

Commanding General's Note

MG MICHAEL FERRITER

COUNTERINSURGENCY: *THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH*

Today we are engaged in a counterinsurgency against an innovative and determined enemy whose tenacity and adaptive skills challenge those of any adversary opposing us since Vietnam. Today's enemy is media-savvy, adapts and employs advanced technology whenever possible, and readily modifies his tactics in an attempt to offset our firepower and mobility advantages. He also screens our unclassified print and broadcast media to glean information on our capabilities and intentions. Today's COIN fight demands that we recognize the comprehensive nature of the enemy and requires vigilance, flexibility, and resourcefulness on the part of Soldiers and all of us. As we address the realities of the current operational environment we cannot lose sight of the traditional approaches to COIN which have already yielded success, and in this Commander's Note I want to discuss how we have built upon earlier success in counterinsurgency operations, the impact of cultural awareness in the COIN fight, and how we can assist Soldiers and leaders in their noble cause.

Our government's aim is to establish and sustain stable governments in Afghanistan and Iraq, free of domination by terrorism and whose stability and security are guaranteed by their own nations' military and civilian security forces. In his August 2009 Commander's Initial Assessment of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations in Afghanistan, GEN Stanley McChrystal recognized the "uniquely complex" COIN environment in that country. He stressed a primary focus on understanding, working with, and protecting the Afghans. This requires that our Soldiers spend more time out among the population, dismounted, active, and visible. GEN McChrystal has based this strategy on four concepts that will enable us to: improve effectiveness through greater partnering with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), prioritize responsive and accountable governance at all levels, gain the initiative and reverse the insurgency's momentum, and prioritize resources and focus them on the areas whose populations are in the greatest danger.

This offers a paradigm for our units who train and partner with Afghan and Iraqi military and police units and who routinely interact with the population. Dealing with counterparts whose culture and belief systems differ from our own can be challenging indeed. We have taken cultural awareness beyond the traditional customs and manners approaches of the past and are now teaching leaders how to gain a clearer picture of the population

in the area of operations. We have gained a broader grasp of the connection between security and infrastructure, and can better support the government officials and citizens as we train the host nation's own forces to secure the communications assets, water and sewage facilities, schools, power plants, and the bazaars that will sustain a return to normal patterns of life.

Our current doctrinal literature reinforces this approach to COIN. The 2006 publication of FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, two decades after the COIN field manual that preceded it, bridged the gap between our existing doctrine and the COIN lessons captured from the outset of the global war on terrorism (GWOT). FM 3-24.2, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency*, published three years later, has not discarded our traditional approaches to COIN, but instead has addressed them in light of our extensive knowledge gained from the current operational environment. Not limited to small-unit counter-guerilla actions, FM 3-24.2 improves upon earlier COIN doctrinal guidance by focusing on a broader range of activities that accounts for both changes in Army doctrine and changes in the world and the nature of the enemy and the environment in which he lives. FM 3-24.2 expands the coverage of cultural awareness beyond that addressed in FM 3-24. Cultural competence and situational awareness appropriately appear in the first chapter, and these are threads that run throughout the manual, recognizing the role, potential, and vulnerabilities of the host nation populace. The new field manual is a non-prescriptive source document that can connect and guide commanders of tactical units from platoon to brigade level, and it was written by credible, experienced tacticians who have served in these very types of units in the GWOT.

The way we prosecute COIN will remain the paradigm for conflicts of the immediate future, because of the lessons it offers on the threat and how we are learning to defeat that threat. FM 3-24.2 will be supplemented by the experience we are steadily gaining and the enemy's own adaptations, because we must evolve to maintain the initiative, and we certainly will.

One force, one fight!

