

# Commandant's Note

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## COUNTERINSURGENCY: SUCCESS IN A DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT

Constant change is a defining element of today's counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. Any technological, tactical, or informational advantage of either side soon evokes responses and countermeasures to offset it. While an enemy, without ready access to technologies commensurate with our own, may not be able to immediately develop countermeasures, his tactics can evolve more rapidly. In tribal societies, such as those in which coalition forces now operate, the insurgent also takes advantage of local connections and relationships, and we must determine how to seize and retain the initiative if we are to be successful. In this Commandant's Note, I want to review our own experience and that of other nations in dealing with insurgencies and highlight some of our recent initiatives that offer approaches to COIN which address the fight in the context of today's operational environment.

While the global war on terrorism (GWOT) may not represent a paradigm for all future wars, it does nevertheless offer lessons as to the nature of present threats and how we can more effectively deal with them. We have gained a better appreciation of the importance of the population and its culture. We have also developed new approaches to understanding an enemy, his motivation, and his commitment. We have learned these lessons before. Our Special Forces and advisors lived with, trained, and supported tribal leaders of the diverse cultures in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia against the Vietnamese Communists, and today in the forbidding terrain of Southwest Asia their successors operate among the tribal and ethnic populations of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The cultural awareness training which we employ today draws upon British forces' experience in the three Afghan Wars from 1839 until 1918, during World War I, and in WWII. During World War I, Lieutenant Colonel T.E. Lawrence served with Arab irregular troops against forces of the Ottoman Empire, contributing to the defeat of the Ottoman Turks and their German allies in Arabia. Beginning with his early Arabic studies and experience as an archeologist in Syria, Lawrence had recognized the uniqueness of the culture and learned what it took to work effectively within it. His "27 Articles," originally published in *The Arab Bulletin* in 1917, and *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* offer insights into a society whose religion and family, clan, and tribal loyalties, feuds, and rivalries are significant to this day. General Vo Nguyen Giap considered Lawrence's observations his gospel for battle, and Lawrence's insights also found resonance among American advisors in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Today's military transition teams tasked with training Iraqi and Afghan military and civilian agencies have likewise drawn upon his suggestions for dealing with their counterparts. Today our Soldiers and leaders employ both traditional approaches to COIN

and an understanding of the cultures and realities of their respective areas of operation as they aggressively prosecute the GWOT, and we have just published a manual that captures our understanding of successful counterinsurgency operations.

Field Manual (FM) 3-24.2, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency*, bridges the gap between the way we have traditionally approached COIN and the realities of today's operational environment. The manual is an up-to-date, practical source document for units conducting counterinsurgency operations. It introduces five key concepts of counterinsurgency and presents a comprehensive approach to COIN. This manual addresses concepts of security, governance, economics, and information engagement in a manner relevant to brigades, battalions, and companies. One of the fundamental aspects of FM 3-24.2 is its introduction of COIN lines of effort (LOEs) as a tool for units to link multiple tasks and missions to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions. The new manual recognizes the uniqueness of each insurgency and encourages commanders to modify LOEs according to their own situation by combining them, dividing them, or by otherwise using them in the manner that can best defeat the insurgency. The manual presents a detailed discussion of the components and manifestations of an insurgency, and thus offers a means to better understand the operational environment. It also describes types of offensive, defensive, and stability operations that take place in the course of a counterinsurgency. Particularly relevant to today's operating environment is the manual's discussion of the training and mentoring of host nation security forces, which focuses on the mission of Soldiers and leaders serving on military transition teams. Intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) is another difficult but integral part of COIN, and the FM 3-24.2 addresses the challenges and difficulties of properly conducting an IPB.

The global war on terrorism is a period of persistent combat against a determined and tenacious enemy, and we must continue to capture and apply successful tactics, techniques, and procedures as we retain the initiative to defeat him. FM 3-24.2 reflects this application of lessons learned over the past decades and the wisdom of our earlier field manuals, and offers an azimuth that will ultimately yield victory. FM 3-24.2 is now available online at the following AKO link: <https://www.army.mil/suite/folder/15648151>, and I encourage you and your subordinates to read it at your earliest opportunity, incorporate it into your operations, and give us your feedback. Follow me!

