

Notes on:

## ***FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency***

Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 2006

1. ***FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency***<sup>1</sup> is the product of two generals, James Mattis of the Marine Corps, and David Petraeus of the Army. Both men commanded divisions in Iraq, led their service's training and doctrine commands, and then returned to command in Iraq. *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* captures the lessons from Iraq in classical counterinsurgency terms. The manual strives to adjust the thinking and practices of our conventionally-oriented ground forces by clearly describing COIN as a political-cultural-sociological struggle, a civic effort far bigger than a straightforward military problem. *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency* certifies a doctrine that needs to be understood by all leaders: that COIN is a complex political effort that the military cannot win alone – it requires all elements of national power.
2. **The focus of counterinsurgency is the people:** provide for the people, protect the people, and convince the people of their government's legitimacy. The insurgents persist by controlling the passive cooperation of the people around them. Leaders need to spend as much time knowing the people as they spend on knowing the enemy. This civic focus reverses many traditional US military philosophies. In COIN, overwhelming firepower is counterproductive, language and cultural knowledge are primary skills, technology – precision strike, airpower, and satellites – contributes little to success, military action supports civic action, military force alone cannot win in COIN, and IO may be the main effort.
3. ***Insurgency and Counterinsurgency***, Chapter 1, defines COIN and establishes basic truths. *Insurgency* is an organized movement to overthrow a government. *Counterinsurgency* is actions by the government to defeat the insurgency. Success in COIN depends wholly on the people. Legitimacy is the objective: each side needs the people to accept its political power as legitimate. Insurgents aim to force political change, so political factors are primary and military action is secondary. Armed forces cannot succeed in COIN alone. Chapter 1 includes nine counterintuitive aspects of COIN and a list, Table 1-1, of COIN practices.
4. ***Unity of Effort: Integrating Civilian and Military Activities***, Chapter 2, explains how the military action is secondary to the political one. Because successful COIN efforts meet the contested population's needs, political, social, and economic programs are more valuable than military programs. Excessive use of force undermines policy objectives. COIN is a battle of ideas. Tactics and technology will NOT defeat the insurgents. Information programs are needed.

Military forces support civilian efforts. Since military leaders do not command contributing organizations, influencing these groups requires skill and subtlety. US military forces, designed for conventional war, do have COIN capabilities: civil affairs, psychological ops, intel, language and regional knowledge, and most importantly, skilled disciplined people who are adaptive and intelligent. Training HN forces is an essential task for all services.

Military leaders need to understand USG organizations: State, USAID, CIA, Justice, DEA, Treasury, Homeland Security, Energy, Agriculture, Commerce, and Transportation. NGOs, UN organizations, multinational corporations, and contractors need trust-based relationships. HN civil authorities need support. Marines need to know social structures: community leaders, businessmen, clerics, journalists, and patriarchs. Military forces often possess the only capability to meet the populace's needs. The ambassador is the senior coordinator for USG agencies. State determines interagency tasks to assist HN organizations. A civil-military operations center (CMOC) integrates military and non-military actions.

5. ***Intelligence in Counterinsurgency***, Chapter 3, is the longest chapter, with seven sections:
  - I **Intel Characteristics.** COIN is an intel endeavor. Intel in COIN is about people: their values, beliefs, and decision-making. All Marines are collectors.

- II **Predeployment Preparation** focuses on the operational environment, defined primarily by people. Deployed units are the best source of intel. AOs often span tribal boundaries. Pages 3-4 through 3-14 describe a thorough methodology to analyze people and groups. Undermining an insurgency's support is the goal. IO can be an insurgency's main effort.
  - III **ISR Ops** focus on the local population. HUMINT is key. All COIN forces know the PIRs and all patrols are tasked with collection and debriefed on return.
  - IV **Counterintelligence** neutralizes insurgent collection efforts. OpSec is very important.
  - V **All-source Intel.** Because analysts take months to understand the insurgency, know perceptions, know culture, and track thousands of people, leaders should maintain analyst continuity.
  - VI **Collaboration.** HN intel integration is risky because of infiltration of foreign intel services.
  - VII **Summary.** Leaders should devote the same amount of time to understanding the socio-cultural aspects of the people as they do to understanding the enemy.
6. **Designing Counterinsurgency Campaigns and Operations**, Chapter 4, discusses campaign planning. Even when situations do not fit established frames of reference, planners default to doctrinal norms. But service doctrine does not address all instruments of national power, and interagency and multinational ops make unity of command unlikely. Continuous assessment of relevant MOEs is needed to adjust campaign plans. Leaders must constantly learn and adapt.

*What kind of leaders design successful COIN campaigns? Leaders without doctrinally-rigid ideas on how to fight. Komer's 1972 analysis, Bureaucracy Does Its Thing<sup>2</sup>, addresses well the challenges of institutional inertia, reluctance to change, and our overly militarized COIN efforts in Vietnam.*

7. **Executing Counterinsurgency Operations**, Chapter 5, describes multiple COIN approaches, each requiring integrated political, economic, psychological, civic, and military action. There are five requirements for success: (1) restore government legitimacy, (2) control one area, (3) retain population centers, (4) expand control, and (5) employ IO to influence the population and discredit the insurgency.

COIN ops progress in three stages: stop the bleeding, recovery, and movement to self-sufficiency. Figure 5-1 describes five Logical Lines of Operations (LLOs) – security ops, HN forces, essential services, governance, and economic development – all wrapped in a shell of IO. IO may be the decisive LLO. It sets the conditions for success in all other LLOs. Every Marine's actions communicate the IO message.

*The IO message that some Shiite and Sunni clerics espouse is that the US invaded Iraq to destroy Islam and seize oil. Our efforts at improving essential services, governance, and security may not gain public support, and even if they do, it may not matter, in the face of successful insurgent IO. Edward Luttwak has criticized FM 3-24's assumption that popular support of a legitimate government, generated by providing better services, insures the allegiance of the population and defeats the insurgency. Repressive governments prove every day that popular support is not needed to secure obedience.<sup>3</sup>*

- Table 5-1 describes the **IO** LLO.
- Table 5-2 describes the **security ops** LLO. Militaries, familiar with security, must not apply too many resources to this LLO at the expense of other LLOs.
- Table 5-3 describes the **HN forces** LLO. Avoid mirror-imaging – making HN forces look like us.
- Table 5-4 describes the **essential services** LLO: police, fire, water, electricity, schools, medical, transportation, and sanitation.
- Table 5-5 describes the **governance** LLO.
- Table 5-6 describes the **economic development** LLO.

There are three COIN approaches: (1) **Clear-Hold-Build** is for high-priority areas. (2) **Combined Action** joins US and HN troops. (3) **Limited Support** builds HN capability with minimal US presence.

Assessment of progress in COIN depends on selecting proper measures of effectiveness (MOEs) or measures of performance (MOPs) for each LLO. Numerical indicators have limits when measuring social environments. The targeting process focuses on people, both insurgents and noncombatants. In the COIN environment, all participants must continuously learn and adapt to each other throughout the campaign.

8. **Developing Host-Nation Security Forces**, Chapter 6, is a critical COIN task. *JP 3-07.1 Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (FID)*<sup>4</sup>, is joint doctrine. *FM 31-20-3 Foreign Internal Defense Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Forces*<sup>5</sup> is US Army doctrine. Training resources include SOF, general purpose forces, and interagency, multinational, and contractor organizations. Sections address the challenges of organization, personnel, training, and employment of HN forces. Advisors need culture and language capabilities, and a realization that building an army is a long-term commitment. The primary force in COIN is the police. Organizing and training police forces should be done by Justice and civilian police officers. HN police and military must work together.
9. **Leadership and Ethics for Counterinsurgency**, Chapter 7, discusses the ethical role of competent leadership. Leaders establish an ethical climate and educate their subordinates on honor and morality. It is counterproductive for poorly trained troops to operate close to the local populace. All COIN force activities are wrapped in a blanket of truth. Leaders know the people, topography, economy, history, and culture of their AO. This requires self-directed learning. Excessive force reduces risk, but alienates the local population, and allows insurgents to portray us as illegitimate. Assume additional risk to minimize harm to non-combatants. COIN forces must be adept at both warfighting and policing. COIN ops more closely resemble police work. Treating a civilian like an insurgent is a recipe for failure. Treat detainees humanely. Do not hold family or associates – hostage taking is unethical and illegal. COIN missions require training, education, and significant leader development, especially in cultural awareness.
10. **Sustainment**, Chapter 8, discusses logistic considerations in COIN. HN logistic and economic assets need to be well understood as they support HN forces, civil populations, as well as the insurgents. US, multinational partners, and contractors may support HN forces or populations in multiple conflicting ways. Local corruption and graft cripples logistic support. US forces, ill-equipped to provide essential services, may be tasked with supporting the populace and increasing local economic development.
11. **There are five Appendices:**
  - **A: A Guide for Action** is a bolded list of FM 3-24's key lessons and philosophies.
  - **B: Social Network Analysis and Other Analytical Tools** explains multiple tools to analyze the population. Social network analysis is explained in detail. Examples are shown of time lines, pattern analysis, link diagrams, and time-event charts.
  - **C: Linguist Support** provides guidelines for selecting and working with interpreters. Table C-2 lists techniques for Marines whose words are being translated.
  - **D: Legal Considerations** outlines regulations that leaders should know: authorities to assist HN governments, including Title 10 and Title 22, prohibitions on DoD training of police, and notes on rules of engagement, law of war, detention, and others issues.
  - **E: Airpower in Counterinsurgency** discusses air surveillance and transport support.
12. **Source Notes, Glossary, Bibliography, Military References, and an Index** complete the manual.
13. **What kind of military force can best implement FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency? What type of leaders should the Marine Corps develop? What type of training should we emphasize? We need:**
  - **Core Values.** *Well-disciplined, ethical Marines obey orders. When Marines operate close to the local population and every action sends an IO message, our Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment are powerful weapons in COIN.*

- **An expeditionary mindset.** *Our ability to operate in austere environments, our small logistic footprint, and our Small Wars legacy — a willingness to engage and live among the population — are key organizational strengths in COIN.*
  - **Flexible leaders.** *The Marine Corps benefits from strong leaders with interpersonal skills, problem solving abilities, and the non-doctrinaire capacity for independent thought and action. Inter-agency expertise, exchange tours, and language and cultural knowledge strengthen our leaders.*
  - **An intelligence mindset.** *All Marines know the PIRs and all Marines are collectors. The Marine Corps can increase intelligence structure and analytical methods, but an intelligence mindset for all Marines requires cultural awareness of regions and populations.*
  - **Language and culture.** *Our leaders' linguistic incapacity is a self-inflicted wound. Technology will not solve our deficiencies, qualification requirements will. All leaders need specific regional expertise. All officers need a second language.*
  - **Long-service professionals.** *Mature Marines with worldwide experience, especially repetitive tours in a specific region, provide more COIN capability per person. This decreases our footprint. We need to age our force and manage Marines' assignments to develop advanced COIN skills. Our small unit leaders, especially our squad leaders, need to be strong, ethical, and experienced.*
  - **Effective advisors.** *To train HN troops, we need Marine advisors who "live with, eat with, train with, and fight with." We need intelligent, hardy, and mature Marines who can demonstrate our values, thrive in rough expeditionary situations, embrace foreign cultures, influence foreign leaders, and understand the language and the nuances of the culture, in order to develop HN COIN forces.*
  - **IO capability.** *If IO is the main effort, then we need structure, leaders, and training to fight in this arena. All ops are wrapped in a blanket of IO and IO sets the conditions for success in COIN.*
  - **Less focus on technology.** *Airpower, precision munitions, armor, and satellites all support the Marine on the ground who is among the population executing the COIN mission.*
14. FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency is an important manual. It is well-written and relevant. It clearly identifies the COIN challenges that must be addressed. The irony of FM 3-24 is stated in its first chapter: armed forces cannot succeed in counterinsurgency alone. The manual addresses US ground forces – a portion of the security element that includes joint forces, multinational partners, and HN forces. This security element is in turn a small portion of the overall COIN effort of NGOs, USG agencies, and HN agencies, which in turn are directed by HN and USG national decisionmakers. The ideas contained in FM 3-24, no matter how well-executed, cannot fully defeat an insurgency and cannot compensate for USG deficiencies. We need interagency doctrine, we need USG agencies with expeditionary capabilities, and we need national will to prosecute a successful counterinsurgency campaign.

## Footnotes:

1. *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 2006. [<http://usacac.army.mil/cac/repository/materials/coin-fm3-24.pdf>]
2. *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S. – GVN Performance in Vietnam* by Robert W. Komer. Santa Monica, California: The Rand Corporation, 1972. [<http://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R967/>]
3. "Dead End: Counterinsurgency Warfare as Military Malpractice" by Edward Luttwak. *Harper's Magazine*, February 2007.
4. *JP 3-07.1 Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (FID)*, 30 April 2004. [[http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new\\_pubs/jp3\\_07\\_1print.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_07_1print.pdf)]
5. *FM 31-20-3 Foreign Internal Defense Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Forces*, 20 September 1994.

AO	Area of Operations	HUMINT	Human Intelligence	Ops	Operations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency	Intel	Intelligence	OpSec	Operational Security
CMOC	Civil-Military Operations Center	IO	Information Operations	PIR	Priority Intelligence Requirement
COIN	Counterinsurgency	ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance	SOF	Special Operations Forces
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency	JP	Joint Publication	UN	United Nations
DoD	Department of Defense	LLO	Logical Line of Operations	US	United States
FID	Foreign Internal Defense	MOE	Measure of Effectiveness	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
FM	Field Manual	MOP	Measure of Performance	USG	United States Government
GVN	Government of Vietnam	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization		
HN	Host Nation				