Sourcing Perception Warriors

In this battlefield, popular perceptions and rumor are more influential than facts and more powerful than a hundred tanks.

—David Kilcullen[1]

By C. GLENN AYERS *and* JAMES R. ORBOCK

In a counterinsurgency fight, shaping the perception of host nation populations is essential to stripping an insurgency of its core means of support. There are numerous avenues available to shape perceptions, but each involves actions to reinforce communications. The premier units capable of shaping perceptions are civil affairs (CA) and psychological operations (PSYOP) forces. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Department of Defense (DOD) has extensively deployed CA and PSYOP forces. Additionally, within DOD, organizational changes have intensified the stress on these Reserve Component forces. Because of these operational requirements and organizational changes, the Department of Defense must readdress how it is to source these perception warriors in order to finish the long fight.

Keeping Order

In November 2005, the Deputy Secretary of Defense signed DOD Directive 3000.05, "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations,"[2] which states that "Stability Operations are a core U.S. military mission." In other words, the Services are to "be prepared to perform all tasks necessary to establish or maintain order when civilians cannot do so." Central to this fight is the directive to the commander of U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) to "develop organizational and operational concepts for the military-civilian teams . . . including their composition, manning, and sourcing," as well as to "support Combatant Commander stability operations training and ensure forces assigned to USJFCOM are trained for stability operations."

Iraqi children chat with Soldiers in Taji

30th Space Wing (William Greer)

The resident stability operations unit within USJFCOM under U.S. Army Forces Command, the Army conventional unit force provider, is the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC). It is composed of four CA commands and two PSYOP groups. Major General Herbert Altshuler, former commander of USACAPOC, described its dual mission as:

the bridge between the military commander on the ground and the civilian population in his area of operations. This includes the population, its leadership, elected, appointed or assumed, and the institutions of government and culture of that population. Psychological Operations is an information-based capability. The job is to give the commander on the ground a means by which to communicate with selected foreign audiences in his area of operations to specifically influence their attitudes and behavior.[3]

These two unit types are critical in establishing the conditions for democratic rule of law, creating and shaping popular perception, countering rumors and misinformation, and acting as the frontline ambassadors of good will.

USACAPOC is a unique stability operations unit created from the Reserve force. To support conventional contingency operations, Soldiers must mobilize, train, and then deploy. Under current conditions, mobilization requires 30 days or more. Additionally, with limited

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numbers of Soldiers assigned to units, personnel are cross-leveled or brought from the Individual Ready Reserve to fill unit vacancies.[4] This cobbling together of units during the mobilization process sends minimally experienced units into a combat zone where complex and innovative solutions are required for success. Although these troops are great citizen-Soldiers, the minimal training and cohesion-building provided by the current deployment process produce less than optimal results.[5]

Additionally, to respond to short-notice crisis situations such as the tsunami disaster of 2004 or after the invasion of Panama during Operation *Just Cause* in 1990, the conventional force units must rely on the CA and PSYOP units assigned to U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). The only Active Component forces are in the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade and the 4th Psychological Operations Group. Both of these units are tasked to support special operations forces and do not possess excess capacity to support conventional force requirements.

An Operational Reserve

A near-term solution to the USJFCOM need for a resident CA and PSYOP capability is to revise current mobilization policies. By activating one Reserve CA brigade and one Reserve PSYOP battalion for 2-year mobilization periods, the units can be based at military installations in the United States for the first year while they increase proficiency through training, become available for short-notice contingency requirements, and then, in the second year, deploy to support ongoing worldwide commitments. The change in mobilization strategy would allow this Reserve unit to become an *operational* reserve instead of continuing the same *strategic* reserve policies created after World War II.

There is opposition to this plan. Some argue that Reservist income decreases with activation, there is undue hardship on families, there is insufficient time between mobilizations, there are not enough Soldiers to fill the ranks, and finally, the burden on employers is too great. Although these concerns are valid, all of these issues would be diminished with a 2-year mobilization rotation instead of the current policy outlined by David Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, which requires Soldiers to mobilize for a total of 1 year at a time.[6] In order to activate Reserve Soldiers for a 2-year period, DOD needs to modify current mobilization policies to maximize authorizations under existing congressional legislation.

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Regarding the first issue, RAND published a study concerning the activation and income of Reservists mobilized in 2001 and 2002.[7] The study concluded that the data show that "72 percent of the more than 100,000 troops surveyed saw their earnings jump 25 percent when called to active duty. Their average pay hike amounted to about $10,000 a year."[8] Additionally, "reservists who served for 270 or more days in a year saw their earnings jump by an average of 44 percent over normal pay."[9] It is often the transition from a civilian income source to an Active pay status that causes the most turmoil as household budgets must be reworked.

Second, by mobilizing Soldiers for a 2-year period, they can choose to move to permanent duty stations with their families. The benefit is that families can then create support groups that provide a social network while the Soldiers are deployed during their second year of mobilization. The additional benefit to the military is reduced financial costs by dependents using already established service centers such as medical facilities in lieu of more remote medical treatment providers.

Third, the 2-year mobilization increases the dwell time for CA and PSYOP units. Although there is a 2-year mobilization, only 1 year is an extended deployment cycle apart from family members; the other year is at a U.S.-based military installation. Once complete, it is 5 years and 4 months before the Soldier is mobilized again under the current force structure. By establishing an additional Reserve CA command and PSYOP group, the dwell time increases. Moreover, since there are standing forces to meet the conventional force requirements, Reservists in nonmobilized units can focus on professional development and maintain a scheduled 2-week annual training period. The result is a decrease in the operational pace of the average Reserve unit.

The first month of mobilization includes the administrative requirements involved in transitioning Solders to an Active status. The next 9 months allow for Soldiers to train at U.S. military bases, be ready for immediate deployment to support contingency operations, establish unit reporting procedures, and enhance their professional skill sets. This period also allows for rotations to combat training centers, such as the Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana and the National Training Center in California. The next 30 days are vacation time in preparation for the next 12 months of deployment. Once complete, the last 30 days include demobilization and vacation time.

The additional advantage of a 2-year mobilization is that Reserve units not filled to complete manning can have Soldiers from other units cross-leveled to fill shortages. These addi-

MG Herbert L. Altshuler, former commander of U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne)

1st Combat Camera Squadron (Richard Rose)

tional fills can then get the needed specialized training to ensure effectiveness while deployed. Types of training can include language training, cultural awareness courses, and regional studies.

Finally, employers can adjust to a 2-year mobilization better than to multiple short-term mobilizations. When hiring Reservists, employers have little idea when these employees are to be mobilized. Second, to backfill the employee-Soldier position, the recruiting effort is for a temporary hire of 1 year. From a civilian recruiting perspective, 2-year fills are easier to find and offer continuity in the workplace.

Sourcing the Requirement

Although the 2-year mobilization is a needed immediate fix, the mid- to long-term solution is to have a resident CA and PSYOP capability with the standing Army divisions. The sourcing of these Soldiers could be a mix of Active and mobilized Reserve force Soldiers, so one battalion of CA and one company of PSYOP Soldiers are at each division. These resident Soldiers would provide the day-to-day perception warfare capability to the Army's primary combat element, the Brigade Combat Team.

To source this requirement, the Army could designate part of the congressionally authorized 65,000-troop increase for CA and PSYOP growth. The number of Soldiers per division would be just under 250. Across 10 divisions, 2,500 Soldiers would provide the basic capability to meet the conventional force needs. Creating such a force would further eliminate the constraints currently encountered at USJFCOM and enhance the day-to-day operational capability of the combatant commanders.

Although these are proposals within reach to fix the shift in the policy created in DOD Directive 3000.05, the real need is to create a new supporting command dedicated to winning the posthostility fight. The same forces at work to create USSOCOM after the failed Iran hostage rescue attempt are now at work to create a command that supports those involved in support, stability, reconstruction, and transition. The creation of a U.S. Stability Command would institutionalize DOD in the interagency and nongovernmental organization coordination process,[10] the support for military assistance teams for foreign internal defense,[11] and the preparation of DOD to fight small wars. It should be composed of units designed for post-hostility stability and reconstruction, disaster response, interagency coordination, and, most importantly, perception-shaping.

But as with every journey, a first step must be taken—and providing ample civil affairs and psychological operations Soldiers for continuing operations is such a step. **JFQ**

Soldiers distribute newspapers in Baghdad, 2007

Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (David Quillen)

Soldier broadcasts messages during patrol in Ghazni, Afghanistan

55th Combat Camera Company (Christopher Barnhart)

NOTES

[1] David Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency," *Small Wars Journal* (Online), March 2006, available at <www.smallwarsjournal.com/documents/28articles.pdf>.

[2] Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations," November 28, 2005, available at <www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/300005p.pdf>.

[3] Interview with Major General Herbert L. Altshuler, USA, *Special Operations Technology* 2, no. 2, available at <www.special-operations-technology.com/print_article.cfm?DocID=442>.

[4] William R. Florig, "Theater Civil Affairs Soldiers: A Force at Risk," *Joint Force Quarterly* 43 (4th Quarter, 2006), available at <www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq_pages/editions/i43/17%20JFQ43%20Florig.pdf>.

[5] Sudarsan Raghavan, "Troops Confront Waste in Iraq Reconstruction, Inexperience and Lack of Training Hobble Oversight, Accountability," *The Washington Post*, August 25, 2007, A1.

[6] David S.C. Chu, "New Mobilization Reality," *National Guard* (February 2007), available at <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3731/is_200702/ai_n18706056>.

[7] David S. Loughran, Jacob Alex Klerman, and Craig Martin, *Activation and the Earnings of Reservists* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006), accessed at <www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG474/>.

[8] Donna Miles, "Most Reserve, Guard Members Earn More, Not Less, in Uniform," *American Forces Press Service*, January 26, 2006, available at <www.militaryconnections.com/news_story.cfm?textnewsid=1844>.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Vicki J. Rast, *Interagency Fratricide: Policy Failures in the Persian Gulf and Bosnia* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, June 2004).

[11] Robert B. Killebrew, "The Army and Changing American Strategy," *Army* (August 2007); and John A. Nagl, *Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for a Permanent Army Advisory Corps* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, June 2007), available at <www.newamericansecurity.org/publications/Nagl_AdvisoryCorp_June07.pdf>.