001 JAN 07 to defeat the enemy in depth and provide a stable environment for governance.

This is an example of an **underdeveloped, incomplete** mission statement that indicates a limited understanding of the complexities of the COE, and our role as a maneuver BCT, BN or CO in that COE. Now look at the next example.

Figure 2 — Lines of Operation, FM 3-24 (Draft), June 2006

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ LINES OF OPERATION (LOOs) – CORPS AND ABOVE ➤ Training and advising HN security forces. ➤ Essential services. ➤ Economic development. ➤ Promotion of governance. ➤ Information. ➤ Combat operations (protection of the civil populace). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ LOGICAL LINES OF OPERATION (LLOs) – BCT/DIV LEVEL ➤ Information operations. ➤ Offensive, defensive, and stability operations. ➤ Training and employment of HN security forces. ➤ Establishment or restoration of essential services. ➤ Better governance. ➤ Support for economic development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ COMMON LOGICAL LINES OF OPERATION – BN-LEVEL AND BELOW ➤ Information. ➤ Combat operations. ➤ Development of HN security forces. ➤ Essential services. ➤ Governance. ➤ Economic development. 	

KRAMER – JAN 07

The 1/52d BCT conducts COIN operations to neutralize the local insurgency in AO Bear NLT 01 0001 JAN 07 to legitimize the local government and prevent disruption by the enemy.

This example of a **more developed, stronger** mission statement indicates a solid understanding of COIN. The mission statement: defines COIN as the full spectrum operation; has a tactical task (neutralize); and has an appropriate COIN-related purpose. This mission statement will serve as the base for good BCT (and below) COIN operations. It gives subordinate commanders the freedom and flexibility to develop clear, COIN-related intent, concepts of the operation, and schemes of maneuver. It also allows BCT commanders the flexibility to develop and alter the intensity of offensive, defensive and stability operations as the situation in their AO changes.

THE TWO SIDES OF THE COIN: Non-Lethal vs. Lethal

Figure 4 explains to brigade staffs, battalion staffs and company commanders how (and why) to plan in a COIN environment. The remainder of this article addresses the “Two Sides of the COIN.”

There are two sides to the COIN fight: lethal operations and non-lethal operations.

Non-Lethal Operations, the Decisive Operations (DO). Without strong, successful non-lethal operations, units will lose the COIN fight and the insurgents will win. Non-lethal operations are decisive because they primarily target the neutral population to sway them to our side (the old “hearts and minds” adage), and because they can target the enemy through a process of co-opting them *or* dividing and conquering. When allocating combat power during planning, units should assign a main effort (ME), shaping operations (SHOs - replace the traditional supporting effort in older Army doctrine), and sustainment operations (SOs) for non-lethal operations.

Lethal Operations, the Shaping Operations (SHO). Units must learn to view lethal operations as more of a shaping effort that will continuously help to mold the battlefield, declining in frequency as non-lethal operations succeed. These are our “killing” operations, the bread and butter of the military machine. Units

must always plan and remain prepared to execute lethal operations in tandem with non-lethal operations at every echelon of command. During planning, units should assign a ME, SHOs, and SOs for lethal operations.

There are countless examples of lethal and non-lethal operations and how both work together successfully. However, two common examples at the company level are raids versus cordons and searches, and trash collection versus counter-sniper operations.

A raid is a lethal offensive operation while a cordon and search is a non-lethal offensive operation. Leaders plan and execute raids with the intent of making enemy contact. More often than not, the objective does not have any enemy. In these circumstances, higher headquarters may require units to immediately conduct non-lethal cordon and search operations. In other situations, leaders plan cordon and search operations and unexpectedly make enemy contact on or in the vicinity of the objective. In these situations, units transition into lethal, deliberate attack operations similar to raids. Both scenarios require prudent leaders to plan and rehearse both types of operations (lethal and non-lethal) as contingencies of each other.

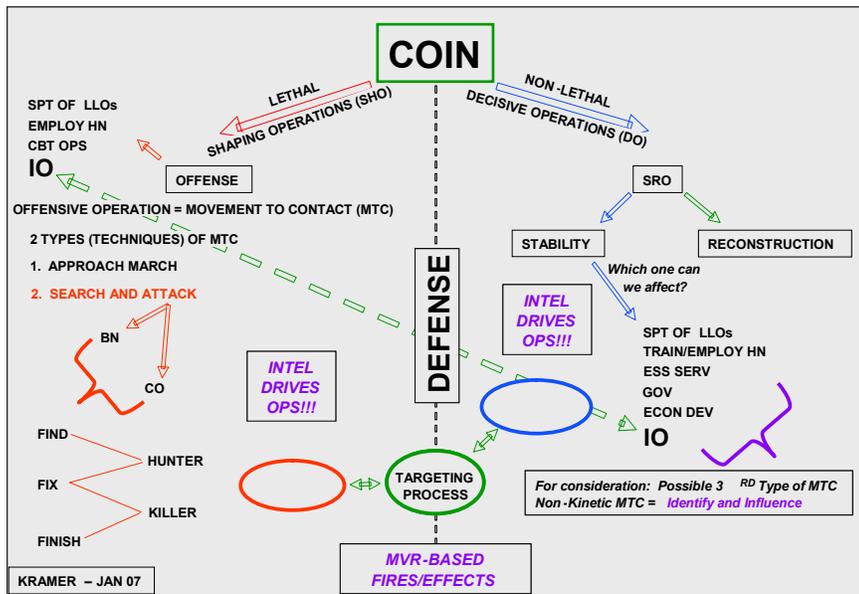
Trash collection operations provide another example. A currently deployed leader recently related how his unit developed an operation along the essential services LOE to clear trash from roads in town. This operation would clean up the town and provide jobs to otherwise unemployed civilians. Equally important, it would have the additional advantage of clearing garbage that could conceal IEDs as well as garbage that Soldiers might mistakenly treat as possible IEDs. Taking advantage of the opportunity to delegitimize the local government, insurgents began sniping (and killing) trash collectors. This forced the unit to develop and execute lethal counter-sniper combat operations concurrent with the non-lethal trash collection operations.

MEs vs. SHOs: One and the same, or separate? The answer is the cliché METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, time). At any given time, a unit will conduct simultaneous operations, some of which are decisive, most of which are shaping. One unit could serve as the main effort for both the decisive (non-lethal) operations and shaping (lethal) operations that it conducts. On the other hand, one unit may be the ME for decisive operations and a SHO for shaping operations, while a different unit is a SHO for decisive operations and the ME for shaping operations. Situation dictates.

The Defense: If we become FOB-centric, then we lose. Defensive operations separate the two sides of the COIN. They are always shaping operations. They serve to protect our lines of communication and command and control. They must remain an economy of force effort. As FM 3-24 so aptly points out, extreme force protection measures will actually decrease security and increase the likelihood of failure. Consider the following:

It's tough to influence the population when you have zero contact. Since the purpose of COIN is to legitimize the government, the biggest target is the neutral populace. We compete with the insurgents for the population's support. If the majority of our forces are hunkering down behind concentric defensive rings instead of living among

Figure 4 — The Two Sides of COIN



the people (as the enemy does), how will we effectively influence the masses?

The fallacy behind force protection ... The enemy has us right where he wants us! Big force protection-oriented FOBs from which smaller units operate present easy targets to the enemy. At best, when the enemy launches a couple of mortar rounds or rockets into a FOB, units tend to go into “lock-down” mode. Maneuver ceases, allowing the enemy to disrupt or deny COIN operations. At worst, should insurgent organizations such as militias or Al Qaida and associated movements (AQAM) become large enough and strong enough, these FOBs can facilitate transition to something similar to Mao’s Strategic Counteroffensive or a Vietnam-esque phase III insurgency (war of movement) in which a more conventional insurgent force can hold units in a FOB or block them from conducting COIN. The best force protection in COIN remains living, and planning, by your wits.

Risk Savvy vs. Risk Aversion. We are Soldiers. Soldiering is dangerous business. We are in a dangerous fight. Accept that fact. Plan and execute the operations necessary to win the COIN. It requires street-smarts, and leaders cannot be foolhardy; the possibility of fratricide or unnecessary collateral damage is greater in COIN than a more conventional fight. However, as long as leaders continue to conduct composite risk assessments, there is little excuse for conducting the majority of operations from mega-FOBs.

DEVELOPING NON-LETHAL OPERATIONS

Stability vs. Reconstruction – Which one can we affect? Most of our combat arms maneuver units cannot reconstruct anything. With respect to COIN, stability equates to security for the population. Units should focus their non-lethal decisive operations on stability.

The Decisive Operations. Non-lethal operations are DECISIVE in COIN. You may win the tactical fight all day (and you must), but if your non-lethal operations are ineffective, you will be ineffective. At every level, for every operation, leaders must have a non-lethal plan as well as a lethal plan.

Applying the appropriate LOEs. Plan non-lethal operations based off of the non-lethal LOEs: Information operations; train/employ HN forces; essential services; governance; economic development.

DEVELOPING LETHAL OPERATIONS

The Offense: Movement to Contact (MTC). Units struggle to train (and execute) COIN operations because they focus COIN training on their traditional weakness, non-lethal operations. They also find it difficult to identify what type of combat operations they should conduct and how to integrate those operations. Combat operations will shape the battlefield on a day-to-day basis. There may be times when a unit surges to conduct a massive attack (like Fallujah II), but during steady-state operations, offensive operations should focus on movement to contact.

The Shaping Operations. Lethal operations are always shaping operations in COIN. These are the operations where we close with and destroy the enemy. We have traditionally conditioned for these types of operations in which success provides the most personal satisfaction for Soldiers and leaders. We must always win the lethal fight. Unfortunately, lethal operations alone will not win in COIN. Often sloppy, with the potential for excessive collateral damage, they can generate a larger base from which insurgents can successfully recruit.

The Rest of the LOEs. Plan lethal operations along the lethal LOEs: Information operations; combat operations; employ HN forces.

The Appropriate Offensive Operation: Movement to Contact (MTC). Doctrinally speaking, there are two types of MTC: Meeting engagement (formerly approach march) and search and attack. Meeting engagement is a centralized MTC used when units have identified the enemy’s location and can define a specific objective. But what kind of offensive operations will identify the enemy?

Search and Attack: The Correct Technique. In COIN, not only do we *not* know the enemy’s location, but we generally *do not even know* WHO is an enemy and WHO is a friend. Search and attack (S&A) is the MTC that will identify the enemy and his location. S&A is decentralized and intelligence focused, making it a solid operation given that intelligence should drive our operations. S&A is the perfect combat operation for COIN.

Find, Fix and Finish. The three elements to a classic S&A operation are a

find force, a *fix* force, and a *finish* force. The find force identifies the enemy. The fix force, by means of (or even just the threat of) direct and indirect fires, prevents that enemy from maneuvering or escaping. The finish force assaults and destroys the enemy.

Hunter-Killer. The Cavalry developed the hunter-killer concept years ago, and continue to train and use it today. It parallels the find, fix, finish of classic S&A, but in some ways provides for more flexibility. The main difference is that separate elements are not necessarily defined as “finders, fixers or finishers.” In hunter-killer, a leader may assign a unit to specifically be the hunter while another unit of comparable combat power is the killer. However, because of that comparable combat power, elements generally all start off as hunters, and then remain hunters or become killers as the situation develops. Traditionally a technique for armored scout and reconnaissance forces, it transcends separate elements of the combined arms team and is applicable to virtually any unit conducting combat operations in COIN.

INTELLIGENCE DRIVES OPERATIONS

The S2 lives in a proverbial cubicle called the tactical operations center (TOC). During the military decision-making process (MDMP), he conducts the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) process and based on his analysis of historical data, he throws down his best guess. Based on this enemy situational template (SITTEMP), planners then develop courses of action that counter the enemy. But what if the S2 is wrong? It is *this* question that requires subordinate commanders to assess the enemy situation at their own level, develop their own plans and confirm or deny the S2’s guess. Search and attack, in conjunction with non-lethal operations, will provide subordinate commanders with the data to bottom-up refine the S2’s top-down driven SITTEMP. This bottom-up refined intelligence will drive continued and future operations and require targeting.

Lethal Targeting. Intelligence that drives lethal operations requires lethal targeting. Two examples of lethal targets are indirect fire targets and insurgent leaders. Lethal targeting is effective, and the outcome of lethal operations will

provide additional intelligence that will drive future operations and shift targeting.

Non-Lethal Targeting. Intelligence that drives non-lethal operations requires non-lethal targeting. Examples of non-lethal targets are different leaders in the population and results from infrastructure assessments (i.e., poor irrigation, broken generators, dilapidated medical facilities, etc.). Non-lethal targeting can be effective, but positive results will not be as immediately visible as a fire-for-effect mission from a platoon of Howitzers.

The Targeting Process: Linking the Two Types of Targeting. The system that units use to feed intelligence, drive operations, and refine targets is known as the targeting process. Through effective management of the information cycle, subordinate commanders confirm/deny the S2's enemy SITTEMP. They can also answer commander's critical information requirements (CCIR). All of this will drive decisions on future operations.

One important aspect of COIN is that lethal operations will often provide intelligence that can drive future non-lethal operations. Likewise, non-lethal operations can provide intelligence that will drive future lethal operations. This is an example of the importance of having both effective non-lethal decisive operations and lethal shaping operations.

MANEUVER-BASED FIRES AND EFFECTS

All targeting must support the maneuver plan, be it non-lethal or lethal. Targeting must achieve commanders' desired effects. It is at this point that units really start to struggle with "*the metrics*" of targeting. I have watched targeting meetings last hours upon hours (just as readers of this article have probably participated in them) as staff members argue in circles about how to define successful non-lethal targeting.

The best advice from fire supporters, intelligence analysts, and maneuver staff officers is to not get frustrated about defining "the metrics" and drive on. The most important aspect of the targeting process is to define the targets! Once you've done that, assessment of a target's status will develop on its own and with greater ease the longer a unit operates in COIN. However, if units really want to start somewhere, they should revisit the sub-objectives along their LOEs linked to the overall objectives. Progress and success with these sub-objectives may provide some initial definition of measures of success.

FOR CONSIDERATION

A Third Type of Movement to Contact. The two doctrinal types of MTC are both lethal. After careful consideration of COIN, it has become apparent that, knowingly or not, units use a third type of *non-lethal MTC: Identify and Influence*.

Identify and Influence: The Non-Lethal MTC. Units often direct their subordinates to "identify and influence" leaders and the population in their AO. This is nothing more than a non-lethal version of S&A. To identify local power-players, leaders must first "search for" and "find" them. Once identified, leaders non-lethally "attack" those power-players to influence the population in favor of the government. Units can use "identify and influence" as a framework in which to develop non-lethal operations. Army doctrine should develop and adopt "identify and influence" as a non-lethal and third form of MTC.

A Recommendation to BCT Commanders. BCT commanders maneuver companies. However, on a routine basis in a COIN environment, a BCT commander will not maneuver his formations

in the classic sense of the word. "Enabling" is the buzz-word for maneuvering subordinates in COIN. Planning efforts should focus on maintaining flexibility within the formation to allocate combat power and provide additional resources as the fight demands. The BCT commander's role becomes one of enabling subordinates to win at their level. Lethally, that could mean repositioning a platoon here, or a company there. Non-lethally, money is extremely flexible combat power. Just as he maneuvers companies, a BCT commander can maneuver money at the company level. Getting those dollars down to the company commanders and empowering them to spend it immediately and within CDR's intent is crucial. **Company commanders are the ones who can get the quick wins on a routine basis!** Company commanders are accustomed to searching and scrounging to recover even the smallest expense ... like accounting for 100 demisting shields for night vision devices during change-of-command inventories. Fiscal accountability is an ingrained part of the military culture among company-grade officers, and company commanders understand that. If BCT commanders give their COs the funds to achieve desired effects, COs will influence within the commander's intent.

IN CONCLUSION

When planning for COIN operations, units must develop integrated non-lethal and lethal operations that work toward the same goal: legitimizing the government. COIN is an extremely complex fight with an infinite number of possibilities for effectively waging war on its asymmetrical battlefield. The first step toward success for leaders and Soldiers is developing a solid understanding of the doctrine. Comprehension must include both insurgency and COIN operations. Non-lethal operations are decisive in COIN and focus on the non-lethal LOEs. "Identify and influence" describes a possible new type of movement to contact that units conduct non-lethally in the COIN fight. Lethal operations are shaping operations. The appropriate lethal operation for COIN is movement to contact, search and attack. Both of these types of MTC remain relevant to today's fight, especially in Baghdad as units continue to conduct COIN using a "Clear-Hold-Build" strategy. S&A operations to clear the enemy will work in tandem with identify and influence operations to co-opt or neutralize political competitors. Units must continue these types of operations unabated in the hold and build phases as S&A morphs into area security operations. Maintaining security levels during hold and build will allow coalition forces to strengthen political partners, emplace capable host nation forces, and prevent the infiltration of the enemy. Intelligence gained from both types of operations will drive future operations through the targeting process. In this manner, units will invent, adapt and overcome as the COE changes over time, allowing coalition forces to maintain the initiative over and sustain momentum against an increasingly skilled enemy.

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