

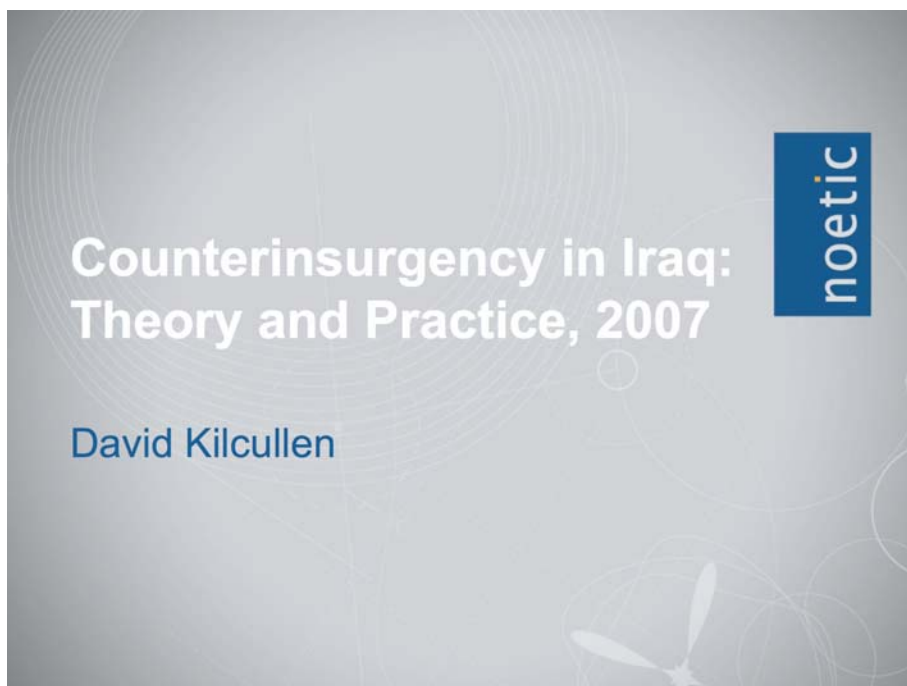
*Small Wars Center of Excellence
Counterinsurgency Seminar 07
Dr. David Kilcullen
26 September 2007, Quantico, VA*



BACKGROUND

Counterinsurgency Seminar 07 (CS 07) featuring Dr. David Kilcullen¹ was conducted on 26 September 2007 at the Gray Research Center, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. This seminar was sponsored by the Small Wars Center of Excellence, Wargaming Division, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory. This report was written by Mr. David Dilegge, Small Wars and Urban Operations consultant to the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory.

PRESENTATION



¹ Dr. Kilcullen is a leading contemporary practitioner and theorist of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. A former Australian Army officer, he was a senior civil servant, seconded to the United States Department of State. He recently completed an assignment as the Senior Counterinsurgency Adviser, Multi-National Force - Iraq, advising General David Petraeus. He has served in several counterinsurgency and guerrilla warfare campaigns in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, as well as in peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations. While at the US Department of State, he has served as Chief Strategist in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, and has worked in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Horn of Africa and South-East Asia.

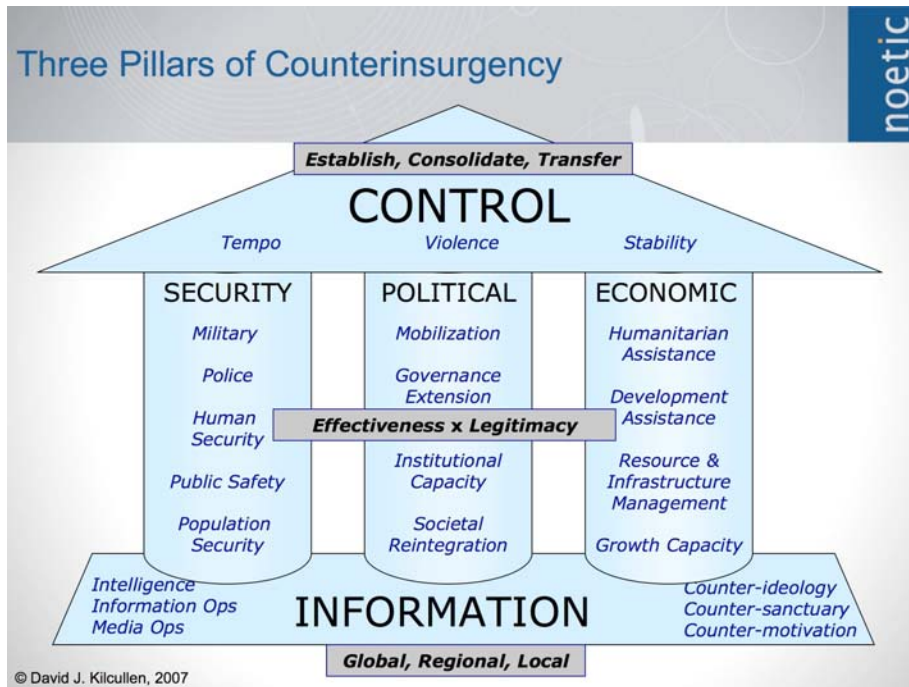
Purpose and scope. The purpose and scope of the Counterinsurgency (COIN) seminar was to share some basic observations on COIN theory and practice derived primarily from Dr. Kilcullen's service in Iraq (2006 and 2007), Afghanistan (2006), and pre 9/11 campaigns in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Additionally, the forum served as a conduit to open a discussion on issues relevant to seminar attendees.

The logic of field observation in Iraq. Kilcullen opened with a caveat – everyone sees Iraq differently, depending on when they served there, what they did and where they worked. Because the environment is highly complex, ambiguous and fluid observations from one time / place may or may not be applicable elsewhere – even in the same campaign in the same year. He enjoined the audience to first understand the essentials of the environment, and then determine whether analogous situations exist, before attempting to apply “lessons”. Kilcullen's role in Iraq (hence his bias) was as Senior COIN Advisor to General David Petraeus (Commanding General, Multi-National Force – Iraq [M-NF – I]). He spent approximately 65 percent of his time in the field and the remainder at M-NF – I Headquarters and the US Embassy in Baghdad.

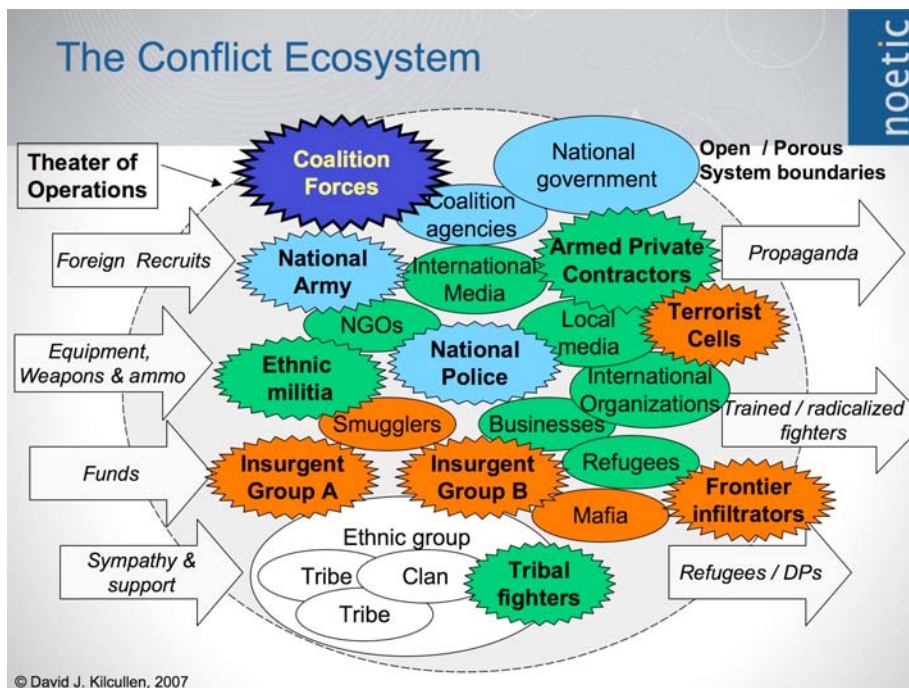
Definitions (FM 3-24 / MCWP 3-33.5 Counterinsurgency). Field Manual (FM) 3-24 defines insurgency as an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict... an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control. The FM defines COIN as military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency. Political power is the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies. Considering these definitions, Kilcullen noted that there are no fixed, standard operational techniques associated with COIN. COIN is a form of “counter-warfare” that morphs in response to changes in the character of an insurrection.

Basic insurgent tactics (PIPE). There are four basic insurgent tactics identified by Kilcullen in the acronym PIPE. *Provocation* entails carrying out atrocities that prompt opponents (counterinsurgents, government or sectarian opponents) to react violently, in ways counter to their best interests. *Intimidation* includes terrifying and coercing members of the insurgent's own community who cooperate with or support the government as well as terrifying and coercing members of security forces and civil administration. *Protraction* includes drawing out of the conflict to avoid strong COIN forces, enable control of the insurgent's own loss rates, and enhancing the exhaustion effect and to preserve strength after insurgent setbacks. *Exhaustion* entails a “soaking up” of COIN forces and government agencies in actions that require a major effort (increased garrison, forward operating base, and convoy security requirements are examples) that does not advance the mission of COIN forces and government agencies.

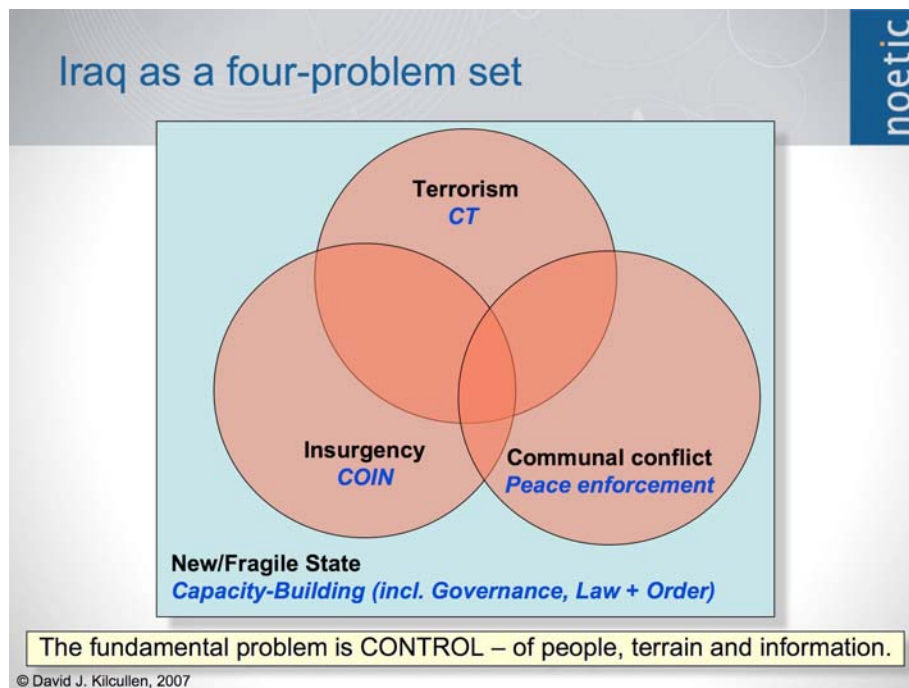
Three pillars of COIN.



The COIN environment. Kilcullen described the COIN environment as a “conflict ecosystem”. This system includes multiple, but interlinked actors that seek to maximize their own survivability and advantage. These actors are pre-existing, and (in normal times) may collaborate or compete. In the conflict ecosystem they become combative and destructive. COIN forces are not outside this ecosystem, but rather one of the players inside. COIN forces intent is to control the system’s destructive, combative elements and return the system to its “normal” state.



The following slide depicts this ecosystem in Iraq as a four-problem set with control as the fundamental problem. Control includes people, terrain and information.



“Getting it” is not enough. As the following quotation implies, though many in COIN leadership roles during the Vietnam War “got it” their efforts were not ultimately successful.

“[This] is a political as well as a military war...the ultimate goal is to regain the loyalty and cooperation of the people.”

“It is abundantly clear that all political, military, economic and security (police) programs must be integrated in order to attain any kind of success.”

--General William C. Westmoreland
COMUSMACV

MACV Directive 525-4, 17 September 1965

Kilcullen emphasized that **understanding** by leaders (and others) **is not enough**. Everyone needs to understand that a framework, doctrine, systems, processes and structures are required to **enact** this understanding. The following slide depicts the “institutional constraints”, as described by Robert Komer in 1972, that inhibited enacting COIN “best practices” in Vietnam.

U.S. “Institutional Constraints” in Vietnam (Komer, 1972)

noetic

1. Repeatedly **underestimating enemy** resilience and capacity to adapt/recover
2. Incremental response – **minimum necessary** at each stage, short-term approach
3. US **could not substitute** for lack of institutional capacity & political support on part of GVN
4. A **discontinuity** between theory and practice - COIN strategy versus conventional ops
5. A high degree of **mirror-imaging** - molding of ARVN/GVN in U.S. image
6. Intel **saw enemy in our image**, focused on factors that would have mattered to us but did not matter to the enemy
7. Civilian agencies focused on **most familiar aspects** of situation
8. Institutional **inertia** / reluctance & slowness to adapt
9. Lack of institutional memory because of **short tours** (“one year nine times”)
10. Reluctance of organizations to **critically examine** own performance
11. “**Business as Usual**” approach
12. Lack of **integrated conflict management** (USG/GVN) to unify effort
13. Proliferation of **overlapping programs**
14. Counterinsurgency was **everybody's business and nobody's**
15. Lack of **inter-agency command/management** machinery
16. Counterinsurgency approach applied **too little and too late**

Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy does its thing: institutional constraints on U.S.-GVN performance in Vietnam*, RAND, 1972 pp. v-xiii

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The political dimension of COIN. Kilcullen began with Aristotle’s description of politics as power and authority relationships and institutions in human groups. He explained that politics is not just about state-based legislative or electoral frameworks – civil society is also key, especially in weak states or where state, nation and territory do not overlap. He continued with a description of six dimensions of politics (each as a spectrum) – formality (formal / informal), focus (internal / external), force (persuasive / coercive) responsiveness (democracy / autocracy), cohesion (integration / disintegration) and stability (fragility / resilience).

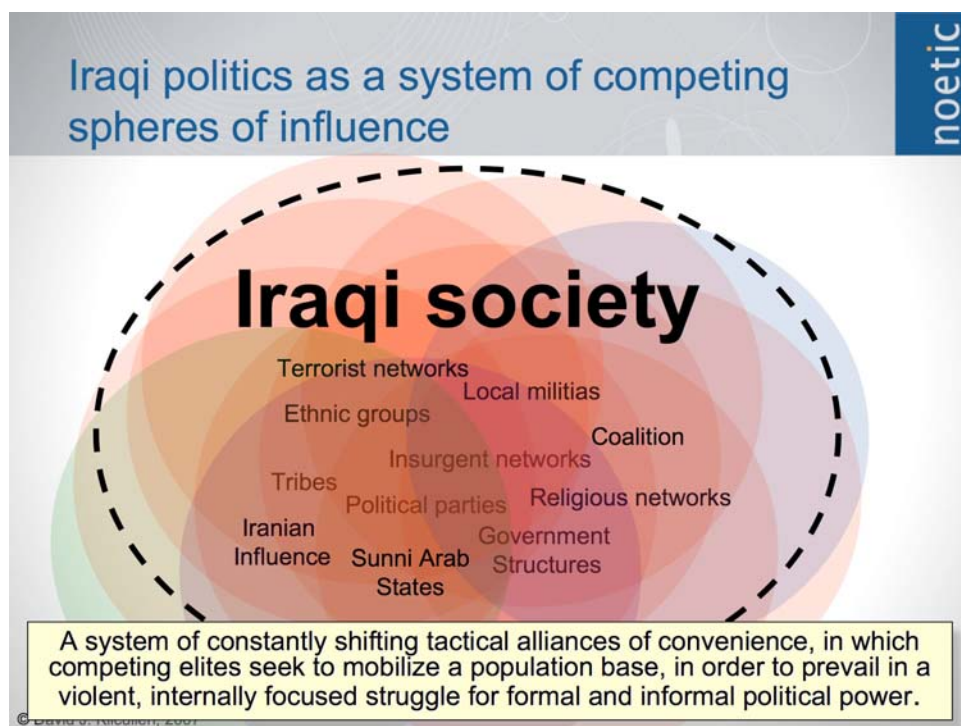
During an insurgency power flows away from formal towards informal structures, away from central towards local institutions, away from unarmed towards armed entities, and away from more recent identities to older identities. Society is “polarized to extremes” leaving an empty middle leading to a competition for mobilization of popular support, competition for governance (effectiveness vs. legitimacy) and a completion between disorder / chaos (insurgent) and order (counterinsurgent). Control over the population (through a combination of **coercion and consent**) is the goal of both the government and the insurgent (“The Population is the Prize” – FM 3-24 / David Galula – *Counterinsurgency Warfare Theory and Practice*)

Kilcullen described Iraqi politics in 2007 as:

- Tribal, clan, family power structures
- Ethnic and religious identity politics
- Disconnected political elites (list system, IZ)
- Religious political parties

- Terrorism, insurgency, tribal warfare and “armed propaganda”
- Old oligarchy/*ancien regime*
- Government formation process
- Pseudo-state criminal networks
- Military politics (coup pre-cursor conditions?)
- External actors (coalition, AQ, Iran, Arab states, Turkey, UN, global media)

The following diagram depicts Iraqi politics as a system of competing spheres of influence.



This system can best be described as constantly shifting tactical alliances of convenience, in which competing elites seek to mobilize a population base, in order to prevail in a violent, internally focused struggle for formal and informal political power.

In this context, Kilcullen described the three political “cycles” in the Iraq war to date:

- Cycle of violence
 - state weakness, enables
 - terrorism, which provokes
 - sectarian backlash, further weakening the State
- Cycle of hope and disappointment
 - new initiatives or personnel, create
 - raised (then unmet) expectations, which provoke
 - Cynicism toward new initiatives and personnel

- “Kiss of Death” syndrome
 - We “surge” into areas and introduce civil programs, which
 - Exposes moderates and cooperative leaders to insurgents
 - Then security improves, we reduce our presence in that district,
 - Then insurgents kill those who cooperated with us

Of particular importance in gaining and maintaining government legitimacy is Rule of Law. Incidents like Abu Ghraib, escalation of force, wrongful arrest or catch-and-release all directly undermines the political position of the counterinsurgent and the government. Kilcullen cited Robert S. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, in describing **Rule of Law as a political weapon**:

“Functioning in accordance with the law is a very small price to pay in return for the advantage of being the government. There is nothing to prevent a government enacting very tough laws to cope with the situation...”

“If the government does not adhere to the law, then it loses respect and fails to fulfill its contractual obligation to the people as a government.

“This leads to the situation in which officers and officials cease to be responsible for their actions, with the result that, instead of an insurgency, there is to all intents and purposes a civil war in the country, in which neither side can claim to be the government.

“In such circumstances there is such little difference between the two sides that the people have no reason for choosing to support the government.”

Kilcullen also described **narrative as a political weapon**. People are not mobilized individually by cold consideration of rational facts. Rather, they are mobilized in groups, by influences and opinion leaders, through **cultural narratives** that include the following seven basic elements:

- A simple, easily expressed story or explanation for events
- A choice of words and story format that resonates with the target group
- Symbolic imagery that creates an emotional bond (ideally at the unconscious level)
- Elements of Myth (“sacred story”) that tap into deep cultural undercurrents of identity and appeal to universal ideals
- A basis in, or a call to action (ideally, action that lies within the immediate capacity of the listeners)
- Credibility built on a high degree of consistency between what is said, what is done, and what is seen
- A future focus that inspires people to mortgage current self-interest for future benefits

Galula's 80 / 20 rule. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, 1964:

“Essential though it is, the military action is secondary to the political one, its primary purpose being to afford the political power enough freedom to work safely with the population. The armed forces are but one of the many instruments of the counterinsurgent, and what is better than the political power to harness the nonmilitary instruments, to see that appropriations come at the right time to consolidate the military work, that political and social reforms follow through?”

“A revolutionary war is 20 per cent military action and 80 per cent political” is a formula that reflects the truth.”

That said, recent Iraq statistics concerning Galula's “rule of thumb” may be deceiving. In September 2006, it was reported that US spending in Iraq for the years 2003-2006 was 1.4 percent civilian and 98.6 military. On face value that might seem quite contrary to Galula, but as Kilcullen pointed out – much of the military spending is invested in political related programs and efforts and military operations are in support of political objectives.

Kilcullen's statement of the obvious # 1. War is armed politics, and COIN is an armed variant of domestic politics in which numerous challenges compete for control over the population. Therefore, there a fundamental difference between conducting COIN in your own country, a territory you seek to control permanently, a friendly foreign country or a hostile or occupied country. The complex interaction between the political characteristics of the insurgent movement, the population, the government, the counterinsurgent, and any external actors, drives the character of a COIN campaign. The enemy will perceive actions by the political staff, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), economic and developmental staffs, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and government officials as a direct challenge to grass-roots control over the population, and will react with violence.

Two frameworks. Kilcullen provided two frameworks that may be useful in evaluating the effectiveness and legitimacy of any political entity (gang, tribe, terrorist, movement, government, regional and international organizations and others) and for initial evaluation of an area and for ongoing assessment.

Joel Migdal's (*Strong Societies and Weak States*, 1988) State-in-Society Framework:

- Comparing insurgents, terrorists, coalition forces and a national government is like comparing apples to oranges – these are *competing* but *unlike* political structures
- Migdal's focus on the four functions of the State gives a framework for comparing political actors on functional, rather than structural grounds:
 - Penetrate society
 - Regulate social relationships
 - Extract resources
 - Apply resources to identified group ends

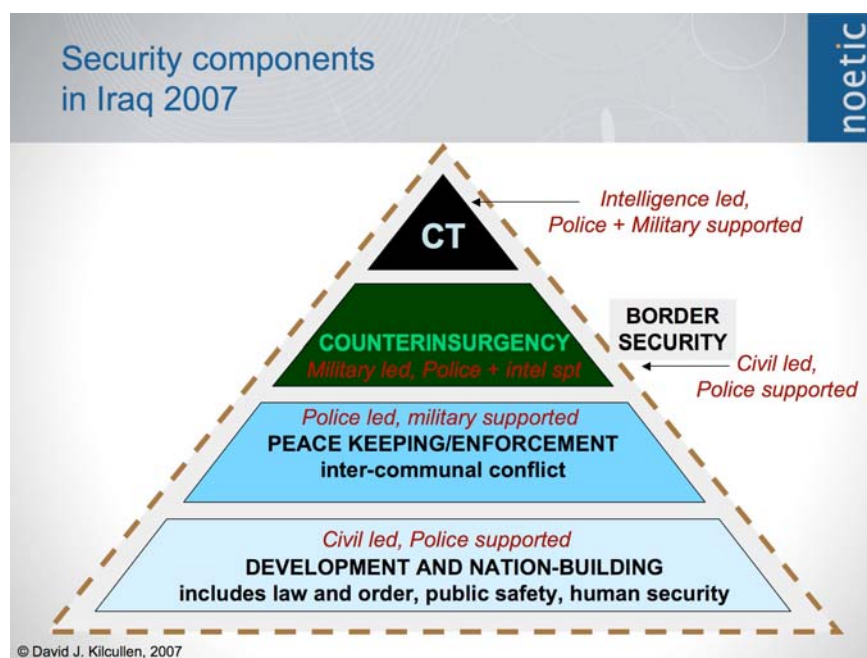
United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Conflict Assessment Framework:

- Methodology for conducting a team-based interagency field assessment of a conflict, reviewing existing programs and developing new responses. Focuses on five areas:
 - Incentives for violence
 - Access to conflict resources
 - Institutional and social capacity to manage violence
 - Global and regional dynamics and forces
 - Windows of opportunity and vulnerability

The security dimension of COIN. Kilcullen opened the security dimension of COIN operations portion of his presentation by defining its five components:

- **Military** – local (territorial) forces, regional (framework) forces, strike forces, border protection, theater reserve
- **Police** – community policing, paramilitary police (constabulary), police intelligence (FBI / Special Branch)
- **Human security** (individual focus) – economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, political security (UNDP 1994)
- **Public Safety** (group focus) – emergency services, police, fire, EMS, emergency telephone system, police dispatchers, public prosecutors, etc.
- **Resource and Population Control** – access controls, neighborhood watch, reporting systems, collective responsibility

He described these components as overwhelmingly non-military in nature - but in a COIN environment, effective military security operations are fundamental – they underpin all other forms of security. The following slide depicts the security components in Iraq, 2007.



Why COIN is population-centric. Kilcullen opened this portion of his brief by outlining the three possible approaches to war:

- **Terrain-centric** – capture the key terrain, all else will follow (“positional warfare”)
- **Enemy-centric** – destroy the enemy’s ability or will to fight, all else will follow (“maneuver warfare” - U.S. has a cultural preference for this approach).
- **Population-centric** – control the population, all else will follow.

He noted that these approaches are not mutually exclusive quoting David Galula – “The Population is the Prize” – control over the **population is the goal** both the government and the insurgent – **but the enemy and the terrain still matter**. Terrain-centric and enemy-centric actions are still vital and crucial to success as the enemy and terrain still matter, but the population is the key to successful COIN operations.

- This is not about being “nice” to the population; it is a hard-headed recognition of certain basic facts, to wit:
- The enemy needs the people to act in certain ways (sympathy, acquiescence, silence, provocation) -- without this insurgents wither
- The enemy is fluid; the population is fixed – therefore controlling the population is do-able, destroying the enemy is not
- Being fluid, the enemy can control his loss rate and can never be eradicated by purely enemy-centric means (e.g. Vietnam VC losses)
- In any given area, there are multiple threat groups but only one local population – the enemy may not be identifiable but the population is.

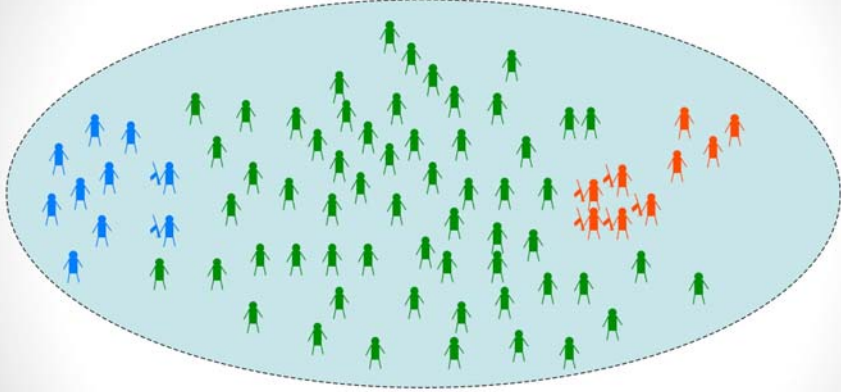
Kilcullen then quoted Bernard Fall (Senior COIN Advisor, MACV) in describing the enemy’s approach in dealing with the population in an insurgency:

“...any sound revolutionary war operator (the French underground, the Norwegian underground, or any other European anti-Nazi underground) used small-war tactics – not to destroy the German Army, of which they were thoroughly incapable, but to establish a competitive system of control over the population. To do this...they had to kill some of the occupying forces and attack some of the military targets. But above all they had to kill their own people who collaborated with the enemy”.

--The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency
Naval War College Review, April 1965

The following four slides were used to depict the “competitive control” aspects of COIN:

“Competitive Control” 1
(start state)

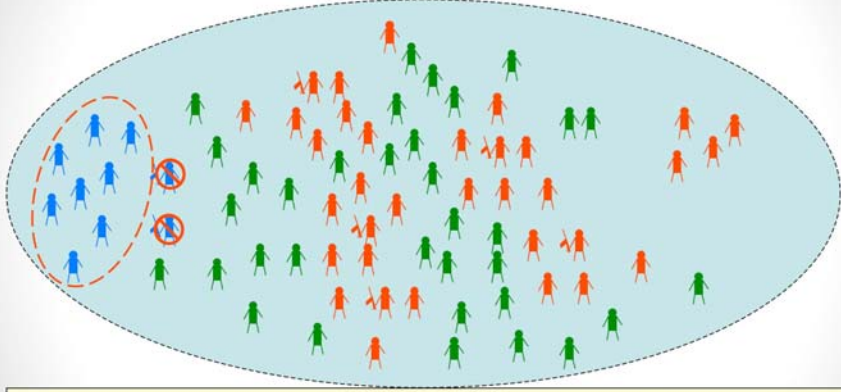


Start State: Minority supports government, minority supports insurgency, majority are undecided / unaffiliated. Insurgents introduce armed organization in order to expand control.

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Competitive Control 1

“Competitive Control” 2
(insurgent “control offensive”)



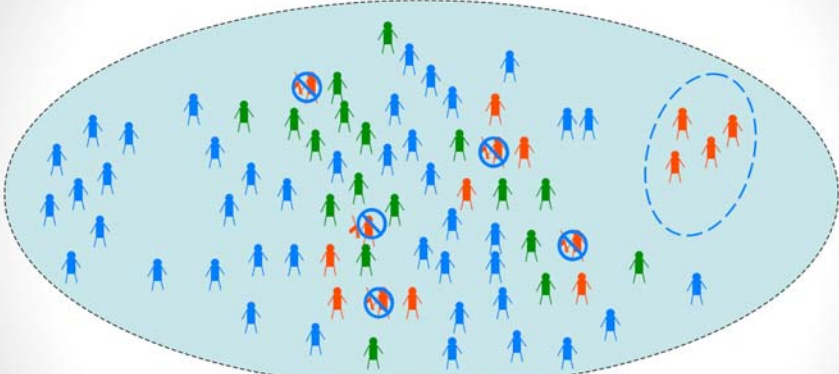
Insurgent “control offensive”: armed organization [plus political cells] spread control (persuasion, intimidation). Insurgents target armed pro-government civilians, eliminate intimidate remainder. Note that the population is won over in “clusters” around social/opinion leaders, not on an individual basis.

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Competitive Control 2

“Competitive Control” 3
(Security Force “control operations”)

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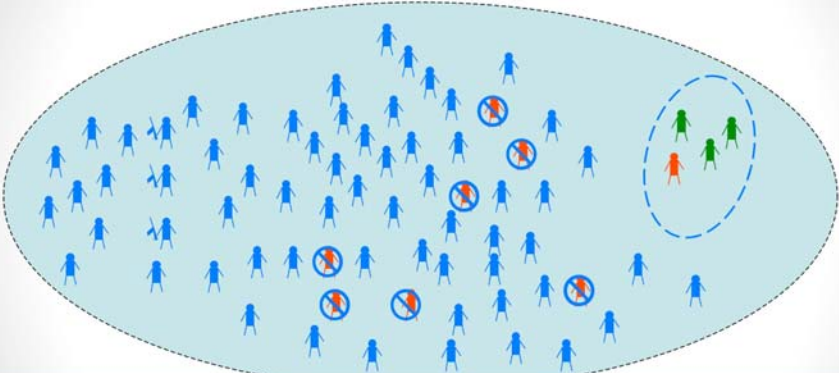
Security Force “control operations”: SF finds the pro-government population (they will initially be difficult to identify), protects them, wins neutrals to government side then eliminates armed insurgent cells and neutralizes insurgent supporters. **Some insurgent political cells remain.**

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Competitive Control 3

“Competitive Control” 4
(Consolidation)

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Consolidation: Security force organizes pro-government population and incentivizes further support for government, via political/economic action. Population are made self-defending. Insurgent political cells eliminated via police work and counterintelligence. Remaining sympathizers contained.

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Competitive Control 4

Defining “victory” in COIN:

“A victory is not [just] the destruction in a given area of the insurgent’s forces and his political organization. It is that, plus the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population, isolation not enforced upon the population but maintained by and with the population.”

--David Galula
Counterinsurgency Warfare, 1964

David Galula’s eight steps. In his discussion on “victory” in COIN operations, Kilcullen presented Galula’s eight steps: surge, quarantine, control and isolate, purge, build, test, nationalize, and mop up. In a given local area:

1. Concentrate enough armed forces to destroy or to expel the main body of armed insurgents.
2. Detach for the area sufficient forces to oppose an insurgent’s comeback in strength.
3. Establish contact with the population, control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas.
4. Destroy the local insurgent political organizations.
5. Set up, by means of elections, new provisional local authorities.
6. Test these authorities by assigning them various concrete tasks. Replace the soft and the incompetents, give full support to the active leaders. Organize self-defense units.
7. Group and educate the leaders in a national political movement.
8. Win over or suppress the last insurgents.

Kilcullen’s statement of the obvious # 1. Local capacity drives the exit date for COIN forces. All counterinsurgencies are fought with an eye on post-conflict power structures and non-indigenous forces will not be present during that post-conflict period. This gives the insurgents a major strategic advantage as they can out-wait security forces and emerge after they leave. The insurgents “home-field” advantage” can only be overcome by developing effective indigenous security and governance institutions. Therefore, indigenous capacity (governance, security, economics) drives external partners’ exit strategy, and determines (or should determine) an exit timeline.

“Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them. Actually, also, under the very odd conditions of Arabia, your practical work will not be as good as, perhaps, you think it is.”

--T.E. Lawrence
Article 15
Twenty-Seven Articles
The Arab Bulletin, 20 August 1917

The information dimension of COIN. Kilcullen began the information operations (IO) element of COIN portion of his presentation with a discussion on the **primacy of influence operations**. In a COIN environment, control arises from a combination of coercion and consent. The more any government has of one, the less it needs of the other. Counterinsurgents almost always lack the coercive power to control the environment – thus building consent is key. This makes the population (specifically, the perceptions of *key opinion leaders* in the various communities) the operational Center of Gravity (CoG) in most COIN campaigns. Influence operations (IO plus targeted kinetic operations) are the key tool for generating consent.

- Commander's intent (political-military) *drives*
- Influence campaign, *which drives*
- Physical (kinetic & non-kinetic) operations

In conventional operations, we use IO to explain what we are doing. In COIN, we design physical operations to enact our influence campaign.

COIN operations are fundamentally **perception management** operations in which we shape the perceptions of the population, the enemy, our own side and a global audience. This demands a solid, realistic **understanding of the environment** and an ability to **coordinate enormous numbers** of information sources and communication tools. The components of information dissemination are:

- **Intelligence** – tactical, operational, political, economic, strategic
- **Information collection** – geographical, cultural, economic, governance, infrastructure, agricultural, media landscape, local political and social landscape
- **Information Ops** – psychological operations, military deception, operational security, computer network operations, electronic warfare
- **Public Diplomacy** – education, media engagement, visits, legislative liaison, think tank engagement, long-term perception shaping
- **Public Affairs** – local media, regional media, global media, homeland
- **Joint Influence Operations** – combination of physical and informational

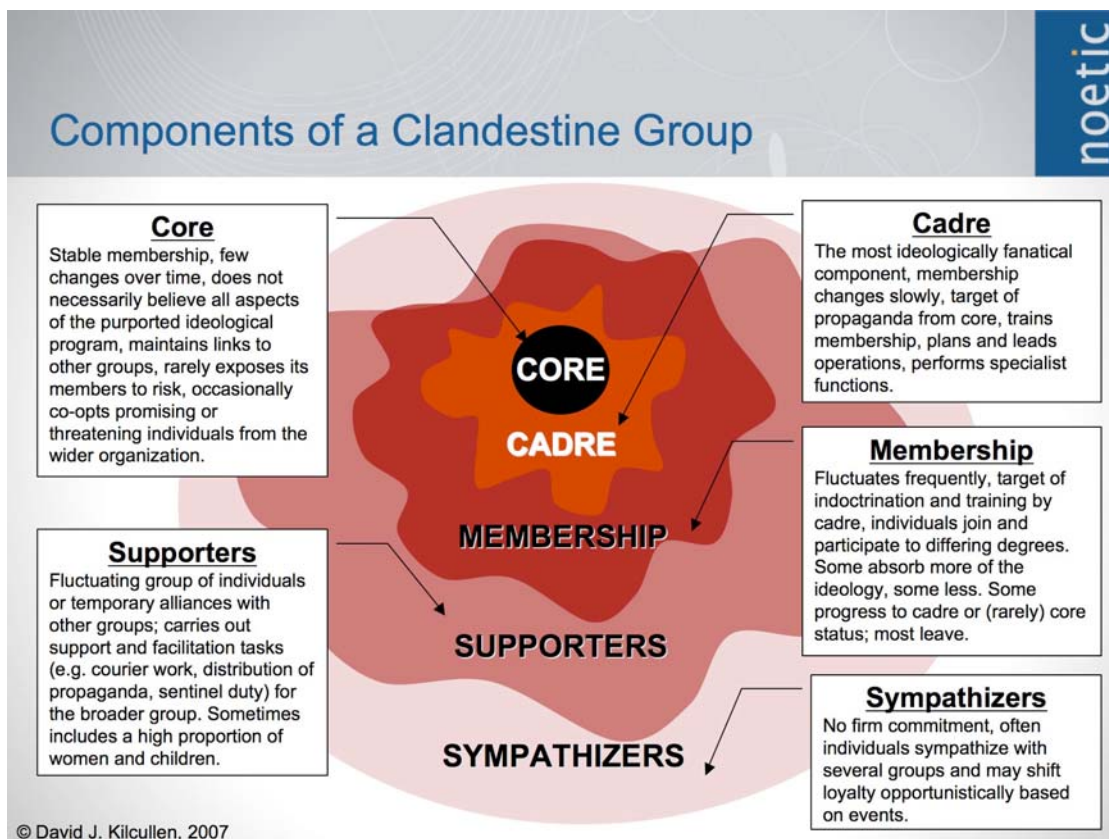
In a February 2007 Rand Corporation study, *Enlisting Madison Avenue: The Marketing Approach to Earning Popular Support in Theaters of Operation*, described the basic elements of shaping perceptions: virtually **every action, message, and decision by a force shapes the opinions of an indigenous population**, to include how coalition personnel treat civilians during cordon and search operations, the accuracy or inaccuracy of aerial bombardment, and the treatment of detainees. **Unity of message is key in this regard**. The panoply of U.S. force actions must be synchronized across the operational battlespace to the extent possible so as not to conflict with statements made in communications **at every level from President to the soldier, sailor, marine, or airman on the street**. Given the inherent difficulty in unifying the American and

coalition message across disparate organizations, within and across governments and over time, **these shaping efforts must be designed, wargamed, and conducted as a campaign.** The goal of such a shaping campaign is to foster positive attitudes among the populace for U.S. and allied forces. These attitudes, while not the goal in and of themselves, help decrease anti-coalition behaviors and motivate the population to act in ways that facilitate friendly force operational objectives and the attainment of desired end states.

Intelligence in COIN. Kilcullen described COIN intelligence as qualitatively different from conventional intelligence in that COIN intelligence collection changes the target we collect on as most information is derived from events – capture, defection, killing leaders – all of which cause the enemy to change. Moreover, COIN intelligence is more population-focused than enemy-focused.

The bottom-line is that **working out what is actually happening is the hardest thing in COIN.** Intelligence drives operations, but our own operations generate most of the intelligence we subsequently use. Intelligence is not a product, served up by higher headquarters – units at all levels generate their own.

Components of a clandestine group. The components of a clandestine group include the core, cadre, membership, sympathizers, and supporters. These components are depicted on the following slide:



Components of a Clandestine Group

Mao's "Three Unities" and globalization:

*"...these are political activities, first, as applied to the troops; second, as applied to the people; and, third, as applied to the enemy. The fundamental problems are: first, spiritual unification of officers and men **within the army**; second spiritual unification of the **army and the people**; and, last, **destruction of the unity of the enemy.**"*

-- Mao Zedong
On Guerrilla Warfare, 1937 Ch. 6

Globalization adds a fourth unity resulting in the "21st Century equivalent of Mao's Three Unities (adding globalization, CNN effect; and subtracting Marxist indoctrination):

- Unity of information activity throughout the force
- Unity between security forces and the population
- Unity of IO measures to counter insurgent propaganda
- Unity of public information messages for the global audience

The reality of "hearts and minds". Kilcullen explained how the following 1952 statement by General Sir Gerald Templer, Director of Operations and High Commissioner for Malaya, has been misinterpreted:

"The answer lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the Malayan People"

General Templer did not mean (or say) that we must "be nice to the population" or make them like us. What he meant, and his subsequent actions played out, was that success in COIN rests on the popular perception and this perception has an **emotive ("hearts") component** and a **cognitive ("minds") component**.

What is essential here is making the population choose. The gratitude theory – "be nice to the people, meet their needs and they will *feel grateful* and stop supporting the insurgents" – does not work. The enemy simply intimidates the population when COIN forces / government are not present resulting in lip-service as the population sees COIN forces / government as weak and easily manipulated. In time, this leads to hatred of COIN forces / government by the population. On the other hand, the choice theory – "enable (persuade, coerce, coopt) the population to make an *irrevocable choice* to support COIN forces / government usually works better. The population typically desires to "sit on the fence" and not commit to supporting any side in an insurgency / COIN environment. COIN forces / government need to get the population off that fence and keep them there. This requires persuading the population, then protecting them, where they live. While this cannot be done everywhere, it must be done where it politically counts.

The components of “Hearts” and “Minds”:

- **Hearts:** The population must be convinced that our success is in their long-term interests.
- **Minds:** The population must be convinced that we actually are going to win, and we (or a transition force) will permanently protect their interests.

Essential to these two components is the **perceived self-interest** of the population, not about whether the population likes COIN forces / government. The principle emotive content is **respect, not affection**. Support based on liking does not survive when the enemy applies fear, intimidation trumps affection. Disappointment, unreliability, failure and defeat are deadly – preserving prestige and popular respect through proven reliability, honoring promises and following through, is key. Smacking the enemy hard (kinetic operations), publicly, when feasible (and no innocents are targeted) is also key. The enemy’s two key assets are cultural understanding of the target population, and longevity (he will be around when we leave). Close cooperation with the host nation – to design messages and demonstrate long-term reliability – are critical.

Insurgent IO. Continuing on IO, Kilcullen addressed the insurgents - in the modern COIN environment, insurgents have a virtual limitless media marketplace of methods and means to convey their IO message. A sampling of the media formats available (and used recently) include:

- Orchestrated protests and demonstrations
- Mobile phone videos
- Video CDs
- SMS (text-messaging) messages
- Rumors / conspiracy theories
- Internet – regional and international audience
- Leaflets – local audience
- YouTube (Internet-based videos)

For insurgent IO, narrative is the key – words leading to action. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) narratives (approaches to IO) include:

- We are Sunni, you’re Sunni, the Americans are partnering with the Shia, let’s fight them together
- We are the only thing that stands between you and destruction
- We’re leaving, but only temporarily. If you support the Americans while we’re gone, we’ll come back later and kill you

Jaish al Mahdi (JAM - Shia) narratives (approaches to IO) in Iraq include:

- Militia, charity, political, criminal, terrorist (Hizballah model)
- The Government can’t protect you; we are all that stands between you and Sunni terrorism
- The occupiers must leave, we refuse to collaborate with them

Pathologies in our approach to IO in Iraq. Kilcullen listed the following elements that describe the nature and effect of our (Coalition) IO efforts in Iraq:

- Inability to achieve uniformity of message across the global audience
- Initial (and too long) avoidance of internet-based IO due to U.S. legal restrictions
- Focus by Public Affairs (PA) officials on “tomorrow’s U.S. headline” rather than long-term improvement in our position in the Iraqi and regional media
- Overly complex and time-consuming approval and development processes
- Tendency to score “own goals” by not anticipating the IO effects of our own planned operations
- Initial (and too long) failure to use local advisers **from the right background** to develop key messages
- Reliance on “message discipline” rather than telling a common story through words and action
- Denying errors, or pretending they didn’t happen
- Not “leveling” with the Iraqi people early on
- Failure to develop Iraqi IO and PA capacity, hence problems creating credible local spokespersons for Government of Iraq (GOI)

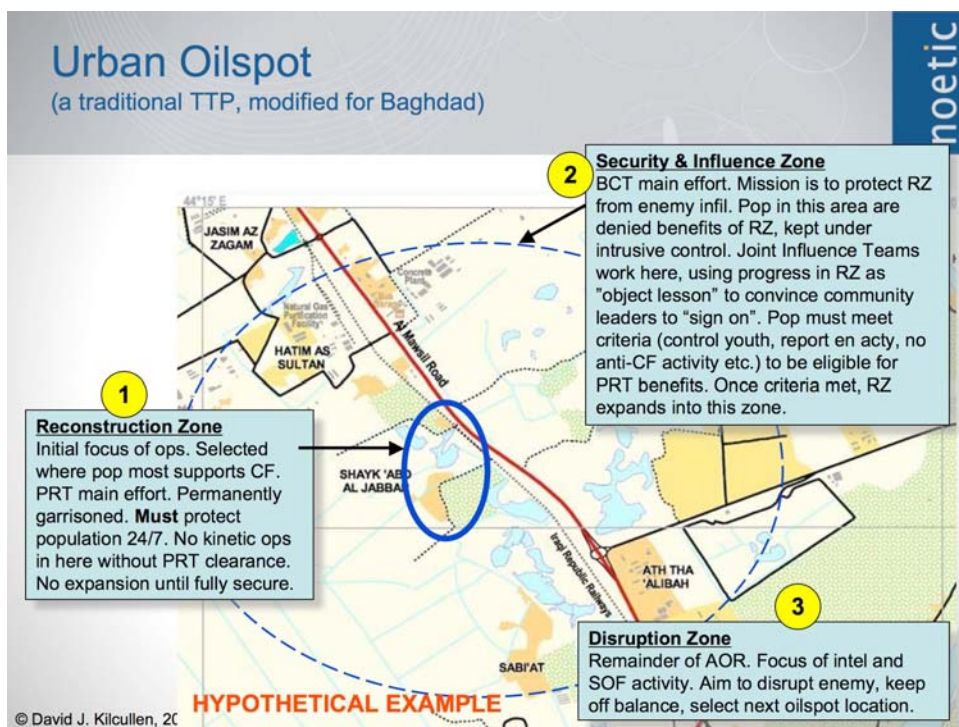
The economic / reconstruction dimension of COIN. Kilcullen began this portion of the seminar by discussing the fundamentals of COIN economics:

- **Immediate vs. long-term perspectives**
 - Immediate programs are necessary, but have to be set up so as not to undermine long-term objectives
 - Long-term focus is essential in order to convince the population we will stick around
- **Simultaneity**
 - Cannot wait until perfect security is in place to commence reconstruction activity, but must tailor initial projects to the environment (“when do we hand over to State”)
 - Economic and security progress have a synergistic effect
- **Ownership**
 - Build shared cross-sectarian interests that the population feels it owns (Afghan hydro-electric example, Thai water system example)
 - Avoid creating a “coalition-in-the-loop” dependency relationship
- **Conditionality**
 - This is not a “pure” development environment, it is *opposed* development
 - Benefits, incentives, disincentives must be made conditional on local support for government initiatives
 - But in a sectarian conflict like Iraq, we must moderate tendencies to use denial of essential services or economic development opportunities to rival groups (Ameriya bank example)
- **Small local programs**
 - Tailored to local conditions, cheap, recoverable, proliferating over time

- Better than large, one-size-fits-all, highly publicized projects that create valuable targets for the enemy to attack

Working with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). PRTs are administrative units of international / coalition aid to Afghanistan and Iraq, consisting of a small operating base from which a group of civilians and military specialists work to perform reconstruction projects or provide security for others involved in aid and reconstruction work. Kilcullen provided the following “rules-of-thumb” concerning employing PRTs in a COIN environment:

- The PRT is an influence tool, not a “pure” aid program
- Get a development adviser in the headquarters
- Focus PRT on specific areas – don’t spread thinly
- Timeliness is critical – population must see *immediate* and *direct* benefit for supporting COIN forces / government
- Manage expectations – disappointment kills.
- Selectively apply PRT benefits to areas that support COIN forces / government; work fringes of these areas to “pitch” community leaders for support
- Develop local compacts with community leaders, with criteria they must meet to receive support – no free lunches
- Apply the “integrated development” model (fix everything in one discrete area, then move on)
- Use reconstruction as the “carrot” and Resource and Population Control (RPC) as the “stick”
- Coordinate using methods like the **urban oil-spot** (oil-spot, or ink-spot, is a descriptive term for the concentration of COIN forces / capabilities into an *expanding, secured zone*)



Hypothetical Example of the Urban Oil-Spot Approach to PRTs

Iraq: PRT political tasks. The PRT is the political and economic **action arm** of the inter-agency team. Key political tasks in Iraq include:

- Finding, organizing, empowering, encouraging and preserving moderates;
- Marginalizing extremists
- Demonstrating the benefits of supporting the government, and the disadvantages of supporting the enemy
- Bringing economic benefits to the majority Iraqi population
- Sponsoring community-led activities for reconciliation
- Building cross-sectarian shared interests within communities
- Driving down sectarian violence
- Helping communities coalesce around competent, non-sectarian institutions
- Reporting on political developments to higher military headquarters and Embassy Baghdad

Kilcullen's PRT observations – 2007. Kilcullen provided the following observations concerning the utilization of PRTs in Iraq in 2007:

- Reconstruction is something of a misnomer. Currently PRTs operate more like expert capacity development teams.
- Big problems with force protection and mobility – addressing this with EPRTs (Embedded Provisional Reconstruction Teams – rather than operating separately from and parallel to the military, they are embedded within the military structure)
- Tied to province level but this is weakest area of GOI structure – addressing this with provincial budgets, provincial powers
- Problems with budget execution (central and provincial level)
- We had a corrosive effect on Iraqi governance structures – beginning to address this
- Managing expectations – military, civilian, Iraqi – is key
- Military tendency to equate size with capability, not necessarily applicable to PRTs
- “Normalization” agenda within USM-I (US Military in Iraq) equated to “transition” in MNF-I – MNF-I now changing emphasis

Kilcullen's EPRT observations. Kilcullen provided the following observations concerning the utilization of EPRTs (Embedded Provisional Reconstruction Teams – rather than operating separately from and parallel to the military, they are embedded within the military structure) in Iraq:

- Major improvement in mobility, access and time “on the ground” – remedying the critical defect of the old PRTs
- Need to “triage” the environment – set and stick to priorities, “model communities”, don't bite off more than we can chew
- C2 structure is critical – EPRT works best as an embedded staff section alongside remaining staff sections in BCT (Brigade Combat Team) Headquarters
- Relationship between Team Leader and BCT commander is fundamental and critical
- Quality trumps quantity – must demonstrate “value-add” in timely manner

- Short term vs. long term paradox – to convince Iraqis to support us in the short term, we have to convince them we have a long-term plan
- CERP (Commander's Emergency Response Program) funding is heroin – easy development \$\$\$ undercuts our efforts to improve their financial governance, builds dependency, but the “rush” only lasts 90 days
- Sheikh engagement proving to be critical in many areas where GOI structures limited
- Expectation management – hope vs. experience
- Metrics currently a “hot issue” of concern – focus on interpretation and judgment
- Push to make standard PRTs “Divisional EPRTs” – pros and cons
- Governance transition teams (GTTs) – re-tasking of Cat A Civil affairs teams working well in some areas
- Governance centers – “GOI FOB” (GOI Forward Operating Base) – as passive force protection measure
- Local Security Forces – funding model and GOI opposition are key challenges; could transform correlation of forces if these challenges are overcome

Concluding thoughts. Kilcullen’s concluding thoughts / summation of the presentation portion of the COIN seminar:

- COIN is a form of counter-warfare designed to suppress insurrection
- It has no fixed or standard techniques, but it does exhibit enduring fundamentals:
 - Control of population, resources and terrain
 - Primacy of political strategy
 - Resource-intensiveness
 - Inherently joint and interagency
 - Centrality of local support based on mobilizing and controlling population
 - Population-centric methods
 - Information, Political, Economic and Security pillars

First **understand the environment**, in detail and in its own terms, **then diagnose** the drivers and key characteristics of the insurgency and **develop tailored approaches** to counter each stage of the insurgent system.

Questions to consider. Kilcullen enjoined seminar participants to consider the following questions concerning our COIN efforts in Iraq and the future:

- Are the Iraqis in the coalition or out of it?
- Do the fundamentals of “classical” (1960s) counterinsurgency still adequately cover the reality of what is happening in Iraq?
- What does this tell us about the mission environment for future counterinsurgencies, and how to prepare for them?

COMMENTS

Kilcullen's presentation, as well as the Q&A were videotaped and will be made available; along with the briefing slides, this summary report, a 45 minute video interview with Kilcullen, and several of his recent COIN-related articles on DVD.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Commanding General
Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory
Attn: Wargaming Division
3255 Meyers Avenue
Quantico, VA 22134

(703) 784-3276
(703) 784-2815 Fax
DSN 278

MCWLWebMaster@usmc.mil
www.wargaming.quantico.usmc.mil
www.smallwars.quantico.usmc.mil