

The So What*

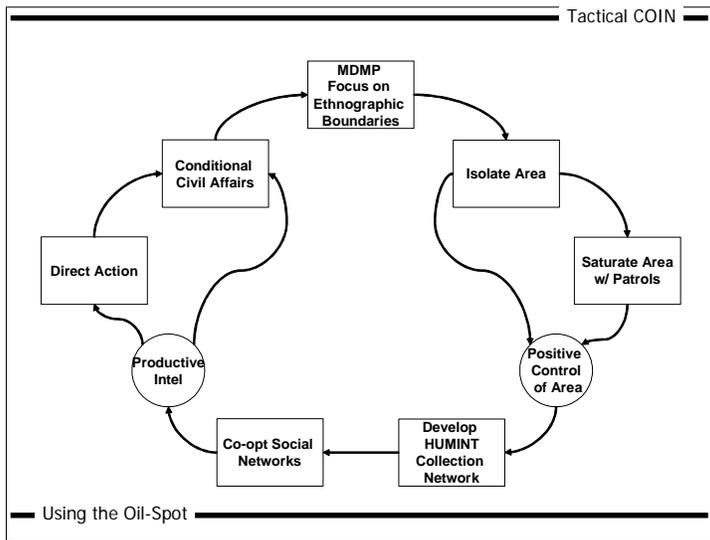
So What? A justified response for a tactical commander after having a strategic counterinsurgency model explained to him. Although there appears to be a renaissance of counterinsurgency thought in the military today, there still exists a disconnect between conceptual answers at the strategic level and the practical tactics to achieve those goals. This article proposes a tactical approach based on the Oil-Spot technique.

The Oil-Spot is the best tactical solution to an insurgency because of its economical use of force. In this case, the Oil-Spot refers to the operational technique in which the counterinsurgent forces secure sectors in a methodical sequence. Through the expansion from a secure sector or base area, resources are efficiently marshaled to achieve social control of a fixed political space.¹ Critiques of the Oil-Spot technique are found in Robert Taber's, *War of the Flea*.² His critique revolves around the "Oil slick" operations of the French in Vietnam, but this failure was due to French misapplication. Correctly contrasting this view is Andrew Krepinevich's proposal to use this technique in Iraq.³ This article proposes an operational cycle to maximize this Oil-Spot technique.

No single solution to insurgencies exists. Keeping this in mind, a tactical solution must be left sufficiently broad to accommodate differing cultural, ethnic, and socio-political differences while rigid enough for standardized implementation. The endstate for the counterinsurgency operation at the tactical level should always be to move from a posture of controlling the population to involvement

by the population. The desire is to foster formal and informal social controls by the local populace so they can take over control of the Oil-Spot. This concept of social controls accentuates the critical fact that insurgencies are defeated by working through, with and by the local population.

The Tactical counterinsurgency cycle as described below, relies on four Phases with multiple operations and



decisions within each phase. Disrupting the insurgency's OODA Loop remains at the core of every phase. The OODA loop is the Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act cycle developed by John Boyd.⁴ This

cycle describes how individuals or organizations determine their actions. Interrupting the enemy's OODA loop allows counterinsurgent forces time and space to maneuver within the local populace.

The first phase is to conduct the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP). The MDMP for a counterinsurgency operation is decidedly different from that of a conventional military operation. The MDMP for the counterinsurgency revolves around ethnographic intelligence.⁵ Ideally, ethnographic intelligence would drive the decision process determining where operational boundaries are drawn. Currently the military creates zones and sectors based on geographic markers. In a

counterinsurgent operation, physical geography falls second in priority to the topography of the local populace. The people become the terrain; more specifically the social network makeup of the populace is the terrain.

Ethnographic MDMP seeks to identify networks, nodes, and hubs of informal and formal social linkages. Mapping, analyzing, and then describing the ethnographic topography to the commander is not an easy task for any staff. Intelligence officers should look for kinship associations, lineages, community and school ties, and religious affiliations when mapping and analyzing the ethnology of a region. This is distinctly different than the cultural awareness currently observed. Operational boundaries based on this information are then developed by weighting decisions on the future needs of co-opting social network for security and intelligence purposes. The goal at the end of the first phase is a decision as to where boundaries will be drawn for the cordoning of specific social networks and which networks are to be co-opted for use.

The intent of the second phase is to establish a cordon followed immediately by the conduct of saturation patrols. British forces successfully cordoned off portions of Yemen in 1965, creating both physical and psychological impact. The physical isolation of a community through checkpoints and patrols served to interrupt the logistical and intelligence operations of the insurgents, therefore hindering the insurgents' OODA loop. The cordon serves as a means to provide security to the local populace, not intimidate it. Collective action on the part of the local populace in assisting the counterinsurgent fight is only possible if the local populace feels it is secure from insurgent retribution. U.S. military may conduct patrols

regularly through an area, but when night falls, and the patrols go back to their Forward Operating Bases, the local population is left to the coercion of the insurgency. Continuous saturation patrolling allows a level of security that inhibits the insurgents' ability to intimidate. Imagine a crime-ridden neighborhood that suddenly has a pair of police officers on every street corner. That is the intended psychological effect of cordoned zones with saturation patrols. This desired effect is also the reason an, Oil-Spot is the only feasible technique. The resource intensive nature of the Oil-Spot precludes large-scale simultaneous operation of this sort. Isolation operations that prove to be both psychological and physically effective provide the sense of security for the population prerequisite to their involvement with counterinsurgent forces.

Successful isolation operations observed in the British counterinsurgency in Malaya and on a limited scale in the Strategic Hamlet programs during U.S. involvement in Vietnam moved populations into isolation. Large urban areas require bringing the isolation to the population versus the population into isolation. These unique population control measures serve to reinforce the psychological sense of isolation for the enemy.

The intent of saturation patrolling, is the very real effect of establishing control over the population. Studies of collective efficacy within inner city communities show that control is critical to providing a sense of security. For human nature, security is a necessity that precludes many other needs. Progress can only be effective once control is established. The saturation patrolling also allows for a means of initial census taking of the

population. If the insurgents operate amongst the local populace, it becomes essential to track and identify the local population. Roger Trinquier in *Modern Warfare* addressed the critical nature of a census with identification cards. The counterinsurgent forces must develop a system to track resources and population movement.⁶ If Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) are a critical component of the insurgent strategy, the counterinsurgent forces must track vehicle movement through a combination of vehicle registration, manned and unmanned checkpoints. If an area is cordoned and proper vehicle registration techniques are applied, it is possible for counterinsurgent forces to determine if a vehicle belongs in a cordoned neighborhood. Impounding vehicles in inappropriate neighborhoods diminishes the insurgents' resource pool of vehicles while impeding their freedom of movement. A decision point to move to the next phase is based on the level of control of the area. If counterinsurgent forces have positive control of the area through patrols and checkpoints, the third phase initiates. This is also the time confidential informants are developed along with recruitment of local constabulary. Previous steps of census taking and intelligence development provide positive linkages with social networks previously identified during the MDMP.⁷ This facilitates the active recruitment of local constabulary.

The third phase is the development of social networks. Initial steps look to develop Human Intelligence or HUMINT. This serves as an extension of the constabulary for intelligence collection. HUMINT networks should consist of confidential informants, pseudo-insurgents and community contacts. The endstate is to create a series of collection

networks that can act as vetting sources for each other. Clandestine collection sources can confirm information provided through community contacts or walk-in informants. The most controversial of the collection sources, pseudo-insurgents, would rely upon the turning of captured insurgents, who are then re-inserted into the operational area to make contact with, and collect on the insurgents in the sector.

Counterinsurgency is 90% intelligence. Gaining the trust of the local population is necessary to gain timely intelligence, and this is brokered on the ability to provide security. This security is only possible with a full understanding of what is happening within a sector and affecting it.

Co-opting the social networks is the next step within this third phase. Rather than attempting to create groups within the community to assist in policing, social networks should be co-opted to create self-policing networks, a community or neighborhood watch. Studies of community groups in inner cities have shown that the individuals who make up community groups are motivated by selective, tangible incentives, while the leaders of the groups will most often be motivated by the respect and status gained by leading a successful group.⁸ The co-opting of these social networks requires realistic, attainable goals that are linked to desired civil affairs programs.⁹ The intent is to entice the most number of individuals in the community to participate in reporting incidents and not allow the insurgency to grow through their own passivity.

Combining intelligence from co-opted social networks and Human Intelligence networks to drive the targeting process is the fourth phase. This targeting process should

not look at individuals, but entire networks of enemy cells. The best strategy for this targeting process today can be found in the Enterprise Theory of Investigation (ETI) used by law enforcement against organized crime. Just as proposed earlier, police agencies using ETI use overt and covert infiltration of criminal organizations to target and dismantle the majority of a network at one time. This requires a balance of tempo and patience to identify the most vulnerable areas of the enemy's activity before attack. Further determining the scope of the investigation, intelligence officers look to identify new linkages from historical data and identify where further investigation is required. The intent is to predict trends and anticipate steps needed to counter these insurgent trends.

At the end of this targeting process, nominated targets and Civil Affairs projects are executed based on the desires of the social networks co-opted. Operations in this last phase should look to dismantle the majority of the insurgent enterprise at one time. Simultaneously the communities that assisted in the intelligence gathering and self-policing that made the direct action operations possible are rewarded with Civil Affairs projects they asked for in the previous phase. Rewards for assistance are based on the level of support from the local populace and the correlation between the level of CA and local support should be stressed to the local populace. These last steps of intelligence analysis, raids and contingent CA are repeated to eliminate the insurgent threat in the area. Once a constabulary is in place, and the local community shows support for the counterinsurgent forces while feeling safe, a move to next Oil-Spot is made.

The targeting process of this last phase is enemy oriented. The intelligence should drive the operational parameters, not the physical boundaries. The unique challenges of counterinsurgent operations require that operations follow the intelligence regardless of where it leads. Patience will be required to fully develop a target packet on an insurgent network. Similar to criminal investigations, counterinsurgent operations take a great amount of time to develop intelligence prior to acting. This may prove the hardest tenet to maintain.

The goal is to create formal and informal social controls in place of the use of suppressive force by counterinsurgent troops. Creation of a constabulary force from the local population provides security so the population feels free to speak while addressing their grievances. Civil Affairs projects will assist in the development of trust, but not in the normally misinterpreted manner of "Hearts and Minds". Civil Affairs should always be contingent of the assistance of the population.

A final note, that although the term phase is used throughout this article, the choice of the term phase is not intended to denote a lockstep methodology. The application of this tactical model will see the simultaneous conduct of every phase described above at one point or another. The driving concept behind the tactical cycle described above is the empowerment of the local population to act as a force multiplier. Heavy initial presence in a counterinsurgent operation may be required, but the intent is rapid growth of the social and intelligence networks so that operational effectiveness increases, while the counterinsurgent forces footprint

decreases. The faster a counterinsurgent force can employ the local forces and co-opt social networks the faster a tipping point is achieved. With the success in one Oil-Spot, it becomes possible to move to the next, where word of initial success will already be spreading facilitating future successes.

*Reprinted from *Infantry* magazine, March-April 2005
Reprinted with Authors permission

¹ The use of the term space is deliberate in an attempt to reinforce an area not associated with physical terrain. Physical terrain, as discussed in this paper is secondary to the human terrain.

² Taber, Robert. *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare*. Brassey's, Inc., Dulles, Virginia 2002. p.61-62, 159-160

³ Krepinevich, Andrew F. Jr., How to Win in Iraq. *Foreign Affairs*. Vol.84, No. 5, September/October, 2005

⁴ Hammonds, Keith. OODA: the Strategy of the Dogfight. *Fast Company*, Issue 59, June 2002

⁵ Author's interview with Anna Simmons, Professor of Anthropology, Naval Postgraduate School. Monterey, CA. November, 2005.

⁶ Trinquier, Roger. *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*. U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. FT Leavenworth, Kansas. 1995

⁷ The conduct of a census also serves as an opportunity to reinforce conditional civil affairs. This is the time to explain to locals that telling the truth about residency and local activities ensures they receive the services they want.

⁸ Sampson, Robert J. 2004. Neighborhood and Community: Collective Efficacy and Community Safety. *New Economy* 11:106-113.

⁹ Diani, Mario and McAdam, Doug. *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*. Oxford University Press. Oxford 2002. p 281-298