Learning From Our Modern Wars:
The Imperatives of Preparing for a Dangerous Future

Lieutenant General Peter W. Chiarelli, U.S. Army, with Major Stephen M. Smith, U.S. Army

Lieutenant General Peter W. Chiarelli, U.S. Army, is the senior military assistant to the secretary of defense. He holds a B.S. in political science from Seattle University, an M.P.A. from the University of Washington, and an M.A. in national security strategy from Salve Regina University. He is also a graduate of the United States Naval Command and Staff College and the National War College. His article "Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations" appeared in the July-August 2005 issue of Military Review.

Major Stephen M. Smith, U.S. Army, is a military assistant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He holds a B.A. in political science and history from Wittenberg University and an M.P.A. from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. MAJ Smith has served in various command and staff positions in CONUS, South Korea, Kuwait, Bosnia, and Iraq.

PHOTO: Role players and U.S. military personnel hold a mock meeting for Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates and U.S. Army SGM William J. Gainey, Fort Riley, Kansas, 9 August 2007. The training focused on cultural awareness. (DOD, Cherie A. Thurlby)

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

SINCE RETURNING from my second tour in Iraq in December 2006, I have had time to reflect on how our collective experiences in that war, along with those in Afghanistan and our wider War on Terrorism, have affected our military, government, and Nation. Although we are still heavily committed in all of those operations and continue to adjust our approaches to ultimately achieve our objectives, I believe it is time to start looking more broadly at how our experiences in modern warfare should help shape our national security institutions in the years to come. This essay highlights the most significant lessons I have learned in the post-9/11 world and how I think they could be applied to better prepare us for the full range of challenges we will likely encounter in the future.

This article began as an effort to identify challenges the U.S. Army must prepare to face, but I soon realized that many of those challenges are connected to the other armed forces, the interagency, and the broader U.S. Government. Therefore, I address elements of our national power beyond just the military. The complexities of today's national security environment demand that we reevaluate missions across the U.S. Government, embrace the requirements for full-spectrum operations, and preserve our most important military principles while adjusting our organizations and values development to best meet the challenges ahead. This article is in no way an effort to propose answers to all of our potential challenges; rather, it is an attempt to join the conversation.

How We Got Here and Where We Should Go

The rapid diffusion of technology, the growth of a multitude of transnational factors, and the consequences of increasing globalization and economic interdependence, have coalesced to create national security challenges remarkable for their complexity . . . .

—General Charles C. Krulak, 1999[1]

As the cold war faded into memory and new security challenges emerged at the beginning of the 21st century, military visionaries were promoting a view of future warfare characterized by increased complexity, unpredictability, and ambiguity. Others, less prescient, viewed concepts such as *low-intensity conflict*, *operations other than war*, and *nation-building* as anathema to our military's warrior culture. Despite repeatedly conducting such operations in the 1990s, we tended to quickly revert our intellectual capacities back to our traditional core competencies of synchronizing combat power on a symmetrically aligned battlefield.

The inevitable result was that the United States, even after an extraordinary round of initial military transformation efforts, entered the War on Terrorism after the 9/11 attacks with armed forces well suited to defeat opposing armies and topple political regimes, but significantly lacking the depth suited to the longer term requirements of stabilizing and rebuilding nations. In essence, we went to war with a military and interagency construct that was not prepared for the imperatives of full-spectrum operations and counterinsurgency warfare.

Since 9/11 and our experiences on the modern asymmetric battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, the military has learned hard lessons and forced itself to make significant generational leaps of adaptation. Meanwhile, much of our government and interagency seems to be in a state of denial about the requirements needed to adapt to modern warfare. Collectively, we must internalize and institutionalize the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure they truly become "learned" rather than merely "observed." We must also broaden our scope to include imperatives across our government—imperatives that will help us prepare for a future in which we will almost certainly encounter situations of equal or greater complexity than those we face today.

> *…much of our government and interagency seems to be in a state of denial about the requirements needed to adapt to modern warfare.*

As events in our Nation's history have repeatedly demonstrated, it is virtually impossible to anticipate with any degree of certainty exactly what future battlefields will look like, or for that matter, where they will be. The only constant is change. Predicting future policy decisions is even more hazardous. However, it is possible to identify some of the trends that are likely to shape future conflicts. These include the increasing chasm between the developed and developing worlds, a population explosion in underdeveloped regions, the rise of ideologies and organizations that don't recognize national borders, a dramatic increase in ethnic and sectarian self-identification, and increasing global competition for energy resources. There have also been dramatic improvements in technologies that allow instantaneous global transmission of information—and thus provide the potential to create weapons of almost unimaginable destruction. All of these characteristics point to the complex, ambiguous nature of future conflict.

Some might seek to avoid the hard choices complexity entails by concluding that we are ill-suited to employ our national power in such multidimensional environments. They would argue that we cannot afford to intervene in another Iraq. But this argument is like those made against entering into another of Europe's wars after the experience of World War I: while tempting, it is unrealistic and invites risk. In the increasingly interconnected, interdependent, and dangerous world we live in, the U.S. cannot assume that it will be able to retreat from other nations' problems for very long. At some point in the not-too-distant future, our national interests may require us to engage in situations even more complicated than the ones we face today.

To meet the national security challenges of the future, we must create the capacity to engage in the full range of military and interagency operations, and we must embrace the concept of nation-building, not

just rhetorically, but entirely. The potential to lose the momentum of change in this emerging reality of conflict through the diffusion of funding, political positioning that takes a short-term view, and the natural reluctance of our forces to intellectually engage beyond the linear construct of warfare is real. Additionally, while we attempt to improve our capabilities in non-linear warfare, we must maintain our ability to defeat conventional military threats and deter the emergence of near-peer competitors. The challenge is to find the right balance without trying to attain competence in so many potential missions that we can't do any of them well.

Developing Our Cultural Mind-Sets

Transformation is not just about technology and platforms—"transformation takes place between the ears." The cultural and intellectual factors of transformation are more important than new ships, planes and high-tech weapons.

—Colonel M.E. Krause[2]

Perhaps the most important thing we need to do to prepare for a dangerous future is change the cultures of our national security organizations and increase our efforts to educate the U.S. public. Americans have traditionally viewed warfare as a struggle between friend and enemy, with both sides clearly identified and engaged on a delimited battlefield where outcomes result in verifiable winners and losers. In other words, we have been very comfortable with the idea of a symmetric battlefield. In fact, for the first 20 years of my Army career, spent as an Armor officer, I trained to defeat the Soviet 9th Combined Arms Army on the plains of Europe by reducing their formations to 60 percent strength so they would surrender. This kind of warfare was easy to understand and to translate into military organizations, equipment, and training. It was clean. The end of the cold war and the blitz victory of Desert Storm hindered our ability to grasp, as a Nation and a military, what would come next. Even to this day, some see conventional battle as the only way to fight. They believe that all we have to do to win our modern wars is kill and capture enough of the enemy.

To maximize our ability to succeed in current and future conflicts, we must change this mind-set. Warfare has evolved, and both the Nation and the military must adjust accordingly. Part of this change must include a brutally honest assessment of what the U.S. must do to optimize its chances for success when it decides to go to war. The U.S. as a Nation—and indeed most of the U.S. Government—has not gone to war since 9/11. Instead, the departments of Defense and State (as much as their modern capabilities allow) and the Central Intelligence Agency are at war while the American people and most of the other institutions of national power have largely gone about their normal business.

A tangible example is the relatively slow procurement and fielding process we use to get new armored vehicles into combat. In a conflict that has lasted longer than World War II, the majority of our personnel in overseas combat zones still operate in armored HMMWVs—early 1980s technology not well suited to the hazards we face. Although the military rapidly fielded numerous upgrades to improve the performance of the HMMWV, the idea of a replacement vehicle better suited to the evolving threat was not, until recently, part of the debate. Thus, significantly improved alternatives are only now being fielded in large quantities to our troops in harm's way. In short, our industrial base has largely been operating on a peacetime footing compared to some earlier conflicts in which we accelerated our production capacity and quickly generated new equipment.

Of course, it must be understood that one of the causes of our industrial inertia was a series of incorrect assumptions about how long U.S. forces would be committed in Iraq. In the early years of the war, civilian and military leaders repeatedly assumed that force levels would steadily decrease over time, and they made many resourcing decisions accordingly. This highlights the peril in being overly optimistic about essentially unpredictable military operations. It clearly points out that strategic planning should include greater consideration of potential worst-case scenarios.

Our current problems raise the legitimate question of whether the U.S., or any democracy, can successfully prosecute an extended war without a true national commitment. History is replete with examples of countries that tried to fight wars in the absence of popular support and without committing their national resources. These countries often found themselves defeated on battlefields far from

home. After one such experience—Vietnam—the U.S. military was restructured so that it could never go to war again without relying heavily on reserve-component forces. We should now consider whether we can ever successfully go to war for an extended period of time without the informed support of the American people and the full commitment of all the elements of our national power.

The history of war is a history of change. The modern battlefield—a multidimensional, ill-defined place where a nation's ability to apply non-kinetic elements of national power is as important to victory as the application of firepower—is so revolutionary it demands that we educate our citizens to its consequences. Iraq and Afghanistan have illustrated that wars will likely be longer and more expensive, with victory and defeat much more difficult to determine. We as a Nation must understand this the next time we decide to commit ourselves to war.

Organizing and Training the National Security Team

I don't think the U.S. government had what it needed for reconstructing a country. We did it ad hoc in the Balkans, and then in Afghanistan, and then in Iraq.

—Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice[3]

Redefining roles and missions. To improve its ability to succeed on the complex modern battlefield, the U.S. desperately needs to conduct a top-down review of the roles and missions of all of its elements

of national power. The latter include every organization that contributes to our diplomatic, information, military, and economic influence. In every overseas intervention the U.S. has undertaken since the end of the cold war, an integrated approach and an understanding of each organization's missions and capabilities have been woefully lacking. For years some in the military have criticized their interagency partners for not contributing enough to our efforts overseas, while some in the interagency have criticized the military for not providing enough security for them to do their jobs. What I've come to realize is that this finger-pointing wastes time and misses the mark. The real problem is that we lack a comprehensive overview of what each military and interagency partner should contribute in conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead, there is a large gap between what we optimally need to succeed and the combined resources our government can bring to bear. This "capabilities gap" is not the fault of any single agency, but is the result of our government not having clearly defined what it expects each instrument of national power to contribute to our foreign policy solutions. Lacking such guidance, we have failed to build the kinds of organizations we need today.

You need only look at the State Department to prove this point. Charged with implementing the foreign policy of the greatest power on earth in our relations with some 180 countries around the world, State has only 11,000 employees in the foreign service, a miniscule number compared to the more than 2,000,000 uniformed personnel in the U.S. military. Whereas the Pentagon's budget is almost half a trillion dollars per year, the 2007 State Department budget request was $9.5 billion.[4] During the Vietnam era, there were approximately 15,000 employees in the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Today there are roughly 3,000, making this once-robust organization little more than a contracting agency. Similarly, the United States Information Agency (USIA), so successful in public diplomacy during the cold war, was abolished as an independent agency in 1999 and its remnants incorporated into the State Department.

An interagency review undertaken by Congress in conjunction with the executive branch and the armed forces could help reduce the shortcomings in our current system. As a Nation, we must decide

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice listens to a question during a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing in Washington, D.C., 27 February 2007. The hearing was to request additional funding for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

DOD, Staff Sgt. Myles Cullen

what role each of our institutions should play in the implementation of our foreign-policy objectives and then resource them accordingly. For example, when required to increase indigenous-nation viability, should we send an agricultural expert from the Department of Agriculture, a governance expert from the State Department, and a rule-of-law expert from the Department of Justice, or should these experts come from the military, since it is most capable of mobilizing and compelling personnel to deploy to dangerous locations? Whatever the answer is, it needs to be codified and understood so that the responsible organizations can prepare properly for future contingencies.

Once the responsibilities beyond traditional warfighting and immediate post-conflict consolidation are established, each member of the interagency team must adjust its organization to meet the requirements that should be nested into the broader governmental structure. Such adjustments will likely entail increasing the resources allocated to the non-military elements of our national power, such as the State Department and USAID. It might also be determined that we need to restore the capabilities of institutions such as USIA. What is clear, though, is that in this type of conflict, where the majority of our success will be determined by the non-kinetic aspects of our national power, we must substantially increase the resources provided to the organizations most capable of projecting that power.

U.S. Army, SGT Joshua R. Ford

Paul A. Brinkley, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Business Transformation, presents a check for more than $6 million to employees of the Bayji Fertilizer Plant, in Bayji, Iraq, 7 August 2007. The facility will use the money to buy new equipment and hire employees.

We should also consider how to better employ some of our most effective nongovernmental elements of national power, such as the universities, businesses, and industries at the heart of our global economic influence. Our universities, for example, are filled with agronomists, engineers, and economists who, if asked and supported, would deploy to assist in advancing non-military development and ministerial capacity in targeted nations, just as they are doing today in some cases. Although implemented several years into the conflict, the Department of Defense's Task Force for Business and Stability Operations in Iraq has attempted to bring business leaders from the United States together with leaders of failed or faltering industries in Iraq in an effort to improve Iraq's economic potential. We should look to apply similar models of private sector/government integration in future operations when the critical means of achieving our objectives fall outside traditional military roles. Our Nation's economic power is often more important than its military power in ensuring strategic security; furthermore, the prosperity of our Nation and its people is what others covet—not our military power. We must continually look at ways to creatively leverage this influential element of national power to support our security objectives abroad.

Military imperatives. Once the decision to employ the military has been made, those of us in uniform must accept that in most modern conflicts, the decisive elements of power required to prevail may, more often than not, be non-kinetic. While we must maintain our core competency to defeat enemies with traditional combat power, we must also be able to offer the populations of countries affected by war the hope that life will be better for them and their children because of our presence, not in spite of it. In other words, in contrast to the idea that force always wins out in the end, we must understand that not all problems in modern conflict can be solved with the barrel of a rifle.

Another reality the uniformed forces must accept culturally is that, like it or not, until further notice the U.S. Government has decided that the military largely owns the job of nation-building. Although the Nation, its political leadership, and its military have routinely dismissed this mission since the end of the cold war, we have repeatedly decided to commit our national power to it. Today, the U.S. military is

the only national organization able to conduct some of the most critical tasks associated with rebuilding war-torn or failed nations. Indeed, since the end of the cold war, the capabilities of some of the interagency organizations that have traditionally played a large role in nation-building have decreased dramatically, even as the requirement to conduct these operations has multiplied. Unless and until there is a significant reorganization of U.S. Government interagency capabilities, the military is going to be the Nation's instrument of choice in nation-building. We need to accept this reality instead of resisting it, as we have for much of my career.

Flattening our organizations. Our national security organizations, and especially the military, must continually look at ways to flatten their organizational structures while increasing internal horizontal integration. This is the way many of our enemies operate, and it can put our more traditionally "stovepiped" organizations at a disadvantage. We don't want to break our structures, or make them suited only for asymmetric warfare, but they need to be modified.

Unfortunately, many of our most important capabilities are implemented at bureaucratic speed, not at the speed required by those at user level. We have the technology to share information much faster, but our legacy stovepiped approval processes can slow down the transfer of that information. Our enemies do not operate under such constraints. Thus, they often run circles around us, especially in the information environment, but also on the rapidly evolving battlefield.

One way to help flatten our military organizations would be for leaders and commanders to expand their focus both up and down the chain of command. Traditionally, military ground commanders have understood their superior's intent two levels up and conveyed their intent two echelons down. I firmly believe that on the modern battlefield, leaders need to expand their focus to three or more levels in each direction. I'm not suggesting that we should bypass the chain of command

> *We don't want to break our structures, or make them suited only for asymmetric warfare, but they need to be modified.*

or micromanage subordinates, but I have learned from recent battlefield experience that our operations are so decentralized and each area of operations so different that leaders need to expand their understanding of operations beyond what has traditionally worked for us on the conventional battlefield.

We can also help flatten our organizations by doing more to enable unconstrained horizontal integration and rapid knowledge transfer. Sometimes the most critical information on the battlefield doesn't come from the chain of command, but from external sources. We must enable those most in need of that information to access it without the filters a chain of command traditionally imposes. Closely related is the need to continually review how we classify and control information. I believe we in the military have a tendency to over-classify information that either perishes quickly or is not worthy of classification at all. This sometimes limits critical information to classified channels that small-unit leaders can't routinely access. Technologically, this problem can be addressed by increasing the number of tools available to disseminate classified information, but culturally, we can help solve it by using more common sense in deciding what truly needs to be classified in the first place.

Splitting the force is not the answer. Because of the complexity of our current wars, some believe we should reorganize our forces into two types of units: those that work only at the high-intensity level of a campaign, and those designed and equipped for the low-intensity fight and classic nation-building. Having done their jobs, the high-intensity force would hand off responsibility to the low-intensity force. This solution is both unsustainable and unaffordable: we simply don't have the resources to divide the military into "combat" and "stability" organizations. Instead, we must focus on developing full-spectrum capabilities across all organizations in the armed forces. Having said that, as the Army and Marine Corps increase their active-duty end strengths, we should consider increasing the number and adjusting the proportion of specialized units such as civil affairs, engineers, information operations, and others that play critical roles in stability operations.

We should apply the same thinking to how we train foreign armies and other security forces. I don't believe it is in the military's best interest to establish a permanent "Training Corps" in the conventional

military to develop other countries' indigenous security forces (ISF). The Special Forces do this mission well on the scale that is normally required for theater security cooperation and other routine foreign internal defense missions. Rather, we should ensure our conventional forces have the inherent flexibility to transition to ISF support when the mission becomes too large for the Special Forces. If requirements exceed Special Forces capabilities, then training and transition teams should be internally resourced from conventional U.S. or coalition units already operating in the battlespace.

There are two significant advantages to taking trainers from military units assigned to the battlespace. First, the partnership has unity of command and effort built into it: the trainers belong to the unit; they know where to go to get the operational, training, and logistical support they need; and most importantly, they get the latter much more easily. Additionally, trainers and warfighters will have already established the personal bonds that are optimal for this type of mission. This is no small advantage. In Iraq, I heard from one training-team leader who said he had an easier time developing rapport with his Iraqi counterparts than he did with the leadership of his U.S. partner unit.

Second, unit-sourced ISF training addresses the criticism, so often leveled at the way we have resourced teams in Iraq and Afghanistan, that we haven't consistently assigned our best leaders to these teams. If commanders on the ground know that the quickest way to complete their mission is to transition their operations over to the ISF, then they will be sure to assign their best people to ISF training. Should we take this approach, we may have to assign additional combat units to the theater, but that would only be the cost of doing business the right way. Furthermore, this sourcing strategy would eliminate the current requirement to cherry-pick units for officers and NCOs with special skills and experience to serve as individual augmentees on externally resourced training teams. Over the last three years, this practice has degraded units preparing to deploy and helped make it impossible to ensure OPTEMPO (operating tempo) equity across the force.

Unity of command. Unity of command has been an oft-violated principle of war in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The unintended consequence of this lapse has been risk of mission failure and unnecessary casualties. Whereas technological advances have given us unheard-of battlefield situational awareness and significantly lowered our number of fratricides, failure to ensure unity of command has stifled our ability to execute coordinated and synchronized campaign plans while making it easier for the enemy to inflict casualties on our forces and on civilians.

I believe that most of these unity-of-command violations are the unintentional result of institutional rivalries, coalition-building at any cost, and sometimes just failure to effectively organize and manage for these complex types of missions.

For example, the current command and control (C2) arrangement in Afghanistan is beyond comprehension even to military professionals. Political necessity may require such an arrangement, but the C2 in Afghanistan tends to support the axiom that the only thing worse than going to war with allies is going to war without them. Exacerbated by the national caveats of some coalition members, our Afghan C2 sacrifices unity of command and obviates theater operational awareness and meaningful strategic communications.

U.S. Navy, Mass Communication Specialist 2d Class Christopher Perez

U.S. Special Forces and Iraqi Army soldiers practice map-reading skills during their weekly training in Suwayrah, Iraq, 28 July 2007.
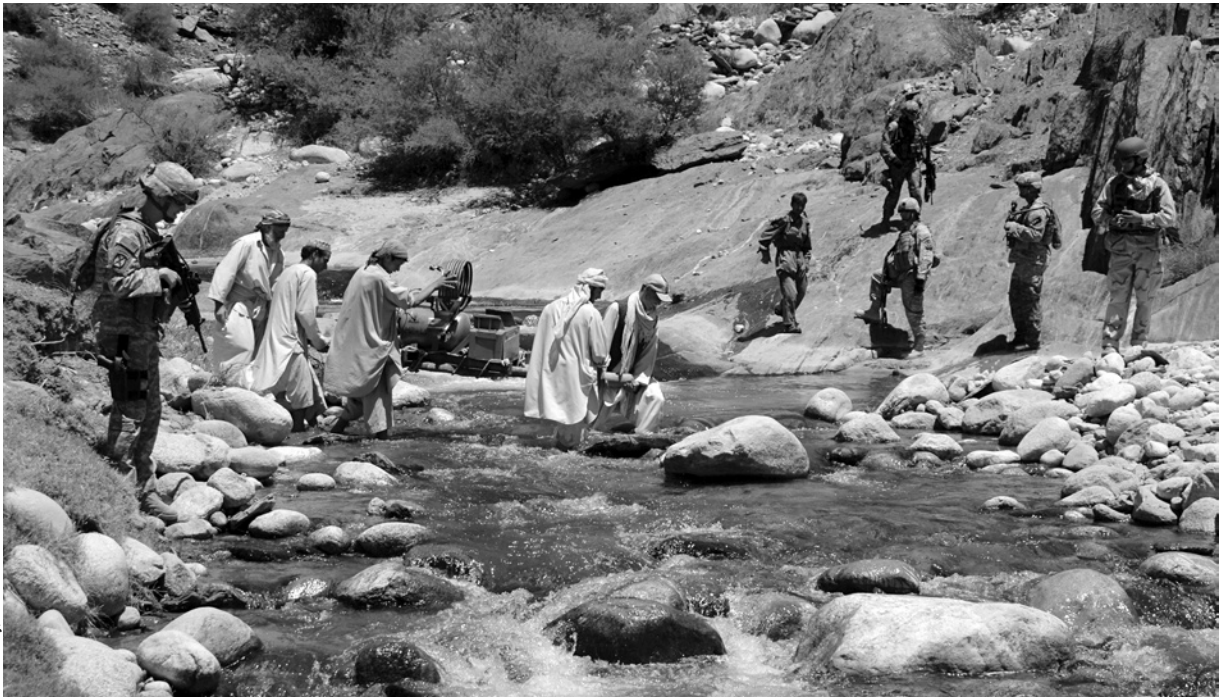
U.S. Army, SSG Michael Bracken

Road construction workers cross a stream while Afghan National Police officers and U.S. Army Soldiers of the provincial reconstruction team from Forward Operating Base Kalagush patrol Balik, in the Nuristan province of Afghanistan, 14 June 2007.

If NATO is to continue to be relevant, especially in an asymmetric security environment, real transformation is a necessity. Command and control is also a challenge we must address with other allies, as there are likely to be more cases in which we go to war with "coalitions of the willing" constituted largely outside of existing treaty organizations. Because coalition-building will almost always be required, even if only to reinforce the legitimacy of our operations, we must develop solutions for increasing our unity of command and effort.

While NATO and coalition operations in general are easy targets when discussing unity-of-command issues, purely U.S. military-interagency operations, so essential to our modern campaigns, can be just as problematic. We in the military are taught the necessity of unity of command; therefore, we can see violations of the principle in situations where our civilian counterparts may not. In peacetime, such violations may lead to nothing more than bureaucratic squabbles driven by budget considerations or turf battles. In combat situations, however, they undeniably cost lives and reduce our chances of success. For instance, few people I know argue against the value of provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) in Iraq and Afghanistan, yet we suffered excruciating delays in

implementing them—delays that were a function of disagreements over everything from how they would be staffed and funded to who would control their activities. Unquestionably, there is a direct correlation between how well we organize and integrate our operations at the military-interagency level and how successful we are in accomplishing our mission and minimizing casualties. Nevertheless, we continue to struggle with this fundamental challenge. The PRTs are only one example, but our problems in setting them up reinforce the call for the U.S. to conduct a top-down review of the roles and missions of all its elements of national power.

Exploiting the Information Environment

Strategically, insurgent campaigns have shifted from military campaigns supported by information operations to strategic communications campaigns supported by guerilla and terrorist operations.

—Colonel (Retired) T.X. Hammes[5]

Perhaps the most decisive factor that will determine who emerges victorious in current and future wars is which side can gain consistent advantage in the holistic information environment that plays out across the globe, near and far from the "front

lines." In short, the commander who prevails in the information war is almost certain to win the war itself. Perception has a nagging tendency of determining how our enemies, our allies, and our own societies view war, often regardless of what is actually happening on the ground. If we are unable to do a better job than our enemies of influencing the world's perception, then even the most brilliantly conceived campaign plans will be unlikely to succeed. This is not a new phenomenon, as the U.S. found out in Vietnam when the Western world perceived the tactically disastrous North Vietnamese defeat in the Tet Offensive as a strategic victory for the North. What makes the information environment even more challenging today is the explosion of technology that connects the world at near real-time speed, making it increasingly difficult for democratic governments and militaries that value accuracy and truth to compete with enemies who do not.

Now, more than ever, it is essential for leaders at all levels to understand not only how the actions they and their subordinates take will impact the immediate situation they are trying to influence, but how the results of those actions could resonate with local, national, and international audiences. Of course, the old maxim that "nothing succeeds like success" still applies, and the best way to succeed in the information war is to succeed in the war itself, but that is no longer enough. We in the military must significantly improve our ability to compete in the information arena. This can be done by upgrading our capabilities in the two traditional areas of information operations (IO) and public affairs (PA), and by insuring that our leaders develop the critical skills and intuition required to understand the complex second- and third-order effects of their decisions and how they may play out before many different audiences. Although IO and PA officers, effects coordinators, and others provide critical staff support to the information campaign, commanders must take the lead and be intimately involved in ensuring that the information aspects of military operations are considered in every action we undertake. It is that important to our success.

To better understand the information environment we are operating in, I offer a vignette from an action in early 2006, when a coalition and Iraqi special operations force raid killed 17 insurgents in Baghdad. After the raid, the enemy dragged the bodies of the dead insurgents into a nearby prayer room and staged it to look as if we had executed them. Although it only took the coalition about eight hours to confirm the original version of the story and discredit the insurgents' version, eight hours was too long and the "massacre" story carried the day both on the streets of Iraq and in much of the Western media. In a national, and indeed a global information community, where people generally believe the first story even if presented with convincing contrary evidence later, this tactically successful raid by our forces nonetheless translated into a strategic defeat. Not even the testimony of a freed hostage was enough to discredit the insurgents' story. Similar situations occur daily in Iraq. Sometimes the event receives national or international attention, but more often than not, enemy IO targets much smaller, local areas. Not bound by the same rules we work under, the enemy's information attacks are very effective. Too often we have failed to take the initiative or even effectively defend ourselves in the information environment. We must look at ways to improve our competitiveness in this critical area.

Information operations. For many in the West, information operations that include any elements of deception or propaganda are anathema to a democracy and a threat to a free press. While this can rightfully be a hot-button issue when a government or military misuses information, IO is nonetheless an essential element of our information strategy, and we must continue to improve it. We should also recognize that the term *psychological operations* is an anachronism that should be replaced by the less offensive *information operations*. Regardless of the value we place on IO, the enemy has made it clear that his key to victory is the domination of this most critical line of operation.

In his book *The World Is Flat*, Thomas L. Friedman outlines what the proliferation of cheap and almost universally accessible information technology has meant for the world economy.[6] According to Friedman, information once available only to the world's elites is now easily obtainable by anyone, anywhere, with a computer and an Internet connection. As if to prove Friedman's thesis, our enemies in Iraq and Afghanistan are using the Internet and associated technology to feed their sophisticated information campaign and to build better improvised explosive devices faster than we can field counter-measures or train service members to defeat them.

We have consistently underestimated the importance the enemy places on the IO campaign. To improve our standing in this area will require creative thinking and solutions well beyond what I have discussed here, but there are a couple of steps we can take to start moving in the right direction. First, we must implement policies that recognize the need for IO. These policies should provide safeguards to prevent abuse, but not be so restrictive that commanders cannot effectively counter enemy IO or are kept from mounting their own information offensives. For their part, commanders absolutely must maintain a firewall between IO and PA to prevent IO products from coloring the information we provide the media. A firewall would not prevent the two functions from coordinating their operations, but media press releases and interviews must always be based fully on the truth as we know it at the time and never be approved for release or amended by those working in IO.

Second, we must improve both our technological and organizational capability to disseminate IO and counter enemy propaganda. Currently, we do not respond well enough to deal effectively with enemies who can say whatever they want without retribution. We need professionals who can design information campaigns and develop rapid-response capabilities that surpass those of our enemies.

As aforementioned, we must also streamline, or eliminate where possible, the bureaucratic processes we have been using to approve our IO messages. Hierarchical organizations with well-developed bureaucracies often erect effective barriers to the instantaneous passing of information. They tend to enforce approval and coordination protocols that were developed before the explosion in information technologies. Unfortunately, as was the case with the Baghdad raid "massacre," information continues to flow uninterrupted to the rest of the world; it does not wait for bureaucracies to catch up. This means that decision-makers who can benefit most from information, or who can disseminate information most quickly to counter spurious enemy claims, are often denied permission to access or release information when it's most vital. Our enemies do not have this crippling constraint and are making much better use of new information technologies. Thus, we must flatten our organizations, reduce bureaucratic impediments, and improve the attendant flow of information—both within our units and from us to the media—to allow leaders at all levels to make the most advantageous, efficacious decisions.

Public affairs and media relations. Independent local, national, and international media coverage of our military operations and our enemies' activities is critical to our success in the global information environment. This is particularly true in today's 24-hour news environment. Unfortunately, our enemies in Iraq have won a significant victory by forcing most Western media to report only from secure compounds, to use embeds with coalition forces, or to retail second-hand information gained from local Iraqi stringers, some of whom have questionable agendas and loyalties.[7]

To address this situation, we must develop solutions for improving media access to the battlefield and to our activities without compromising the media's independence or our operational security. This could include relatively simple actions such as making it easier for journalists to get accredited and transported to the combat zone, and offering increased logistical support to help defray escalating costs. It could also include more sophisticated approaches, such as soliciting media assistance in designing information policies and erecting firewalls that address their concerns about IO influencing PA. It is important, too, despite what we may sometimes perceive as unfair treatment from the media, that we understand and support the crucial role they play in reporting the realities of our combat operations to the world.

U.S. Army, SPC Davis Pridgen

The commanding general of the 9th Iraqi Army Division, right, speaks with a journalist from the Al-Arabiyah news channel, left, as they walk with General David Petraeus through the Al Shurja market in East Baghdad, Iraq, 11 March 2007.

In our dealings with the media, we must also become more sophisticated than we have sometimes been. First and foremost, we must always be truthful and forthright when talking to the press. In some cases, PA officers and commanders have chosen to use the media as an outlet for IO, or have put out inaccurate statements in the hope of shaping public perceptions. When this occurs it weakens our bond of trust not only with the media, but with the American population we serve and the indigenous populations whose trust and confidence we are trying to gain. Any short-term gains achieved by such strategies merely serve to weaken our institution in the long run.

Finally, since IO and PA are as important on the modern battlefield as Congressional Affairs is on the home front, it might be time to consistently assign some of the best and most qualified officers to these positions. Perhaps the top two officers in a battalion, brigade, or division should be PA and IO officers. Public affairs officers should be assigned down to battalion level and even company level for certain missions, and when they are, we need to give them latitude to publish news releases quickly and the support they need to overcome mistakes. We must ensure PA officers and NCOs develop fully by giving them opportunities early in their careers to train with private-sector print and broadcast news organizations. If we make this kind of investment in our information professionals, maybe someday we will trust one of them to lead the public affairs field rather than a general officer who has spent his career in the combat arms. In the same vein, we might also recognize the need to authorize a position for an Army chief of strategic communications, one who has the same three-star rank and clout as the chiefs of operations, intelligence, logistics, and other Army-level staffs.

Training and Leader Development

We must develop the confidence to grant authority to those we send to conduct these complex operations commensurate with the responsibilities laid on their shoulders…This confidence will only come with the selection and training of the right people.
—General Rupert Smith[8]

In today's complex, constantly changing climate where the levels of war are increasingly interwoven—when they are even relevant at all—we must develop leaders at all levels, from small-unit to strategic and political, who are agile and sophisticated enough to make adjustments. We must ask ourselves why our current system has produced some leaders who seemingly have adapted well to the complexities of modern warfare and created others who have not, and what we can do to improve the quality of leadership required at all levels. We must also ensure that the value we place on broader experience (versus traditional tactical military experience) is truly reflected in those leaders we select for continued advancement.

Training critical tasks. Prior to September 2001, much was written about asymmetric warfare, the nonlinear battlefield, and the need to train leaders who could synchronize combat power under uncertain, inchoate conditions. In many Army units the concept of mission essential task lists, or METLs, institutionalized by former Chief of Staff of the Army Carl Vuono, had been weakened. Commanders at all levels felt pressured to train for any and all contingencies they could face, ranging from high-intensity warfare to peacekeeping operations. They forgot that the METL concept demanded that we train to standard and not to time and that if a commander, after analyzing his mission, identified more METL tasks to train in a year than he could train to standard, he was required to go to his boss and ask for relief.

In some units, commanders refused to face the realities of the post-cold-war period and continued training regimes adopted during the height of the Soviet threat. Training in these units was kinetic, and those who tried to insert non-kinetic events into the training plan were thwarted by commanders who feared "mission creep" into roles they didn't think belonged to the military. A prime example of such intransigence occurred when the Army went to great expense to develop gunnery trainers. Leaders who wanted to give back portions of their yearly ammunition allocations in order to generate dollars to buy more gunnery trainers—which in turn would buy back time to train other tasks—were considered heretics rather than progressive thinkers who were trying to leverage the huge investments the Army had made in leap-ahead technologies.

Modern METLs must contain kinetic and nonkinetic tasks, but not so many that leaders are forced to train to time and not to standard. In units where training to standard is resourced and enforced, subordinates gain confidence in their leaders and learn

how to adjust to the dynamic, uncertain asymmetric battlefield. Units lacking METL discipline are never sure that their leaders know what right looks like, and they are less able to adjust to warfare that includes tasks they have not trained—especially non-kinetic tasks. As the Army emerges from today's conflicts, it must focus hard on returning to METL-based training programs.

Education. Our armed forces must continue to update and expand their educational programs. This means broadening the curricula of formal schools to reflect the complexity of the modern operating environment, and increasing opportunities—and rewards—for leaders to serve in assignments outside the traditional military structure. Although I have spent the majority of my 35-year career serving in traditional, "muddy boots" Army organizations, the experience that best prepared me for division and corps command in Iraq was the 5 years I spent earning a masters degree and teaching in the Social Sciences Department at the U.S. Military Academy. "Outside" assignments should include those in executive branch agencies, think tanks, media organizations, businesses, and similar entities that can help military leaders increase their agility. Further, we should consider expanding opportunities for interagency team members to work routinely with military organizations. These members would increase their understanding of what the military can and cannot contribute to our national security solutions. To the argument that this type of cross-training damages "warrior culture," I say that a broad exposure to experiences outside the traditional military can only help our leaders as they operate in an increasingly interconnected world.

Evaluations. Closely tied in with how we develop our military leaders is how we evaluate them and promote them to positions of greater responsibility. It has been said that an individual can fool his superiors most of the time, his peers some of the time, and his subordinates none of the time. This is somewhat of a simplification, but there is certainly some truth to it. Yet, our current military evaluation systems consider only the evaluations of superior leaders in judging competency for career advancement. The time is long overdue to implement a military evaluation system for NCOs and officers that formally considers the input of peers and subordinates. The opinions of superiors should

remain predominant, but it is important to get the unique perspectives that peers and subordinates can contribute. They will allow us to make a more complete evaluation of our leaders.

Preserving excellence. Our current generation of junior military officers, NCOs, and enlisted personnel has answered our Nation's call during a time of crisis and has done what few in our history have done: volunteered to serve multiple high-stress combat tours. However, with the prospect of unending deployments on the horizon, we may be approaching a point where even the most patriotic Americans will find themselves unable to continue to serve. As we look to grow the next generation of the Army and Marine Corps, we must be very careful to recruit and then retain only those Americans who have the potential to succeed in today's and tomorrow's complex operating environments. If we fall into the trap of lowering recruiting and retention standards to meet numerical goals and near-term requirements, our Nation will pay for it dearly.

Many proposals have been presented for maintaining the quality of the force, but if none of those work, we may not know until it is too late. The executive branch, Congress, the armed forces, and indeed the American population need to look now at the type of military we want for the future and the price we are willing to pay to ensure our national security.

Within the military, perhaps the most important thing we can do to help secure the future of our institutions is to ensure that those junior leaders and service

The next generation: members of the West Point class of 2011 cross the bridge to Thayer Hall, where they will receive basic training classes.

members who are bearing the brunt of the fighting in today's wars have a significant say in how we reshape our armed forces for the future. A recent biography recounts the story of how General Dwight Eisenhower wrote a controversial article in the late 1920's about the emerging importance of tanks in warfare.[9] Eisenhower's views contradicted conventional Army doctrine and were considered so heretical that he was verbally reprimanded and even threatened with court martial if he continued to air them. Such intellectual obtuseness in the interwar years helped ensure that the U.S. Army was not optimally prepared for battle in the initial stages of World War II.

This story should serve as a cautionary tale as we engage in contemporary discussion about how to best prepare ourselves for the future. To maximize our chances for success, we must ensure all views are welcomed to the debate and that junior leaders have no fear of career retribution for freely stating their opinions about what is needed to make our leaders, organizations, and doctrine better.

Moral and ethical imperatives. There are troubling indicators from our experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan that some military leaders and service members have not internalized the moral and ethical codes that define who we are as an armed force and Nation. Our moral conduct in extreme situations when others fail has helped make us an exceptional Nation. When we fail, our actions can damage our credibility as a fighting force, our mission, and indeed our standing in the world. One need only look at the global backlash against our national interests from allegations made against U.S. forces in places like Abu Ghraib, Haditha, and Mahmudiyah to see how necessary ethical leadership and conduct is at all levels.

We must reinforce the importance of proper ethical conduct with our organizations at every opportunity. When we do fall short of our ethical and moral standards, we must candidly admit our wrongdoing, hold individuals up and down the chain of command accountable, and move forward. Too often, we are reluctant to admit mistakes, which only serves to further antagonize those whose support we rely on so much. Leaders must also be careful not to set "ethical traps" for subordinates by asking them to do too much with too little—a caveat we haven't always heeded in our recent operations. One of the military's greatest strengths is its can-do attitude, but that attitude can be a liability when it causes us to take ethical and moral shortcuts to accomplish our mission.

Reviewing jointness. An area of career military officer development that deserves continual review is how we approach jointness. The Goldwater-Nichols Act (1986) appropriately requires officers with senior-rank potential to complete joint assignments. Responding to interoperability problems encountered during the invasion of Grenada, the act effectively forces the services to work in integrated teams; thus, wherever there are U.S. forces engaged in operations, they almost always consist of multiple services working together in joint or combined commands. What has not always kept pace with this reality, however, is how we acknowledge and track officers serving in positions that clearly allow them to demonstrate their understanding of joint operations. Congress and the Department of Defense have realized this, and the resulting Joint Qualification System (JQS), to be implemented 1 October 2007, will ensure that we recognize officers' joint experiences. The JQS will enhance the basic tenets of the Goldwater-Nichols Act.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the JQS is that it will allow joint experiences gained while serving in various non-joint positions to count toward joint qualification. This change acknowledges the fast tempo of our military operations around the world and the fact that many duty positions, especially in deployed environments, are inherently joint even if they are not validated as such in an official document.

For example, an Army brigade commander and his staff who have subordinate Army and Marine battalions attached, along with Navy electronic-warfare officers and Air Force forward controllers, may now earn joint-qualification points for that experience. As the new system is introduced, criteria will be developed to assess such joint situations.[10] It will be important for military leaders to monitor this new program and to ensure that officers are properly credited toward joint qualification.

A second area that needs close review is how we select officers for joint assignments. Simply put, in our quest for equitable jointness, we have not always assigned the right people to the right jobs. We have created joint headquarters to ensure each service's capabilities are maximized, but in the name of jointness, we sometimes fill those headquarters staff positions according to service,

not to skill set. This is why Goldwater-Nichols can be deemed a success while the performance of our military in the numerous interventions since the legislation was passed appears, if we assess it honestly, to have been "disjointed."

It can be argued, for example, that the senior operations officer or plans officer at the strategic level in a predominately ground, naval, or air campaign should come from the dominant service in that specific fight. Right now, they don't. Whether stated or not, equity seems to require that each service get a fair share of these important positions in order to ensure no service is at a disadvantage when competing for senior joint billets. The combatant commander might have the greatest weight in choosing his command's primary staff officers, but it seems that certain staff positions tend to go to the same service for every rotation. We must be cognizant of this "heir apparent" succession for key positions and be willing to make the necessary changes to eliminate it.

An unintended consequence of Goldwater-Nichols is the sentiment that there is "no such thing as being too joint," which sometimes leads commanders to put some officers in positions for which they are not optimally qualified. We must change this "ticket punch" mentality and put the best qualified into critical positions regardless of their branch of the armed forces.

Looking to the Future

Americans had learned, and learned well. The tragedy of American arms, however, is that having an imperfect sense of history, Americans sometimes forget as quickly as they learn.

—T.R. Fehrenbach[11]

Given our Nation's inconsistent track record when reorganizing its forces following periods of national crisis, the time is now to start discussing how the military and interagency organizations that emerge from Iraq and Afghanistan will prepare for a dangerous future. These are not Army or military challenges alone; they are national imperatives that we must address to ensure our future national security. The ideas discussed in this essay will, I hope, contribute to the necessary discussion all serious national-security professionals should be having now on how best to prepare for the future.

Undoubtedly, some people would like to forget our recent conflicts. They would have us extricate ourselves rapidly from overseas and never involve our country in another complicated engagement again. Unfortunately, our Nation's history is full of examples in which we have fallen into this very trap and not been prepared the next time our interests were threatened. Indeed, we have been involved in many more of these so-called "small wars" than major conventional struggles, and there are few indications to suggest this trend will change. We must therefore prepare our military and other elements of national power to conduct the full range of operations against enemies who have proven to be every bit as adaptive as we are and sometimes even better than us at exploiting modern technologies. This is our primary challenge as we learn from our recent wartime experiences.

In 1983, when the military was undergoing a period of self-examination following the Vietnam War, an Air Force colonel wrote: "It has been said that Mars (the god of war) is a cruel and unforgiving master. We in the military do not have the luxury of choosing the wars we will fight—and the days of clean 'declared wars' may be forever behind us."[12] Indeed, those of us in the military and the other institutions of national power don't have the luxury of choosing when we will be called and where we will be sent to defend or advance our Nation's interests. We do, however, have the opportunity to help decide how our national-security structures will be organized to deal with an increasingly dangerous world. It is important now that we accelerate the conversation on how we can best prepare ourselves for this future. *MR*

NOTES

1. General Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marines* (January 1999).

2. Colonel M.E. Krause, "Transformation During War," *Joint Force Quarterly* 38 (July 2005).

3. David Rohde and David E. Sanger, "How a 'Good War' in Afghanistan Went Bad," *The New York Times*, 12 August 2007, 1.

4. Information collected from <www.state.gov>, the official Department of State webpage.

5. T.X. Hammes, "Fourth Generation Warfare Evolves, Fifth Emerges," *Military Review* (May-June 2007): 14.

6. Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).

7. Stringers in Iraq are mainly local Iraqis who are paid by news organizations to gather news in locations that are too dangerous for Western journalists to report from without military escort.

8. General Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 414.

9. See Mark Perry, *Partners in Command: George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower in War and Peace* (London, England: Penguin Press, 2007), page 43, for a discussion of how generals Eisenhower and Patton understood the importance of the emerging role of tanks in the early 1930s, but were intellectually stifled by their superiors.

10. For more information on changes in this system, consult the *Department of Defense Joint Officer Management Joint Qualification System Implementation Plan*, 30 March 2007.

11. T.R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness* (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1963), 303.

12. Colonel Kenneth Alnwick, "Strategic Choice, National Will, and the Vietnam Experience," *Air University Review* (January-February 1983).