

SPECIAL WARFARE

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A STUDY OF IRAQI TRIBAL
INFLUENCE IN WESTERN IRAQ
OPTIMIZING INDIRECT MISO



IRAQ
THE COUNTER-ISIS FIGHT

THE OFFICIAL PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL OF U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

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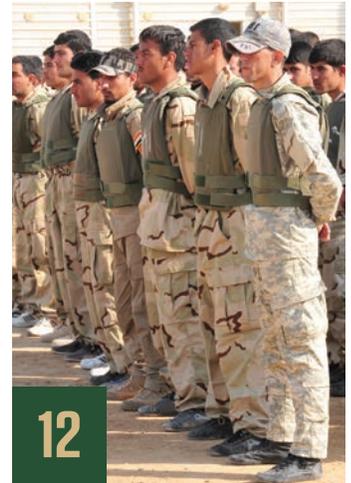
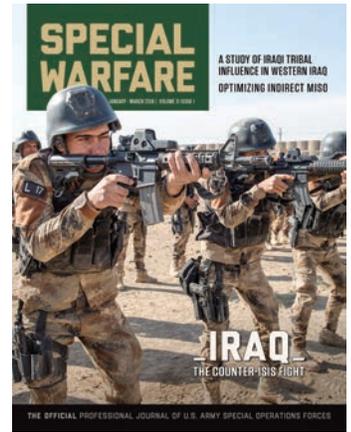
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ON THE COVER

Iraq Army soldiers fire their rifles on a range as part of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service's selection process. The CTS is Iraq's elite counterterrorism force and has proven to be an effective fighting force against ISIL.

U.S. Army Photo by SSG Alex Manne



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from the COMMANDANT



For more than 15 years, U.S. forces have been engaged in Iraq. In this issue, we delve into the most recent engagements, which resulted from the growth of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The fight against ISIS has dominated the nightly news headlines and has been a priority for our special operations forces, who returned to Iraq to leverage relationships made during Operation Iraqi Freedom in order to shore up the Iraqi Armed Forces so they could not only stand against ISIS, but defeat them.

In this issue of *Special Warfare*, we are featuring three articles by Lt. Commander Daniel R. Green, a PH.D., whom has studied and written extensively about counterinsurgency. He is a Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and has authored three books on insurgency and the role of special operations in countering them: *The Valley's Edge*, *In the Warlord's Shadow: Special Operations Forces, the Afghans, and Their Fight Against the Taliban and Faullujah Redux*. In this issue, he writes about the role of tribes in Iraq; how the concept of revenge in tribal societies will play a dominant role in unifying the country; and on building stability in the country using the Anbar Province as a case study.

Lt. Col. Tavi Brunson and Maj. David Armenson both assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), discuss the use of non-standard logistics to sustain the operations against ISIS in Iraq.

Also in this issue, the idea of talent management and how our nation can best utilize special operations Soldiers to engage our allies and partners is explored in USSOCOM's "Lawrence of Anywhere," which discusses the Special Operations Liaison Officer program. In a second article, Lt. Col. Joe Becker discusses the importance of building strategic influence and how best to employ SOF in that effort.


KURT L. SONNTAG
MAJOR GENERAL, USA
COMMANDING GENERAL

“ISIS needs to understand that the Joint Force is on orders to annihilate them. So they have two options should they decide to come up against the United States, our allies and partners: Surrender or die. If they surrender, we will safeguard them to their detainee cell ... if they choose not to surrender, then we will kill them with extreme prejudice.”

— John Wayne Troxell
Sergeant Major of the Army

USSOCOMs "LAWRENCE OF ANYWHERE"

ROMANIAN SOF TRANSFORMATION

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL (RETIRED) CHARLIE BLACK
AND LIEUTENANT COLONEL MICHAEL CSICSILA

In June 2016, while sitting around the pool at the Fayetteville Holiday Inn, I was discussing the future of Romanian SOF with the Romanian Chief of Defense, the Director of the Military Intelligence Directorate and the U.S. Senior Defense Official. With growing concern over the malign influences in the region, the CHOD wanted to ensure his SOF was prepared to counter any aggressions. Although we were years away from the "G-Base" in Pineland, we were having the same conversations — but at the strategic level. As the U.S. Army Special Operations Liaison Officer to Romania, I was invited into the discussion and would later assist the CHOD and MID Director with Romanian SOF's Transformation.

What the Romanians accomplished in less than two years was unprecedented.

When one hears foreign internal defense, the first thought is often about an operational detachment alpha deploying to an austere environment, training a partner force in the fundamentals necessary to protect national security. While U.S. Special Operations Forces has significant experience in the art and science of train, advise and assist, demonstrated in more than 15 years of war, has rarely been able to build structures and systems — i.e. Defense Institution Building — that could sustain what is developed by the training. One of the reasons it is almost impossible to do lasting DIB during a Joint Chiefs of Staff Exchange Training or a six-month TDY, is because U.S. SOF rarely has the chance to build deep relationships with the leadership of the allied/partner nation, and is unlikely to gain a thorough understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the partner nation's SOF forces.

As the U.S. Special Operations Command Commander, Admiral Eric Olson addressed this issue by creating the Special Operations Liaison Officer program. He wanted to have officers, and now senior noncommissioned officers, who could build relationships with the allied/partner nation's leadership. His J2 at the time called the SOLOs "Lawrence of Anywhere," because, like the iconic World War I figure, SOLOs were expected to live and build relationships with the A/PN SOF (and the U.S. Embassy's Country Team). Another USSOCOM Commander, Admiral William McRaven, was fond of saying that SOF moves at the speed of trust — a trust that often comes from building personal relationships. Over months and years, SOLOs, and their families, become part of the Em-



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bassy and host nation SOF communities, establish relationships and trust, and therefore became a stronger liaison resource.

Romania has always been a capable and loyal ally. Years of fighting alongside U.S. SOF in Iraq and Afghanistan have built a strong bond between SOF operators. Special Operations Command Europe's persistent JCETs have also done much to improve the effectiveness of the individual operators. However, building lasting structures and systems that would enable Romanian SOF to be self-sufficient and a regional SOF leader has been a task too comprehensive for these short duration events.

This began to change when Gen. Ciuca became CHOD.

Gen. Ciuca is a true visionary with the skill and energetic desire to improve the Romanian military and transform its SOF. His trip to Fort Bragg helped him better understand the capabilities of SOF and what was required to transform Romanian SOF. The discussions around the pool in Fayetteville helped us see why the CHOD wanted to transform, but still left the puzzle of what needed to be done or how to do it.

In August 2016, two months later, Gen. Ciuca decided to formally transform Romanian SOF and requested USSOCOM's support. He demonstrated

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Romanian SOF Soldiers conduct training. Since 2016, the Romanian military has transformed the way it trains, recruits and mans its special operations forces.

COURTESY PHOTO

USSOCOM'S LAWRENCE OF ANYWHERE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 05

his commitment to the effort by placing the MID Director, one of his most trusted and capable officers, in charge of the project. After conducting an initial academic analysis of how other countries had undertaken similar efforts, it was evident that in order to come up with the “Romanian Solution” (and not just copy USSOCOM), a better understanding of the Romanian “system,” and the challenges and opportunities it presented, needed to be explored.

The CHOD and MID Director agreed to form a series of working groups, comprised of mid-level Romanian SOF officers and NCOs, and some Romanian and U.S. subject-matter experts, supported by Joint Special Operations University and the SOLO. We decided to use JSOU’s “Design Thinking for the SOF Enterprise.” The traditional military planning process has been successful at solving limited, stable, and less complex problems. Intended for repeatable complicated problems, rather than unique complex problems (sometimes called “wicked problems”), traditional planning and resourcing processes tend to produce plans that are very similar to one another and not necessarily tailored to the complexity of each specific situation. When faced with similar phenomena, the business world has embraced design methodologies in order to meet customer needs in the complex environments of the information age. “Design” encourages the creativity that leads to innovation, seeking to balance objectively and a more contextual, and subjective perspective.

The U.S. Special Operations Command’s Design Thinking is divided into three elements: Appreciate the Context, Define the Problem and Develop an Approach. It starts with the assumption that there is not a good understanding of the problem or how to address it. Design was used to overcome inter service rivalries and break free from decades old paradigms, and create a new Romanian SOF identity — all at an unprecedented pace. Moreover, Design helped to create a unified view among the working group members toward a common goal, which would prove essential to our future success.

After six months, the participants gained a better appreciation of the emergent and future world, the range of threats and a new role for Romanian SOF in national security. The main realization was that Romanian SOF had a significant role to play as a strategic tool in peace, crisis, and war — something that was novel in the Romanian system. This was first time they saw a role beyond contributions to the NATO alliance. The working group produced the “Vision and Strategic Concept,” which was accepted by the CHOD in December 2016 and the Service Chiefs in January 2017. The “Vision and Strategic Concept” was a type of road map from their current situation to the desired end state. Even though this document became

the accepted road map for the transformation, there was still resistance to overcome.

Resistance to change and uncertainty are common challenges for any transforming organization. Communication and support from the CHOD, MID Director and the U.S. Embassy were critical in addressing these concerns.

Ambassador Hans Klemm and the U.S. Embassy Country Team played an important part in helping to overcome the resistance and uncertainty with the transformation. The Ambassador and Country Team used diplomatic channels to pave the way with the Romanian President, Minister of Defense and other key stakeholders that were involved in the transformation. They also helped the Romanian SOF gain access to U.S. Security Cooperation and other grant funds that they needed to implement the transformation quickly.

Having a SOLO as a member of the Embassy, and part of the Country Team, helped to maximize the already strong Embassy support. The SOLO who had an established relationships with the Country Team members prior to the transformation, was able provide briefings, answer questions and identify opportunities where there could be the greatest impact — from mentioning the transformation in public speeches or the Ambassador presenting his personal coin to the Romanian SOF school’s cadre to help boost morale and show U.S. appreciation for their work.

Over the next year, with the support and leadership of the CHOD and MID Director, Romanian SOF would change defense policy and Romanian Law to ensure that the transformation would endure. The 10-man Romanian SOF Headquarters would develop and implement a SOF recruiting campaign that not only improved recruiting by 700 percent, but was revolutionary to the Romanian system and helped to address critical manning shortages. Romanian SOF also established its first Joint SOF training pipeline, which overcame cultural and institutional issues to prepare, assess and select SOF candidates who, according to their U.S. SOF advisors, would likely meet or exceed U.S. SOF’s standards.

In January 2018, Romania established its first Special Operations Forces Command with the authority and charter to advise senior national security leadership on SOF matters and to take operational control of all of the Romanian SOF components. The command gives Romanian SOF the permanent structures and systems that are essential to drive lasting change and help ensure that it becomes a self-sufficient regional SOF leader.

This is what the Romanians accomplished.

There have been many times throughout our careers where we have sat around the team room, in the G-base, or at a goat grab when we had wished we could finally fix “the system.” U.S. SOF are experts in the TAA process, but they have not always had the tools to bring about lasting change. Special Operations Liaison Officers have the relationships and opportunity to complete the work started by our teams, and to help our allies and partners develop their own solutions to transform their systems. 

THE LAST TACTICAL MILE

Sustaining Defeat-ISIS Operations in Syria.

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL TAVI BRUNSON
AND MAJOR DAVID ARMESON



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INTRODUCTION

Military logisticians understand that special operations forces conduct distributed operations far from major bases or safe havens, and that there are inherent challenges when supporting a SOF-specific mission set. Logisticians also recognize that these missions often include indigenous partner forces and the unique requirement to sustain their atypical formations. However, some SOF missions are more challenging than others, and the Defeat-ISIS mission in Syria produced lessons that will be valuable for SOF logisticians into the foreseeable future. Most notably, SOF logisticians had to find solutions for three significant challenges: 1) how to rapidly equip a new partner force and sustain operations, 2) how to provide material solutions to emerging capability gaps as the battlefield evolved, and 3) how to field a team of capable SOF logisticians on an enduring basis. These challenges were overcome through critical thinking, innovation and SOF professionals solving problems with limited resources.

BACKGROUND

In 2013, an al-Qaeda splinter cell declared its caliphate across the Middle East as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Within a year, the organization occupied more than 34,000 square miles across the region. ISIS imposed a ruthless government that was responsible for countless murders and human rights violations. The Government of Iraq quickly mobilized its military and, with support

from the United States, slowly regained terrain from ISIS. The fall of Mosul in July 2017, marked the pinnacle of a collaborative effort between the Government of Iraq and a multinational coalition, and it leveraged the full range of bases and infrastructure Iraq had to offer.

The mission to defeat ISIS in Syria was not afforded the same support from a host-nation government, and SOF teams were challenged to establish a capable and sustainable partner force. By 2013, the Syrian Arab Republic had been immersed in civil war for more than two years. The Syrian Regime's military was focused solely on the defeat of Syrian rebels, and the Kurdish population had essentially seceded from the struggling state. Further, ISIS was nearly unopposed as it declared its capital in Raqqa, the sixth largest city in Syria. Syrians opposed to ISIS rule found themselves fighting without the support of a central government, and they lacked the equipment and training necessary to mount an effective resistance.

The United States Special Operations Command organizes and trains its forces to operate in challenging and ambiguous environments, and the command set conditions to confront ISIS in Syria. In December 2014, the United States Congress provided the President with the authority and funds to overtly train and lethally equip vetted members of the Syrian Opposition. Section 1209 of the FY15 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA 1209) authorized up to \$500 million from the newly established Counterterrorism Partnership fund to train and equip Syrian partner forces solely for the purpose of defeating ISIS. SOF teams established a system to recruit

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Equipment from the CONUS Aggregation Node (CAN) is received at a logistics node (LOGNODE) location. The CAN is the central receiving location for new equipment to be used to train and equip Syrian partner forces. SOF logistics Soldiers at the CAN ensure shipments are properly received, accounted for and tested before sending it forward to a LOGNODE location where it's tailored and distributed to meet mission needs. U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF 5TH SFG(A)

fighters from Syria, screen them for ties to terrorism; train them in basic combat skills; provide them with equipment; and reinsert them as members of organized resistance forces. The process of creating a Vetted Syrian Opposition was designated as the 1209 Train and Equip mission. This program marked the beginning of the US-led ground opposition against ISIS in Syria.

EQUIPPING THE PARTNER FORCE AND SUSTAINING OPERATIONS

Equipping the vetted opposition required the establishment of a global network to support acquisition, storage and movement of NDAA 1209-authorized equipment. Initially, items were sourced from the United States because they were readily available, and conditions in Syria dictated timely procurement and delivery. USSOCOM leveraged its directorate for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics to locate and procure items. SOF teams, working with their vetted partners, quickly identified and communicated an array of critical capability gaps. In turn, SOF AT&L collaborated with the Army Materiel Command to source items available within military stocks. SOF AT&L also established a contracting mechanism for nonstandard items that required purchase outside of the Defense Department. In total, SOF AT&L procured \$406 million in weapons, ammunition, vehicles, communication items and individual clothing and equipment during FY 15/16.

The decision to procure equipment from the United States meant that items would come from multiple vendors located across the country. The initial fielding concept called for direct shipment of equipment from vendors to SOF elements in theater. However, lessons learned from previous operations showed utility in consolidation, accountability and testing prior to receipt by the end-user. SOF teams in Syria requested that equipment arrive ready for employment, and that the administrative and

maintenance tasks occur outside of the operational area. The request was approved, and SOF elements developed the CONUS Aggregation Node to execute these tasks.

The CONUS Aggregation Node was established on a U.S. Army installation in the spring of 2015, and the facility was operated by 25 SOF logistics Soldiers with varying functional backgrounds. The CAN included a 10,000 square foot warehouse, 55,000 square foot storage yard and four secure bunkers for ammunition. These facilities enabled SOF elements to segregate 1209 equipment from the other categories of Army materiel, and closely monitor the deliberate effort to receive, account for and test items as they arrived. In total, the CAN received more than 500 truckloads of equipment from vendors across the United States, and it accounted for more than \$400 million in equipment earmarked for Syrian partner forces.

Transportation of equipment into theater also required a departure from standard logistics practices and was made possible through close coordination with strategic mission partners. The traditional employment of surface vessel shipment was not viable due to long lead-times and the requirement for additional movement from the seaport. The rapid pace of operations in Syria dictated timely delivery of requested items, and dedicated air lift was the timeliest mode of delivery. SOF logisticians at the CAN forged strong relationships with the Air Mobility Branch at the United States Transportation Command, and with its support, routed cargo aircraft directly through an airfield adjacent to the CAN. The support from USTRANSOM was vital, and it facilitated the movement of more than 1,400 pallets on 61 aircraft in the first 12 months alone – all received by SOF elements operating in Syria and its adjacent safe havens.

Executing logistics in an immature theater is difficult, and Syria initially lacked the logistics infrastructure necessary to support SOF elements. Syria, and its adjacent safe havens, were not routinely supported by the robust logistics enterprise located in the CENTCOM Area of Re-

01 Equipment staged at a LOG-NODE CRSP yard. After arrival, the equipment is organized and placed on trucks for ground movement to SOF teams in Syria. U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF 5TH SFG(A)



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sponsibility. Years of build-up in Kuwait and Iraq simplified those logistics equations as systems and structures were available in both countries. Conversely, locations around Syria had only nascent capability inherent to SOF teams and lacked the capacity for a sudden uplift in equipment. Initial flights of 1209 materiel were transported from the CAN to these locations, but airfields lacked the ability to efficiently receive, store, distribute and sometimes download equipment once it arrived. SOF elements found it necessary to develop nodes capable of managing 1209 equipment and sustaining SOF teams with standard logistics functions.

Logistics nodes, later referred to as LOGNODEs, were developed and manned by SOF support Soldiers. These nodes were geographically arrayed to best facilitate 1209 equipment distribution and tailored to meet mission requirements at each location. The LOGNODEs varied in size and were responsible for two primary tasks: 1) accountability and throughput of 1209 equipment, and 2) execution of logistics functions for SOF teams in Syria. While a total of two tasks is ostensibly underwhelming, the LOGNODEs were small and each task was riddled with challenges that required critical thinking, innovation and junior leaders to solve problems with limited resources.

The effort to manage 1209 equipment came with a heightened level of scrutiny. The equipment was funded with a specific appropriation and accompanied by Congressional oversight. As a result, SOF logisticians had to develop a segregated line of supply and maintain meticulous records as items moved through theater. Further, 1209 equipment was given to the Vetted Syrian Opposition and divested from military accountability systems. The transaction required that leaders develop a new process that maintained visibility on end-users while simultaneously releasing equipment to their partners. The process received consistent checks to guarantee accurate accounting, and SOF elements answered countless Congressional and DoD inquiries into the amount, type and recipients of 1209 equipment.

While management of 1209 equipment was critical to mission success, SOF teams also needed routine logistical support to operate in Syria. Each LOGNODE maintained the capability to receive, store and distribute 1209 equipment, but also executed sustainment in the maintenance, supply and field services disciplines. SOF support Soldiers established the critical link between airfields and supported SOF teams. Each LOGNODE was fielded with the requisite personnel to execute aircraft download, operate a central receiving and shipping point and conduct ground distribution or aerial delivery of materiel from the airfield to SOF teams operating in remote locations. Further, each LOGNODE conducted maintenance on all vehicles, weapons and generators, and provided vehicle recovery for battle-damaged or non-mission capable platforms. While the LOGNODE teams were manned with a relatively small number of Soldiers, they were versatile enough to execute tasks often reserved for support battalions and brigades.

IN TOTAL, THE CAN RECEIVED MORE THAN 500 TRUCKLOADS OF EQUIPMENT FROM VENDORS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES, AND IT ACCOUNTED FOR MORE THAN \$400 MILLION IN EQUIPMENT EARMARKED FOR SYRIAN PARTNER FORCES.

MATERIAL SOLUTIONS TO UNFORESEEN CHALLENGES

SOF teams prepare to operate in any environment, but battlefield dynamics cannot always be predicted, and often materiel solutions are necessary to overcome challenges. Equipping Special Operations Forces requires flexibility and depth in order to be effective. SOF support elements must be well-versed in the equipping process to deliver required resources and thus capabilities to the battlefield rapidly. There exists a multitude of methods for procuring equipment and services in support of SOF elements. The three primary methods through which to enable the equipping of SOF operating in support of overseas missions include: operational fund purchases, contingency contracting, and requesting materiel through an Operational Deficiency Report. Each method is effective, but SOF support elements must know which to leverage based on the requirement, location, and operational tempo.

If an in-theater solution was available to source an emerging SOF requirement, a Type I or Type II OPFUND would be used as a procurement capability to meet that requirement. OPFUNDs not only provided for the rapid acquisition of mission critical material and services, but also allowed our Soldiers to leverage and engage the local populace by bolstering the local economy and gaining credibility by investing dollars into the local area. The OPFUND program supporting both Type I and Type II funds, was managed by a myriad of pay agents, field ordering officers, contracting officers and regional disbursing agents to execute and fulfill requirements.

Type I OPFUNDs support only USG requirements and provide rapid material and service solutions under a \$30k threshold and temporary services under 30 days. Typical Type I purchases included septic tanks, air conditioners, generators and repair parts, lumber, fuel drums, washing machines, hot water heaters, gravel, linguist services and plumbing materials and labor. Type I OPFUNDs were invaluable for resourcing basic life support items in austere environments where contracts were infeasible or too slow to keep pace with the operational tempo.

Type II OPFUNDs supported partner forces and met operational requirements in a similar manner to Type



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02

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Type I and II OPFUND earmarked for CLI sustainment of VSO partners, and basic life support requirements for SOF teams.

02
Parts purchased with Type I OPFUND were used to create a black-water removal system. This system was employed at a SOF operating site in Syria.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS COURTESY OF 5TH SFG(A)

I OPFUND requests. Type II OPFUND authorizations included durable goods, repair and construction parts, food, fuel and water, sanitation and preventive medicine purchases. These funds had an immeasurable impact on working relationships and the cohesion between U.S. and partner forces. Most notably, Type II OPFUND was pivotal in the task to provide food for our partner forces as the local staples of beans, rice and oils were readily available on the local economy.

Separately, contingency contracting was used for in-theater solutions that do not meet the OPFUND criteria in order to provide essential services and immediate capability for SOF personnel. The primary conduit for contracting support was the Operational Contracting Support Integration Cell within the SOF headquarters, which funneled contract requirements through one of three contracting cells to validate, fund and award contracts in support of SOF elements. All contract requirements compete through the Joint Requirements Review Board, a panel comprised of staffers from the J3, J4, Engineer and JAG sections. Once a requirement is validated, it is forwarded to the appropriate contracting organizations for a contracting officer to solicit bids. SOF elements leveraged contingency contracting in select locations for billeting, food services, construction and limited transportation.

Finally, for solutions that cannot be met immediately in-theater, an element can complete the Operational Deficiency Report. The ODR begins with a well-defined and specific operational shortfall that can be met with an existing material solution. The requesting unit must clearly articulate what the requirement is, the desired capability, an operational justification, impact to the mission if not funded, required delivery date and cost. The ODRs for Syria T&E were processed through the SOF headquarters for validation and then forwarded to the appropriate headquarters for resourcing. Specifically, SOF peculiar equipment requests went to the Theater Special

Operations Command a Combat Mission Needs Statement was developed, and service component common equipment requests went to the conventional force as an Operational Needs Statement. The ODR was crucial when filling gaps in mobility platforms, but SOF logisticians must understand the process and timeline from request to receipt of equipment.

FIELDING THE TEAM

The challenges with sustaining Syria's T&E mission made it apparent that SOF logisticians needed to develop a structured system to manage personnel requirements. In order to prepare for sustainment operations, enablers borrowed an existing Joint SOF community model known as the Joint Operational Readiness Training System. The purpose of JORTS was to ensure sustainers and maintainers could provide support to the forward command and be well postured to continue home-station requirements.

As the complexity of the sustainment mission increased, the JORTS system required a more refined process. SOF logisticians developed a Green Cycle Pre-Mission Training program consisting of three phases to address evolving needs and prepare enablers for utilization across the CENTCOM AOR: Phase I-Individual-Level Training; Phase II- Collective-Level Training; Phase III-Individual Readiness and Deployment. The LOGNODE formed for each cycle completed this training program, comprised of Soldiers from across the unit, in order to create the most diverse and exhaustive skillset possible.

The first phase of PMT focused on baseline individual and MOS-specific skills that created the foundation for further specified skills development and collective training to occur in Phase II. During this phase, LOGNODE members remained in their organic formations while executing training tailored toward proficiency in their overseas mission. Such training included baseline com-



petencies in the enabler's MOS and, in some cases, the completion of ATRRS-related certifications.

Additionally, training with civilian contract partners was critical to sustain individual and MOS-specific skills. Given the ever-growing complexity of sustainment operations across the CENTCOM AOR, coupled with the significant manpower costs associated with manning the sustainment enterprise, the employment of contract maintainers became vitally important to ensure technical proficiency. Training alongside civilian contract partners helped develop skills and bolster partnerships across the sustainment enterprise.

The second phase of PMT consisted of collective training with a tactical focus for the deploying LOGNODE. Soldiers engaged in training geared towards Soldier survivability and tactical proficiency. During the second phase, Soldiers were task-organized into their LOGNODE roles to develop unit cohesion and team dynamics. Phase II covered a wide berth of collective tasks supported by both organic and contracted assets. Training events included tactical and non-tactical vehicle driving, vehicle recovery, convoy procedures, convoy live fire exercises, counter-IED operations, and Tactical Combat Casualty Care. The culminating event of Phase II was a four-day certification exercise. During the first three days of the CERTEX, the LOGNODE conducted Mission Command of sustainment operations from a fixed LOGNODE. Additionally, the LOGNODE managed 1209 stock warehousing and distribution, and conducted long-haul LOGPAC missions to dispersed locations. The last day of the CERTEX focused on the execution of a key leader engagement to exercise strategic messaging and an aerial delivery resupply to cross-train non-MOS soldiers on containerized delivery system bundle rigging.

The last phase of PMT ensured each member of the LOGNODE was administratively ready to deploy. The unit programed an extensive Soldier Readiness Program that included the necessary medical tasks, human resources

tasks (DD93 and SGLI), and parachute operations to ensure Soldiers were current for pay prior to deployment. This time also allowed LOGNODE leadership to direct any necessary retraining after the CERTEX assessments to guarantee full proficiency before departure. The end state of the PMT program was a cohesive team of well-trained, flexible and adaptive SOF logisticians who were able to think critically and employ a vast array of varying skillsets required by the dynamic operating environment of the CENTCOM AOR. Equally important, Soldiers were medically and administratively ready to deploy.

CONCLUSION

Unquestionably, the execution of competent and effective sustainment in an unconventional conflict is pivotal to the success of operations. The D-ISIS mission in Syria presented challenges with equipping a new partner force and sustaining operations, providing material solutions to emerging capability gaps and fielding a capable team of SOF logisticians on an enduring basis. These challenges were overcome through critical thinking, innovation and SOF professionals solving problems with limited resources. Most paramount was the trust and confidence SOF leadership afforded SOF logisticians to empower disciplined execution.

The D-ISIS mission in Syria produced lessons that will be valuable for SOF logisticians into the foreseeable future. First, moving at the "speed of SOF" means that we will always outpace existing support infrastructure, policy and funding. It is necessary to plan for these variables as SOF elements will have to fill the void. It is also imperative that SOF Commands understand the processes associated with the validation and procurement of requirements as staffing and fielding take time, and they must be worked into the operational plan. Finally, SOF logisticians must be versatile and prepared to work outside of their MOS, and a structured cross-training program is the only proven method to guarantee success. 

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01

ANBAR AFTER ISIS

Building Long-Term Stability in Western Iraq.

BY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER
DANIEL R. GREEN, PH.D.

"My duties were simple; I was to encourage the local inhabitants to stand up for themselves."

— Former British Officer & Ambassador Alec Kirkbride⁰¹

The tribes and tribal leaders of Anbar Province are facing a future of uncertain options. It is clear the military momentum of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria has been arrested and the threat from ISIS has largely receded, even though it still remains. Additionally, as the Iraqi Government moves forward with reconstruction in liberated areas, a deep mistrust exists between Anbar residents and their central government that can only be bridged with political reconciliation and a long-term stability plan.

The legacy of tribal cooperation with ISIS, either through action or inaction, and the remaining misgivings of the central government toward Anbar leaders in particular mean liberation from ISIS may not mean liberation from misrule in Baghdad. Even though many tribes were unable to resist the military offensive of ISIS in 2014-

2015 due to the crumbling of the Iraqi Army, inadequate equipment, and poor leadership, the perception continues to exist in the minds of many central government leaders that the Sunni Arab community joined with ISIS and cannot be trusted. Against this backdrop is a struggle within Anbar over political leadership of the province pitting some tribal leaders against more technocratic officials who do not want to see a return to power of the tribes as had taken place during the Anbar Awakening.⁰² The successful mobilization of Anbar's tribes during the Awakening period from 2005-2008 took place under the auspices of robust U.S. military, political, and diplomatic leadership wherein the United States became political advocates of the interests of the Sunni Arab community to the central government.⁰³ Absent this same U.S. presence today, Sunni Arab tribal leaders are left to their own devices and, without an outside catalyst to unify them, they will likely continue to be weak and susceptible to political overtures from Islamists, sectarian interests, or outside groups. Past efforts by the tribes to organize politically on their own under the *Mutammar Sahwat al-Iraq* effort splintered due to tribal and personal rivalries.

A new approach should be considered that will not only mobilize the Sunni Arab tribal community in Anbar Province against ISIS but also seeks to facilitate a political rapprochement with the central government. However, before such an approach can be attempted, how ISIS forces seized Anbar Province must be better understood. The following are three vignettes of how ISIS seized the Anbar towns of Al-Qaim and Hit and attempted to take Haditha based upon interviews with tribal leaders conducted by U.S. Government officials.

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Iraqi Troops stand in formation in front of tribal leaders in Al-Asad circa 2014. U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF 3RD SFG(A) PAO

AL-QAIM – DIVIDE AND CONQUER

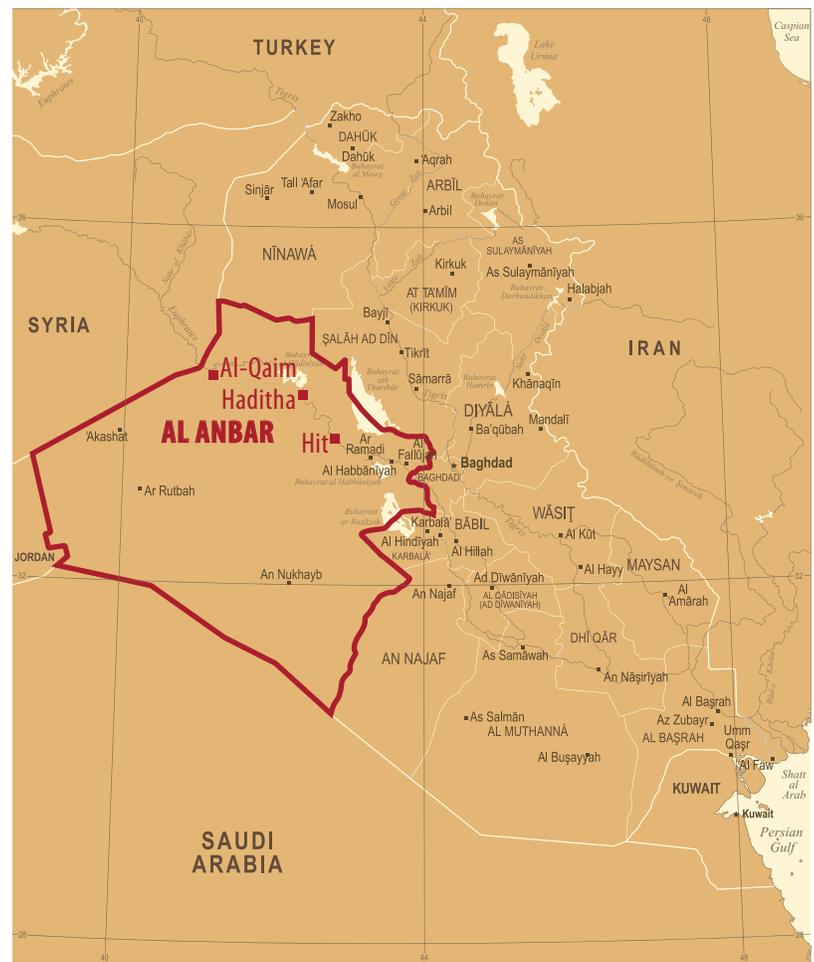
It is unclear what role the residents of al-Qaim performed in protests against the rule of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Malik, from 2011-2014, but they likely sympathized with the broader Sunni Arab community's grievances against their mistreatment under the regime.⁰⁴ Unlike most other parts of Anbar Province, the district of al-Qaim was especially sensitive to events taking place in Syria during the Arab Spring. Not too long after Fallujah "fell" to ISIS militants in early 2014, the district of al-Qaim was quickly overwhelmed by military forces associated with the terrorist group on June 21, 2014. Much like their other military conquests, the success of ISIS was due to a variety of actions including using overwhelming conventional forces, a dispirited indigenous military, popular grievances amongst Sunni Arabs, and tribal rivalries. The central tribe which participated in the Anbar Awakening beginning in 2005, which served as the local partner to U.S. forces, was the Abu Mahal tribe. While other tribes in the region eventually participated in the Awakening, it was this particular tribe which first joined it and provided the effort's key leadership. When ISIS military forces arrived in the al-Qaim region, the Abu Mahal tribe fought them the most until they were forced to capitulate in mid-2014. The key tribal rivals of the Mahal, the Abu Karbali and the al-Salmani, joined forces with ISIS supplementing the terrorist group's forces with local volunteers. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria allowed members of both the Abu Karbali and the al-Salmani tribes to retain the weapons and vehicles they had taken from Abu Mahal as well as equipment that had been abandoned by Iraqi Security Forces. Historically, the Abu Mahal were the first to work with Coalition Forces early in the war around the 2004-2005 time-frame with the Karbali and Salmani eventually doing so in 2006-2007. Once ISIS consolidated its control of the area, significant Abu Mahal leaders fled the region while members of the Karbali and al-Salmani tribes became integral elements of the local ISIS governance and security structure.

HIT, OVERWHELM AND UNDERMINE

In the spring of 2014, the Hit police began receiving intelligence reports of terrorists living in the defunct railroad station west of town. After investigating the report they captured a laptop computer which contained detailed plans for an attack on Hit from three separate directions. These plans were passed to the Ministry of Interior but nothing was done to increase security or provide additional resources to go after the cell. During the summer, Hit began

to receive tens of thousands of internally displaced people (from the eastern Anbar areas of Fallujah and Ramadi who were fleeing ISIS attacks in those cities. Dozens of IDPs were actually ISIS supporters who were acting as sleeper agents reporting on Iraqi Security Forces/tribal fighters within Hit. On the night of Oct. 22, 2014, ISIS began its assault on the City of Hit from the north, west and south following the exact plan which had been previously discovered. Islamic State of Iraq and Syria fighters used the train tracks located on the west side of Hit to move fighters freely into the area. The attack was initiated by multiple assaults on check points in the northern sector of Hit in order to force ISF/tribal fighters to move to reinforce the northern area. Islamic State of Iraq and Syria fighters used two car bombs to attack the Hit Emergency Response Battalion Headquarters located south of the city at 6 a.m., followed by mortars and heavy machine guns. Sleeper cells within Hit then detonated improvised explosive devices throughout the area at various Abu Nimr Sheikhs' houses, checkpoints, and police stations to support the main attack. The IEDs were intended to scare the populace and force the ISF/Tribal fighters to corral their forces into one area so ISIS elements moving in could easily identify them.

02
 The Anbar Province in Iraq outlined in red. The article vignettes focus on how ISIS seized the Anbar towns of Al-Qaim and Hit and attempted to take Haditha based on interviews with tribal leaders.





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01 Traffic fills the market area of Haditha, Iraq. U.S. MARINE CORPS PHOTO BY SGT. CHAD L. SIMON

02 Iraqi troops stand in formation in Al-Asad circa 2014.

03 Iraqi tribal fighters conduct training. The tribes of Anbar successfully mobilized during the Anbar Awakening period to fight al-Qaeda militants.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS COURTESY OF 3RD SFG(A) PAO

Sleeper cells prepositioned snipers on roof tops throughout the city to target ISF leadership, create havoc, and maximize confusion among ISF/tribal fighters. Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's attack forced the ISF/tribal fighters to consolidate on the western side of the Euphrates River where ISIS then used heavy weapons to gain fire superiority and force the ISF/tribal fighters to retreat to the east of the river and then on to Barwana, Haditha. Upon entering the city, ISIS specifically recruited Hit civilians who had fought against Coalition Forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom and on November 21, 2014 they announced through local mosques that they would be conducting forced recruitment of civilians and sending them to fight outside of Hit. On October 4, 2015, seventy Abu Nimr tribesmen were killed by ISIS in Khanizir village and in early November 2014 they massacred upwards of 500 of the tribe's members with 200 bodies later found in a mass grave. In a recent interview a senior Abu Nimr Sheik named Nairn Al-Gaoud said the following about the situation, "ISIS is killing the Abu Nimr because back in the 2000s, in 2006, Abu Nimr was killing al-Qaeda and today Abu Nimr is killing ISIS. We were the first tribe to kill them. Many tribes also fought them, but we were the first ... ISIS, as you know, is an enemy of Islam. Any good man will kill them. Many tribes will fight ISIS and kill ISIS ... ISIS is inhuman."⁰⁵



HADITHA – A DETERMINED SIEGE

Military forces associated with the ISIS seized the towns of al-Qaim and Rawa northwest of Haditha on June 20, 2014, laid siege to Haditha, and then bypassed it to take the town of Hit on October 22, 2014. The town of Barwanah, south of Haditha, had originally fallen to ISIS forces but through a combination of Coalition assistance, the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service, the Iraqi Army, and local tribal and police forces they were able to retake the town on Sept. 7, 2014. Security operations in the area were coordinated through the Jazeera Badeya Operations Center at the Haditha Dam. In mid-November 2014, Haditha security forces reported more than 20 ISIS sleeper cells within the city of Haditha, the majority of which had entered the city by disguising themselves as IDPs from the greater Anbar Province. One member of the Haditha police department described the city as “an Island surrounded by Daesh.”⁰⁷ Efforts by ISIS to take the Haditha area usually involved attacks on multiple fronts utilizing suicide car and truck bomb attacks, indirect fire, and small arms fire. Initial food and medical shortages due to the siege were addressed by a local food distribution committee organizing humanitarian assistance for the local population as well as

IDPs. A local tribal leader provided some perspective on the ISIS siege:

“The tribes inside and around Haditha, including the Jughayfi tribe inside the city and the Albu Nimr tribe on the west bank of the Euphrates, will not surrender the city. Whatever the differences we have with the central government, which ignored the legitimate demands of the Iraqi people in the western [region] ... and allowed groups such as this [ISIS] to enter the country, we will not surrender.”⁰⁷

In early January 2016, ISIS forces launched a complex attack against Haditha from three different directions. The mayor of Haditha provided his perspective, “We have more than 20 martyrs and more than 50 wounded. They are from the army, counterterrorism service, the police and the tribal fighters ... Haditha was targeted Sunday by a massive offensive involving more than 40 vehicles, all armored and some explosives-laden ... They were destroyed by Coalition and Iraqi air strikes.”⁰⁸ During this same attack, ISIS was able to seize the village of Sakrana, where 20 car bombs were used, but it was eventually liberated by ISF several days later. However much tribal resiliency and geography played roles in Haditha’s ability to resist ISIS, locals also realized the importance of their location. Ibrahim al-Jughayfi, spokesman for the Haditha tribal fighters, provided this perspective, “Everyone agrees that there are two things that have helped us. The existence of the Haditha Dam and Ayn Al-Asad Airbase.”⁰⁹



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BUILDING AN ANBAR PEACE

Any effort to build better relations between the residents of Anbar Province and the Iraqi central government must be bold and imaginative, take into account how ISIS had seized power in Anbar, and understand the views of central government leaders with respect to their interest in creating stability in western Iraq. The following initiative is proposed to establish the desired effects in Anbar: (1) wholesale tribal rejection of ISIS, (2) a political rapprochement between the Iraqi central government and Anbar residents, and (3) build enduring stability in the region. It is based upon the concept that both sides to the agreement have rights and responsibilities and that building trust will only come about through a series of confidence-building measures. It is focused on concrete action and is not intended to spawn endless rounds of meetings with few results and an indefinite timeline for implementation.

“THE ANBAR AGREEMENT”

The process would begin with Anbar tribal leaders signing a comprehensive agreement calling upon their members to renounce ISIS and stating that they would punish those who support them (individual tribes have done this in the past such as the Haditha area tribes led

by the Jughayfi in April 2007). It would also call upon the tribes to reject those leaders who sided with ISIS and to select new ones untainted by association with the group. The tribal leaders would pledge their support to a unified Iraq based upon justice and equality and their support for a peaceful political process that dealt with all Iraqis fairly. In return for these pledges, the agreement would call upon the Iraqi Government to provide an expedited judicial process to determine the fate of tribal members who were found guilty of crimes against the state and to establish this process in Anbar Province. The agreement would also call upon the government to establish an office for a representative of the Prime Minister in Ramadi in order to build confidence between the tribes and the Prime Minister and to demonstrate that good-faith efforts are being undertaken to implement the agreement. It would call upon the government to embed CTS forces in each newly-liberated tribal area in order to build cross-tribal forces to provide continued security in tribal communities. These newly mobilized forces would be trained and overseen by members of the CTS. It would call for the creation of an independent board comprised of representatives of the tribes, the Prime Minister's office, prominent but independent Iraqis, and the United Nations to monitor the terms of the agreement and to advocate for its implementation with the Iraqi Central Government's bureaucracy and

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Iraqi tribal and military leaders in Anbar province work together to maintain stability in the region.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO
COURTESY OF 3RD
SFG(A) PAO

tribes in the province. This same board would also advise the Prime Minister about tribal interests in Anbar and keep his office apprised of implementation. The key principles throughout the process are tribal balance and equality, justice and security (e.g. tribal bill of rights), and national cohesion. Funding for additional CTS forces, tribal mobilization billets, and increased judicial activity would be split between the Iraqi Government and Coalition Forces.

Tribal Perspective: There are five “fighting tribes” that central government leaders respect and trust in Anbar Province due to their willingness to fight ISIS, especially when it first arrived in force in the province: Albu Issa (Fallujah), Albu Nimr (Hit), al-Jughayfi (Haditha), al-Wani (Ramadi) and the Albu Mahal (al-Qaim). These tribes should be the primary leaders of an effort to reconcile Anbar’s tribes with the Iraqi Government. If the tribes are able to organize and propose an “Anbar Agreement,” they will see their political influence dramatically increase at the possible expense of more technocratic Sunni Arab leaders. It would allow tribal leaders to “clean house” within their tribes and position themselves as friends of the central government. The embedding of CTS forces in their communities would help these tribal leaders continue to remove ISIS forces within their community and the provision of employment through tribally-balanced local forces overseen by CTS would allow them to provide jobs to their supporters. Furthermore, among all of Iraq’s security forces, the tribes trust CTS the most. Additionally, calling for a unified Iraq pursuing change within peaceful political means also undercuts irredentist elements seeking to break up the Iraqi state using violence.

Iraqi Central Government Perspective: Seeing the tribes “spontaneously” reject ISIS and attempt to clean their own houses of the terrorist group will be well received and, frankly, unexpected. The calling for embedding CTS forces in newly liberated tribal areas will be welcomed as a check on the ability of these tribes to rise again against the central government. The commitment to raise local protective forces under the auspices of CTS will also give central Iraqi Government leaders encouragement that they will play an enduring role in shaping who participates in these forces in order to prevent a future rebellion. The call for judicial involvement and the tribes asking the central government to prosecute those tribal leaders who committed crimes against the state will also be well received as a sign that the tribes are owning up to their role in the rise of ISIS. The establishment of a regional office from the Prime Minister’s office

will be well received as a confidence-building measure and the creation of a “Peace Committee” to monitor and advocate for the implementation of the agreement and to keep key stakeholders informed would also be welcomed. It would be helpful to place the “Peace Committee” in Baghdad as a confidence-building measure and to facilitate its activities in Anbar. The pledge of Coalition Forces to partially fund both new CTS forces and tribal forces would also be welcomed by a government experiencing significant budgetary shortfalls.

CONCLUSION

It is not uncommon for political actors to resort to armed force and use leverage as a tool in political systems that are highly centralized but the population greatly desires decentralization (e.g. unitary state vs. a decentralized society). This is especially acute in situations such as Iraq where mistrust is rampant among the key political players, religious and ethnic grievances are strong, and there is a history of oppression. All of these factors, among others, shape decision-making in Iraq and continually lead to sub-optimal outcomes for all of those involved. The concepts contained within “The Anbar Agreement” seek to allay mistrust between the central Iraqi Government and Anbar tribal leaders by allowing each to build leverage on the other while building greater confidence between both that the motives of each are sincere. The province of Anbar has a special place in Iraqi history as being the first to comprehensively reject al-Qaeda and its enduring relationship with Coalition Forces is unique among Iraqi provinces. A test case of this sort of agreement could become a model for other Sunni Arab areas seeking to reject ISIS but also reform their relationship with the Iraqi Central Government. While this approach is unorthodox and would require not only resources and great dedication to its implementation, it also requires robust U.S. leadership to serve as an honest broker between the Iraqi Government, tribal leaders, and the international community. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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TRIBE AND STATE RELATIONS IN IRAQ

01

The Case of Anbar Province

BY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER DANIEL R. GREEN, PH.D.

"The tribe was a community which went on forever, because it was based on family relationship, not on the ups and downs of politics."

— General John Bagot Glubb⁰¹

Tribal affiliation is a central element of Middle Eastern society and varies considerably depending upon the level of a country's modernity (e.g. education, development, urbanization, etc.), ethnic/religious diversity (e.g. Houthi, Kurd, Sunni, Shia, etc), physical terrain (e.g. desert, mountain, forest, etc.), and political system (e.g. authoritarian, totalitarian, democratic, monarchy, etc.) among other factors. Tribes also play varying roles in the politics of the countries they reside in and indigenous governments frequently use a mixture of approaches to deal with them. These efforts vary from tribes being ignored, suppressed, managed, or co-opted to even, at the other end of the spectrum, tribal capture of the state. Many political leaders view tribes and tribal leaders as potential challengers for power, as impediments to progress, or even corrupt and anachronistic. In governments where tribes control the state or are willing partners in governing, a blending of tribal and state institutions often takes place with the state frequently adopting some characteristics of tribes and tribes adopting more formal practices. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Coalition's views on tribes evolved from a policy of deliberately not engaging with them as separate entities to an active embrace of them as vital social institutions in Iraqi

society. Most notably, this took place during the Anbar Awakening in western Iraq in an effort to combat the Sunni Arab insurgency there. Engagements also took place in Shia areas although to a lesser degree (in many Shiite areas, Shia religious leaders played a more prominent role in community mobilization).⁰² Tribes are once again assuming a central place in a strategy to pacify those areas held by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) forces and so it is important to understand the nature of tribes in order to achieve greater operational effects. It is also essential to appreciate how a changed political environment within Iraq is influencing the broader outlines of tribal outreach efforts.

TRIBAL RELATIONS UNDER THE HUSSEIN REGIME

As a member of the Albu Nasir tribe, Saddam Hussein was friendly toward, and sensitive to, tribal interests when he led Iraq but also recognized that a potential threat to his regime, as well as a guarantor of its stability, would most likely come from within the Sunni Arab community. To this end, he adopted a strategy of an inclusive patronage system which allowed him to both control and manage the

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Al-Anbar sheiks and Iraqi Policemen dance during a conference in Ramadi. ARSOF Soldiers must understand how the blending of tribal and state institutions in Iraq effect operational strategy. U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF 3RD SFG(A) PAO

Sunni Arab tribes in Iraq. He used robust state sector employment (e.g. civil service, military/security forces, state-run industry) as well as other benefits (e.g. political representation, exclusive contracts, access to higher education, trips overseas, etc.) to ensure that Sunni Arabs were aligned with the interests of the state. His regime then used these benefits to shape tribal behavior by denying access to state benefits to punish a tribe or its leaders, to divide tribes by favoring some factions over others, or to favor a tribe to such a degree that it also caused discord within a community. This patronage system facilitated the development of a robust Sunni Arab middle class and a significant portion of its members benefited immensely from this largesse. However, the principal goal of this patronage approach was control of the Sunni Arab tribes using "golden handcuffs" so that political opposition would be so costly as to prevent it completely. The Hussein regime also used force and military power to protect its interests and this carrot and stick approach maintained stability, protected the regime, and built a base of political support for it within Iraq. The regime also emphasized the development of a technocratic elite of engineers, doctors, architects, lawyers, and others as part of a national strategy of development. Thus, the importance of tribal affiliation was understood by the regime but tribes were not allowed to develop their power and influence fully as it also relied upon technocrats to run the country. During this time, the Sunni Arab tribal community had political representation of its interests through the leadership of Saddam Hussein and his regime, access to state resources through government largesse, but no real ability to affect political change in the country outside of fairly narrow limits set by the government.

THE ANBAR AWAKENING - RISE OF THE TRIBES

The invasion of Iraq by Coalition Forces in 2003 significantly undermined the inclusive patronage system from which Sunni Arab tribes had long benefited. Initial policies adopted by the Coalition Provisional Authority such as the disbanding of Iraqi security forces, the privatization of state industry, and de-Baathification dismantled central elements of the largesse and political representational structures from which the tribes had benefited. Additionally, the political empowerment of new segments

of the population including the Shiites and the Kurds set up alternative patronage systems which directly competed for resources. However, the political constraints which had long kept tribal power checked were also removed while the patronage system was simultaneously dismantled. As other Sunni Arab political actors began to participate in the new Iraq and political parties proliferated, new opportunities arose. Once the Sunni Arab tribal community decided to turn against al-Qaeda due to the terrorist group's brutality, competing political vision, and threat to tribal economic interests, tribal power finally began to reach its natural fruition. The Anbar Awakening process not only reestablished security in the province after which it was named but it also empowered tribes politically and economically through U.S. diplomatic, military, and political efforts. In many respects, the United States became the new political advocates of the Sunni Arab community within the Shiite-led central government. Additionally, Coalition financial support in the province through reconstruction contracts (e.g. Civil Affairs/U.S. Agency for International Development, salaries for tribal fighters (e.g. Commander's Emergency Response Program/Ministry of Interior), employment on and logistical support to forward operating bases, and Coalition political advocacy on their behalf in Baghdad created a new patronage system, albeit not as robust as under the Hussein regime. While Coalition Forces were in Iraq, the Sunni Arab community and tribal groups in particular regained a modicum of political representation, greater access to state largesse and other resources, and the full realization of their power through security and political mobilization.

THE ANBAR AWAKENING - ENLISTING THE POPULATION

The Anbar Awakening process wherein Coalition Forces collaborated with tribal leaders to recruit, train, and deploy their members as security forces worked through traditional tribal leadership structures to establish enduring local security by empowering legitimate leaders. This allowed them to reestablish social control over their members and preside over a process of tribal reconciliation, consolidation, and mobilization. In this respect, the U.S. acted as a "super-tribe" mitigating tribal friction points within and between tribes, facilitated tribal

reconciliation through development contracts and access to employment as security forces, and enhanced the status of tribal leaders through political support, attention, and inclusion in planning efforts. Additionally, military operations against insurgent members also served to pressure tribal members to reconcile with their home tribe. Tribal engagement was usually conducted through a paramount sheik who through a process of consultation with the tribe's sub-sheiks and tribal members presided over a process of tribal reconciliation. This entailed using patronage and influence to convince, cajole, and pressure tribal members to rejoin the fold.

This process required tribal members who had been aligned with al-Qaeda in Iraq to provide intelligence on the terrorist group and participate in operations against it. By turning against their former colleagues this process facilitated the inclusion of the formerly ostracized tribal member back into the tribe by establishing a blood-debt between the former AQI tribal member and his past terror associates. It was also a demonstration of his loyalty to the tribe. Another aspect of the Anbar Awakening was that the terms of the conflict differed from the subsequent struggle with ISIS forces. Tribal members who participated in the insurgency, both the nationalist and Islamist aspects of it, focused most of their efforts against Coalition Forces and the Iraqi Security Forces. While opportunists within tribes sometimes used violence to seize more power, these efforts were relatively modest. Once the insurgency split, tribal leaders focused their efforts on killing foreign jihadists and overseeing a process of adjudicating local collaborators. Individual revenge-seeking took place as tribes internally policed their members but no quarter was given to foreign jihadists by the tribe. Paramount sheiks also participated in the selection of tribal members to be trained as security forces and frequently sought to ensure tribal balance in order to maintain their position and to reconcile different family groups.

TRIBAL RELATIONS BEFORE ISIS

Following the departure of U.S. military forces from Iraq in 2011, the government of then Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki adopted a policy of Sunni Arab marginalization and persecution.⁰³ Tribal groups which had risen in power during the U.S. presence now witnessed the systematic dismantlement of their

heretofore modest inclusion in Iraqi political affairs. National Sunni Arab political leaders were removed from office through arrest, persecution, or threats and many tribal leaders also suffered similar fates. With political marginalization came economic adversity as salaries were cut or abolished for many Anbar security forces, including tribal groups, and state security forces attempted to intimidate Sunni Arabs to prevent them from expressing political objections to the national government's policies.

Attempts by the tribes to organize were beset with difficulties as some tribal leaders refused to be led by members of the Albu Risha tribe that led the Anbar Awakening while others attempted to build their own political followings. Divided politically, Anbar tribes struggled to present a unified voice, leadership, and political program to the central government. Forces allied with al-Qaeda in Iraq began to take political advantage of this growing resentment toward the central government within the Sunni Arab community.

Using the collapse of government control and stability in Syria during the Arab Spring as a safe haven to reorganize, ISIS forces began a program of political outreach to disaffected Sunni Arab communities looking for support. Additionally, they also conducted military planning to seize the Sunni Arab heartland and identified potential tribal

allies, assembled a target list of Anbar tribal leaders for assassination, and established a political program to impose on the population. In many respects, they sought to create a competing state within Iraq that incorporated the lessons the Islamist group had learned from its prior experiences in Iraq. The ISIS political program took advantage of Sunni Arab grievances to present itself as the protector of Sunni Arabs while simultaneously imposing a system of control based upon Sharia law. Unlike its previous incarnation as al-Qaeda in Iraq when it operated as an insurgent group, ISIS now sought to function as a government. It had conventional-sized military forces, judicial, policing, and other state services ready to be implemented, and a system of population control ready to impose on the tribes. Knowing that the tribes were its greatest threat, ISIS sought to control them through fear and intimidation while splitting them through the selective empowerment of key factions or leaders. Many tribes were unable or unwilling to resist the ISIS forces, especially as conventional Iraqi Army units fled, were captured, or disbanded altogether. Additionally, since many tribal groups were organized to fight a modestly sized insurgency they were unable to resist conventional-sized military attacks as isolated checkpoints were quickly overrun. In some cases, tribes invited ISIS forces into their

communities in an effort to remove the Maliki Government and the Iraqi Army, which operated at his behest, from power. With the disappearance of state largesse, the halting of economic activity in ISIS controlled areas, and the population control measures imposed on Sunni Arabs, tribal groups were increasingly forced to rely upon their own resources.

TRIBAL RELATIONS DURING ISIS

When ISIS forces arrived in Anbar Province in 2014-2015, it was the culmination of a multi-year campaign to reconstitute their forces in Syria, reach out to the disaffected Sunni Arab community within Iraq, and learn the lessons of its prior defeat during the Awakening period. Their strategy initially began by systematically weakening the Anbar Awakening leadership. It started with the targeted assassination of influential leaders in the Awakening movement and then the scattering of remaining leaders once ISIS forces seized the province. Prominent assassinations included (1) Albu Issa Sheik Aifan Saddun (Fallujah), the a member of parliament, who was killed by a suicide vest attacker on January 15, 2013, (2) Jughayfi Paramount Sheik Said Flayyih Uthman al Jughayfi (Haditha) who was killed by a suicide car bomb at his guesthouse on Feb. 28, 2014, and (3) Aniza Paramount Sheik Lawrence Mutib Mahruth al-Hathal, the mayor of

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01 Iraqi tribal fighters conduct training. Tribes play a vital role in providing stability in Iraq.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF 3RD SFG(A) PAO

Nukaybah, who was killed by a car bomb on January 31, 2015, among other leaders. The swiftness and success of the ISIS attacks and their overall brutality led to many Awakening leaders being killed, displaced, discredited, or demoralized. With relations having deteriorated between tribal groups and the central government and with most tribal security forces having now been defunded, Anbar residents were only protected by the Iraqi Army and local police forces. As the Iraqi Army withdrew or was defeated by ISIS forces, Anbar communities came to rely solely upon local police forces which were largely overrun or scattered robbing tribes of some of their best military leaders. Having seized the province, ISIS then sought to expand its influence within the tribes by favoring some factions over others and using intimidation to force compliance with their rule. Most notably, they killed upwards of 500 members of the Abu Nimr tribe in November 2014 and approximately seventy Nimr tribesmen on October 4, 2015 in the Khanizir village. Additionally, due to the size of ISIS forces and their willingness to use violence to impose their rule, they were able to control many tribes and impose a superstructure of political rule upon them. The terrorist group also sought to replace tribal affiliation with a radicalized conception of identity through reeducating and indoctrinating young people and de-emphasizing tribal identity. Significant numbers of Anbar residents fled to Erbil, the country of Jordan, or to Baghdad to escape the violence, further complicating tribal mobilization efforts.

The Government of Iraq appears to have adopted a program of partial tribal mobilization and the selective empowerment of certain tribal leaders, many of whom had not been active in the Anbar Awakening movement. Some Awakening leaders are still leading their respective tribal forces, albeit substantially smaller than before, and are playing prominent roles in local police forces and in elected positions. The overall approach of the central government seems to be shaped by budgetary constraints, an unwillingness to mobilize tribal forces to Awakening levels due to a concern over possible threats to the central government, a sense that they do not know who to support, and a view that the tribes were complicit in the rise of ISIS and must be controlled by formal state security forces. This mixture of security approaches to controlling the tribes has also extended to Govern-

TRIBES ARE AN IMPORTANT SOCIAL INSTITUTION IN IRAQI SOCIETY AND ARE ESSENTIAL IN ANY SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY TO DEFEAT ISIS FORCES.

ment of Iraq political engagements as they engage with certain tribal leaders over others in order to prevent a unified tribal effort. Additionally, it appears as if a struggle exists between tribal and more technocratic leaders in the Sunni Arab community which further limits a program of overall tribal empowerment. Finally, a more robust U.S. military and diplomatic presence in Baghdad has also facilitated Sunni Arab tribal empowerment and prompted the central government to be more inclusive of tribal forces in government deliberations. However, many tribes have begun to rely upon their own financial means or have established relationships with outside patrons to meet tribal security needs to fund local protective forces. Lacking sufficient support from the central government, many tribes are pursuing some elements of a "go-it-alone" approach and have even opened an office in Washington, D.C. to directly advocate their interests before members of the U.S. Government. Additionally, displaced tribal leaders have also taken advantage of their locations in Jordan, Erbil, and Baghdad to organize politically which has allowed some cohering of a unified political approach to their collective problems. In many respects, the tribes are increasingly self-sufficient politically, militarily, and economically and are willing to work with the central government but have fostered outside links if this approach does not address their long-term concerns.

CONCLUSION

Tribes are an important social institution in Iraqi society and are essential partners in any successful strategy to defeat ISIS forces. Sunni Arab tribes have seen their relationship to the Iraqi state fluctuate over the decades from managed collusion to marginal-

ized outcasts to governing partners to a suspicious and highly truncated partnership. However tribes are looked upon, they will continue to play a vital role in providing stability in Sunni Arab areas and must be included in any effort to govern their communities.

While competing visions of what sort of partnership with tribes will continue to be debated, they will be nested within a broader conversation of the relationship between the central government and its minority religious and ethnic communities. A highly centralized state presiding over a decentralized population will continue to look for local partners who can bridge the divide between how formal governing institutions are designed and the requirements for local legitimacy and efficacy. Tribes and tribal leaders can often provide these essential connections between local communities and provincial and central government institutions. Additionally, their increasing ability to operate on their own politically, militarily, and economically will provide further opportunities and challenges for them to exercise their newfound influence into the future. The challenge going forward is to make sure they are willing partners in their future and not bystanders to it. 

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NOTES 01. General John Bagot Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion*, 1948, pg. 120. 02. Daniel R. Green and William F. Mullen, III, *Fallujah Redux: The Anbar Awakening and the Struggle with al-Qaeda*, 2014, pgs. 1-158. 03. Emma Sky, *The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq*, 2015, pgs. 1-400; Joel Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, 2014, pgs. 1-284.



The challenge of addressing tribal "revenge-taking" will assume greater importance as areas of Anbar Province are cleared of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) forces and efforts are undertaken there to reestablish civil governance. If not dealt with appropriately, revenge-taking by aggrieved tribesmen will contribute to a second wave of instability in cleared areas and has the potential to unravel recent security gains. Meetings with tribal and government leaders from Anbar indicate that revenge-taking is a real concern and requires a comprehensive effort from the Government of Iraq. However, addressing the sources of grievance from which tribal members suffer will involve more than simply providing compensating payments, it must be holistic, specific to each tribal situation, well-resourced, and actively supported by Coalition Forces and the Government of Iraq. A number of complicating factors will make this challenge more difficult including the fact that there will be a lag time between the liberation of an area and the reconstitution of local government, rule of law, as well as police departments. Newly empowered tribal factions, which are now armed and organized, will also have the preponderance of power in a post liberation environment and will have the means and incentive to exact revenge. Many tribes have also seen their leaders killed, discredited, or displaced which will further complicate revenge mitigation efforts. Some tribes will need to select new leaders, which will likely be a contested process, marginalize or exile others, and facilitate the reconsolidation of the tribe. However challenging addressing revenge-taking may be for the Government of Iraq and Coalition Forces, a number of lessons can be drawn from past experiences with this issue as well as from a greater understanding of Arab tribal culture which may provide a way forward.

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THE CONCEPT OF "REVENGE"

IN ARAB TRIBAL SOCIETIES

BY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER
DANIEL R. GREEN, PH.D.

TRIBAL STRUCTURES

Tribes are extended family and kinship groups which through shared ancestry operate as collective organizations the members of which have rights and responsibilities to each other.⁰¹ Tribes vary in size from a few hundred members to hundreds of thousands and can span the length of a country. Largely settled Arab tribes, as opposed to nomadic tribes, have developed extensive tribal hierarchies, often initially tied to control of arable land, and are usually led by a paramount sheik (leader) who presides over, but simultaneously consults, as equals sub-sheiks who lead other family clusters. The most basic component of a tribe is the family unit, the next level of complexity is the clan followed by the sub-tribe, tribe, and then tribal confederation. Every tribal member has an identity which affixes them to the tribe's social and familial hierarchy and is usually reflected in their formal name (e.g. Sheik Ghazi Faisal

Nejres (father) Al-Gaoud (family) Al-Nimrawi (tribe) Al Dulaimi (tribal confederation)). A tribal member's name serves as a reference point for other tribal members to understand their place in the family's structure and to determine their behavior towards them. While a name determines a tribal member's social identity in a tribe, it does not prevent him from ascending or descending in social, economic, or political status in the tribe. Every tribal member has a collection of rights which they can call upon to be respected (e.g. the right of appeal to a sheik for justice) as well as responsibilities to the tribe as a whole (e.g. volunteer for collective tribal defense) and to specific tribal sheiks (e.g. right- for patronage; responsibility- to defer to their leadership). Because Arab tribes pre-date the modern Iraqi state and can often trace their lineage back for centuries, a collection of tribal mores, codes, and values have developed over time which guide and shape their behavior. In many respects, this collection of tribal behavioral guidelines is an attempt by the tribe to ameliorate disputes, establish social expectations, provide for stability, and to regularize tribal interactions. Tribal sheiks typically perform the role of guiding the tribe and are often deferred to by tribal members for judgments concerning violations of tribal tenets.

TRIBAL MORES: HONOR, SHAME AND VENGEANCE

Within Arab communities where tribal identity is strong, one's individual identity is, to a great extent, sublimated within the collective identity of family, clan, sub-tribe, and tribe. Concomitant with this is the centrality of personal, family, and tribal honor within a shame based society. Within western countries, shame pertains to an *individual's* social status and standing and is a function of guilt which relates to how an individual's conduct interacts with their internal values and conscience. In the Middle East, an individual's shame is related to how that person's conduct reflects upon the status and standing of a person's *social group* (family, clan, or tribe). A tribal member's honor is a function of how his behavior, as well as the wrongs he has suffered, impacts the reputation of his social identity. When a tribal member seeks revenge for a wrong he has suffered, he does so to restore his honor and that of his family, clan, sub-tribe and tribe. Declining to do so

compounds the dishonor and, if not addressed, could contribute further to reputational losses. Over time, a lack of honor could lead to social ostracizing within the tribe as well as personal, political, and financial hardship and invite further attacks as others sense weakness. However, reacquiring honor through revenge varies based upon the victim, the perpetrator, and the nature of the crime. A useful perspective on this issue is the former Commander of the Arab Legion in Jordan, General John Bagot Glubb:

"Another aspect of tribal law is that the same crime differs according to the circumstances and the identity of the victim. To murder or rob a member of an enemy tribe (in the days of tribal war) was, of course, no crime at all. To kill a man of another but friendly tribe cost the murderer only seven camels in compensation. To kill a man of his own tribe would cost fifty camels and many other expenses. In either case, if the victim were at the time a guest of the murderer, the compensation would be quadrupled."⁰²

This need to establish the status of a victim as well as the perpetrator and determine the nature of compensation adds layers of complexity to revenge-mitigation efforts. It also complicates revenge seeking for tribal members since affixing responsibility can sometimes be very difficult, prompting some to seek proximate revenge versus absolute revenge.

Within the broad categories of honor and justice are a set of rights and obligations between sheiks and tribal members that, in their totality, amount to a rudimentary social safety net. This community ecosystem provides protection and support of the weak, hospitality, patronage, and social equality. While material inequality can be quite stark within a tribe, it is mitigated by a form of social equality so that even the poorest member of a tribe can engage with his paramount sheik as a social equal although the sheik is first among equals. In some respects, it is a form of social egalitarianism rooted in respect and honor that no amount of material or status difference can diminish. The expectations that flow from these obligations include the ability of sheiks to facilitate patronage (e.g. jobs), provide for those who are less well off (e.g. charity), and adjudicate disputes by administering justice (e.g. conflict resolution). Tribal leaders also seek to promote stability in a tribe through regular consultations with both other sheiks as well as members of the tribe to maintain harmony within the group. This process usually takes place

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 Local sheiks in Balad, Iraq, discuss the way forward during a meeting with both Sunni and Shia sheiks. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY RICK RZEPKA

IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AN INDIVIDUAL'S SHAME IS RELATED TO HOW THAT PERSON'S CONDUCT REFLECTS UPON THE STATUS AND STANDING OF A PERSON'S SOCIAL GROUP ... WHEN A TRIBAL MEMBER SEEKS REVENGE FOR A WRONG HE HAS SUFFERED, HE DOES SO TO RESTORE HIS HONOR AND THAT OF HIS FAMILY, CLAN, SUB-TRIBE, AND TRIBE.



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concerning the strategic direction of a tribe, other matters internal to the tribe (e.g. leadership selection), and how the tribe will engage outside actors. As extended family networks, tribes have also adopted a practical approach to interactions, with the state and politics more broadly, and are not typically prone to either political or ideological rigidity. This is not to say that some individuals within tribes or even sections within tribes do not have strong views, but that a tribe's typical manner of behavior is realistic pragmatism. In some cases, a perceived ideological motivation may in fact be in the service of other short-term goals such as a struggle for influence within a tribe. It is not uncommon, for example, for some tribes or elements within tribes to align with groups (e.g. ISIS) hostile to their interests in order to achieve other goals. Taken together, this collection of tribal rights, responsibilities, mores and values creates a lattice work of connections that tie individual tribal members together and provides benefits for them as well as obligations to the tribal collective.

As extended kinship networks, tribes are also able to call upon a variety of resources to buttress their interests and any tribal member has the potential to be called upon to assist the tribe, especially if it is thought that a threat exists to their collective interests. These networks also typically seek to place additional members of their group in key places of influence, especially if it is regarded as an influential political position, provides economic benefits, or provides for a military/security advantage. It is not uncommon for Westerners to view such behavior as nepotistic but from a tribal perspective it is seen as a benefit to the tribe and a means of ensuring compli-

ance with its decisions. It is a commonly held view in many Western countries that the path to success in life is by allowing the individual to excel which then only allows for a secondary benefit to accrue to a group he/she might claim membership in. Within tribal cultures, this perspective is reversed where the individual succeeds because the group has been allowed to prosper. Additionally, by establishing a robust network of influence, the tribe is better positioned to adjust to the ups and downs of politics and can call upon the collective resources of the group to bolster their position when required.

An example of this is the Albu Nimr tribe in the Anbar town of Hit wherein one sheik is a Member of Parliament, some are leading police and tribal security forces, others are running the tribal businesses in Jordan and in other countries, and a sheik is the mayor of Hit. This combination of political, economic, and military/security power makes the Albu Nimr a very strong tribe. Family networks also provide linkages to other tribes, since tribal members frequently intermarry, and many tribes have histories of either cooperation or antagonism based upon a variety of calculations of self-interest. Thus, no single tribe stands alone and many are interconnected with each other. However, like many families, there are rivalries and struggles for power within tribes and so Coalition Forces members must be mindful of the fact that some tribal leaders will take advantage of their ignorance of tribal politics in order to expand their influence. It is essential that engagement efforts be robust enough to ensure that a baseline of tribal organization is established so that engagement efforts do not inadvertently support one faction or another which may destabilize local security efforts.

REVENGE - THE ANBAR AWAKENING

The Anbar Awakening process wherein Coalition Forces collaborated with tribal leaders to recruit, train, and deploy their members as security forces served to significantly diminish revenge seeking behavior during Operation Iraqi Freedom.⁰³ The general approach of the program was to work through traditional tribal leadership structures to establish enduring local security by empowering legitimate leaders. This allowed them to reestablish social control over their members and preside over a process of tribal reconciliation, consolidation, and mobilization. In this respect, the U.S. acted as a "super-tribe" mitigating tribal friction points within and between tribes, facilitated tribal reconciliation through development contracts and access to employment as security forces, and enhanced the status of tribal leaders through political support, attention, and inclusion in planning efforts. Additionally, military operations against insurgent

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Sheiks speak with members of the Iraqi military and police forces. Tribes typically seek to place members of their group in key places of influence, especially if it is regarded as an influential political position, provides economic benefits, or provides for a military/security advantage. This combination of power makes a strong tribe.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS COURTESY OF 3RD SFG(A) PAO

members also served to pressure tribal members to reconcile with their home tribe. Tribal engagement was usually conducted through a paramount sheik who, through a process of consultation with the tribe's sub-sheiks and tribal members, presided over a process of tribal reconciliation. This entailed using patronage and influence to convince, cajole, and pressure tribal members to rejoin the fold.

This process required tribal members who had been aligned with al-Qaeda in Iraq to provide intelligence on the terrorist group and participate in operations against it. By turning against their former colleagues this process facilitated the inclusion of the formerly ostracized tribal member back into the tribe by establishing a blood-debt between the former AQI tribal member and his past terror associates. It was also a demonstration of his loyalty to the tribe. Another aspect of the Anbar Awakening was that the terms of the conflict differed from the subsequent struggle with ISIS forces. Tribal members who participated in the insurgency, both the nationalist and Islamist aspects of it, focused most of their efforts against Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces. While opportunists within tribes sometimes used violence to seize more power, these efforts were relatively modest. Once the insurgency split, tribal leaders focused their efforts on killing foreign jihadists and overseeing a process of adjudicating local collaborators. Individual revenge-seeking took place as tribes internally policed their members but no quarter was given to foreign jihadists by the tribe. Paramount sheiks also participated in the selection of tribal members to be trained as security forces and frequently sought to ensure tribal balance, within the tribe in order to maintain their position and to reconcile different family groups.

REVENGE — THE ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND SYRIA

The rise of ISIS in Anbar was due, in part, on tribal collusion with the group, through action or inaction, as well as the ability of ISIS military forces to coerce compliance to their rule through fear, intimidation, and violence. Some tribal factions that had been affiliated with the Anbar Awakening worked with ISIS while others resisted and large numbers of tribal members fled the province causing tribal structures to weaken. The violence directed against the tribes partly reflected the determination by ISIS to ensure the tribes did not challenge their power since they had played such a prominent role in fighting AQI in the past. Suppression and cooptation were key elements of their approach and their conventional-sized forces ruthlessly implemented their vision of Sharia Law on the population. The

large scale violence that ISIS used to exert its control, as well as tribal complicity in enabling them to do so, escalates the potential for revenge-seeking behavior dramatically. Furthermore, the local governance program ISIS imposed on the population and the lack of accountability for their actions further exacerbated the abuses the population experienced. The variety, scale, frequency, and length of time the tribes experienced dishonorable acts suggests that revenge-seeking will occur on a similar scale. Abuses occurred within and between families and clans, sub-tribes, and tribes. It encompassed personal affronts such as loss of property, abuse, rape, and murder to larger scale atrocities where specific groups within tribes (e.g. factions) or large components within tribes were systematically killed (e.g. Albu Nimr in the town of Hit). Foreign fighters as well as local tribal members participated in the abuses and so a process of disentangling responsibility and establishing accountability must be attempted.





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RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

A process of mitigating tribal revenge should seek to establish a process wherein the Anbar Government and the Government of Iraq more broadly empower tribal structures to reconsolidate, reconcile, and address their problems using a mix of traditional tribal practices as well as rule-of-law procedures. A blended approach of formal state activities and customary practices will create a legitimate process for both parties and further enable follow-on reconstruction activities, the reestablishment of local governance, and facilitate enduring security in the area.

- **Establish a Tribal Truth and Reconciliation Process.** Initial revenge-mitigation efforts should focus on reconciling elite tribal factions so they can better work together. This will significantly diminish revenge-seeking activities within and across the tribe. A panel of tribal and government officials from Anbar Province should be established to convene shuras with tribal sheiks from targeted tribes to explore the nature of their grievances and to facilitate a coming together of the factions. This process will be facilitated not just by government participation but through the implied expectation that such a process could eventually lead to reconstruction of an area and the potential for lucrative contracts. Additionally, this process of consultation will also begin a conversation about how the tribe will address revenge-seeking behavior more broadly and allow the tribe and state to begin preliminary planning to that end.

- **Determine the Facts.** A supplementary effort should simultaneously be undertaken to help tribal members establish the facts of what took place in their community. Iraqi police, justice, and intelligence officials, under the auspices of a Tribal Truth and

Reconciliation effort, should begin a public process of interviews to (1) establish how ISIS seized the area, (2) the nature of their rule, (3) what locals supported the terrorist group, (4) the nature of crimes committed, and (5) the whereabouts of perpetrators. This particular effort must be robust since the scale of atrocities and those seeking redress will be significant. A public effort to establish what took place in a newly liberated area will do much to dampen revenge-motivated ardor as locals see that a legitimate process of addressing grievances has been established. A temporary, local amnesty should be declared that allows local ISIS supporters to provide truthful and complete testimony about their actions and the crimes they witnessed in return for a more lenient sentence or, quite possibly, forgiveness. This will require some ability to protect these individuals from reprisal as they participate in the reconciliation process.

- **Orchestrate "Noble Gestures" of Forgiveness.** As the victims, perpetrators, and scale of the crimes become known, a simultaneous process of sanctioning guilty parties, as well as forgiving others, should be explored. The dimensions of this process will need to be established through elite tribal consultation. Due to the scale of the crimes and their horrendous nature, a tribal process of reconciliation might need to be embraced allowing lower-level crimes to be addressed under the tribal system while allowing more grievous crimes to be addressed by the state. Thus, crimes such as property damage and theft could potentially be forgiven if compensation was paid to the victims under the tribal system. Large scale events wherein tribal leaders orchestrate forgiveness ceremonies as part of a process of establishing tribal harmony should also be explored. Herein, General Glubb shares his views on the subject: "His pride being thus salvaged, a poor bedouin will often forgo the prospect of wealth in order to make a dramat-

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A detainee holds his children following his release as part of reconciliation efforts in Iraq.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. MARGARET NELSON

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Members of the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation meet with the Former Regime Element to discuss veteran benefits in Iraq.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. JOANN S. MAKINANO

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A child waves Iraqi flags during a ceremony celebrating the reopening of a water pumping station in Burhitz, Iraq.
U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY PFC. KIRBY RIDER



ic gesture of forgiveness before a noble audience.” Facilitating the orchestration of these “noble gestures” by empowering tribes to work through their own process of forgiveness should also be supported. A built in flexibility must exist wherein establishing the rule of law is balanced against internal tribal revenge-mitigation and reconciliation efforts. Establishing stability that is enduring is more important than a perfect process that will likely never be implemented.

- **Create Accountability.** A process of allowing damaged communities to knit themselves together will eventually require a process of accountability. Reestablishing the rule of law in newly liberated areas will be difficult as local governments reconstitute themselves and trained judicial officials return from exile, emerge from hiding, or are brought in from the outside. A transparent legal process must be established that will give the people confidence that tribal reconciliation, establishing the facts of abuses, limited amnesty, and orchestrated forgiveness will lead to final accountability. To this end, detention facilities will also need to be evaluated and as well as justice infrastructure and will require strong Government of Iraq support.

CONCLUSION

Once ISIS has been defeated militarily in an area, dealing with the legacy of their rule will assume greater importance. The scale, complexity, and duration of the violence they committed against residents of Anbar Province will have long-term effects if not addressed properly. As a society that is strongly influenced by tribal traditions, mores, and structures, Anbar is poised to experience a second wave of violence as tribal members seek private redress for wrongs they have suffered. If not addressed in a timely and comprehensive manner revenge-seeking behavior has the potential to

destabilize Anbar once again prompting outside groups to militarily intervene to re establish order. A holistic approach requiring a partnership between the Government of Iraq, tribal leaders, and Coalition Forces must be undertaken that seeks to empower tribal leaders to address as many sources of grievance as they can to prevent revenge-seeking behavior. A transparent process facilitating tribal leadership consolidation and reconciliation as well as establishing the identities of victims, perpetrators, and potential compensation should be established that will allow communities to heal and justice to be served. If a serious attempt is undertaken to address revenge-seeking behavior in



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newly-liberated areas, significant strides will have been made to reestablish stability and freedom in Anbar for the long-term and to allow local residents to once again participate in the national life of their country. 

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OPTIMIZING INDIRECT MISO

MIST-IRAQ AND ADVISING AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR

From the firsthand experiences of Regional MISO Detachment Commanders.

BY CAPTAIN AMY SEXAUER, CAPTAIN VICTOR MCKENZIE,
CAPTAIN SHARI SMITH AND CAPTAIN PHILIP KAUTZ

ADVISING OPERATIONAL MISO

For years ARSOF psychological operators have deployed to develop partnered PSYOP forces — to increase *by, with and through* Military Information Support Operations capability and capacity. Despite all efforts in developing MISO specific skills in our partners, the framework for employing these skills with relevance to *campaigns and major operations* — the operational level — remains immature and underexplored. If psychological operators are to develop partner MISO capabilities to this level, paradigms must be developed to simultaneously increase understanding of the operational level of war in conjunction with MISO advisory skills. The PSYOP community must codify what it is to *Advise Operational MISO*. One ongoing case study exists on advising operational MISO which may provide the precedent to fully investigate and develop the concept. This case study is the work of the Military Information Support Team-Iraq from 2014 to present. Drawing from the MIST-IZ experience, ten potential areas for advising a partner MISO force at the operational level of war have been extrapolated.

MIST-IZ CASE STUDY OF ADVISING OPERATIONAL MISO

In the summer of 2014, when the significance of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria threat was just occurring to the western world, a Regional MISO Team, designated MIST-IZ, deployed to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

MISTs are routinely postured in a number of embassies around the world and generally have the task of conducting unilateral MISO to support the messaging priorities of Theater Special Operations Commands and U.S. Country Teams.

The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq requested that in lieu of conducting unilateral MISO, MIST-IZ *advise* the Iraqi Ministry of Defense in efforts to conduct MISO of their own. This request included defined expectations of only engaging with military counterparts (versus any other non-military key influencers) and strictly limiting the amount and type of resources offered. The four person SOF element of MIST-IZ, relatively new to the world of messaging and much younger than their Iraqi counterparts, had to assess the

capabilities, capacity, and priorities the Iraqi military had for their conduct of MISO.

Advise Iraqi partners on their conduct of MISO was a distinct transition in approach. Unilateral messaging was the primary tool of MISO during the last two major conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unilateral messaging can be best summarized as instigating behavioral change within a desired target audience by disseminating an array of multimedia products and leveraging the outcomes of select actions. Across the full spectrum of warfare, unilateral messaging capability will always be a necessary task for psychological operators as it is the baseline of the craft. However, as Special Operations doctrine reflects, training indigenous forces to carry out an objective is often more appropriate, more discreet, or more effective. For this MIST, it was clear that this approach was aimed at creating a sustained messaging capability within the Iraqi military that would outlast a U.S. presence and hold operational relevance. It was also clear that a message written and broadcasted by the U.S. military, no matter how culturally vetted, would not meet the

U.S. goal of supporting the long term objective — a unified and stable Iraq. The Iraqi people had to find their own inspiration for unity of voice and unity of action. The MIST would have to navigate supporting that goal without taking the reins.

This navigation first took months of assessing the Iraqi messaging apparatus, and afterwards it was evident that the power to create real change existed at the *operational*, and not the tactical level. Although the relationships with operational level leaders began out of access and placement and not with an outcome in mind, the MIST quickly realized the value in these relationships. Thus, the brunt of the MIST's effort became focused at advising operational MISO — a task which at the time was poorly defined yet inherently centered on mentoring and aiding the Iraqi partners to optimize their MISO capability in support of the greater counter-ISIS campaign. Undeniably, optimization required far more than mere training on tactical MISO tasks such as aerial leaflet dissemination, loudspeaker employment, portable radio broadcasts, etc. Although the MIST conducted these as well, the team quickly realized in order to achieve an operational level optimization they needed to develop an understanding of the bigger picture. Such as the necessities of organizational relationships, collaborative planning and support, integrated and echeloned information-related capabilities, etc., all the MISO specific operational framework which enables tactical MISO for supporting battles and engagements; while unifying efforts to shape operational conditions.

Ultimately by interpersonal relationship building, understanding partner priorities, and operational patience, MIST-IZ established the environment which facilitated a higher order of advising and corresponding operational level development-ranging from MISO force generation to narrative development and unifying messaging efforts across the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service, Kurdish Peshmerga, Iraqi Ministry of Defense and select ministerial 'PYSWAR' sections.

MIST-IZ is actively formulating the *principles for a new paradigm* — by providing a case study like no other.

THE MIST-IZ PARADIGM

Corroboratively, the MIST-IZ teams developed ten potential areas for advising a partner MISO force at the operational level of war. The topic areas are neither definitive nor doctrinal but merely exploratory thought based on their experiences of MIST-IZ from 2014 through 2017.

#1 - Advisory and Operational Assessments. Among the psychological operations community, assessments are commonly associated with measuring the effects of a MISO series. However, advisory and operational assessments take on a different purpose relative to partner MISO *capability and capacity* nested in the context of a *campaign or major operation*. Assessing advisory and operational aspects together is all the more complex, yet critical, as the two are inherently interdependent and both fundamental to the operational level of war.

The first of the two assessments is chiefly an inward look. The partner MISO force must understand its own capability and capacity, as well as the factors that influence it. Army Training Pamphlet 3-07.10 provides a functional and malleable template to assist framing an assessment that enables a partner force and the MISO advisor to establish baseline understanding, assess priorities, and gauge development. This 'advisory' assessment is both the anchor and the guiderail for building partner capacity.⁰¹

Once an understanding of foreign force capability and capacity

is gained, the greater challenge is assessing its role and effectiveness in a campaign or major operation. Assessing partner MISO effectiveness in a campaign context has less to do with the appraising of a particular MISO series or psychological action, and is more about the effectiveness of the partner MISO element in fulfilling its role as an integrated co-contributor among the array of warfighting capabilities. Ultimately the partner MISO force must be "doing things right" but more importantly it needs to be "doing the right things" regarding the campaign or major operation.⁰²

In both areas, assessments are inherently perpetual and dynamic, requiring emphasis before, during, and after campaigns and major operations. Assessments are starting points, adjustment mechanisms, and end state qualifiers for campaigns and major operations - being vital advisory functions at the operational level.

#2 - Operational MISO Conditions. Operational level conditions hold significant relevance to the MISO capability as numerous conditions are human-centric. It is critical then for the MISO advisor to work closely with a partner MISO force to identify conditions which inhibit or enable operations and efforts - and influence those conditions. For instance, if a Phase IV (stability) desired condition is establishing security among a given population and that population perceives the security force as sectarian then the perception needs to be altered or influenced if the objective is to be accomplished. Similarly, a condition may be purely physical yet affecting psychological opportunities such as

OPTIMIZATION REQUIRED FAR MORE THAN MERE TRAINING ON TACTICAL MISO TASKS ... ALTHOUGH THE MIST CONDUCTED THESE AS WELL, THE TEAM QUICKLY REALIZED IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE AN OPERATIONAL LEVEL OPTIMIZATION THEY NEEDED TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIGGER PICTURE.

providing internet connectivity, cellular service, or broadcast reception to a previously unconnected population in order to establish a new condition and affect an objective.

#3 - LOO/LOE MISO Support/Lead. Perhaps paramount in advising operational MISO is mentoring partner MISO support to Lines of Operation or MISO lead in Lines of Effort as nested in an operational approach. Partner MISO acting alone generally holds little relevance to a campaign or major operation. However, when integrated, synchronized, and phased in conjunction with other capabilities (maneuver, fires, civil affairs), the effectiveness of partner MISO is optimized. Line of Operations and LOEs provide this mechanism.

#4 - Operational MISO Force Generation and Sustainment. Likely the most challenging practice for any partner MISO leadership is generation of a dedicated MISO force through the course of a campaign. As ground breaking as it may be, developing a training pipeline and certification process may only be the first hurdle in a force generation process. Substantial challenges lay in retaining trained psychological operators, who, once returned to the partner operating force may become re-missioned - ranging from photographers to infantrymen. Retaining partner MISO leadership can also be challenging as often leaders are simply 'promoted out of job' as many partner forces do not subscribe to a military branch sys-

tem for their officer corps. The MISO advisor then must aid the partner MISO force not only in developing methods to build a MISO force but also in addressing methods to keep it - such as policy creation.

Military Information Support Operations-specific sustainment is of equal importance and similar challenge. Items such as cameras, publishing and printing equipment, military loudspeakers, etc., are essential for a partner MISO force and detailed requirements should be an outcome of the advisory *institutional assessment*.

Sustainment is more comprehensive than acquisition and distribution alone, requiring advisement on property accountability, unit level maintenance, forecasting, contracting, and the like. Also, the human side of sustainment must be considered, as some partners may use "property and supplies as a form of superiority" in order to hold leverage over subordinates or peers.⁰³

#5 - Operational MISO Collaboration. An essential part of understanding partner MISO capabilities, capacities, and conditions is determining who all the players are on the field and are they *collaborating* in a manner that achieves unified action. Gaining collaboration among competitive factions, diverse ministries, and unaffiliated non-governmental key communicators is no easy feat. However, establishing MISO-specific collaboration throughout the strata of partner ranks not only increases synchronization but also strengthens

human dynamics considerations such as narrative inclusivity, multicultural nuance, and stakeholder ownership. Hence, MISO collaboration is an exponential combat multiplier for a partner MISO force.

To harness this combat multiplier, MISO advisors must identify and develop collaboration points with the partner MISO force derived from assessment and supplemented with historical precedent. Presented as a model, this process can act as a guiderail or compass to maximize collaborative opportunities in formal tiered organizational designs as well as in less formal interpersonal relationships. No matter how constructed or achieved, the greater the degree of collaboration attained, the more effective a partner MISO force will be in supporting a campaign or major operation.

#6 - Operational Narrative Development. In the context of global connectedness and information-centric warfare, much discussion exists around the quasi-doctrinal term of *narrative*. Narrative, as discussed from a commander's perspective in a less abstract form, may simply be a shared vision presented to the information environment for the purpose of gaining military advantage.

Narrative first becomes powerful at the operational level of war in terms of approaches developed, operations and effort phasing, forces and capabilities applied, and likewise in enemy and non-combatant reactions to each. Developing an effective narrative can be imperative to any campaign or major operation but especially those which are irregular in nature and require support from diverse populations, multiple military partners, and competing political factions. Yet developing the narrative is only half the battle; dominating the information environment with it is as equally important. No universal framework exists for dominating the narrative, therefore the MISO advisor and partner MISO force must develop this process together for the specific campaign or major operation.

#7 - Operational Targeting. Understanding targeting at the

Figure 01
Example Partner MISO integration for LOO/LOEs and conditions in the context of an operational approach.

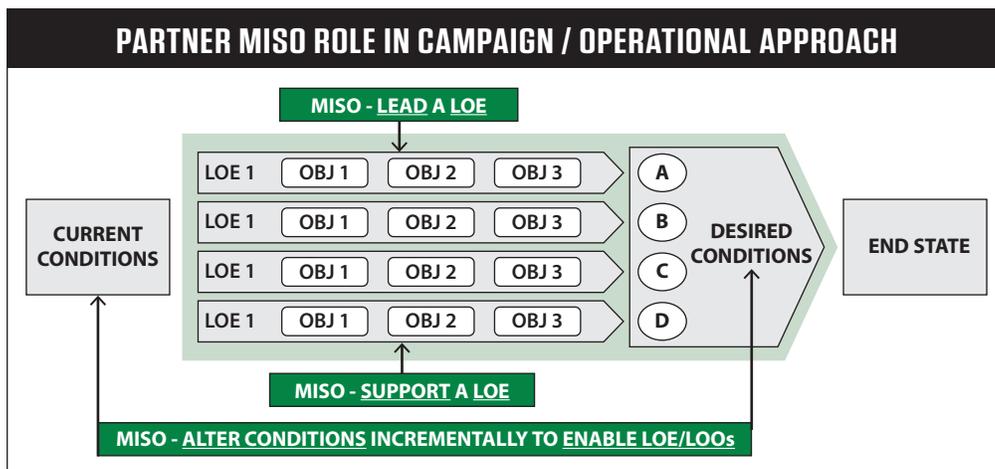


Figure 01

COUNTERTERRORISM ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

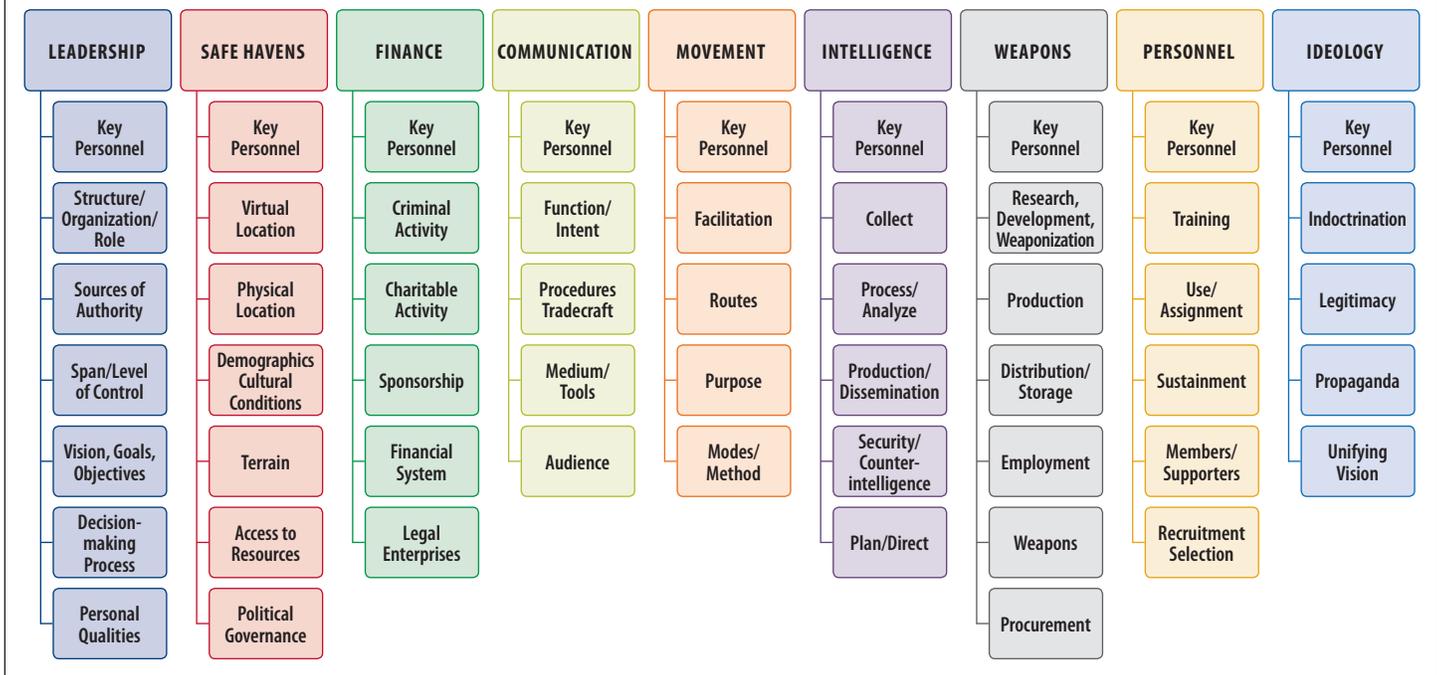


Figure 02

operational level is challenging, yet equally relevant to a partner MISO force and should not be discounted. "Targeting requires that the commander synchronize information related capabilities, intelligence, maneuver, fire support systems, non-lethal effects, and special operations forces to attack and eliminate critical target(s) using the most effective system in the right time and place."⁰⁴ Understanding of, and involvement in, the targeting process is essential for U.S. psychological operators and therefore holds commensurate value for partner MISO forces.

Another challenge is distinguishing operational from tactical level targeting and the role our partner MISO plays. This distinction primarily rests on an understanding of the systems and structures an enemy requires to plan, sustain, and operate. Understanding can generally be described in a targeting model (or targeting system) which outlines multiple target categories such as leadership, finance, personnel, weapons, ideology, etc. Select categories may be especially susceptible to partner MISO capabilities while other target categories are suitable for attack by other capabilities (maneuver, fires, etc.). Most importantly,

all capabilities require synchronization in time and space if operational effects are to be achieved. Targeting on this design is fundamentally targeting at the operational level. If partner MISO forces understand this design, enemy operational *pillars of support* may be systematically degraded, disrupted, and at times, destroyed relative to a campaign or operation. The Counterterrorism Analytical Framework (CTAF) provides an example of an operational targeting model.⁰⁵

8 - Operational PSYACTs.

As discussed in FM 3-53 *Military Information Support Operations*, Psychological Actions (PSYACTs) are "lethal and nonlethal actions planned, coordinated, and conducted to produce psychological effect..." and often include actions such as raids/strikes, humanitarian assistance, civil affairs projects, shows of force, demonstrations, media events, etc.⁰⁶ PSYACTs hold a special significance to a campaign or major operation as these actions can be key in establishing or altering operational conditions and environmental characteristics.

Artfully advised partner MISO forces can design, plan, execute, and support PSYACTs which alter conditions and environments of a particu-

lar campaign and enable LOO/LOE accomplishment. As with other areas, no universal list of effective PSYACTs exists, so the MISO advisor and partner MISO force must creatively collaborate for optimal operational psychological action opportunities.

#9 - Operational Enemy Propaganda Apparatus Analysis.

Often on a tactical level, partner MISO forces are trained on baseline propaganda analysis techniques such as MARCO (message, audience, reaction, carrier, origin) or SCAME (source, content, audience, media, effects). While useful in the appropriate context, MARCO and SCAME hold little relevance to the operational level of war where the scope and scale of enemy propaganda capabilities exceed the historic analytical framework. Of much greater relevance to a campaign or major operation are the enemy propaganda trends and processes that can be observed and then utilized for targeting.

At the operational level, partner MISO forces benefit from analyzing enemy propaganda efforts holistically to determine trends and anomalies in arguments, dissemination cycles, product lines, and enemy propaganda force structure. Examining these

Figure 02 Counterterrorism Analytical Framework (CTAF) can serve as a targeting model which addresses enemy pillars of support / lines of effort rather than enemy center of gravity.

aspects of enemy propaganda can aid the partner MISO force in a number of design, planning, execution, and support efforts. For instance, understanding trends in enemy arguments aids the partner MISO force in developing counterarguments to degrade enemy propaganda objectives. Similarly, understanding of enemy propaganda dissemination cycles and product lines aid the partner MISO force in assessing potential disruption or degradation of enemy propaganda cells. Note, this is also a key area where MISO advisors may assist partner MISO forces with analysis of Publicly Available Information.

Lastly, visualizing enemy propaganda force structures may significantly contribute to the outcome of a campaign. Apart from the analysis, understanding of an enemy propaganda apparatus can also enable lethal targeting of select nodes and processes to further disrupt or degrade enemy capabilities. Enabling partner force propaganda trend analysis can lead to predictive analysis of when, where and how enemy propaganda assets may be employed in a campaign context, the enemy propaganda apparatus can be dealt with more discriminately and more definitively.

#10 - Operational Information-Related Capabilities Integration. Partner MISO forces often

serve in blended roles as compared to U.S. capabilities. For instance the distinctions between public affairs, military morale operations, and military information support operations may not be as definitive for a partner force. Also, partner MISO forces may have access to information-related capabilities outside of conventional democratic perspectives such as censorship, rumor, and disinformation. In either situation, the ability to employ an array of partner force information-related capabilities in concert with the other elements of a campaign (maneuver, fires, etc.) greatly increases likelihood of success in a given campaign or major operation. As the Partner PSYOP leadership is often the focal point for information-related capabilities, advising on integration, echeloning, and massing may be key.

CONCLUSION

If the PYSOP community is to truly optimize *by, with and through* MISO capability, or *indirect MISO*, methods and practices for connecting partner tactical MISO capabilities to U.S. regional or strategic objectives must be established. This requires advising partner MISO forces at the operational-level of war where campaigns and major

operations are designed, planned, executed and sustained. The MIST-IZ's work serves as a starting point for discussion and eventual codification. The 10 derived areas for advising a partner MISO force are neither definitive nor universal as every operating environment is unique; however, the ongoing case study does provide a historically substantiated reference for further development. One critical aspect to cement these practices is doctrine. Doctrine must be established to codify and delineate MISO at tactical and operational levels. Tactical-level MISO exists in doctrine and has since 2007; as for the operational-level MISO, specific doctrine is yet to be written with the same degree of specificity.

Finally, over the course of the last 16 years of perpetual warfare, countless lessons learned have been lost in the fog of war. Obviously, evolutions, adaptations and innovations in military thought and practice are essential to address every new era of conflict, however, most are abandoned due to circumstance. Hopefully, the MIST-IZ's experience of advising operational MISO is not among these, but instead is capitalized on for evolving special warfare capabilities to meet the characteristics and challenges of the future operating environment. 

Figure 03 Example of operational level enemy propaganda apparatus analysis. This style of analysis holds greater relevance to campaigns and major operations than do SCAME and MARCO approaches.

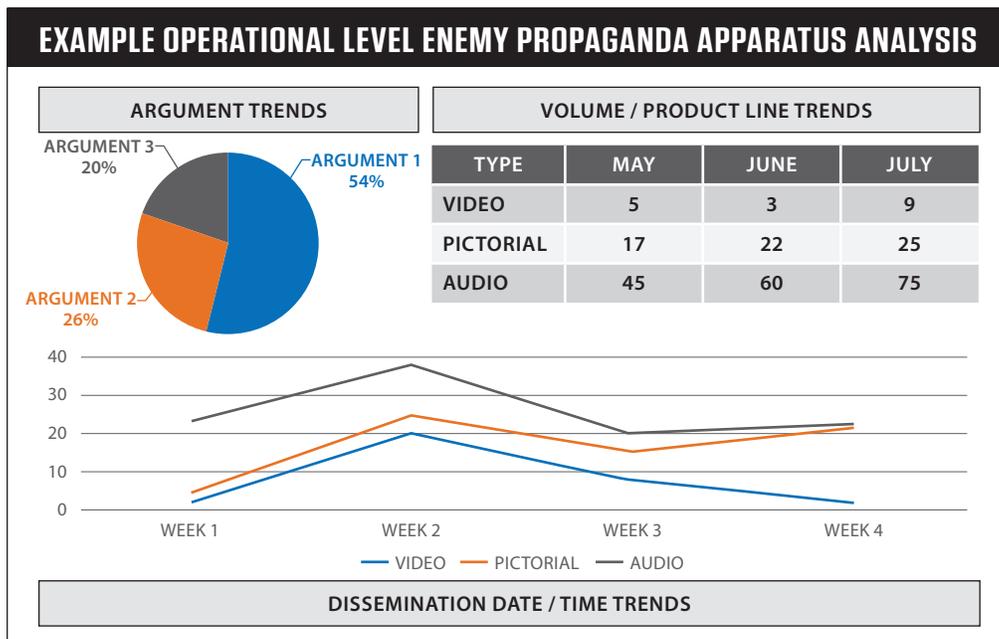


Figure 03

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BUILDING STRATEGIC INFLUENCE

THE SOF ROLE IN POLITICAL WARFARE

BY JOSEPH D. BECKER

In 1948, George Kennan, the head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, introduced the term "political warfare" into the lexicon of international-relations strategy. Kennan further developed this concept and became one of the founding fathers of the containment strategy, which has been widely credited with success in helping to facilitate the demise of the Soviet Union and its worldwide vision to proliferate communist ideology. In recent years, political warfare — essentially a coordinated whole-of-government approach to obtaining strategic objectives in the international arena, has regained traction in some circles. The U.S. Army Special Operations Command has authored several white papers on the subject and recently commissioned a RAND study to further examine options for the special operations in leading these efforts. However, political warfare is a potentially divisive term, and its implementation is fraught with challenges in the modern world. This paper will argue first that strategic influence is the heart of political warfare, second that forward presence and active engagement are the keys to strategic influence, and most importantly that the Department of Defense can, and should, take concrete steps to increase its forward presence whether or not the other agencies of the U.S. Government ever join the rally around the banner of political warfare. Furthermore, special operations is best placed to lead these efforts.

Political warfare was by no means a novel concept when Kennan coined the phrase in a 1948 planning



document for the National Security Council. He defined the term using the following description:

Political warfare is the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in time of peace. In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures... and "white" propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of "friendly" foreign elements, "black" psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.⁰¹

Nation states, including the U.S., conduct this type of "warfare" to varying degrees every day across the world stage. Kennan's cold-war efforts, however, provided a model relatively unprecedented in U.S. history for its scope and level of focus toward strategic goals. As noted by a number of prominent authors like Max Boot of the Council on Foreign Relations, U.S. capabilities to coordinate on this level have largely atrophied since the end of the Cold War.⁰² Meanwhile, as pointed out by strategists such as Anthony Cordesman, potential adversaries such as Russia and China seem to be setting a new standard for the successful application of political warfare.⁰³

The concept of political warfare, however, as advocated by Max Boot and recently by USASOC, is problematic for the U.S. Government. The term itself is polarizing because warfare implies a specific adversary and divides the world, in the words of George W. Bush, into those "for us" and "against us." It also begs the question of whose political viewpoint reigns supreme



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01 A Civil Affairs officer and a Nepalese partner force commander review a partnership agreement. Civil Affairs teams provide one of the best peacetime examples of influence through active engagement. However, these teams require the sponsorship and support of the U.S. Embassy, and they only deploy to countries in which security and infrastructure requirements make their routine operations feasible. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY JENNIFER G. ANGELO

02 A Military Information Support Operations team leader speaks with local villagers in Konar Province, Afghanistan. The military owns the largest, most robust information operations capability in the U.S. Government, but narrow authorities generally constrain its use to times of war. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SGT. KATRYN MCCALMENT

in U.S. policy. The Cold War, in a manner akin to more violent conflicts, provided Americans with a common, existential threat that had a geographical address and definable borders. Today's world, although possibly more dangerous, is also far more complicated. It is difficult to gain broad consensus, even domestically, on the best approaches for dealing with the international environment. America's adversarial system of government, especially in times of heightened partisan divide, only exacerbates this challenge. Additionally, policymakers rarely find it politically expedient to publicly commit themselves to long-term strategic choices until they are compelled by events to do so.

Political warfare, at its heart, is a global competition for strategic influence. The term "influence" is often conflated with information operations or simply with messaging. While this is certainly an aspect of influence, it misses the holistic nature of the concept. Joint Publication 3-13 *Information Operations* defines influence as "the act or power to produce a desired outcome or end on a target audience,"⁰⁴ which is an apt description except that the word "audience" might tend to reinforce a bias toward messaging. The USASOC White Paper, *The Role of Influence in Political Warfare and the Whole-of-Government Approach*, references this joint definition but then goes on to discuss influence in a broader context, relatively indistinguishable from other aspects of political warfare.⁰⁵ This suggests that influence cannot be reduced to a subset of political warfare, but is central to the very concept. Harvard University's Joseph Nye, a leading thinker on the subject of national power, defines power as "the ability to affect others to get the outcomes one wants."⁰⁶ He caveats this, by pointing out that a definition of power must provide the context of "who" and "over what?"⁰⁷ Simply put, influence is the power of a people over other people. Strategic influence is the power to shape the

human terrain of one's world and dictate outcomes, and this is the very heart of political warfare.

So where does this leave the U.S. military? The military owns the largest, most robust information operations capability in the U.S. Government, but narrow authorities generally constrain its use to times of war (although it sometimes supports other agencies on a strictly limited basis in peacetime as well). As with many military capabilities, influence operations are often treated like a jack-in-the-box. They are trained for in peacetime then expected to spring into action in case of war. Unfortunately, the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that, even at the tactical level, influence is rarely a magic bullet that can be pulled out of a box and applied effectively on short notice. It requires a deeply rooted cultural understanding and years of fostering credibility at the human level to have a deep or enduring impact. This is even truer at strategic levels.

So what can the U.S. military, and its special operations forces in particular, do in a constrained environment to shape the world in which it operates and hone its capabilities for use in a future conflict? Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster highlighted the following tenet in his remarks to a conference on irregular warfare in Washington, D.C.:

*The key to deterrence is not the threat of punitive action (carried out from over the horizon). It is forward presence, being already active and involved in the theater you are attempting to shape.*⁰⁸

Deterrence, in this case, is a form of strategic influence, and this statement applies broadly across the concept. You have to be there to make a difference. Furthermore, to understand today's conflict, you have to have been there yesterday. The Russians didn't have their way with Ukraine in recent years because clever propaganda fooled a witless population. The Russian



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presence has been ubiquitous and palpably felt in its eastern neighbor since the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The worldwide basing presence maintained by the U.S. during the Cold War provided exactly this type of strategic influence. Unfortunately, with almost a quarter century since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the U.S. facing a tight fiscal environment, the military has been forced to accept a reduction in its global influence. It is important to keep this in perspective, though. While a robust military presence sends a strong message on a certain level, overseas basing has traditionally created little cloistered pieces of America, limiting interaction with the local populations. “Status of Forces” agreements exempting U.S. soldiers from local laws have also been sources of contention. In terms of influence, “forward presence” does not necessarily require a large footprint to be effective.

The special operations community already offers a number of programs that punch far above their weight in terms of global influence. USASOC’s Civil Affairs teams provide one of the best peacetime examples of influence through active engagement. These four-person teams provide host countries with humanitarian assistance, educational support and small-scale infrastructure development projects that disproportionately expand their influence for the investment required.

However, these teams require the sponsorship and support of the U.S. Embassy, and they only deploy to countries in which security and infrastructure requirements make their routine operations feasible. They also lack the personnel and resources to follow up their efforts with consistent presence in each of the areas in which they operate. A modest expansion of this program could yield benefits in terms of influence, but only to the point that these limiting factors allow before a major structural overhaul would be required.

The DoD has some effective programs outside the Special Operations community, as well, which could be modified or expanded for greater utility in gaining strategic influence. The Army’s Foreign Area Officer Career Field is one of the premier institutional pipelines for training and preparing officers for attaché and regional specialty assignments. Officers spend years in training, which usually includes language skills for their country or region. However, after an initial embassy tour, these officers often find themselves languishing in cubicles in the Washington, D.C. area, with little assurance of a follow-on overseas assignment. To expand DoD’s strategic influence, Foreign Area Officers (and their equivalents from all services) need to spend more time overseas and less of that time inside the walls of an embassy. The U.S. Special Operations Command could assist in developing and sponsoring non-traditional assignments for an expanded corps of regional specialists.

If the maxim referenced by Lt. Gen. McMaster holds true, however, DoD’s existing programs are not enough to effect the kind of strategic influence that this paper advocates. If the DoD is truly going to lead in terms of strategic influence and hone its capabilities in case of war, it is going to have to develop new and innovative ways of getting Americans overseas into positions that matter. The special operations community should have a leading role in this effort.

One way the DoD could increase its strategic influence is by expanding military-to-military relationships with a broad swath of foreign partners and embedding U.S. Soldiers for long-term rotational assignments within foreign militaries. This would require a paradigm shift from the way the DoD currently interacts with foreign partners. Staff school exchanges, liaisons and combined training exercises provide a great deal of value, but they don’t foster an enduring presence. Visitors make an impression, but you have to live there to make a difference. This type of program would involve

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risks and complications, and DoD would clearly need to establish controls to ensure that U.S. Soldiers are not misused or mistreated. DoD systems for career management would also require adjustment to afford U.S. service members the opportunity and incentives for this type of duty. However, these obstacles are surmountable with creativity and willpower, and the special operations community is best-placed to plan and implement this type of program.

Another way the DoD could lead the quest for strategic influence is by harnessing the power of American youth and funding overseas educational opportunities for promising undergraduates. Students come from all over the world to attend universities in the U.S., and public and private grants support this, often effective, form of public diplomacy. Foreign students are exposed at an impressionable age, not only to the benefits of quality education, but to the best of American culture and values. However, in many cases, only English-speaking elites benefit from these opportunities, and the beneficiaries of this education may or may not return to their home country to work. U.S. students, on the other hand, are unlikely to study abroad, and many of the opportunities available (for students who can afford them) focus on picturesque European locales. U.S. students have few means and little incentive to study in less westernized countries. Additionally, few U.S. college students possess the language skills required unless they are heritage speakers. Consequently, many of the most promising youth in these foreign countries enter their working-age adulthood without ever having interacted with an American on a personal level.

The DoD could develop programs to fund language training and semesters abroad for promising undergraduates, potentially starting with Reserve Officer Training Cadets. The Army already has a program known as the Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency, which provides three-week cultural exchange trips for cadets and affords opportunities

for language training in some cases.⁰⁹ While this is an excellent program and a step in the right direction, the participants are little better than tourists in terms of long-term strategic influence in the countries they visit. Expanding this concept to maintain an enduring overseas presence would be complicated, but it would increase U.S. influence abroad and create a larger pool of college graduates in the U.S. (both military and civilian) with language skills and overseas experience. As with many forms of strategic influence, the true impact of this program will be difficult to quantify and might take years to fully realize, but the possible benefits range far and wide.

The special operations community, in particular, could expand its global footprint by creating a graduate version of this educational initiative that would position civilian participants for long-term rotational assignments into under-penetrated countries and societies. This would ensure a consistent overseas presence while simultaneously developing a body of social science expertise to inform and advise operational planning. The program could recruit promising graduates and incentivize long-term commitments through pay-for-play educational agreements. For instance, three years of overseas service might earn a year stateside in a fully-funded master's program. Another four years could earn funding for PhD coursework, and so on ... Participants could leave the program at any time, but would sign contracts in the Individual Ready Reserve that would allow them to be recalled to service as cultural advisors in the case of war.

Such a program would have to be carefully planned and managed to ensure success. Participants could be channeled towards service or partnership in any number of fields or organizations that maximize their interaction with a broad swath of the local population. Their primary function for the DoD might be the overseas conduct of unclassified cultural research, but they could also serve as a critical link to the non-gov-

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A senior research analyst with the Center for Naval Analyses, Strategic Studies Detachment, converses with Afghan Ministry of Information officials in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. Strategic Studies analysts were commissioned by the U.S. Congress to determine how American forces can better assist their Afghan counterparts in the future.

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY
SGT. MARGARET TAYLOR

ernmental organizations community. In some cases they might be positioned to plant government-organized non-governmental organizations, which serve to address local needs in a manner consistent with the interests of their governmental sponsor. Many countries have utilized this type of organization, including potential rivals like China, Russia and North Korea, and even the U.S. Government is no stranger to GONGO's, funding the National Endowment for Democracy since 1983.¹⁰

In any case, member of this program should eschew any "official" or diplomatic role and would travel like private citizens on blue passports, avoiding embassies for anything but administrative needs. The Defense Attaché would not be responsible for their safety. They would not have any intelligence role or contact with the intelligence community, both for their own protection and to avoid the impossible morass of approvals this would entail. Perhaps most importantly, this program would have to manage and accept the risks involved. Even with mitigating steps, participants could still be targeted by terrorists or criminals, detained by foreign governments or exposed to diseases or any number of potential hazards. This is one of the primary reason why it should be managed as a special operations program. Hazard pay authorized...

This type of program is not entirely unprecedented. Until 2007, USASOC had a unit called the Strategic Studies Detachment consisting of approximately 60 social scientists with PhD's and regional expertise who assisted in developing and directing psychological operations.¹¹ However, while the program suggested by this paper could fill the ranks of newly created SSD, its primary purpose would instead be active influence through consistent presence and engagement. The recruitment and retention incentives should ensure a steady flow of applicants and participants to man overseas postings even with attrition, and the resulting pool of alumni with regional expertise would be a welcome by-product of the effort.

Of course, the high-threat status of some countries makes the deployment of U.S. government civilians a non-starter, and many of these countries are important to the influence fight. To gain a foothold among these populations, DoD could employ a host of contracted solutions which might extend the spirit of the previously outlined programs in creative ways.

Again, the special operations community would be well-placed to lead this effort, and many of the contractors who support it would likely come from special operations backgrounds.

One of the most important keys to success for any effort along these lines will be the implementation of a fully integrated and carefully constructed information operations plan. As seen throughout the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the DoD has faced a tremendous challenge in adapting its culture to the demands of the modern information environment, in spite of its organic information operations capabilities. U.S. troops have suffered the heartbreak countless times of conducting successful operations only to be lambasted in press reporting because adversaries were "the first-est with the mostest"¹² in telling the story. The bottom line is that if troops leave the wire without an information operations plan, they've already lost. The special operations community is somewhat better attuned to these considerations, but it must be emphasized again that no effort to increase the global footprint will succeed if adversaries control the narrative.

These specific suggestions serve as mere examples of the type of programs which could enhance the DoD's global influence, and creative planners could develop many more. None of these proposals would be easy to implement, and each would present a myriad of challenges. However, these obstacles are far more surmountable than solving the Gordian Knot of reorienting the entire U.S. government (against its will, in most cases) toward the effective conduct of political warfare. The DoD, led by the special operations community, has real options for increasing long-term U.S. strategic influence by enhancing the effectiveness of its overseas footprint. To put it frankly, if the military is not prepared to tackle the challenges within its own grasp, why even write papers about political warfare? 

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THE MINDSET OF PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE

BY ASPEN ANKNEY, MA | Special Warfare Education Group (Airborne)
Special Operations Cognitive Enhancement for Performance

Performance Excellence

Optimal Performance. Elite Performance. Experts. We recognize greatness when we see it happen. We inherently seem to know when a performance is executed with the appropriate equipment, at the perfect moment, in the correct context, with the highest level of skill. Interestingly, quantifying these elite performances is more elusive than one would think, and generating insight into the nature of elite performance is of high interest in the human performance professions (e.g., strength and conditioning, nutrition, sport and performance psychology, physical therapy, athletic training, etc.).

While elite performance is not objectively understood for all performances all of the time, as a collective, the human performance professions have diligently sought to understand the processes required to become an elite performer.⁰¹ One of the overarching norms common among elite performers is a continued striving in a meaningful direction. Current terms for this striving are “grit,” “mental toughness,” “resilience” and “hardiness.” From a cognitive perspective, it is understood that some combination of the above terms is a necessary component for continuous engagement in the rigorous training, recovery, setbacks and evaluations inherent to attaining elite performance. The important question is: *Why do some performers persist, overcome and continue to improve, while others do not?*

Explaining Outcomes

A key to understanding the differences among performers is revealed in how a person understands and interprets events. Essentially, how someone explains the things that happen. Consider a poker player who wins a tournament. There are distinct ways to explain their success. Perhaps the cards fell right or the other players didn’t have their heads in the game. While these explanations may contain some validity, they can largely be summarized as *luck*. Another way to explain the win is the winner’s ability to read other players’ cards, and to employ mathematical and intuitive strategies. This explanation implies *skill*. The psychological term for these explanations is *attributions*⁰² and over time the subjective ways in which we explain outcomes are built into less malleable cognitive structures or beliefs, which create a personalized understanding of *how the world works*.⁰⁴ Eventually, the world is simply filtered, more or less automatically, through this personalized lens.

The explanations one makes for the outcome of their experience can be viewed as more adaptive or less adaptive

(Figure 01). While in some instances, explaining a less ideal outcome (e.g., failure on a nighttime land navigation training event) as luck (e.g., no illumination) may serve as ego protecting, and prompt the performer to attempt subsequent training without entirely undermining one’s belief in their ability to obtain a successful outcome. Nonetheless, it is quite obvious how a consistent appraisal of outcomes as *unlucky* would allow the individual to effectively sidestep their personal contribution to the negative outcome.

What is of most interest in this discussion is not the objective truth about whether the outcome is due to luck, skill, effort, or other factors, but *how the performer explains the outcome*. For example, if someone were to consistently explain negative performance outcomes on lack of talent, this may lead to attrition. If one identifies as *untalented* then discontinuing an endeavor is, arguably, the rational choice when a person feels unable to effect a different outcome no matter the amount of preparatory training. Consequently, explanations which determine causes of events and behaviors to be outside of someone’s sphere of influence, to be stable and unchanging overtime, and to be external to self, are most detrimental to continued engagement.⁰³ This disengagement can be observed as avoidance of challenges and lack of persistence.⁰³

Mindsets and Performance

So far, we have determined that quantifying performance excellence is, at times, nebulous. However, the process through which one achieves elite performance is heavily studied. As such, one of the significant factors in achieving high performance is an ability to sustain engagement, partially attributable to three beliefs: a) that outcomes are within one’s ability to influence; b) that the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to perform well are perishable and need to be purposefully implemented for each performance and; c) that the technical and tactical KSAs needed are within the performer’s control. Beliefs about one’s own performance abilities and the abilities of others are interconnected in a variety of combinations that unintentionally filter how someone explains performance outcomes. Ultimately, this set of core beliefs about one’s abilities form a philosophy⁰⁵ about performance, also known as a mindset.

Mind sets are a set of beliefs that shape our reality. Carol Dweck and Kelly McGonigal are two researchers on the forefront of explaining that “the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life”.⁰⁶ McGonigal

focuses her research on stress mindsets: the concept that how someone interprets stress (i.e., detrimental or facilitative) can directly influence the physiological and psychological effects of the stressor. She summarizes this distinction:

Stress is harmful, except when it's not. ... Stress increases the risk of health problems, except when people regularly give back to their communities. Stress increases the risk of dying, except when people have a sense of purpose. Stress increases the risk of depression, except when people see a benefit in their struggles. Stress is paralyzing, except when people perceive themselves as capable. Stress is debilitating, except when it helps you perform. Stress makes people selfish, except when it makes them altruistic. For every harmful outcome you can think of, there's an exception that erases the expected association between stress and something bad—and often replaces it with an unexpected benefit.⁰⁵

McGonigal has also demonstrated that the above physical and psychological health risks can be ameliorated by changing the way people view stress.

Dweck's research on mindsets explains the differing views people hold about their abilities. Dweck's mindsets are a dichotomous distinction between fixed beliefs and growth beliefs. Fixed mindsets are composed of beliefs that "qualities are carved in stone...[creating] an urgency to prove yourself over and over again,"⁰⁶ while growth mindsets are based on beliefs that "your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through effort...[and while] people may differ in...their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments — everyone can change and grow through application and experience."⁰⁶

The fixed and growth mindsets are of particular interest for performance. The growth mindset is exemplified by a *desire to learn*, which creates a tendency to embrace challenge, to persist during setbacks, to see effort as the requisite to mastery, to learn from criticism, and to draw inspiration and lessons from the success of others.⁰⁶ The fixed mindset, on the other hand, is revealed in to a *desire to look smart* and therefore a tendency to avoid challenges, to give up easily, to see effort as fruitless, and to feel threatened by criticism and the success of others.⁰⁶ Having fixed or growth mindset traits do not in themselves lead to success or failure.

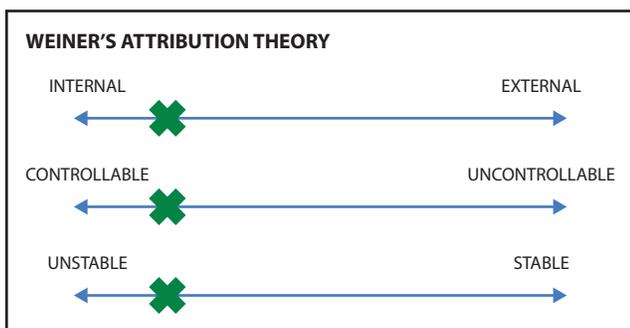


Figure 01 The combination of attributing outcomes to: a) internal factors, b) that the performer is responsible for demonstrating (controllable), and c) must purposefully train (unstable) leads to increased effort, increased perception of ability, and pursuit of more difficult tasks.

A performer demonstrating a fixed mindset may still perform at high levels, however, their improvements will plateau when success is not easily attained or when they are surpassed by others. The growth mindset performer, on the other hand, continues to improvise novel strategies and to seek insights from others as a means to continually reach new levels of achievement.

Mindsets at SOCM

The Special Operations Combat Medic course is one of the most difficult schools in the Department of Defense, turning elite students into masters of trauma in as little as nine months. The grueling pace of instruction and evaluation can easily lead to cognitive fatigue, while issues of human life challenge students to face existential questions. A SOCM qualified Soldier will face operational responsibilities that will place additional pressure on him or her to perform as close to perfectly as possible. This is a school where a desire to learn, to embrace challenge, to persist, to be coachable, and to be inspired through competition will produce medics that are experts in their craft and will continue to retain a high level of skill after graduation.

Considering the learning and performance demands of the SOCM course, support from Special Operations Cognitive Enhancement for Performance was requested to provide performance and learning enhancement training to compliment the technical and tactical training. Before cognitive training begins, it is vital to understand the needs of the Soldiers so as to provide tangible and beneficial cognitive training to develop the competencies of the mind. As such, the SOCEP integration into Special Operations Forces training is a multi-step process by which a tailored mental training plan is developed and implemented for each unique training group. The initial task is to identify the performance demands of students and to determine what cognitive factors are needed to meet those demands.

Through collaboration with SOCM instructors, a general theme of early attrition due to student-perceived inability to complete the medical training, was anecdotally discovered at the first phase of SOCM. In an effort to determine the pervasiveness of such beliefs, three classes of students (n = 109) entering the first phase of SOCM (i.e., EMT) completed a questionnaire which gauged their beliefs about medical abilities. The Conception of the Nature of Athletic Ability Questionnaire- Version 2 (CNAAQ-2),⁰⁷ developed to assess the degree to which one believes that sport/athletic abilities are attributed to stable traits and gifts or to learning and improvement, was adapted by SOCEP to measure beliefs about medical abilities (CNAAQ-2MV).

Students were given the CNAAQ-2MV on days zero and 20 of the SOCM course regarding how strongly they agreed or disagreed with 12 statements on a 5-point Likert scale about the skills and talents necessary to become a good medic. Three questions on the scale assess beliefs about learning (e.g., "To be successful in medicine you need to learn techniques and skills, and practice them regularly")

and three items assess beliefs about improving (e.g., “If you put enough effort into it, you will always get better at medicine”). These six questions comprise the growth mindset and help to determine the extent to which students believe that medicine is learnable. The fixed mindset factors involve three questions about the stability of abilities (e.g., “You have a certain level of ability in medicine and you cannot really do much to change that level”) and three questions about whether medicine is a gift (e.g., “You need to have certain ‘gifts’ to be good at medicine”).⁰⁷ These items help determine the extent to which students believe their medical ability is based on a talent that is fairly stable, rather than requiring continued effort.

The internal consistency of the 12-item CNAAQ-2 is good ($\alpha = 0.74$ for the fixed items and 0.80 for the growth items). Exploratory factor analysis was conducted ($n = 209$) on the version adapted by SOCEP (CNAAQ-2MV) for use with medical students and the instrument maintained similar internal consistency⁰⁹ ($\alpha = 0.72$ for the fixed items and 0.79 for the growth items). Removing item 1 (i.e., “You have a certain level of ability in medicine and you cannot really do much to change that level) improved the internal consistency ($\alpha = .74$). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted ($n = 209$) to examine the validity of the CNAAQ-2MV using IBM SPSS Amos 25.¹⁰ The measurement model suggested for the CNAAQ-2 was a hierarchical model comprising four first-order factors (learning, improvement, stable, and gift) and two higher-order factors (incremental and entity)⁰⁷ (i.e., growth and fixed). CFA indices for the CNAAQ-2MV suggested that the model did not fit the data and four different versions of the model were evaluated. The most parsimonious model was hierarchical with three first order factors (learn, improve, and gift; stable was removed, items 1, 3, and 10) and one higher order factor for learn and improve (incremental) (Figure 02). Fit indices for this model were acceptable¹¹ ($\chi^2 = 56.97$, $df = 24$, $RMSEA = .081$, $CFI = .951$) and comparable to the psychometric properties of the CNAAQ-2 ($\chi^2 = 89.78$, $df = 51$, $RMSEA = .057$, $CFI = .944$).

Given that the psychometric properties of the CNAAQ-2MV are similar to the CNAAQ-2, the responses provide insight to the mindsets of students entering the SOCM course. Seventy-five percent of the students entering the course think they need some amount of certain “gifts” to be good at medicine, 75.9 percent of students think it is necessary to be born with some basic qualities which provide for success in medicine, and 69.8 percent of students think it is necessary to be somewhat naturally gifted to be good at medicine. Combined, these beliefs convey that students explain that the skills and attributes needed to be good at medicine are internal factors, outside of their control, and are unchangeable (Figure 03). This is consistent with Dweck’s fixed mindset. It is important to note that mindsets are domain specific, and this fixed mindset pertains only to SOCM students’ beliefs about medical abilities. As such, the students’ responses provide evidence that some SOCM students enter the course with a set of beliefs about medical abilities that may lead

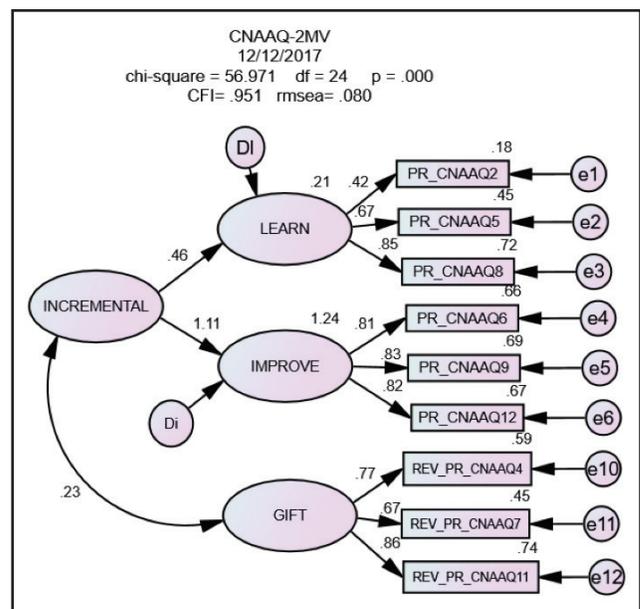


Figure 02 Proposed hierarchical model for CNAAQ-2MV.

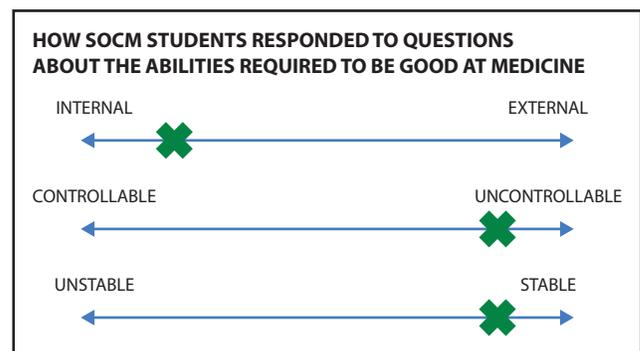


Figure 03 SOCM students explain medical abilities as internal factors, outside of their sphere of influence, and as set quantities which are unchangeable.

to decreased levels of effort and persistence, lower levels of coachability (i.e., threatened by the success of others and impervious to criticism), and lower levels of perceived ability to complete medical training.

The conclusions that can be drawn from student responses may help explain some of the early attrition of EMT students. First, if students attribute their ability to learn and master medicine to an inborn quality, they may begin the course with the belief that they have that trait. Unfortunately, when that student meets a challenge which exceeds their proficiency level, or earns a No-Go, is surpassed by a peer, or some other experience common to learning a new skill, the student operating from a fixed mindset may conclude that they don’t actually have the inborn quality they thought they did.

In application, this can influence the amount of effort a student will put in (i.e., if they had the “gift,” effort would not be necessary and if they don’t have the gift, no amount of effort will change the outcome). This mindset can also influence the likelihood that one would want to practice and make normal, learning-related mistakes in front of

others, and can influence how susceptible the student is to feedback (i.e., for someone operating from a fixed mindset, feedback that their performance is not correct can further confirm that they do not have the skills necessary to be successful). Over time, the decreased effort and engagement can cause the student to fall further behind their peers and perpetuate the belief that they don't have the right gifts to be good at medicine.

A fixed mindset can pose challenges for effort and persistence, but do mindsets actually affect how a student will perform? K-means clustering revealed relationships between the mindset of students and their subsequent performances on written exams and practical skills. Students with the view that medical skills are more attributed to gifts, which are then difficult to change, had the lowest GPA's and the greatest number of No-Go's (failures) on practical skills. The students that view medicine as something they can learn but also believe that they must have gifts to be able to succeed have slightly below average GPA's and an above average number of No-Go's. The students with the highest GPA's and the fewest number of No-Go's reported that medicine is learnable and also, difficult to learn.

In line with the mindset research, decreased persistence and withdrawal from course material are common themes expressed by students who do not pass the first phase of EMT. Even students that do pass the first phase of SOCM are not immune to the fixed mindset which may hinder their persistence and continued engagement when met with challenges and when facing evaluation failures at later phases in the course. From this case example at SOCM, it can be gleaned that the mindset a student brings with them to a learning environment can impact their future performance and the amount of effort they put in to the task. What is most interesting, however, is that a mindset can be shifted by presenting novel information about the ineffective belief and by trying out the new mindset.⁰⁶

Changing Mindsets

The value of a growth mindset for members of the armed forces, policy-makers, defense analysts, academic specialists and civilians at SWCS is both evident and accessible. In fact, the art of changing mindsets has been termed "lay theory interventions" involving ordinary, brief, and precise experiences that present an idea that may have not been considered and a chance to reflect on how it applies

personally.¹² These approaches are efficacious in numerous settings¹² by targeting and altering an underlying psychological process that is inhibiting the desired behavior. In fact, just learning about an alternate mindset can cause a big shift in the way people think about their behaviors and interact with their lives, with effects lasting several years.^{06,12} One effective method of shifting a mindset is a one-hour presentation, including education about a pre-identified aspect of people's psychology that is harming their outcomes. The education portion is followed by a self-reflective experience, such as a writing exercise, which allows people to try the mindset out for themselves.

While understanding the effect of mindsets on personal performance and organizational cultures is itself a worthwhile cause, the largest benefit to be gained from a mindset intervention will come from understanding what beliefs are contributing to the undesirable outcomes and target those directly. Based on SOCM students' self-reported psychological realities, the cognitive training provided by SOCEP for SOCM students currently involves a one-hour mindset training during day zero of the course; targeting the students' beliefs about medical capabilities and teaching students how to attribute outcomes to internal, controllable, and changeable skills and attributes.

The intent of this article was to convey the importance and accessibility of one cognitive factor that can impact performance through the key characteristics of a growth mindset. Additionally, shifting a mindset is practical and the most effective mindset interventions have three parts, which are employable across many settings:

1. Learn a new point of view (e.g., the health benefits of stress).
2. Partake in an exercise that encourages you to adopt and apply the new point of view (e.g., make use of the energy that stress gives you instead of wasting that energy trying to manage stress).
3. Share the new point of view with someone else (this step further crystalizes the new information and provides further reflection).⁰⁵

The far-reaching applicability of mindset training provides an opportunity to design targeted training for the individual matters that effect the SOF community and can change how people interact with one another and their performance domains. 

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VANGUARD OF THE IMAM

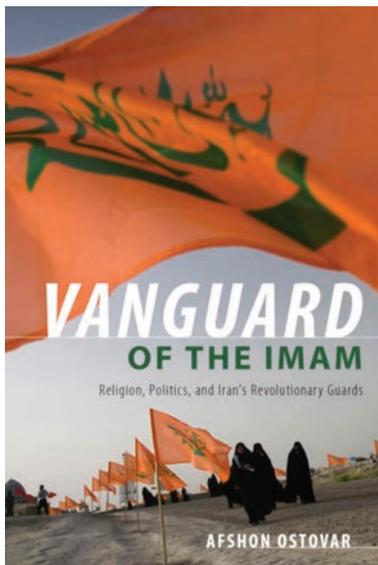
Qassem Soleimani, the legendary shadow commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds force, was described by *The New Yorker* in 2013 as the Middle East's single most powerful operative. Yet even as one of the most antagonistic organizations to the U.S. in the region, the inner workings of his organization, the IRGC, are not widely understood. Few works capture the structure of the IRGC, and Dr. Afshon Ostovars' *Vanguard of the Imam* is a timely contribution. Another timely book, *the Iran Wars: Spy Games, Bank Battles, and the Secret Deals that Reshaped the Middle East*, by *Wall Street Journal* reporter Jay Solomon, captures the U.S.-Iran blood feud, but more from a foreign policy and bank war perspective surrounding the nuclear deal. In *The Vanguard of the Imam*, Dr. Ostovar contributes a comprehensive history and overview of the IRGC using a tremendous range of sources that include scholarly works, Arabic blog posts, interviews, and most compelling, the IRGC's own Arabic publications. This comprehensive book, written by an authoritative and well-respected voice on Iran, is a must read for anyone seeking to grasp the deep challenges surrounding a counter-Iran strategy.

Starting with dissecting the history of the IRGC, *The Vanguard of the Imam* shows how in the landscape of modern warfare it became a cutting-edge organization. Ostovar convincingly argues that the IRGC builds a new model of paramilitary organizations having both the roots and doctrine of an irregular militia but also having the political power and conventional assets of a conventional force. How this came about becomes apparent through the history and political landscape that formed the IRGC. Noting the role of Shia piety and cleric activism in the organization, Ostovar lays out a brief but informative explanation of the Shia-Sunni divide before detailing the political forces at play. Following the overthrow of the Iranian government in 1953, the IRGC's militia underpinnings came to power in 1979 cham-

pioned by Ayatollah Khomeini. Mutual antagonism to the Shah, his oppressive policies and the influence of foreign powers such as the U.S. coalesced those underpinnings, and much of the IRGC's internal actions are still shaped by a paranoia of foreign interventionism. When the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad maintained power in the 2009 election through an election rife with tampering, the country exploded with protests against what looked like an IRGC play to put one of their own in power. The consequent crackdown on the green movement of 2009 was publicly justified by accusations of foreign influence. The defense against foreign influence became the *raison d'être* for the IRGC's actions to defend the revolution and ultimately extend its influence abroad through the Quds. To do this, the IRGC wields paramilitary, political, cultural and clerical activist components as arguably one of the most influential organizations in the Middle East. More importantly, Ostovar argues that this style of organization is not unique, but more likely an emerging norm.

Starting with the organization's roots, Ostovar shows how politics and warfare shaped the IRGC's characteristics. Shortly after its inception, the Iraq-Iran war grew the IRGC from an irregular militia group into a stronger military organization with a strong populist base. Since the time of its initial crude strategy of human-wave assaults comprised of poorly-trained troops, it has transformed into a complicated political, military and religiously grounded organization with a doctrine still focused on asymmetrical or guerrilla-like tactics. Its populist roots lie in the

Basij, which claims broad membership across all levels of society and played a role in bringing large numbers of raw recruits to the front lines during the Iraq invasion of Iran. In its political and cultural role, this organization fights the "soft-war" to prevent social and political change within Iran along with the counter-protest Imam Ali battalions and the socially- and culturally-focused *Ashura* and *Bayt al-Muqtadda* battalions. In contrast to its militia and societal roots, the IRGC also has conventional military capabilities,



BOOK DETAILS

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REVIEWED BY

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as it controls the countries air defense systems as well as various conventional ground, navy and air force units.

As part of this much wider organization, The Quds is a more recent outgrowth of the IRGC, but also the primary vehicle for extending Iran's influence abroad. Starting with the experience of Hezbollah in Lebanon, conflict has enabled the spread of the IRGC's influence through proxy client paramilitary like organizations. In no uncertain terms, Ostovar identifies key Iranian leaders who stated plainly their intent to replicate the experience in Lebanon in Syria, as well as a riveting account of the actions of Iranian operatives on the frontlines as depicted by captured videos from an Iranian unit documenting their operations in Syria. The Quds has become one of the most important levers of national power, Dr. Ostovar concludes. Furthermore, The Qud force was the tool for Iran to replicate its success in Palestine and Lebanon in Iraq and Syria, building a network of client groups that would enable it to outmaneuver rivals and expand its power primarily through covert measures.

The powerful narrative behind the IRGC gives it mobilizing power to build those client organizations, and Ostovar does an excellent job bringing this to light. While leaders in the organization constantly negotiate politics and religion, the cleric-based activism permeates the entire organization. From the eulogies of operatives in Syria as martyrs defending the Sayyida Zaynab Holy Shrine in Damascus, to the iconic symbolism of green headbands and tributes to Shia martyrs, Shia pietism is integral to the identity of the organization. Ostovar uses another example in the Iranian regime's popular slogan, "The road to Jerusalem runs through Karbala," to show the grander project of Muslim control of Jerusalem used to mobilize constituents successfully during the Iran-Iraq war. Using source documents, including posters and propaganda, Ostovar succinctly demonstrates how the IRGC's religious identity relies on the tenets of Shia piety and sacred ground. The Quds capabilities are the case in point for this strategy's effectiveness; originally formed to support the Palestinians, it metastasized on a threadbare budget to become arguably the most influential organization in the region.

Developing a deep understanding of the cultural and political nuances involved in the Middle East remains challenging with the high-operations tempo maintained by special operations. However, *Vanguard of the Imam* is worth the effort to understand a longstanding rival. As an organization with an increasingly global role, its salience to U.S. foreign policy and the challenges it presents will not disappear soon. 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

3RD QUARTER SELECTION BOARDS

Board	CONVENE DATE	ADJOURN DATE
RA-USAR (AGR) SFC PROMOTION/SSG QSP	03 APR 18	30 APR 18
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 3/4/5 PROMOTION SELECTION BOARD	25 APR 18	10 MAY 18
RA CSM/SGM NOMINATIVE & RA-USAR (AGR) CSM-SGM QSP	14 MAY 18	18 MAY 18

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