

U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare, 1898-2007:  
**ANTHOLOGY AND SELECTED  
BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Colonel Stephen S. Evans



***Cover:***

**Top Photo:** Sandinos colors captured at Ocotal, Nicaragua. (USMC Official Photo.)

**Bottom Photo:** Marines and Iraqi Police distribute school supplies and toys to Iraqi children outside the Fallujah Civil-Military Operations Center, 28 June 2005. (Photo by LtCol David A. Benhoff, USMCR.)





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# Foreword

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This anthology presents a collection of 27 articles on counterinsurgency warfare and includes a broad bibliography that collectively describe the role played by the United States in various counterinsurgency and irregular warfare efforts from 1898 until 2007, with a particular emphasis on the role of the Marine Corps in the conduct of such efforts. Like other previously published USMC History Division anthologies on earlier wars, the purpose of this volume is to provide readers with a general overview and introduction to the topic of counterinsurgency and irregular warfare. Designed essentially as a primer, this volume is intended to serve as an initial educational resource that provides Marine officers and other national security professionals with the historical basis for modern-day USMC counterinsurgency strategy and operational doctrine.

Using a broad range of historical and contemporary examples of U.S. involvement in counterinsurgency and irregular warfare, this particular anthology has drawn its articles from an equally wide range of publishers. As such, I would like to thank the editors of the *Naval Institute Press*, *Parameters*, *Military Review*, *Marine Corps Gazette*, *Strategic Forum*, *Aerospace Power Journal*, *Revista/Review Interamericana*, *Orbis*, *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, *Washington Quarterly*, *Royal United Services Institute Journal*, and *Foreign Service Journal* for permitting the reproduction of the articles that comprise this volume. Their valued support has made the creation of this volume possible.



Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer  
Director of Marine Corps History



# Preface

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This anthology joins a growing number of works whose topic is counterinsurgency and irregular warfare. Continuing discussion and study of these subjects is of critical importance to the ongoing efforts of the United States and its allies in the Global War on Terrorism.

The 27 articles presented here, as well as the works referenced in this book's "Selected Bibliography," represent only a small fraction of the enormous body of literature written about these subjects. Especially since the tragic events of 9/11 and the consequent advent of the Global War on Terrorism, there has been a remarkable surge of interest in counterinsurgency, reflected most notably in the very large number of recent articles, monographs, studies, and reports that are found in a variety of highly divergent sources. These run the academic gamut from traditional military, government, and university studies and publications to those produced by a host of think tank and nongovernmental organizations. The articles selected for inclusion in this anthology all help to illustrate the complexity involved in conducting counterinsurgency and irregular war efforts, both historically and in the contemporary Global War on Terrorism.

The anthology is divided broadly into two halves: the first half presents historical examples of counterinsurgency involving the United States, while the second half addresses the nation's contemporary efforts in this regard. Part One contains three articles on counterinsurgency doctrine and theory. Parts Two through Six present articles about historical counterinsurgency efforts by the United States, with particular emphasis on the role played by the Marine Corps. Specifically, Part Two recounts the United States' first taste of fighting a prolonged, overseas counterinsurgency—the Philippine Insurrection. The experience gained in this conflict soon came to be employed on numerous occasions and at various locations in the Caribbean during the course of the "Banana Wars"; most prominently in the long-term military occupations of Nicaragua (Part Three), Haiti (Part Four), and the Dominican Republic (Part Five). Because of its all-too-frequent involvement in a range of counterinsurgency efforts, the United States in general, and the Marine Corps in particular, became quite proficient in conducting a variety of civil and military counterinsurgency operations. In fact, many of the experiences and lessons garnered from the Philippines and the Banana Wars eventually came to be incorporated into one of the Marine Corps' seminal publications—the *Small Wars Manual*—in 1940. Regrettably, some of these lessons had to be relearned for America's involvement in Vietnam (Part Six).

After a 30-year hiatus, the United States once again finds itself engaged in several prolonged counterinsurgencies and a number of related counterterrorism efforts, all part of the ongoing, overarching Global War on Terrorism (Part Seven). The princi-

pal—though certainly not the exclusive—focus of these contemporary counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts is on al-Qaeda and other proponents of radical Islamist ideologies (Part Eight). While the Global War on Terrorism is truly global in scale, with operations stretching from Columbia to Indonesia and the Philippines, the main battlefields are in Afghanistan (Part Nine), Iraq (Part Ten), and the Horn of Africa (Part Eleven). Compared with America’s counterinsurgency operations of the previous century, contemporary counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts are far more likely to be multinational, joint-service, interagency affairs that are correspondingly far more difficult to plan and to coordinate successfully.

Although further details can be found in the initial section of the volume’s “Selected Bibliography,” several things should be noted here in regard to the rationale and development of the bibliography. First, like the anthology itself, the bibliographic entries deal with topics concerning counterinsurgency and irregular warfare involving only the United States; the experiences of European nations, the Soviet Union, and others are left largely unexplored. Beyond this, because it is intended primarily as an introduction and educational resource, the entries comprise English-language and secondary sources only. Lastly, because the cutoff for research for this volume was mid-2007, the impact of the surge in Iraq is not addressed. Despite these constraints, the references manage to address a broad range of subjects: on higher-end operational/strategic level of war considerations, on geopolitical context, and on a varied array of related topics—political theory, historical case studies, failed states, cultural studies and analysis, and many others—that all provide context or play a role in conducting a counterinsurgency and achieving success in the realm of irregular warfare.

My sincere thanks to Dr. Charles Neimeyer, Director of the Marine Corps History Division, for granting me wide latitude in determining the scope of the project, in organizing the topics to be addressed, in selecting the articles that would be included in the anthology, and in compiling and selecting the bibliographic entries. Thanks also to Captain C. Cameron Wilson for researching various photo collections and helping to select the photographs contained in this volume. Major Valerie Jackson’s Editing and Design section at History Division, and in particular W. Stephen Hill and Greg Macheak, were responsible for transforming an eclectic array of electronic files, photocopies, and photographs into a manageable format. Additional guidance and advice was provided by Colonel Patricia Saint, Deputy Director, by Charles D. Melson, Chief Historian, and by Kenneth H. Williams, Senior Editor. Wanda J. Renfrow aided with the editing, and Emily D. Funderburke, an Editing and Design intern, helped re-create many of the graphics from the articles.

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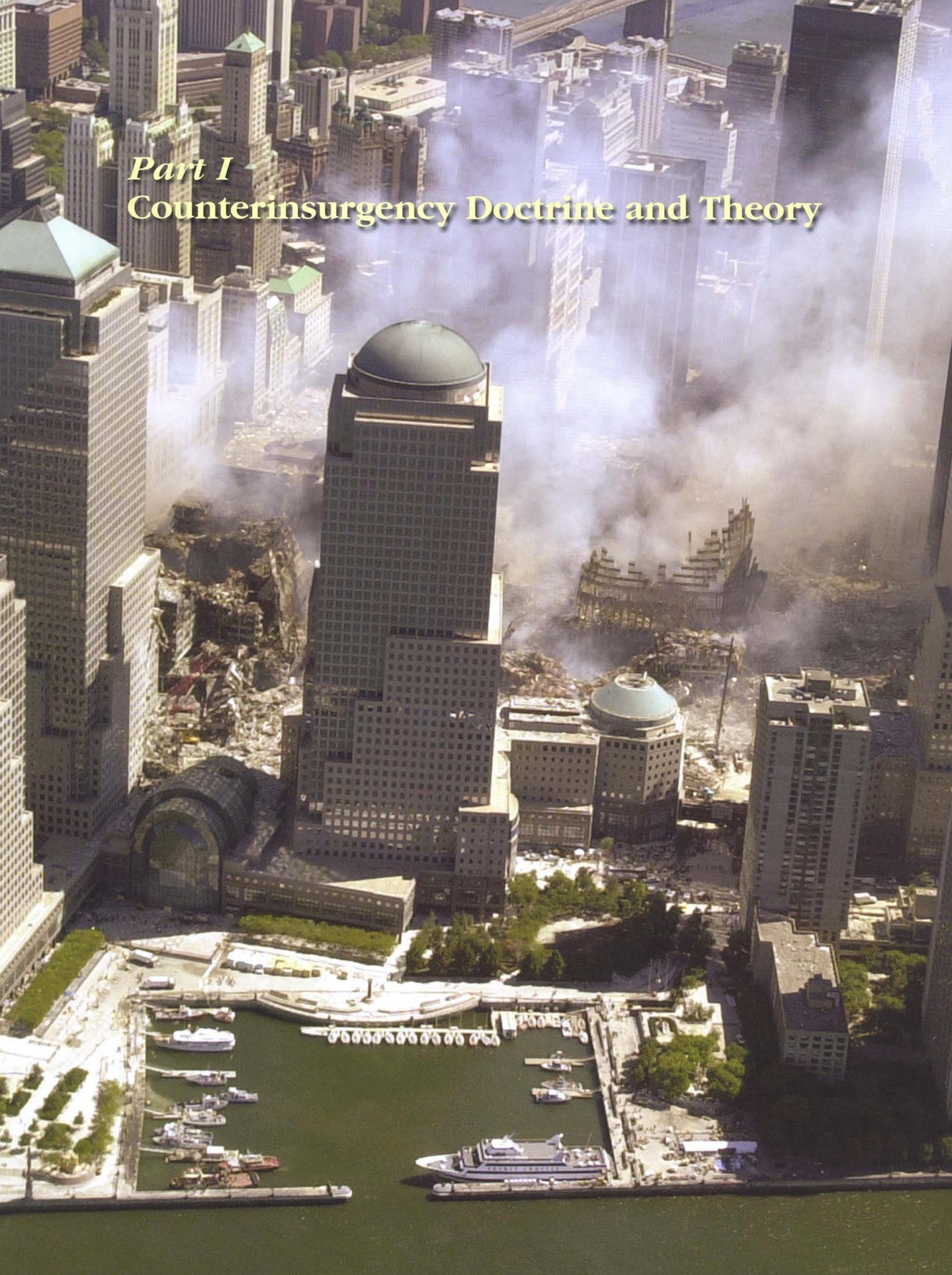
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*Part I*  
**Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Theory**



# Insurgency: Modern Warfare Evolves into a Fourth Generation

by *Thomas X. Hammes*

*Strategic Forum*, January 2005

Fourth-generation warfare, which is now playing out in Iraq and Afghanistan, is a modern form of insurgency. Its practitioners seek to convince enemy political leaders that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit. The fundamental precept is that superior political will, when properly employed, can defeat greater economic and military power. Because it is organized to ensure political rather than military success, this type of warfare is difficult to defeat.

Strategically, fourth-generation warfare remains focused on changing the minds of decisionmakers. Politically, it involves transnational, national, and subnational organizations and networks. Operationally, it uses different messages for different audiences, all of which focus on breaking an opponent's political will. Tactically, it utilizes materials present in the society under attack—to include industrial chemicals, liquefied natural gas, or fertilizers.

Although these modern insurgencies are the only type of war that the United States has lost (Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia), they can be overcome—witness Malaya (1950s), Oman (1970s), and El Salvador (1980s). Winning, however, requires coherent, patient action that encompasses the full range of political, economic, social, and military activities. The United States cannot force its opponents to fight the short, high-technology wars it easily dominates. Instead, the nation must learn to fight fourth-generation wars anew.

On 1 May 2003, President George W. Bush declared the end of major combat in Iraq. While most Americans rejoiced at this announcement, students of history understood that it simply meant the easy part was over. In the following months, peace did not break out, and the troops did not come home. In fact, Iraqi insurgents have struck back hard. Instead of peace, each day Americans read about the death of another soldier, the detonation of deadly car bombs, the assassination of civilians, and Iraqi unrest.

Barely three months later, in August, a series of bombs hit a police academy graduation ceremony, the Jordanian Embassy, and United Nations (UN) headquarters in Baghdad. The Ayatollah Mohammed Bakr al-Hakim (leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq) was killed, and an attempt was made to kill the Baghdad chief of police. These attacks marked the opening of the anti-coalition campaign that continued through the turnover of authority to the Interim Iraqi Government. As of this writing, the violence continues as Iraqi authorities struggle to provide security for their people and work to rebuild their country. Unfortunately, Iraq has become the scene of another fourth-generation war.

At the same time things were degenerating in Iraq, the situation in Afghanistan was moving into fourth-generation conflict. While al-Qaeda and the Taliban were not attacking U.S. troops directly, they were moving aggressively to defeat the U.S.-supported Hamid Kharzai government. Decisively defeated in the conventional campaign by a combination of U.S. firepower and Northern Alliance troops, the anti-coalition forces have returned to the style of warfare that succeeded

against the Soviets. The Taliban's emphasis on derailing the recent presidential elections shows they understand that fourth-generation warfare is a political rather than military struggle. By trying to prevent Afghans from voting, they sought to undermine the legitimacy of whoever won the elections. Instead of defeating the government's security forces, they plan to destroy its legitimacy. While polling for the presidential election proceeded without major incident, it remains to be seen whether this positive step has set the Taliban back politically—and much more contentious legislative elections are just over the horizon.

In Iraq, the attacks on and threats against oil pipelines are economic and political in nature. The insurgents are assessing a tax on the entire world's economy by raising the price of oil. They hope such attacks will weaken the Iraqi government while simultaneously bringing economic and political pressure to bear on the United States. Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's shift from military action to the political arena most likely means no real change in goals, only methods. He can use his political and social networks in conjunction with his militias to advance his goals.

In Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Spain, al-Qaeda and its affiliates managed a series of high-profile attacks and are promising a major attack on the United States. Despite the Bush administration's declaration of victory in Iraq and Afghanistan, the war on terror has not been an entirely one-sided fight.

As debilitating and regular as these attacks are, this kind of warfare is not new but rather has been evolving over the last seven decades. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have moved from third-generation warfare, America's forte, to fourth-generation warfare. It is much too early to predict the outcome of either fight, but the anti-coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq are attempting to tie their fourth-generation tactics into integrated strategic campaigns. At the same time, al-Qaeda is maintaining its own strategic campaign: to defeat the United States and its allies.

Opponents in various parts of the world know that fourth-generation warfare is the only kind the United States has ever lost—and not just once, but three times: in Vietnam, Lebanon, and

Somalia. This form of warfare also defeated the French in Vietnam and Algeria and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. It continues to bleed Russia in Chechnya and the United States in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas where it is engaged in the war on terror. This record of defeat of major powers by much weaker fourth-generation opponents makes it essential to understand this new form of warfare and adapt accordingly.

Mao Zedong was the first to define modern insurgency as a *political* struggle and use it successfully. Each practitioner since has learned, usually through a painful process of trial and error, from his predecessors or co-combatants. Each then has adjusted the lessons to his own fight and added his own refinements. The cumulative result is a new approach to war. The anti-coalition forces in Iraq, the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Chechens, and the al-Qaeda network are simply the latest to use an approach that has been developing for decades.

Since World War II, wars have been a mixed bag of conventional and unconventional conflicts. Conventional wars—the Korean War, the Israeli-Arab wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973, the Falklands (Malvinas) War, the Iran-Iraq war, and the first Gulf War—generally have ended with a return to the strategic status quo. While some territory changed hands and, in some cases, regimes changed, each state came out of the war with largely the same political, economic, and social structure with which it entered. In short, the strategic situation of the participants did not change significantly.

In contrast, unconventional wars—the Communist revolution in China, the first and second Indochina wars, the Algerian war of independence, the Sandinista struggle in Nicaragua, the Iranian revolution, the Afghan-Soviet war of the 1980s, the first intifada, and the Hizbullah campaign in South Lebanon—display a markedly different pattern. Each ended with major changes in the political, economic, and social structure of the territories involved. While the changes may not have been better for the people, they were distinct. Even those unconventional wars where the insurgents lost (Malaya, Oman, El Salvador) led to significant changes. The message is clear for anyone wishing to shift the political balance

## Fourth-Generation Warfare in Perspective

The term fourth-generation warfare came into use among military strategists and planners in the late 1980s as a way to characterize the dynamics and future direction of warfare. This community postulated the evolution of warfare in several distinct phases. The first generation of modern (post-Westphalian) war was dominated by massed manpower and culminated in the Napoleonic Wars. Firepower characterized the second generation, which culminated in World War I. The third generation was dominated by maneuver as developed by the Germans in World War II. The fourth generation has evolved in ways that take advantage of the political, social, economic, and technical changes since World War II. It makes use of the advantages those changes offer an unconventional enemy. For background and a compilation of papers and articles on the subject, see the Defense and the National Interest Web site at <http://www.d-n-i.net/dni/category/strategy-and-force-employment/4gw-articles/>.

of power: only unconventional war works against established powers.

### ***Strategic Aspects***

Fourth-generation warfare attempts to change the minds of enemy policymakers directly. But this change is not to be achieved through the traditional first- through third-generation objective of destroying the enemy's armed forces and the capacity to regenerate them. Both the epic, decisive battles of the Napoleonic era and the wide-ranging, high-speed maneuver campaigns of the 20th century are irrelevant to this new warfare. More relevant is the way in which specific *messages* are targeted toward policymakers and those who can influence them. Although tailored for various audiences, each message is designed to achieve the basic purpose of war: to change an opponent's political position on a matter of national interest.

The struggles in Iraq and Afghanistan show these characteristics. In each, the insurgents are sending one message to their supporters, another to the undecided population, and a third to the coalition decisionmakers. Supporters are told that they are defending the faith and their country against outside invaders. The message to uncommitted or pro-coalition countrymen is to stay out of the fight between the insurgents and the invaders, who will eventually leave. Finally, the coalition, particularly the Americans, is advised to withdraw or be engaged in an endless, costly fight.

Fourth-generation warfare is not bloodless. As shown in the chart on page 6, the casualties we

have sustained in fighting insurgents in Iraq long ago passed those we sustained in the comparatively short, high-intensity phase that toppled Saddam. And even then, most casualties will tend to be civilian, a pattern borne out by fighting in Iraq, Chechnya, Palestinian areas, and elsewhere. Further, many of those casualties will be caused not by military weapons but rather by materials made available within society. Thus, the opponent does not have to build the warfighting infrastructure required by earlier generations of war.

As displayed in the Beirut bombings, the Khobar Towers bombing, the Northern Ireland campaign, the American Embassy bombings in Africa, the 9/11 attacks, and the ongoing bombing campaign in Iraq, fourth-generation warfare practitioners are increasingly using materials made available by the society they are attacking. This allows them to take a very different strategic approach. It relieves the practitioners of the necessity of defending core production assets and frees them to focus on offense rather than defense. It also relieves them of the burden of moving supplies long distances. Instead, only money and ideas—both of which can be digitized and moved instantly—must be transported.

Furthermore, even at the strategic level, the importance of the media in shaping the policy of the participants will continue to increase. This was demonstrated when U.S. interest in Somalia, previously negligible, was stimulated by the repeated images of thousands of starving Somali children. Conversely, the images of U.S. soldiers being dragged through the streets ended that commitment. The media will remain a major factor from

the strategic to the tactical level. In fact, worldwide media exposure can quickly give a tactical action strategic impact.

### ***Political Aspects***

Fourth-generation warriors exploit international, transnational, national, and subnational networks politically for their own purposes. A growing variety of international conduits are available: the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the World Bank, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, and dozens of others. Each organization has a different function in international affairs, but each has its own vulnerabilities and can be used to convey a political message to its leadership and then to target capital cities. While these international organizations may not be able to change the minds of national leaders directly, they can be used to slow or paralyze an international response.

The prime objective of the fourth-generation practitioner is to create political paralysis in both the international organizations (usually not a difficult task) and the target nation (difficulty varies with the nation being targeted). In addition to normal political attacks, planners can influence other aspects of the target society. For instance, they know that the security situation in a country has a direct effect on the ability of that nation to get loans. This gives the attacker a different venue to affect the position of a nation—the mere threat of action may be enough to impact

the financial status of the target nation and encourage it to negotiate. Thus, if the objective is to paralyze the political processes of a target nation, a number of methods can be used.

Attacks by the al-Sadr militia on oil production infrastructure in southern Iraq have illustrated this fact. Nigerian rebels have also used the threat to oil production to force negotiation on the Nigerian government. The fact that oil prices were at a record high gave the rebels more leverage because each day's delay increased the costs to the Nigerian government. As the world becomes ever more interconnected, the potential for varied approaches increases, and the effects may reinforce each other.

A coherent fourth-generation warfare plan always exploits transnational elements in various ways. The vehicles may include not only extremist belief-based organizations such as Islamic Jihad, but also nationalistic organizations such as the Palestinians and Kurds, mainline Christian churches, humanitarian organizations, economic structures such as the stock and bond markets, and even criminal organizations such as narco-traffickers and arms merchants. The key traits of transnational organizations are that none are contained completely within a recognized nation-state's borders; none have official members that report back to nation-states; and they owe no loyalty to any nation—and sometimes little to their own organizations.

The use of such transnational elements will vary with the strategic situation, but they offer a number of possibilities. They can be a source of

## **Insurgencies throughout History**

Insurgency, often referred to as guerrilla warfare, is not new. The very name guerrilla ("little war") dates back to the Spanish resistance against Napoleon's occupation of Spain (1809-1813). In fact, insurgency far predates that campaign. Darius the Great, King of Persia (558-486 BC), and Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) both fought insurgents during their reigns. Insurgency continued as a form of war through the ages. The Irish nationalist, Michael Collins, drove the British out of Ireland with an insurgent campaign during 1916-1921. In all cases, the weaker side used insurgent tactics to counter the superior military power of its enemies. However, in the 20th century, the political aspects of insurgency came to dominate these struggles. The goal became the destruction of the enemy's political will rather than the exhaustion of his conventional military power. Advances in communications technology and the growth of formal and informal networks have greatly increased the ability of the insurgent to attack the will of enemy decisionmakers directly.

recruits. They can be used (at times unwittingly) as cover to move people and assets. They can be an effective source of funds; charitable organizations have supported terrorist organizations as diverse as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and al-Qaeda. During the 1970s, for example, Irish bars on the east coast of America often had jars where patrons could make donations, ostensibly to provide support to Irish families, but in fact much of the money went directly to support IRA insurgent operations.

At times, entire organizations can be used openly to support the position of the fourth-generation warfare operator. Usually this is done when the organization genuinely agrees with the position of one of the antagonists, but false flag operations are also viable. Such support can lend legitimacy to a movement and even reverse long-held international views of a specific situation.

National political institutions are primary targets for fourth-generation messages. Insurgents fighting the United States—whether the North Vietnamese, the Sandinistas, or the Palestinians—know that if Congress cuts off funds, U.S. allies would lose their wars. Thus, congressmen have been targeted with the message that the war was unwinnable and it made no sense to keep fighting it. The Sandinistas even worked hard to make individual congressmen part of their network by sponsoring trips for congressional aides and mainline church groups to insurgent-held areas in Nicaragua. If they could convince their guests that Anastasio Somoza's government was indeed corrupt, they would actively lobby other aides and the congressmen themselves to cut off aid to Somoza. Nongovernmental national groups—churches, diaspora associations, business groups, and even lobbying firms—have been major players in shaping national policies. The United States must assume its opponents will continue these efforts.

Subnational organizations can represent both groups who are minorities in their traditional homelands, such as the Basque, and those who are self-selecting minorities, such as Sons of Liberty and Aryan Nation. These groups are in unusual positions; they can be either enemies or allies of the established powers. It simply depends upon who best serves their interests.

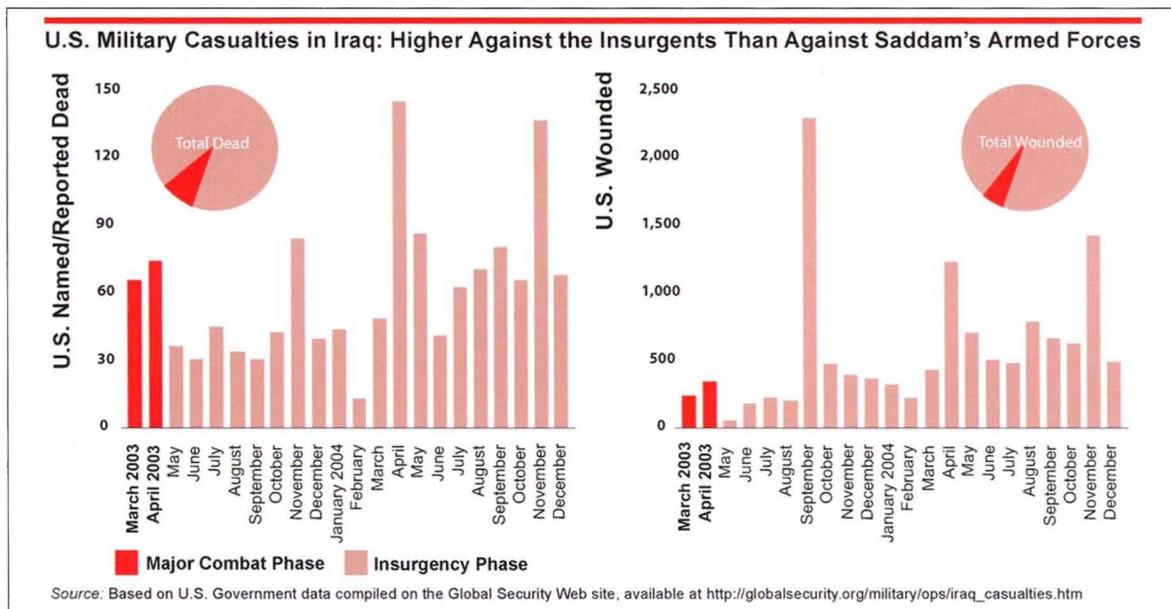
Even more challenging is the fact that since they are not unified groups, one element of a subnational group may support the government while another supports the insurgents.

Political alliances, interests, and positions among and between insurgents will change according to various political, economic, social, and military aspects of the conflict. While this has been a factor in all wars (Italy changed sides in the middle of World War II, the largest conventional war), it will be prevalent in fourth-generation war. It is much easier for nonstate entities (tribes, clans, businesses, criminal groups, racial groups, subnational groups, and transnational groups) to change sides than it is for nation-states or national groups. A government usually ties itself to a specific cause. It has to convince decisionmakers or its people to support it. Thus, it can be awkward for that government to change sides in midconflict without losing the confidence of its people. Often, the act of changing sides will lead to the fall of the government. In contrast, nonstate entities get involved only for their own needs, and, if these needs change, they can easily shift loyalties.

## ***Operational Techniques***

To influence this wide variety of networks effectively, the fourth-generation warfare operational planner must seek different pathways for various messages. Traditional diplomatic channels, both official and unofficial, are still important but are no longer the only route for communication and influence. Other networks rival the prominence of the official ones. The media have become a primary avenue, as seen in places such as Vietnam, the West Bank, and Iraq. However, the sheer diversity and fragmentation of the media make it much more challenging for either side to control the message. Professional lobbying groups also have proven effective.

An increasingly important avenue is the Internet and the power it provides grassroots campaigns. Whether it is the international campaign to ban landmines or Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's terror campaign in Iraq, the Internet provides an alternative channel for high-impact messages unfiltered by editors or political influ-



ence. It can also be used to raise money.

A key factor in a fourth-generation warfare campaign is that the audience is not a unified target. It is increasingly fragmented into interest groups that may realign or even shift sides depending on how a particular campaign affects their issues. During the first intifada, the Palestinians tailored messages for different constituencies. The Israelis have used the same technique during the al-Aqsa intifada, and the anti-coalition forces are doing so today in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The United States has been slow to understand the importance of these communications. As recently as last year [2004], military spokesmen insisted that the insurgent attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq were “militarily insignificant.” This was at a time when each attack was on the front page of major daily newspapers in the United States and Europe. While the actual casualties may have been few, each story reached the decisionmakers in Congress and the public.

To succeed, the fourth-generation operational planner must determine the message he wants to send; the networks best suited to carry those messages; the actions that will cause the network to send the message; and the feedback system that will tell him if the message is being received. In Bosnia, the seizure of UN hostages by Serb forces

during the NATO bombing campaign of 1995 was the first step of a cycle. The media were used to transmit images of the peacekeepers chained to buildings. Then the Serbs watched television to determine the response of the various governments. It allowed them to commit the act, transmit it via various channels, observe the response, and then decide what to do next. All this occurred much faster than the bureaucratic reporting processes of NATO could complete the same cycle.

During the first intifada, the Palestinians made an operational decision to limit the use of violence. They confronted the Israeli Army not with heavily armed guerrillas but with teenagers armed only with rocks. Thus, they neutralized U.S. support for Israeli action, froze Israeli defense forces, and influenced the Israeli national election, which led to the Oslo Accords.

Similarly, the series of bombings conducted by the Iraqi insurgents throughout the fall and winter of 2003–2004 carefully targeted the organizations most helpful to the Coalition Provisional Authority—police, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), coalition partners, the Kurdish political parties, and Shia clerics. Each event was tactically separated by time and space, but each fit together operationally to attack America’s strategic position in the country.

In Iraq, the United States has found no evidence of central direction at this early date in the insurgency, yet the pattern of the attacks has represented a coherent approach to driving the coalition out of the country. The question is: With no coordination, how could the insurgents reinforce each others' actions?

The insurgents could track each attack and, to a degree, measure its effectiveness by monitoring the Iraqi, U.S., and international media. Those attacks that succeeded were quickly emulated; those that failed ceased to be used. The insurgents showed many of the characteristics of a self-organizing network. Each attack is designed to prevent a stable, democratic government from emerging. Not all attacks have succeeded, but they have kept UN presence to a minimum and have driven many NGOs out of the country. Further, the coalition is shrinking, and the insurgency has clearly affected the price of oil. And the threat of instability spreading to the rest of the Persian Gulf increases the upward pressure on oil prices.

To complicate matters, fourth-generation warfare will incorporate elements of earlier generations of war. Even as the Israelis struggled with the intifada, they had to remain aware that major conventional forces were on their border. In Vietnam, the United States and later South Vietnam had to deal with aggressive, effective fourth-generation guerrillas while always being prepared to deal with major North Vietnamese conventional forces. Clearly, the new generation of warfare seeks to place an enemy on the horns of this dilemma. Just as clearly, this is an intentional approach that reaches all the way back to Mao.

Action in one or all of the fields above will not be limited to the geographic location (if any) of the antagonists but will take place worldwide. From New York to Bali and Madrid, al-Qaeda and its affiliates have forcefully illustrated this to their enemies. Though some elements will be more attractive as targets, no element of American society, no matter where it is in the world, is off limits to attack. The Bush administration actions in Afghanistan and elsewhere against the al-Qaeda network show that effective counters must also be worldwide.

The range of possible fourth-generation opponents is broad. It is important to remember that such an opponent does not need a large command and control system. At a time when U.S. forces are pouring more money and manpower into command and control, commercial technology makes worldwide, secure communications available to anyone with a laptop and a credit card. It also provides access to 1-meter-resolution satellite imagery, extensive information on U.S. troop movements, immediate updates on national debates, and international discussion forums. Finally, it provides a worldwide financial network that is fairly secure. In fact, with the proliferation of Internet cafes, one needs neither the credit card nor the laptop—only an understanding of how e-mail and a browser work and some basic human intelligence tradecraft.

Ideas and funds can be moved through a variety of methods from e-mail to surface mail to personal courier to messages embedded in classified advertisements. The opponent will try to submerge his communications in the noise of the everyday activity. He will use commercial sources and vehicles to disguise the movement of material and funds as commerce. His people will do their best to merge into whatever civil society they find themselves in. As a result, detecting the operational-level activities of a sophisticated opponent will be extraordinarily difficult.

### ***Tactical Considerations***

Fourth-generation warfare takes place in the complex environment of low-intensity conflict. Every potential opponent has observed the Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and operations in Afghanistan. They understand that if the United States is provided clear targets, no matter how well fortified, those targets will be destroyed. Just as certainly, they have seen the success of the Somalis and the Sandinistas. They have also seen and are absorbing the continuing lessons of Chechnya, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. They will not fight with conventional means.

In attempting to change the minds of key decision makers, antagonists will use several tactical paths to get their message through to presidents, prime ministers, cabinet members, legislators, and

even voters. Immediate, high-impact messages will probably come via visual media—and the more dramatic and bloody the image, the stronger the message. Longer term, less immediate, but more thought-provoking messages will be passed through business, religious, economic, academic, artistic, and even social networks. While the messages will be based on a strategic theme, the delivery will be by tactical action such as guided tours of refugee camps, exclusive interviews with insurgent leaders, targeted kidnapping, beheadings, car bombings, and assassinations.

This warfare will involve a mixture of international, transnational, national, and subnational actors. Since the operational planner of a fourth-generation campaign must use all the tools available, the United States probably will have to deal with actors from all these arenas at the tactical level as well. Even more challenging, some will be violent actors and others nonviolent. In fact, the term *noncombatant* applies much more readily to conventional conflicts between states than to fourth-generation war involving state and non-state actors. Nonviolent actors, while being legally noncombatants, will be a critical part of tactical actions. By using crowds, protesters, media interviews, Internet Web sites, and other nonviolent methods, fourth-generation warriors can create tactical dilemmas for opponents. Tactical resources in police, intelligence, military, propaganda, and political spheres will be needed to deal with the distractions they create.

Tactical military action (for example, terrorist, guerrilla, or, rarely, conventional) will be tied to the message and targeted at various groups. The 19 August 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Iraq convinced the organization that continuing to operate in Iraq would be too costly. The 19 August 2004 burning of southern Iraq oil buildings had an immediate effect on the per-barrel price of oil. These were two tactical actions with different messages for different target audiences, yet they both support the strategic goal of increasing the cost to the United States of staying in Iraq.

## **WMD Attacks**

Only by looking at current conflicts as fourth-generation warfare events can America's true vul-

nerabilities to an attack with weapons of mass destruction (WMD) be seen. Even a limited biological attack with a contagious agent, such as plague, will result in a shutdown of major segments of air travel, shipping, and trade. Smallpox will require a total quarantine of the affected areas until the incubation period has passed. The potential for billions of dollars in losses to disrupted trade is obvious, as well as years of continuing loss due to subsequent litigation.

WMD attacks may not focus on physical destruction but rather on area denial or disruption. The ability of a single person to shut down Senate office buildings and post offices with two anthrax letters is a vivid example of an area denial weapon. Disruption can easily be made even more widespread. The use of containerized freight to deliver either a WMD or a high-yield explosive will have more far-reaching and costly effects on the international trade network than the shutdown of international air routes. Security for airliners and air freight is easy compared to the problem of inspecting seaborne shipping containers. Yet containers are the basic component for the majority of international trade today, and the United States has no current system to secure or inspect them. By taking advantage of this vulnerability, terrorists can impose huge economic costs with little effort. They do not have to limit their actions to the containers but can also use the ships themselves. Ships flying flags of convenience do so to minimize the ability of government efforts to regulate or tax them. It is logical to assume the same characteristics will appeal to terrorists.

Finally, terrorists do not even have to provide the materials for simple chemical attacks. The 1984 chemical plant disaster in Bhopal, India, killed more people than 9/11 and left more with serious long-term injuries. While Bhopal was an accident, it presents a precedent for a devastating chemical attack.

The existence of chemical plants and the movement of toxic industrial chemicals needed to support the American lifestyle ensure the raw material for a chemical attack is always present. In addition to the widely recognized potential for chemical attack, it is fairly certain terrorists are today exploring how to use liquid natural gas

tankers, fuel trucks, radioactive waste, and other available material for future attacks. These are just a few of the resources available to an intelligent, creative opponent.

## ***Long Timelines***

Fourth-generation warfare timelines, organizations, and objectives are very different from those of conventional war. Of particular importance is the fact that timelines are much longer. Failure to understand that essential fact is why many observers do not fully appreciate the magnitude of the challenge presented by a fourth-generation enemy.

When the United States has to fight, it prefers to wage short, well-defined wars. For the United States, a long war is five years—which, in fact, was the duration of major U.S. involvement in Vietnam (1965–1970). The nation entered when the war was already under way and left before it was over. Even then, the U.S. public thought the country had been at war too long.

But fourth-generation wars are long. The Chinese Communists fought for 28 years; the Vietnamese Communists for 30; the Sandinistas for 18. The Palestinians have been resisting Israeli occupation for 37 years so far—and some would argue they have been fighting since 1948. The Chechens have been fighting over 10 years—this time. Al-Qaeda has been fighting for their vision of the world for 20 years since the founding of Maktab al-Khidamar in 1984. Numerous other insurgencies in the world have lasted decades. Accordingly, when getting involved in this type of fight, the United States must plan for a decades-long commitment. From an American point of view, duration may well be the single most important characteristic of fourth-generation warfare. Leadership must maintain the focus of effort through numerous elections and even changes of administration to prevail in such an effort.

The United States must understand that fourth-generation organizations are different. Since Mao, they have focused on the long-term political viability of the movement rather than on its short-term tactical effectiveness. They do not see themselves as military organizations but rather as webs that generate the political power central to this

type of warfare. Thus, these organizations are unified by ideas. The leadership and the organizations are networked to provide for survivability and continuity when attacked. And the leadership recognizes that their most important function is to sustain the idea and the organizations, not simply to win on the battlefield.

These opponents focus on the political aspects of the conflict because they accept that war is ultimately a political act. Since the final objective is changing the minds of the enemy's political leadership, the intermediate objectives are all milestones focused on shifting the opinion of the various target audiences. They know that time is on their side.

Noted military strategist Harry Summers recounted how he once told a North Vietnamese colonel that the United States had never been beaten on the battlefield. The officer replied, "That may be so, but it is also irrelevant."<sup>1</sup> Because of the long timelines and its political nature, the objectives are different. Fourth-generation opponents do not seek the defeat of the enemy forces. They seek the erosion of the enemy's political will and can win even if the opposing military force is largely intact. They focus on winning wars, not battles.

## ***U.S. Response***

Fourth-generation opponents are not invincible. They can be beaten, but only by coherent, patient actions that encompass all agencies of the government and elements of the private sector. Their warfare encompasses the fields of diplomacy, defense, intelligence, law enforcement, and economic and social development. American efforts must be organized as a network rather than in the traditional vertical bureaucracies of Federal departments. This interagency process will have to exert its influence for the duration of the war—from the initiation of planning to the final withdrawal of forces.

Besides dealing with the long timelines, developing genuine interagency networks will be the most difficult U.S. problem in fighting a fourth-generation opponent. This will require fundamental changes in how national security leadership trains, develops, promotes, deploys, and employs

personnel across the Federal Government. The current system, which is based on 19th-century bureaucratic theory, cannot support 21st-century operations. In particular, the United States must be able to:

- ◆ train personnel in a genuine interagency environment. From the classroom to daily operations to interagency training exercises, personnel must think and act as part of a network rather than a hierarchy.

- ◆ develop personnel through the equivalent of military joint tours. As in the military, these tours must be an essential step for promotion.

- ◆ deploy interagency personnel from all segments of the U.S. Government overseas for much longer tours. The current 3- to 12-month overseas tours in a crisis cannot work in fights lasting decades.

- ◆ operate as interagency elements down to the tactical level. This means abandoning the agency-specific stovepipes that link operations overseas to their U.S. headquarters. The British War Committee system used in the Malaya emergency provides one model that eliminated the stovepipes and ensured unified effort at every level of government. Starting in peacetime, personnel must be trained to be effective linking into the interagency process, and those who do so should be rewarded. The current process of rewarding those who work entirely within a specific agency prevents effective networking.

- ◆ eliminate the detailed, bureaucratic processes that characterize peacetime government actions (particularly contracting and purchasing). People have to be trusted and held accountable. Longer tours of duty will be essential, both to ensure that personnel understand the specific situation well enough to make decisions and can legitimately be held accountable for their actions. The current short tours mean no one masters his or her job, the records are incomplete, and accountability cannot be maintained.

- ◆ develop procedures for fully integrating the range of international organizations, NGOs, allies, and specialists necessary to succeed against an adept, agile insurgent.

These are major challenges, but a model exists with which to work. Presidential Decision Directive 56 provides an excellent starting point.<sup>2</sup> Based on lessons learned from U.S. involvement in multiple crises and complex contingencies during the 1990s, it provides guidance for both training and operations in an interagency environment that can be adapted for the purpose of waging fourth-generation warfare.

Yet this is only a starting point. In the same way that the Armed Forces had to learn to fight jointly to master third-generation war, the entire government must learn to operate in a genuine interagency fashion to master fourth-generation conflict. There are no simple, one department, one-dimensional solutions to these wars. Even with a fully functioning interagency process, the assumption must be made that fourth-generation wars will last a decade or more.

## ***Conclusion***

As German military strategist Carl von Clausewitz once observed: “The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.”<sup>3</sup> Fourth-generation war, like its predecessors, will continue to evolve in ways that mirror global society as a whole. As the United States moves away from a hierarchical, industrial-based society to a networked, information-based society, its political, socioeconomic, and technological bases will also evolve.

With this evolution come opportunity and hazard. The key to providing for security lies in recognizing these changes for what they are. In understanding the kind of war being fought, the United States must not attempt to shape it into something it is not. Opponents cannot be forced into a third-generation war that maximizes American strengths; they will fight the fourth-generation war that challenges U.S. weaknesses. Clausewitz’s admonition to national leaders remains as valid as ever, and it must guide the planning for future wars

## **Notes**

1. Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), 1.
2. Presidential Decision Directive 56 was developed by the Clinton administration to manage complex contingency operations. Although canceled by the Bush administration, it still provides a well-thought-out model for insurgency operations.
3. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Peter Paret and

Michael Howard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 88.

## **About the Author**

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## Back to the Street without Joy: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam and Other Small Wars

by *Robert M. Cassidy*

*Parameters*, Summer 2004

“The deplorable experience in Vietnam overshadows American thinking about guerrilla insurgency.”

— Anthony James Joes<sup>1</sup>

“Fools say they learn from experience; I prefer to learn from the experience of others.”

— Otto von Bismark<sup>2</sup>

In 1961, Bernard Fall, a scholar and practitioner of war, published a book entitled *The Street Without Joy*. The book provided a lucid account of why the French Expeditionary Corps failed to defeat the Viet Minh during the Indochina War, and the book’s title derived from the French soldiers’ sardonic moniker for Highway 1 on the coast of Indochina—“Ambush Alley,” or the “Street without Joy.” In 1967, while patrolling with U.S. Marines on the Street without Joy in Vietnam, Bernard Fall was killed by an improvised explosive mine during a Viet Cong ambush. In 2003, after the fall of Baghdad and following the conventional phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. and Coalition forces operating in the Sunni Triangle began fighting a counter-guerrilla type war in which much of the enemy insurgent activity occurred along Highway 1, another street exhibiting little joy. Learning from the experience of other U.S. counterinsurgencies is preferable to the alternative.

The U.S. military has had a host of successful experiences in counterinsurgency war, including some distinct successes with certain aspects of the Vietnam War. However, the paradox stemming from America's unsuccessful crusade in the jungles of Vietnam is this—because the experience was perceived as anathema to the mainstream American military, hard lessons learned there about fighting guerrillas were neither embedded nor preserved in the U.S. Army's institutional memory. The American military culture's efforts to expunge the specter of Vietnam, embodied in the mantra "No More Vietnams," also prevented the U.S. Army as an institution from really learning from those lessons. In fact, even the term counterinsurgency seemed to become a reviled and unwelcome word, one that the doctrinal cognoscenti of the 1980s conveniently transmogrified into "foreign internal defense." Even though many lessons exist in the U.S. military's historical experience with small wars, the lessons from the Vietnam War were the most voluminous. Yet these lessons were most likely the least read, because the Army's intellectual rebirth after Vietnam focused almost exclusively on a big conventional war in Europe—the scenario preferred by the U.S. military culture.<sup>3</sup>

Since the U.S. Army and its coalition partners are currently prosecuting counterinsurgency wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is useful to revisit the lessons from Vietnam and other counterinsurgencies because they are germane to the wars of today and tomorrow. Capturing all or many of these lessons is beyond the scope of this article and is most likely beyond the scope of a single-volume book. However, this article aims to distill some of the more relevant counterinsurgency lessons from the American military's experiences during Vietnam and before. A bigger goal of this article, however, is to highlight some salient studies for professional reading as the U.S. Army starts to inculcate a mindset that embraces the challenges of counterinsurgency and to develop a culture that learns from past lessons in counterinsurgency. This analysis also offers a brief explanation of U.S. military culture and the hitherto embedded cultural obstacles to learning how to fight guerrillas. To simplify and

clarify at the outset, the terms counterinsurgency, counterinsurgency warfare, small war, and asymmetric conflict are used interchangeably. It is a form of warfare in which enemies of the regime or occupying force aim to undermine the regime by employing classical guerrilla tactics.<sup>4</sup>

The U.S. Army and the broader American military are only now, well into the second decade after the end of the Cold War, wholeheartedly trying to transform their culture, or mindset. Senior civilian and military leaders of the defense establishment realize that military cultural change is a precondition for innovative and adaptive approaches to meet the exigencies of a more complex security landscape, one in which our adversaries will most likely adopt unorthodox strategies and tactics to undermine our technological overmatch in the Western, orthodox, way of war. Military culture can generally be defined as the embedded beliefs and attitudes within a military organization that shape that organization's preference on when and how the military instrument should be used. Because these institutional beliefs sometimes tend to value certain roles and marginalize others, military culture can impede innovation in ways of warfare that lie outside that organization's valued, or core, roles.<sup>5</sup>

For most of the 20th century, the U.S. military culture (notwithstanding the Marines' work in small wars) generally embraced the big conventional war paradigm and fundamentally eschewed small wars and insurgencies. Thus, instead of learning from our experiences in Vietnam, the Philippines, the Marine Corps' experience in the Banana Wars, and the Indian campaigns, the U.S. Army for most of the last 100 years has viewed these experiences as ephemeral anomalies and aberrations—distractions from preparing to win big wars against other big powers. As a result of marginalizing the counterinsurgencies and small wars that it has spent most of its existence prosecuting, the U.S. military's big-war cultural preferences have impeded it from fully benefiting—studying, distilling, and incorporating into doctrine—from our somewhat extensive lessons in small wars and insurgencies. This article starts by briefly

examining some of the salient lessons for counterinsurgency from Vietnam and lists some of the sources for lessons from that war that have been neglected or forgotten. This article also examines some sources and lessons of counterinsurgencies and small wars predating Vietnam.

### ***Vietnam—The “Other War” and Valuable Lessons***

If and when most Americans think about Vietnam, they probably think of General William C. Westmoreland, the Americanization of the war that was engendered by the big-unit battles of attrition, and the Tet Offensive of 1968. However, there was another war—counterinsurgency and pacification—where many Special Forces, Marines, and other advisers employed small-war methods with some success. Moreover, when General Creighton Abrams became the commander of the war in Vietnam in 1968, he put an end to the two-war approach by adopting a one-war focus on pacification. Although this came too late to regain the political support for the war that was irrevocably squandered during the Westmoreland years, Abrams’ unified strategy to clear and hold the countryside by pacifying and securing the population met with much success.

Abrams based his approach on a study prepared by the Army staff in 1966 that was entitled *A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam* (PROVN Study). The experiences of the Special Forces in organizing Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG), the Marines’ Combined Action Program (CAP), and Abrams’ PROVN Study-based expansion of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary (later Rural) Development and Support (CORDS) pacification effort under Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) all offer some valuable lessons for current and future counterinsurgencies.<sup>6</sup>

For much of the Vietnam War, the 5th Special Forces Group trained and led CIDG mobile strike forces and reconnaissance companies that comprised ethnic minority tribes and groups from the mountain and border regions. These

strike forces essentially conducted reconnaissance by means of small-unit patrols and defended their home bases in the border areas, denying them to the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regular units. What’s more, during 1966–67 American field commanders increasingly employed Special Forces-led “Mike” units in long-range reconnaissance missions or as economy-of-force security elements for regular units. Other CIDG-type forces, called mobile guerrilla forces, raided enemy base areas and employed hit-and-run guerrilla tactics against regular enemy units. The Special Forces also recruited heavily among the Nung tribes for “Delta,” “Sigma,” and “Omega” units—Special Forces-led reconnaissance and reaction forces. To be sure, the CIDG program provided a significant contribution to the war effort. The approximately 2,500 soldiers assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group essentially raised and led an army of 50,000 tribal fighters to operate in some of the most difficult and dangerous terrain in Vietnam. The CIDG patrolling of border infiltration areas provided reliable tactical intelligence, and the units secured populations in areas that might have been otherwise conceded to the enemy.<sup>7</sup>

Another program that greatly improved the U.S. military’s capacity to secure the population and to acquire better tactical intelligence was the U.S. Marine Corps’ Combined Action Program (CAP). The CAP was a local innovation with potential strategic impact—it coupled a Marine rifle squad with a platoon of local indigenous forces and positioned this combined-action platoon in the village of those local forces. This combined Marine/indigenous platoon trained, patrolled, defended, and lived in the village together. The mission of the CAP was to destroy the Viet Cong infrastructure within the village or hamlet area of responsibility; protect public security and help maintain law and order; protect friendly infrastructure; protect bases and communications within the villages and hamlets; organize indigenous intelligence nets; participate in civic action; and conduct propaganda against the Viet Cong. Civic action played an important role in efforts to destroy the Viet Cong, as it acquired impor-

tant intelligence about enemy activity from the local population. Because of the combined-action platoon's proximity to the people and because it protected the people from reprisals, it was ideal for gaining intelligence from the locals. The Marines' emphasis on pacifying the highly populated areas prevented the guerrillas from coercing the local population into providing rice, intelligence, and sanctuary to the enemy. The Marines would clear and hold a village in this way and then expand the secured area. The CAP units accounted for 7.6 percent of the enemy killed while representing only 1.5 percent of the Marines in Vietnam. The lessons from CAP provide one model for protracted counterinsurgencies, because the program employed U.S. troops and leadership in an economy of force while maximizing indigenous troops. A modest investment of U.S. forces at the village level can yield major improvements in local security and intelligence.<sup>8</sup>

Although CORDS was integrated under MACV when Abrams was still the Deputy Commander in 1967, it was Abrams and William Colby, as the Director of CORDS, who expanded and invested CORDS with good people and resources. Under the one-war strategy, CORDS was established as the organization under MACV to unify and provide single oversight of the pacification effort. After 1968, Abrams and Colby made CORDS and pacification the main effort. The invigorated civil and rural development program provided increased support, advisers, and funding to the police and territorial forces (regional forces and popular forces). Essentially, this rural development allowed military and civilian U.S. Agency for International Development advisers to work with their Vietnamese counterparts at the province and village level to improve local security and develop infrastructure. Identifying and eliminating the Viet Cong infrastructure was a critical part of the new focus on pacification, and Colby's approach—the Accelerated Pacification Campaign—included the Phuong Hoang program, or Phoenix. The purpose of Phoenix was to neutralize the Viet Cong infrastructure, and although the program received some negative attention in the instances when it was abused,

its use of former Viet Cong and indigenous Provisional Reconnaissance Units to root out the enemy's shadow government was very effective. The CORDS' Accelerated Pacification Campaign focused on territorial security, neutralizing Viet Cong infrastructure, and supporting programs for self-defense and self-government at the local level.<sup>9</sup>

The Accelerated Pacification Campaign began in November 1968, and by late 1970 the government of the Republic of Vietnam controlled most of the countryside. The "other war"—pacification—had essentially been won. "Four million members of the People's Self-Defense Force, armed with some 600,000 weapons" constituted a powerful example of the commitment of the population in support of the Republic of Vietnam and in opposition to the enemy. Expanded, better advised, and better armed, the Regional Forces and Popular Forces represented the most significant improvement. Under CORDS, these forces became capable of providing close-in security for the rural population. The Hamlet Evaluation System, though imperfect and quantitative, indicated that from 1969 to 1970, 2,600 hamlets (three million people) had been secured. Other more practical measures of the Accelerated Pacification Campaign's success were a reduction in the extortion of taxes by the Viet Cong, a reduction in recruiting by the enemy in South Vietnam, and a decrease in enemy food provisions taken from the villagers.

In addition to the MACV and CORDS pacification efforts, other factors contributed to South Vietnam's control of the countryside. First, the enemy's Tet Offensive in January 1968 and Mini-Tet in May 1968 resulted in devastating losses to Viet Cong forces in the south, allowing MACV/CORDS to intensify pacification. Second, the enemy's brutal methods (including mass murder in Hue) during Tet shocked the civilian population of South Vietnam, creating a willingness to accept the more aggressive conscription required to expand indigenous forces. Last, one can surmise that Ho Chi Minh's death in September 1969 may have had some negative effect on the quality and direction of the North Vietnamese army's leadership.<sup>10</sup>

In and of themselves, the CIDG, CAP, and CORDS programs met with success in prosecuting key aspects of the counterinsurgency in Vietnam. Each program expanded the quality and quantity of the forces conducting pacification and counterinsurgency, improved the capacity for dispersed small-unit patrolling, and consequently improved the scope and content of actionable intelligence. One can only postulate, counterfactually, how the war might have gone if both CAP and CIDG had been harmonized and unified under CORDS and MACV, with Colby and Abrams at the helm, back in 1964. Ironically, Abrams had been on the short list of those considered for the MACV command in 1964. The lessons and successes of these programs are salient today because in both Afghanistan and Iraq, improving the quantity and capabilities of indigenous forces, ensuring that there is an integrated and unified civil-military approach, and the security of the population all continue to be central goals.<sup>11</sup>

None of these Vietnam-era programs, however, was without problems. The CIDG program was plagued by two persistent flaws. First, continuous hostility between the South Vietnamese and the ethnic minority groups who comprised CIDG strike forces impeded the U.S. efforts to have Republic of Vietnam (RVN) Special Forces take over the CIDG program. Second, partly as a consequence of that, 5th Special Forces Group failed to develop an effective indigenous U.S. counterpart organization to lead the CIDG—the RVN Special Forces proved ineffective in this role. Moreover, U.S. Marines themselves who have written studies that generally laud the benefits of the CAP model also reveal that the combined-action platoons were not all completely effective. In some instances the effects of CAP “were transitory at best” because the villagers became dependent on the Marines for security. In other instances, especially before General Abrams ushered-in a new emphasis on training popular forces, the local militia’s poor equipment and training made them miserably incapable of defending the villages without the Marines. As for CORDS, the one major problem with rural development was that until 1967 it was not integrated under

MACV, which seriously undermined any prospect of actually achieving unity of effort and unity of purpose. Abrams’ influence resolved this by allowing MACV to oversee CORDS as well as regular military formations.<sup>12</sup>

Three works written during or about the Vietnam era are highly relevant to fighting counterinsurgencies: *The Guerrilla and How to Fight Him*, edited by Lieutenant Colonel T.N. Greene; the U.S. Army’s 1966 PROVN Study; and Lewis Sorley’s *A Better War*, published in 1999. *The Guerrilla and How to Fight Him* is a great single-volume compendium on the nature and theory of guerrilla warfare. The most germane chapter the book is “The Theory and the Threat,” which includes a primer on guerrilla warfare by Mao; an analysis of Mao, time, space, and will by Edward Katzenbach; and a section on guerrilla warfare by Peter Paret and John Shy. This book also includes two sections on why the French lost the first Indochina War, one written by Vo Nguyen Giap and the other by Bernard Fall. The PROVN Study and *A Better War* offer valuable insights on pacification and the command and control required for integrating the civil and military efforts in counterinsurgency. *A Better War* is the shorter and more readable of the two, but the executive summary, the “resume,” and chapter five of the PROVN Study merit reading because this analysis formed the foundation of the approach explained in *A Better War*.

### ***Lessons from Counterinsurgencies before Vietnam***

Before Vietnam, both the Army and the Marine Corps had much experience fighting guerrilla-style opponents. The Army seemed to learn anew for each counterinsurgency, while the Marines codified their corpus of experience in the 1940 Small Wars Manual. In fact, the Marines’ lessons from leading Nicaraguan Guardia Nacional indigenous patrols in counter-guerrilla operations against Sandino’s guerrillas may very well have served as the basis from which to design their CAP model in Vietnam. Nonetheless, there are a host of good works

and lessons from the Banana Wars, from the Philippine Insurrection, and from the Indian Wars. This section encapsulates some of the common lessons from these wars and recommends some key books that cover them. The Hukbullahap Rebellion in the Philippines following World War II is excluded because the U.S. role there was essentially limited to providing money and the advice of Edward Lansdale.

From the Marines' experience in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua during the first part of the 20th century, they learned that small wars, unlike conventional wars, present no defined or linear battle area and theater of operations. While delay in the use of force may be interpreted as weakness, the *Small Wars Manual* maintains, the brutal use of force is not appropriate either. "In small wars, tolerance, sympathy, and kindness should be the keynote to our relationship with the mass of the population." For small wars, the manual urges U.S. forces to employ as many indigenous troops as practical early on to confer proper responsibility on indigenous agencies for restoring law and order. Moreover, it stresses the importance of focusing on the social, economic, and political development of the people more than on simple material destruction. It also underscores the importance of aggressive patrolling, population security, and the denial of sanctuary to the insurgents. An overarching principle, though, is not to fight small wars with big-war methods—the goal is to gain results with the least application of force and minimum loss of civilian (non-combatant) life.

The 1940 *Small Wars Manual* and the draft of its 2004 addendum, *Small Wars*, are the best sources for distilling the Marines' lessons from the Banana Wars and beyond. While the logistical and physical aspects of the 1940 manual have become obsolete, the portions that address the fundamentals and principles of small wars are still quite relevant. One indication of this manual's continued relevance is the fact that the 2004 draft, *Small Wars*, is not intended to supplant the earlier version but to complement it by linking it to the 21st century.<sup>13</sup>

During the Philippine insurgency, the

American military won a relatively bloodless but unambiguous victory in three and a half years in a way that established the basis for a future friendship between Americans and Filipinos. Anthony James Joes, a scholar on American and guerrilla warfare, succinctly explains why:

There were no screaming jets accidentally bombing helpless villages, no B-52s, no napalm, no artillery barrages, no collateral damage. Instead, the Americans conducted a decentralized war of small mobile units armed mainly with rifles and aided by native Filipinos, hunting guerrillas who were increasingly isolated both by the indifference or hostility of much of the population and by the concentration of scattered peasant groups into larger settlements.<sup>14</sup>

During the Philippine Insurrection from 1899 to 1902, the U.S. military learned to avoid big-unit search and destroy missions because they were counterproductive; to maximize the employment of indigenous scouts and paramilitary forces to increase and sustain decentralized patrolling; to mobilize popular support by focusing on the improvement of schools, hospitals, and infrastructure; and to enhance regime legitimacy by allowing insurgents and former insurgents to organize anti-regime political parties. In *Savage Wars of Peace*, an award-winning study on America's role in small wars, Max Boot attributed American success in the Philippine Insurrection to a balanced and sound application of sticks and carrots; the U.S. military used aggressive patrolling and force to pursue and crush insurgents; it generally treated captured rebels well; and it generated goodwill among the population by running schools and hospitals, and by improving sanitation. In addition to Boot's book, *America and Guerrilla Warfare* by Anthony James Joes and *America's Forgotten Wars* by Sam C. Sarkesian both offer insightful chapters on U.S. military counterinsurgency methods in the Philippines.<sup>15</sup> Sarkesian writes

There is a need to learn from history, analyze American involvement and the nature

of low-intensity conflict, and translate these into strategy and operational doctrines. Without some sense of historical continuity, Americans are likely to relearn the lessons of history each time they are faced with a low intensity conflict.<sup>16</sup>

When Brigadier General Jack Pershing returned to the Philippines to serve as military governor of the Moro Province between 1909 and 1913, he applied the lessons he had learned as a captain during the Philippine Insurrection to pacify the Moros. He established the Philippine Constabulary, comprising loyal Filipinos from the main islands and serving as a police force, to assist in the campaign to pacify the Moros. Pershing did not attempt to apply military force alone to suppress the Moro rebellion. "Pershing felt that an understanding of Moro customs and habits was essential in successfully dealing with them—and he went to extraordinary lengths to understand Moro society and culture." Pershing understood the imperative of having American forces involved at the grass-roots level. He also comprehended the social-political aspects and knew that military goals sometimes had to be subordinated to them. "He scattered small detachments of soldiers throughout the interior, to guarantee peaceful existence of those tribes that wanted to raise hemp, produce timber, or farm." To influence and win the people, there had to be contact between them and his soldiers. During his first tour there as a captain, he was allowed inside the "Forbidden Kingdom" and as an honor not granted to any other white man, he was made a Moro Datu.<sup>17</sup>

More removed in time and context, the Indian Wars of the 19th century nonetheless provide some lessons for counterinsurgency. These lessons also demonstrate that the overarching fundamentals for fighting small wars are indeed timeless. With little preserved institutional memory and less codified doctrine for counterinsurgency, the late-19th-century U.S. Army had to adapt on the fly to Indian tactics. A loose body of principles emerged from the Indian Wars: to ensure the close civil-military coordination of the pacification effort, to pro-

vide firm but fair and paternalistic governance, and to reform the economic and educational spheres. Good treatment of prisoners, attention to the Indians' grievances, and the avoidance of killing women and children (learned by error) were also regarded as fundamental to any long-term solution. Additionally, General George Crook developed the tactic of inserting small teams from friendly Apache tribes into the sanctuaries of insurgent Apaches to neutralize them, to psychologically unhinge them, and to sap their will. This technique subsequently emerged in one form or another in the Philippines, during the Banana Wars, and during the Vietnam War.<sup>18</sup>

One of the better books on the U.S. Army's role in counterinsurgency warfare against the Indians is Andrew J. Birtle's *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941*. It includes some interesting and relevant sections entitled "Indian Warfare and Military Thought," "U.S. Army Counter-guerrilla Operations on the Western Frontier," and "The Army and Indian Pacification." Birtle describes one of the few manuals published during the era on how to operate on the Plains, *The Prairie Traveler*, as "perhaps the single most important work on the conduct of frontier expeditions published under the aegis of the War Department." Captain Randolph Marcy's *The Prairie Traveler* was a "how-to" manual for packing, traveling, tracking, and bivouacking on the Plains. More important, it was also a primer on fighting the Indians.

In formulating principles for pacification, Marcy looked at his own experiences on the frontier as well as the French and Turkish experiences conducting pacification operations in North Africa to arrive at three lessons: over-dispersion strips the counterinsurgent force of initiative, increases its vulnerability, and saps its morale; mobility is an imperative (mounting infantry on mules was one way of increasing mobility during that era); and the best way to counter an elusive guerrilla was to employ mobile mounted forces at night to surprise the enemy at dawn. However, *The Prairie Traveler* conveys one central message that is still salient

and germane today: it urges soldiers to be adaptive by coupling conventional discipline with the self-reliance, individuality, and rapid mobility of the insurgent.<sup>19</sup>

### ***A Mindset for Winning the “War of the Flea”***

In *The War of the Flea: Guerrilla Warfare in Theory and Practice*, author Robert Taber wrote:

Analogically, the guerrilla fights the war of the flea, and his military enemy suffers the dog’s disadvantages: too much to defend; too small, ubiquitous, and agile an enemy to come to grips with. If the war continues long enough—this is the theory—the dog succumbs to exhaustion and anemia without ever having found anything on which to close its jaws or to rake with its claws.<sup>20</sup>

The “war of the flea” is harder than fighting against enemies who opt, imprudently, to fight the U.S. military according to the conventional paradigm it has historically preferred and in which it is unequaled. Our current and future adversaries in the protracted war on terror are fighting—and will continue to fight—the “war of the flea.” Employing hit-and-run ambushes, they strive to turn Coalition lines of communication and friendly regime key roads into “streets without joy.” However, the lessons from previous U.S. military successes in fighting the elusive guerrilla show that with the right mindset and with some knowledge of the aforementioned methods, the war of the flea is in fact winnable.

The U.S. Army is adapting in contact, learning and capturing lessons anew for beating the guerrilla. As it transforms and develops a mindset that places much more emphasis on stability operations and counterinsurgency, the books listed in this article are ones that should appear on reading lists and in the curricula of professional schools, beginning with the basic courses.

### **Notes**

1. Anthony James Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2000), 325.
2. Cited in Samuel B. Griffith II, “Guerrilla, Part I,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, July 1950, 43.
3. For an explanation of this rebirth, see Robert M. Cassidy, “Prophets or Praetorians: The Uptonian Paradox and the Powell Corollary,” *Parameters*, 33 (Autumn 2003), 132–33.
4. For a lengthier explanation of counterinsurgency, small war, or asymmetric conflict, see Robert M. Cassidy, “Why Great Powers Fight Small Wars Badly,” *Military Review*, 82:43 (September–October 2002). For a definition of guerrilla insurgency, see Joes, 333.
5. For a short discussion on military culture and big-war preferences, see Robert M. Cassidy, *Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya: Military Strategic Culture and the Paradoxes of Asymmetric Conflict* (Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 8, 54–60.
6. U.S. Department of the Army, *A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam* (Washington: Department of the Army, 1966), 1–9; and Lewis Sorley, *A Better War* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 10–125. Some analysis in this article derives from a briefing produced by the USAREUR Commanding General’s Initiatives Group (CIG). The briefing was distributed to USAREUR units in Iraq in December 2003.
7. Jeffrey J. Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years* (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1988), 196–207.
8. Frank Pelli, “Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, and the Marines in Vietnam,” unpublished paper, USMC Command and Staff College, Quantico, Va., 1990, 13–16; and Brooks R. Brewington, “Combined Action Platoons: A Strategy for Peace Enforcement,” unpublished paper, USMC Command and Staff College, Quantico, Va., 1996, 13–19.
9. Sorley, 22–23, 64–67.
10. *Ibid.*, 64–67, 72–73, 217–24.
11. *Ibid.*, 1.
12. Clarke, 207; Keith F. Kopets, “The Combined Action Program: Vietnam,” *Military Review*, 82:78–79 (July–August 2002).
13. U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington: GPO, 1940), 1-1 to 1-31; Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Small Wars* (Draft) (Quantico, Va.: U.S. Marine Corps, 2004), iii–iv; and Max Boot, “A Century of Small Wars Shows They Can be Won,” *New York Times Week in Review*, 6 July 2003.
14. Joes, 120–23.
15. Max Boot, *Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 126.
16. Sam C. Sarkesian, *America’s Forgotten Wars: The Counterrevolutionary Past and Lessons for the Future*

(Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), 245.

17. Ibid., 178–80.

18. Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860–1941* (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1988), 55–92.

19. Ibid., 64–66.

20. Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: Guerrilla Warfare in Theory and Practice* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1965), 27–28.

### **About the Author**

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