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Army hosts conference to revise counterinsurgency field manual

(Bill Ackerly, Mission Command Center of Excellence)

FORT LEAVENWORTH, KS – From 8-11 May, more than 200 military practitioners and civilian counterinsurgency theorists, academicians, and reps from civilian research institutions met here to provide input to the Counterinsurgency Center’s revision of the Army/Marine Corps counterinsurgency manual. Their collective thoughts, ideas and recommendations will shape the first draft of the revised Army Field Manual (FM) 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency*.

“Our intent with the conference was to seek a broad range of perspectives by bringing together a very diverse and experienced group of practitioners, academicians and theorists for a rich, full and rigorous dialogue about counterinsurgency,” said Lt. Gen. David G. Perkins, Commanding General, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center.

“We know it takes a very broad effort to ensure a level of success in counterinsurgency. The input from this conference will inform us about how to man, equip and train the Army to deal with counterinsurgencies now and in the future.”

Since its publication in 2006, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 has been one of the most widely read and oft-quoted field manuals by military leaders, academic scholars, and policy makers alike. The manual’s principles and fundamentals have guided operational planning and actions at all echelons.

Conference participants included current and former battalion and brigade commanders, as well as key personnel from:

Centers of Excellence (CoEs)	University of Kansas
Combat Training Centers (CTCs)	Kansas State University
U.S. Marine Corps	King’s College London
North American Treaty Organization (NATO)	Air Command and Staff College
Canadian Armed Forces	Naval War College
Army Research Institute	National Defense University
U. S. Central Command (CENTCOM)	U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC)/Special Warfare Center (SWC)
Brookings Institution	U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
RAND Corporation	U.S. Department of State
Harvard University	
Stanford University	

The conference used panels and working groups to provide the framework for gathering new relevant comments for addition and deletion in the revised manual. Panels reviewed issues, such as: what did not get included in the previous version of the manual that must be addressed in the revised manual; what needs to be changed in the revision of FM 3-24; what definitions need to be added to the manual; and how does the writing team make the manual more reader-friendly.

Seven working groups examined various aspects of counterinsurgency, from the foundations of insurgency and counterinsurgency to measures of performance/success to operating with other joint-interagency-multinational partners. The groups examined a variety of issues, built consensus on key topics, and briefed senior Army and Marine Corps leaders on their recommendation about how to address these issues in the revised field manual.

A subordinate organization of the Mission Command Center of Excellence (MC CoE), the Counterinsurgency Center began revising the manual seven months ago. Because FM 3-24 is military publication, the military makes decisions on content, writing style and format. However, the Counterinsurgency Center has sought to engender a collaborative environment for the revision process that capitalizes on the collective experiences, intellect and expertise of practitioners, scholars and agency partners.

Brig. Gen. Wayne W. Grigsby Jr., MC CoE Director, said, "The goal is to produce a field manual that captures enduring tactics and procedures to guide Army and Marine ground forces, integrated with joint-interagency-multinational partners, in conducting counterinsurgency operations against future irregular threats. It should be a document that any Soldier 10 years from now who has limited-to-no-counterinsurgency experience can pick up and use."

The Counterinsurgency Center has conducted monthly webcasts open to the public throughout this phase of the revision process to gain feedback on key issues, such as the value of centrism (population-centric vs. enemy-centric, etc.). A dedicated writing team has also published issue papers about various counterinsurgency topics for discussion among senior officers, practitioners and theorists.

The conference was a final opportunity to capture lessons from Afghanistan, Iraq, the Philippines and other counterinsurgency conflicts prior to completing the initial draft of the revised manual for formal review and coordination.

Lt. Col. John Paganini, Director, the Counterinsurgency Center, said, "This revision of FM 3-24 needs to meet Marine Corps, Army and interagency needs for future complex counterinsurgency scenarios. Anyone can participate in the FM 3-24 revision process through the COIN revision website at <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/FM3-24Revision.asp>."

Headquartered at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, the Mission Command Center of Excellence is a network of organizations that develops and integrates Mission Command Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and education, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) requirements and solutions across the six warfighting functions in order to prepare commanders and leaders to successfully conduct Unified Land Operations. The COIN Center provides DOTMLPF solutions applicable to counterinsurgency environments in order to improve ground forces' capability to execute and succeed in counterinsurgency operations globally. <http://mccoe.army.mil>.



BGen (Sel) Paul Kennedy, USMC, Director Marine Corps Public Affairs



Panel leads discussion about the framework for revising FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency



CG, CAC, LTG David Perkins and Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration, LT GEN Richard P. Mills, USMC, listen to a presentation of conference recommendations