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DEFEATING GUERRILLA WARFARE

by

Peter A. Dotto

Lieutenant Colonel, USMC

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The Contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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The United States military has had little success in countering guerrilla warfare as part of an insurgency since World War II. The U.S. approach has been to use conventional forces which rely on high technology and massive firepower against low tech enemies who refuse to stand and fight. This paper focuses on developing ways to defeat the basic strategy guerrillas employ as part of an insurgency, through the examination of classic guerrilla warfare literature. Overall insurgent strategies, tactics, and operational considerations are synthesized and from these, strategy, tactics and an operational plan is developed to specifically counter the aims of the insurgent. This examination then leads to some basic operational concepts of counter-guerrilla warfare. Guerrillas can best be defeated militarily using guerrilla warfare techniques. The major tools are psychological operations and effective use of intelligence assets. Defeating guerrillas will not eliminate an insurgency if the causes which gave rise to it are not addressed and corrected by the government in power. However, as these problems are being corrected, the guerrilla must still be defeated militarily.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
ABSTRACT . . . . .	ii
I INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II GUERRILLA WARFARE AND INSURGENCY . . . . .	3
III CLASSIC GUERRILLA WARFARE LITERATURE . . . . .	5
T.E. LAWRENCE . . . . .	5
MAO TSE-TUNG . . . . .	7
"CHE" GUEVARA . . . . .	9
CARLOS MARIGHIELLA . . . . .	11
IV INSURGENT AIMS . . . . .	15
INSURGENT STRATEGY . . . . .	15
INSURGENT TACTICS . . . . .	17
INSURGENT OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS . . . . .	19
V COUNTERINSURGENT AIMS . . . . .	20
COUNTERINSURGENT STRATEGY . . . . .	20
COUNTERINSURGENT TACTICS . . . . .	22
COUNTERINSURGENT OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS . . . . .	24
VI COUNTER-GUERRILLA WARFARE . . . . .	26
VII CONCLUSION . . . . .	28
NOTES . . . . .	30
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	32

# DEFEATING GUERRILLA WARFARE

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

"What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy."

- Sun Tzu<sup>1</sup>

Despite recent spectacular military success in the Persian Gulf, similar results in counterinsurgency operations continue to elude the U.S. military. Both the U.S. Army and Marine Corps enjoyed moderate success in putting down insurgencies in the early part of this century in the Philippines and in the Banana Wars of Central America and the Caribbean. However, since the end of World War II, the United States has been repeatedly frustrated in its attempts to reverse the progress of insurgencies in Third World nations, most notably in Vietnam. To argue whether these failures were due to faulty policy or strategy or to military incompetence begs the issue; failure was a joint effort. End results are what matter and too often results were poor regardless of whether the U.S. provided only advisors and material support or became directly involved in the fighting. U.S. over-reliance on high technology and massive firepower, which have repeatedly proven themselves in conventional warfare, provide no advantage over a no-tech adversary.

Failure against insurgencies has not been limited to the U.S. alone, as recently seen in Afghanistan. Additionally, past masters of insurgency warfare, Vietnam and Cuba, have also failed in counterinsurgency efforts in Kampuchea and Angola, respectively. This is not to say that insurgencies cannot be defeated. Successful examples exist, such as the British in

Malaya; defeat of the Huks in the Philippines; Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil and other South American countries in the 1960s. But these successes pale compared to the problems caused to U.S. interests where insurgencies have succeeded, such as in Cuba and Nicaragua.

What makes insurgencies so difficult for military professionals to counter? What conditions continue to pose problems for conventional forces? From a military standpoint, it is not so much insurgency in general that is the major problem, but one aspect of it: guerrilla warfare. This form of warfare has existed almost as long as professional armies so it is not a new problem confined to insurgencies. The crux of the counterinsurgency dilemma for the military professional, then, becomes the mastery of counter-guerrilla warfare. This paper will focus on analyzing classic guerrilla warfare literature to find ways to counter the guerrilla. The issue is not one of policy of whom to support in an insurgency nor a diplomatic one of how to influence a government in power to institute necessary reforms. It is, rather, to develop an operational strategy to militarily defeat the guerrilla and thus buy time for the government to correct the problems that led to the insurgency.

## CHAPTER 11

### GUERRILLA WARFARE AND INSURGENCY

FM 100-20, Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict, divides insurgency into three phases. The latent and incipient phase is the initial growth and development of the revolutionary movement. During this phase, the insurgency is weak and must concentrate on organizing itself rather than confronting the government. Because of its weakness, the insurgency is most vulnerable during this stage. The government has the advantage if it can maintain the initiative, and dealing with the insurgents is mostly a police matter.

However, in the second phase, guerrilla warfare, the insurgent has built up his strength and can seize the initiative from the government. This phase is characterized by unconventional military operations of irregular forces for primarily psychological goals designed to exploit the weaknesses of conventional military forces. Both sides struggle for ascendancy and it is here that professional military forces have been routinely found wanting. To succeed, the military professional must devote more attention to this phase.

The final phase, the "war of movement," is akin to civil war between substantial conventional military forces. Although the professional military finds it easier to deal with the insurgent in this phase, the fact that an insurgency has reached this level indicates the government is in severe trouble. All efforts must be made to prevent the insurgency from reaching this level.

The second or guerrilla warfare phase, then, is where the military can have the most influence on the outcome of the insurgency. To compound the



problem for the professional military, however, an insurgency is not strictly a military problem. In fact, it is primarily a political movement in which military action plays only a small part. So to understand and be effective in counter-guerrilla warfare one has to understand guerrilla warfare and its roots.

## CHAPTER III

### CLASSIC GUERRILLA WARFARE LITERATURE

In the twentieth century, four practitioners of guerrilla warfare have provided classic writings that notably influenced their successors: T.E. Lawrence, Mao Tse-Tung, E."Che" Guevara, and Carlos Marighella. Each based his concepts on the success of his predecessors and added ideas of his own. From these writings, we can synthesize some general precepts on insurgent strategy and tactics. This synthesis then leads to the formulation of some basic principles of counterinsurgency strategy and tactics and of counter-guerrilla warfare.

#### T.E. LAWRENCE

T.E. Lawrence, known as "Lawrence of Arabia," led disunited Arab bands in a classic guerrilla warfare campaign against Turkey during World War I. His book recounting this experience, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, is a seminal work not only on the strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare but also on the psychology behind its success against conventional armies.

Lawrence operated in a severe desert environment with an undisciplined, disorganized force that was greatly inferior in numbers to his adversaries. To overcome these disadvantages, he used a Fabian strategy that relied on the following principles:

The objective is the destruction of enemy logistics and communications rather than his forces.<sup>1</sup> Because of the severity of the desert environment, destruction of logistics meant the destruction of enemy forces without having to fight them. Consequently, the Turks were forced to commit a large part of their force to guarding supplies and lines of communications.

Strike at scattered, isolated targets.<sup>3</sup> This keeps the enemy on the defensive and in a reactionary mode. The idea is to concentrate superior forces against a small post, hit it hard, then disappear before enemy reinforcements arrive. This tactic forced the Turks to man their isolated garrisons heavily, thus dissipating their superior strength. The Turks could not defend everything and could never react quickly enough.

The threat of attack anywhere paralyzes enemy leadership.<sup>4</sup> Lawrence's ability to strike anywhere and overwhelm a weak target at any time demoralized the Turkish forces. Their leadership could not react quickly enough and resorted to attempting to defend everywhere at once. Failing at this, the initiative invariably rested with the Arabs.

Speed and mobility counterbalances firepower.<sup>5</sup> The Turks possessed a large modern army with heavy weapons and artillery. The Arabs were a much smaller, lightly armed (rifles, swords, and spears), untrained force. Their heaviest weapons were a few machine guns. Yet, by remaining highly mobile, by refusing battle except on their own terms, and by striking swiftly, then disappearing, the Arabs completely negated the Turks' massive firepower superiority.

An insurgency needs an unassailable base.<sup>6</sup> Lawrence stressed again and again the need for a secure base where his forces could resupply, rearm, plan and rest. This area needed to be not only secure from attack, but secure from the threat of attack. Conversely, there could be no area where the enemy could feel completely safe from a sudden strike.

Lawrence's small forces repeatedly succeeded against the much larger Turkish Army and were instrumental in Turkey's defeat in Palestine. This paved the way for eventual independence of the Arab states.

## MAO TSE-TUNG

Mao Tse-Tung led the struggle of the Chinese Communist forces against both Japanese occupation forces and the Nationalist Chinese. He orchestrated a "people's" war of the peasants against larger and much better equipped forces. Very well read, he was familiar with Clausewitz, Jomini, and Sun Tzu,<sup>1</sup> and with the campaigns of George Washington and T.E. Lawrence.<sup>1</sup>

Mao's three phases of insurgency differ from the U.S. definition above. He defined the first phase as guerrilla warfare, the second phase as combined guerrilla and conventional warfare, and the third phase as a civil war between conventional military units.<sup>1</sup> In either case, guerrilla warfare is still key to the success or failure of an insurgency.

Mao operated in the vast, rugged terrain of west and central China, mobilizing and training peasants to fight large, well trained standing armies. He espoused Sun Tzu's strategy of continually attacking the enemy where he was weakest, paralleling many of Lawrence's tactics. Mao wrote several essays on the subject, the most notable of which are "Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan" (1936), "Guerrilla Warfare" (1937), and "On Protracted War" (1938). His significant points are:

The objective is destruction of the enemy will, not holding terrain or cities." Mao realized that he could not stand up to either the Japanese or the Nationalists in a conventional war. Conventional forces fight battles to secure terrain and prevent the enemy from doing so. This is their measure of success. However, by refusing to focus on terrain, Mao increased the enemy's frustration. By refusing battle except on his own terms, by remaining completely mobile, and by refusing to defend objectives, he continually thwarted his enemies' strategies.

The target is the enemy military."<sup>11</sup> Mao realized that in China strength and power rested in the armies; they gave a government its legitimacy. The military leaders were the political leaders. Therefore by destroying the army's ability to fight, he was destroying the government's ability to control.

Avoid battle unless you have absolute superiority and are assured of victory."<sup>12</sup> With the goal of destroying the enemy's ability to fight and their leader's will to fight, winning battles became paramount. Psychologically, losing a battle is catastrophic; for the insurgent, avoiding defeat is a form of victory. Mao fought only when sure of victory and thus developed a reputation of invincibility which further demoralized his enemy. When not sure of victory he went to great lengths to avoid battle.

Strive to destroy the enemy when he is moving."<sup>13</sup> Mao borrowed this from Sun Tzu, understanding that military forces were at their weakest when moving and at their strongest when in bases or defensive positions. By developing an excellent intelligence network and relying on the classic guerrilla tactic of the ambush, he increased his probability of success and the guerrilla's aura of invincibility.

Insurgency war must be protracted; time negates technical superiority."<sup>14</sup> This was Mao's main point. Time is the insurgent's greatest asset. The government faces constant pressure to win and win quickly. All its technological superiority increases expectations of a quick victory. Failure to achieve quick success results in frustration which in turn often leads to rash action. The insurgent, if patient, constantly increases his power base while that of the government erodes. Eventually, the insurgent overwhelms

opposition and the government is powerless to stop it.

Additionally, in a people's war, the insurgent must insure that he does not win too quickly. Popular support relies on grievances against the government. According to Mao, the insurgent must take the time to organize his infrastructure to rule effectively after victory. He must show that the government is increasingly unable to resolve the country's problems so that when the revolution succeeds, whatever the new government does will be an improvement. If the insurgent wins too quickly, he just replaces the existing government with his own, and forfeits the ability to improve conditions substantially. Dissatisfaction could rapidly lead to a new insurgency.

Mao's success became the model for mass people's revolutions. His campaigns and writings greatly influenced all subsequent communist inspired insurgencies.

#### "CHE" GUEVARA

Ernesto "Che" Guevara was the most important theoretician of the Cuban Revolution. His Guerrilla Warfare used that revolution as an example to prescribe successful techniques for the future." Operating in rugged jungle terrain, he adapted Mao's insurrection philosophy to the conditions and environment of Central and South America. He modified it to take into account the stereotypical Latin impatience. Rather than fighting a protracted war, he espoused a quick revolution and the catalytic effect of a successful guerrilla campaign on popular support for revolution: "It is not always necessary to wait for the fulfillment of all conditions for the revolution; the focus of insurrection can create them."" In short, the act

of armed revolt itself can accelerate the overthrow of the government. Guevara saw revolution in the Americas as essentially being fought and won in the rural areas." His other main points were:

"The essential duty of the guerrilla is not to let himself be destroyed."<sup>1</sup> Since the destruction of the guerrilla is the government's major goal, survival is victory for the guerrilla. The pressure for victory is on the government, and thus avoiding battles could be more important to the guerrilla than winning them.

The target is the government."<sup>2</sup> In China the military was the strength behind the government, but in Cuba the power lay in a corrupt dictatorship. By disrupting the government's ability to function, the guerrilla weakened its hold over the people and its legitimacy. Weak, isolated military units were to be attacked, with the aim of demonstrating the lack of power of the government to stop the attacks. In this regard, terrorism was as effective as guerrilla attacks.

Guerrilla activity should be constant and spread over a wide area."<sup>3</sup> The guerrilla must give the impression that he was everywhere, that the entire countryside was in revolt. Pressure must be constant. "An enemy soldier in the zone of operations should not be allowed to sleep..."<sup>4</sup>

"The guerrilla is a Social Reformer....the battle flag of the struggle [in Central and South America] will be agrarian reform."<sup>5</sup> If the guerrilla identifies with the rural populace and espouse all their causes, then the peasant will support the revolution. When not fighting, the guerrilla must assist the peasant.

The aim of the guerrilla is to demonstrate that the government cannot function or rule."<sup>6</sup> By constantly showing that the government is unfit to

rule, the guerrilla raises the dissatisfaction of the people. The goal is a unanimous uprising of the populace, under guerrilla leadership, against the government. The guerrilla cannot win if the people are not behind him, but the people will not revolt without the revolutionary spark provided by the guerrilla.

Quevara personally exported his expertise to other Central and South American insurgencies. However, well trained government counterinsurgent forces hunted him down and killed him in Bolivia in 1968. This effectively ended that insurgency. Ironically, it was the peasants that Quevara tried to rouse that betrayed him to government forces. As a Cuban, he had failed to gain the Bolivian peasants' trust.<sup>14</sup>

#### CARLOS MARIGHELLA

Many Cuban inspired insurgencies failed in Central and South America in the 1960s, mostly due to poor planning and organization. After Quevara, revolutionary attention in South America shifted from a rural to an urban focus. Urban terrorism proved to be extremely successful in ending the British mandate in Palestine, thus establishing the Jewish state of Israel<sup>15</sup> and was also instrumental in Algeria's winning independence from France. One of the most influential writers on this form of warfare was Carlos Marighella who wrote the Minimanual of the Urban Terrorist in 1969. Reading like a military field manual, it includes checklists for training, planning, and operations. Although primarily developed for Brazil, the book reached an international audience and was widely read, especially by European terrorist groups. Marighella shifted the targets and tactics to an urban environment, preaching that, at least in South America, an urban insurgency must precede a rural one. His major points were:



Terrorism is the major tactic.<sup>20</sup> Guerrilla warfare was an unconventional means of fighting military forces. Terrorism avoided this confrontation and struck randomly at "non-military" targets just to establish instability and uncertainty in the minds of the people and to demonstrate the incompetence of the government to do anything about it. However, the targets must still be government or business related. Killing "innocent" people would backfire on the insurgency.

This strategy further favored the insurgent since terrorists were easier to train and maintain than guerrillas, especially in an urban environment. They could work at normal jobs and blend in with normal citizens even though they were part time terrorists.<sup>21</sup>

The major targets are capitalistic businesses as well as political leaders.<sup>22</sup> Marighella understood that many governments shared power with economic leaders. In a democracy, attacking the government was not especially effective if the country was strong economically. Therefore, one also had to attack businesses and industry to bring the existing society to its knees. Additionally, terrorist tactics facilitated targeting individuals. While the guerrilla went against isolated military forces and installations, the urban terrorist targeted individual business leaders, politicians, police chiefs, etc. By selectively (and randomly) targeting leaders rather than forces, terrorists could maintain pressure against a government with fewer insurgents. A corollary in the urban environment was that police forces were a bigger threat to the insurgent than military forces.

An urban insurgency must be supported by workers and students rather than peasants.<sup>23</sup> This brought communist insurgency philosophy back full

circle to the Marxist-Leninist theory of the workers' revolt. In an industrialized urban society, the workers had the grievances and would most easily support action against businesses and the government. Additionally, university students, because of their uncritical idealism and intrinsic distrust of authority, made exceptional terrorists.

The psychological aim of the insurgent is to prod the government into overreacting.<sup>10</sup> Overthrowing a democracy is harder than overthrowing a dictatorship because of the former's inherent system for addressing reforms and appearance of representing the needs of the majority. Therefore, an insurgency in a democratic society had to go further to incite the masses to rebellion. Through a campaign of terror that disrupts the government's ability to maintain order, the dissatisfactions of the people increases. The government has to become repressive to combat the terrorist, thus reducing individual rights. This further alienates the people and the insurgent continuously fuels the cycle until the legitimacy and public support of the government are in jeopardy.

Finance the insurgency through bank robberies and kidnappings for ransom.<sup>11</sup> Previous writers on guerrilla warfare stressed support from the people and from outside sympathetic governments. Marighella preached self-sufficiency through robbing the enemy. This not only provides assets and attention for the insurgency, but it weakens the enemy at the same time. Thus, ironically, business and government provide the resources for their own downfall.

Marighella was unsuccessful as a revolutionary, however. Brazilian police ambushed and killed him in 1969.<sup>12</sup> This is another example of a successful counterinsurgency effort, although the Brazilian government had to

resort to a massive terrorism campaign of its own, including torture, summary executions, mass arrests, and suspension of civil liberties to prevail." His book outlived him, and influenced German, Italian, and Spanish leftist terrorist groups in the 1970s.

Of the four writers examined, Lawrence and Mao were successful practitioners; Guevara and Marighella were not. But the writings of all four have had enduring influence on revolutionaries and insurgents in developing nations. Of the four, Mao has probably been the most influential.

## CHAPTER IV

### INSURGENT AIMS

Having examined these key writings on guerrilla warfare, one can synthesize some general precepts on insurgent strategy, tactics, and operational considerations. We can then formulate some basic principles of counterinsurgent strategy, tactics, and operational considerations. However, it must be reemphasized that what follows is an attempt to understand guerrilla and counter-guerrilla warfare from a military standpoint. If the political, social, and economic problems that bring about an insurgency are not adequately addressed and corrected by the government, it cannot win. Military action by itself is futile.

### INSURGENT STRATEGY

Exploit the dissatisfactions of the majority of the populace and alienate them from the government. The long range goal of the insurgent is to replace the current government with his own. Every action he takes must support this goal. His greatest tool is the support of the people which gives a government its legitimacy. Without the support of the people, an insurgency cannot win. With mass support, it cannot fail.

The struggle is political; military action is primarily for psychological impact. The war is for the "hearts and minds" of the people. Military action only serves to emphasize that the government has lost control. For the insurgent, being able to fight battles is more important than winning them. Survival of the guerrilla negates all government battlefield victories.

Strike and overwhelm selected weak targets for psychological impact. The guerrilla avoids enemy strength; he only fights when he can win. This leads to five psychological outcomes:

- The guerrilla maintains an aura of invincibility.
- The government demonstrates its incompetence to deal with the situation.
- The guerrilla obtains and maintains attention for his cause.
- The government is forced on the defensive and can only react to what is happening.
- The frustration level of government forces constantly increases, leading to rash decisions and actions. This often results in the government over-reacting to the point of repressing the populace.

The guerrilla aim is destabilization rather than military victory; the ultimate goal is for the people to overthrow the government under rebel leadership. An insurgency builds its power gradually as the government is losing its own. Guerrilla activity buys time for this, all the while weakening the government. By repeatedly demonstrating that the government cannot deal with the guerrilla, the insurgency gains legitimacy with the people. At the same time, if the government cannot adequately address the grievances of the people, popular support shifts steadily to the insurgency until the government topples.

Guerrilla warfare exploits the weaknesses of conventional military forces and negates their strengths. Conventional military forces are objective driven. They seek enemy forces to destroy and terrain to control. Their major weapon is the application of superior firepower. But the guerrilla's objectives are survival and defiance. By hitting and running, he

negates the conventional forces' superior fire power. By fighting only where and when he chooses, he can bring overwhelming superiority to the decisive spot. By refusing to stand and fight and defend terrain, he nullifies one of the major methods of operations of conventional forces.

Terrain is immaterial to the guerrilla; he controls where he is standing. Terrain becomes a liability to the conventional forces, however, because they cannot defend everywhere at once and must thus present weak targets somewhere.

Conventional forces must defend everywhere and hunt down a mobile, elusive enemy who refuses to fight except on his own terms. Time is against them because of the pressure to defeat the insurgent. The insurgent needs only to avoid defeat, time is on his side.

#### INSURGENT TACTICS

Avoid contact except at a time and place of the insurgent's choosing and with victory assured. This is a psychological war. The guerrilla must appear invincible and the government forces incompetent. Therefore, the guerrilla only fights when he can win. He cannot tolerate a situation where the government appears to be winning. But because victories are psychological rather than tactical, the mere willingness to fight a much stronger force is sometimes more important than winning the battle. In the 1968 Tet Offensive, the U.S. won the tactical victory, but North Vietnam won the psychological one. In guerrilla warfare, the important victory is always the psychological one.

Avoid enemy strength and strike at logistics, command, and communications. This is the essence of guerrilla warfare, economy of force carried to its highest level. Strike the soft areas and make the government

work hard to defend them. Strong forces who worry about their supplies, who cannot communicate with each other or their leaders, and whose command and control is continually disrupted become ineffective and irrelevant.

Exploit every act for its psychological operations value. In a war for the hearts and minds, perceptions are more important than facts. How an action is perceived is more important than what happened, and insurgents must always be quick to capitalize on this. The aim is to continually:

- Convince the people that the insurgent offers solutions to their problems and the government cannot.

- Exploit the media to publicize the insurgent cause and graphically display government inability to cope with the insurgency.

- Convince everyone that the insurgent cause is not only just but that its success is inevitable, and thereby:

- - Frustrate government leadership, and

- - Demoralize government forces, and thus

- - Provoke government overreaction which further alienates the people.

Maintain the initiative and an offensive mind set; keep the government on the defensive and reactionary. To be successful, the guerrilla must always pick the time, place, and intensity of contact. He must always attack, and not allow himself to be forced on the defensive. He must keep the government guessing as to his next actions and thereby focus on defending everything. Above all, he must always maintain the initiative.

#### INSURGENT OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Two last key elements must be considered before discussing counter-insurgency strategy and tactics: first, guerrilla warfare is very

decentralized. It does not rely on real-time communications between commanders and subordinates but instead on mission type orders. There is great latitude for regional commanders to plan and execute. Operations are planned well in advance and meticulously rehearsed. Preparation of the battlefield receives a great deal of attention. Because of this, there is little room for flexibility in execution. Operations either go as planned or they are canceled. Thus, if a change in situation jeopardizes the chance for success, the operation does not happen. This lack of active control from the top is a tremendous asset compared to a conventional military force because there is no command, control or communications to disrupt.

Secondly, intelligence is the key to success. Because guerrilla warfare relies on small forces to defeat large ones, survival and success rely heavily on intelligence gathering, processing and dissemination.



## CHAPTER V

### COUNTERINSURGENT AIMS

Having listed the major strategies, tactics and operational considerations of insurgencies, counter strategies, tactics and operational considerations can now be developed to support a campaign plan to militarily defeat the guerrilla. Remember that these apply both to the threatened government, and to foreign forces assisting it.

### COUNTERINSURGENT STRATEGY

Convince the populace that the government can provide what they want better and faster than the insurgent, AND that the insurgent is only hindering that progress. This is a political war. The "hearts and minds" of the people are key terrain. Their grievances must be addressed. If the counterinsurgent only concentrates on defeating the guerrillas, he can win all the battles and still lose the war. The key to victory is Nation Building -- correcting the legitimate social, economic and political complaints of the population. The people's legitimate grievances are the center of gravity of insurgency warfare. Whoever convinces the people that they can solve their problems will win. Military counterinsurgency action buys time for the government to accomplish this.

Change the guerrilla goal from insurgency to survival. The insurgent has committed his life to overthrowing the government. He did not make this decision lightly and he will not be dissuaded from it easily. Defeat in battle only increases his resolve. Addressing the social and economic problems that gave rise to the insurgency will affect the people but not the

insurgent. The counterinsurgent must convince the guerrilla that not only can the insurgency not succeed, but that his very survival is at stake.

Government forces must remain constantly on the offensive to find, fix and fight the insurgent. They do not have to crush or decisively defeat the insurgent, just keep him fighting. Just as avoiding contact frustrates conventional forces, constantly being forced into a fight at a time and place not of his choosing frustrates the guerrilla. If he does not have time to train, to plan, to rehearse, he cannot be effective and he will act rashly. The goal is to push the guerrilla back in to the incipient (first) stage of the insurgency where he can be destroyed more easily.

Concentrate on liquidating insurgent leadership. The most consistently successful way to end an insurgency is to destroy its leaders. Charismatic leadership is more essential to guerrilla warfare than to any other military endeavor. The guerrillas are not important; it is their leaders that are key. The leaders have the political and ideological motivation that keeps everyone else focused. Insurgent command and control is decentralized and information is kept compartmented to preclude compromise if some guerrillas are captured. Because of this, the top leadership is very hard to replace. No one else has the complete picture. In no other military endeavor is the removal of key leaders as devastating to a cause. Remember what happened to the insurgencies of Guevara and Marighella when they were killed.

Eliminate insurgent bases. All the writers examined at the beginning of this paper repeatedly stressed the importance of secure bases. This is where guerrillas rest, train, indoctrinate recruits, lick wounds, plan, rehearse, and store supplies and equipment. The guerrilla must have nowhere to which he can run and hide. There must be nowhere he can feel safe. This must be

done even if the bases are across national borders.

Physically isolate the insurgent from support. Guerrillas receive support from a sympathetic population or from outside governments or both. Make every effort to separate the guerrilla from his support. This means keeping his supporters away from him, physically relocating them if necessary. This can also mean physically sealing borders. The guerrilla cannot live without support. With it, he can outlast the government.

Maintain the initiative. This is probably the most important aspect. The government must be proactive not reactive. An offensive mind set is essential. Take the war to the guerrilla. Continuously harry him. Do not give him time to organize, plan, or rehearse. Keep him constantly reacting to government actions, not vice versa. The guerrilla has the strategic advantage; one cannot allow him to capitalize on it.

#### COUNTERINSURGENT TACTICS

Tactics here means techniques to implement the aforementioned strategy, not just battlefield maneuver. Maintaining the initiative is just as important at the tactical level as it is at the strategic. Knee jerk reactions to guerrilla activity must be avoided.

Soldiers and militia must work with the people. The soldier is the pointman for social improvement. This is the "hearts and minds" issue again. The major contact the people have with the central government is through the soldiers and militia operating in their area. These are the government's representatives who will cause the people to decide whether to support the insurgent or the government. The people base their decision on how they are treated, who helps them and who protects them, and their choice cannot be forced. It is that simple. Insurgencies are won or lost at the local level.

Effective population control requires an effective, respected police force. Providing law and order and security for civilians is a police function more than a military one. The police must be well trained, effective, and honest. If they meet these requirements, they will be respected. Police are just as necessary in rural areas as in cities. Police are better trained to deal with civilians than the military and can often be an exceptional source of tactical information. Working closely together, police can deal with the people while the military confronts the guerrilla forces (concentrating on leaders and base areas).

Psyops is paramount. This is a psychological war, not a military one. Evaluate every action or lack of action in terms of its effect on the target: the populace. As previously stated, perceptions are more important than facts. Psychological victories are all that matter.

Just as it is for the insurgent, the media is vital to get the government's message to the people. The only requirement is truth. Distorting facts to present government actions in a favorable light can only backfire. The government has a bigger credibility problem than the insurgent, who is measured on a less stringent scale of acceptable behavior. Nothing damages a government's legitimacy more than lying to its populace. People will accept bad news; they become infuriated by false news. The aim of the government must be to expose insurgent falsehoods, not to hide its own shortcomings. The government's actions and programs must be promoted but not at the expense of the truth. Also remember that one of the greatest psychological weapons a government can hand the insurgent is an attempt to cover-up a government atrocity. As repeatedly seen throughout history, nothing damages government credibility more than a cover-up.

## COUNTERINSURGENT OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Intelligence is the only force multiplier. The key element to counter-insurgency operations is intelligence. In no other military activity is knowing the who, what, when, and where as vitally important to success. The counterinsurgent must be able to predict and anticipate guerrilla actions to thwart them. Reacting after the fact is ineffective. Surprise is the guerrilla's greatest asset. Effective intelligence can negate this.

In a guerrilla environment, the essential elements of information are enemy plans and intentions. The best way to get this information is through informants and agents (HUMINT). Other intelligence gathering means, especially high-tech electronic ones, are rarely as efficient and never as cost-effective as Humint, especially against a low-tech opponent.

For the past 4000 years the best guerrilla battlefield tactic has been the ambush. The best counter-guerrilla tactic is also the ambush. Good ambushes are the result of good intelligence.

Counterintelligence is equally important. Because the success of the insurgent relies so heavily on knowing what the government is doing, great efforts must be taken to keep him in the dark. The insurgent's agents must be identified and neutralized and he must be deceived as to government intentions.

High tech is counter-productive. Relying on high technology to find and kill guerrillas instead of relying on well trained people is a highway to failure. As previously discussed, guerrilla warfare negates technological superiority. The simpler the force, the better its chances as either an insurgent or counterinsurgent. Technology requires ever increasing amounts of support and overreliance on it has often backfired. It has little impact

on a low technology foe. Historically, those counterinsurgency forces that have succeeded have been those that have stripped down to fight as light as the guerrilla. One only has to read accounts of Malaya, the Philippines, Bolivia, and recently El Salvador to realize that the tide did not turn against the guerrilla until government forces went after him and hunted him down on his own terrain.

This does not mean that communications and mobility assets are not important. Just keep the equipment as simple as possible. Technology that makes equipment lighter, smaller and simpler is good; that which requires significant training to operate and maintain is a hinderance. A good rule of thumb is that equipment and technology that cannot be supported and repaired indigenously is counter-productive. Reliance on high technology to find and destroy the guerrilla rather than physically hunting him down with light forces on his own turf is an expensive trap that has seen governments overthrown.

## CHAPTER VI

### COUNTER-GUERRILLA WARFARE

Guerrilla warfare cannot decisively defeat and overthrow a government. That is not its intent. As Mao stated and Vietnam demonstrated, guerrilla warfare wears down conventional military forces and erodes the governments will to continue fighting. The guerrilla buys time for the insurgency to build and train conventional military forces. Only conventional military forces can decisively defeat and overthrow governments. Conversely, defeating the guerrillas will not necessarily defeat the insurgency if a government is unwilling to institute effective reforms. Counter-guerrilla forces buy time for a government to correct its people's grievances.

The best weapon against guerrilla tactics is guerrilla tactics. This statement should be self explanatory, but it is amazing how many times in history it has been forgotten or disregarded. Military professionals say that the best weapon against a tank is another tank; against an airplane is another airplane; against a submarine is another submarine, etc. Yet when it comes to guerrilla warfare, we continually assume that the best counter-force is an elite conventional infantry unit. When that does not work governments throw in more units and more firepower. By the time this has failed, the insurgents have won.

Counter-guerrilla units are:

- Small autonomous units with a high ratio of leaders.
- Self contained and highly mobile.
- Logistically self-sufficient (resupply by air or live off economy).
- Low technology.

- Manned by politically perceptive troops with a stake in the government and sensitized to the needs of the people.
- Led by competent, incorruptible military leaders.
- Offensive minded and constantly in the field where the guerrillas are.
- In constant contact with an effective intelligence net.

**High intensity operations.** When the guerrillas (or better yet their leaders or base camps) are found, they must be hit quickly with overwhelming force. This is a psychological war; always hit them disproportionately harder than they can possibly retaliate. The guerrilla must be made to dread contact. His primary goal in life must become just plain survival.

**High operational tempo.** To maintain the initiative, the counter-insurgent must constantly operate at a high tempo over a wide area. Keep the guerrilla guessing as to counterinsurgent actions and intentions. Keep him off balance, guessing as to where and when he will be struck next. Do not stop and wait for him to act, and do not overreact when he does. Time is on his side; delay is his ally. The counterinsurgent must constantly operate faster than the insurgent can keep up. A high tempo of operations will wear him down and break him.

**Streamlined Logistics.** Logistics and lines of communications are the major target of guerrilla strategy. To counter this, units must become as self-sufficient as possible and thus reduce the importance of logistical assets as a target. Supply depots should be few and unassailable. Resupply must be carefully planned and executed operations. Guerrilla forces repeatedly fight and win with no more equipment than they can carry on their back. That should be the goal for counter-guerrilla forces also.



## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Three major conclusions can be drawn from this examination of insurgencies based on guerrilla warfare literature:

First, a guerrilla campaign can be defeated but not by conventional forces (even elite forces) using conventional tactics. Guerrilla warfare enables inferior groups to defeat superior conventional military forces. Guerrillas can best be defeated in an unconventional manner. Guerrilla warfare can only be countered effectively by guerrilla warfare.

Secondly, psyops is the battlefield; intelligence is the only force multiplier. Insurgency (and counterinsurgency) is a political war where military action is used strictly to achieve psychological goals. Victory goes to the side that best uses its intelligence assets.

Lastly, counterinsurgency is won or lost at the local level. Hearts and minds, not terrain and body counts, are what matters. Defeating the guerrilla militarily does not resolve the problem that gave rise to the insurgency. An insurgency can never be eliminated without addressing and correcting those conditions. The corrections must begin at the top but must be manifested and visible at the local level. As those corrections are being made, though, the guerrilla must still be defeated to end the insurgency.

The lesson of Desert Shield/Desert Storm for the world is that one cannot succeed against the U.S. in a conventional military way. The old lesson of Vietnam, however, is that one might succeed in an unconventional (guerrilla) war. Insurgencies will continue to be a threat in lesser developed nations in the decades to come. The probability of the U.S.

becoming involved in an advisory and support capacity is high, although direct military involvement is less likely. We are already involved in El Salvador and the Philippines. Military professionals must study potential adversaries and how they fight in order to learn how to defeat them. We have not done that well when it comes to guerrilla warfare. We must train to fight our potential enemies not just hope they fight the way we have trained. Cursing the enemy for not operating the way we expect is not enough. If we do not study how guerrillas operate and learn how to defeat them, they will have the last word when history is written.

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