

A Doctrinal Template for Insurgencies (Part 1 of 3)

Commanders and their staffs use the Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) process as a critical component to understanding, modeling, and predicting enemy behavior on the battlefield. Of the four steps, the third requires that analysts apply a “doctrinal template” to the areas of interest and operations within a given set of existing battlefield conditions. Doctrine prescribes it this way:

In step 3, the G2/S2 and his staff analyze the command's intelligence holdings to determine how the threat normally organizes for combat and conducts operations under similar circumstances. When facing a well-known threat, the G2/S2 can rely on his historical data bases and well developed threat models. When operating against a new or less well-known threat, he may need to develop his intelligence data bases and threat models concurrently. The G2/S2's evaluation is portrayed in a threat model that includes doctrinal templates which depict how the threat operates when unconstrained by the effects of the battlefield environment. Although they usually emphasize graphic depictions (doctrinal templates), threat models sometimes emphasize matrices or simple narratives.¹

Unfortunately, our irregular enemies rarely publish a doctrine from which we can extract models, and their irregular approach is seldom understood (even by those who have faced it) in sufficient detail to facilitate a rigorous IPB. Worse, the new counterinsurgency field manual, FM(I) 3-07.22, provides very little, if any, assistance to readers in providing quantifiable and specific information to help soldiers better comprehend, template, and predict insurgent enemies and their actions.

What few soldiers realize is that an excellent doctrinal model about how insurgencies fight is available for greater understanding and increased precision within IPB. In fact, it's our own doctrinal model for how insurgencies begin, organize, develop, fight, and win at the operational and tactical levels. FM 3-05.201 is the U.S. Army's recipe for cooking up an insurgency of its own when the National Command Authority decides that a given insurgency can achieve or support the national interests of the United States.

The next three *Irregular Warfare Messages of the Week* will introduce a few important aspects of this doctrinal model. Though this e-column is never intended to reiterate what's already been said somewhere else, readers may find this doctrinal **introduction** useful for two reasons: (1) it will arm them with a fundamental understanding of key insurgency terms and relationships that hopefully can get everyone communicating more effectively; and (2) it will wet the appetites of soldiers everywhere to explore the prescriptions of 3-05.201 in greater detail and how they model the methods of our enemies.²

¹ FM 34-130, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*, Retrieved 8 AUG 05 from <https://atiam.train.army.mil/soldierPortal/atia/adlsc/view/public/9208-1/fm/34-130/Ch1.htm#s4>.

² FM 3-05.201 is actually a U.S. Army Special Forces publication that outlines a doctrinal approach to Unconventional Warfare (UW). UW has many applications, and among them is the capability to develop insurgencies. That said, Special Forces can and have used UW methods to not only breed insurgencies but also

First, insurgencies are typically subordinate to a larger resistance movement. The resistance movement develops “when the government is unable or unwilling to address the demands of important social groups” and those needs are typically social, political, diplomatic, economic, or informational in nature—not military.³ Resistances comprise both violent and non-violent feature, and the insurgency is responsible for the violent and subversive aspects of the resistance organization. As we currently watch Great Britain deal with non-violent political and religious leaders of Islamism that aggravate and incite violence against British society, we should also consider how those non-violent initiatives influence the violent operations of the insurgency.

Second, “insurgencies normally seek to overthrow the existing social order and reallocate power within the country. They may also seek to (2) Overthrow an established government without a follow-on social revolution; (3) Establish an autonomous national territory within the borders of a state; (4) Cause the withdrawal of an occupying power; (5) Extract political concessions that are unattainable through less violent means.”⁴ Presently, al Qaeda and the operations of its allied subsidiary organizations worldwide include each of these objectives. Nevertheless, when engaging an insurgency in a particular area, analysts should consider specifically which objectives apply in their areas of interest. Next, analysts should articulate the specific aims of that objective. For example, the July 2005 bombings in Great Britain were hardly an attempt to create a social revolution or seize control of the government. Nevertheless, they could have more likely intended the bombings to persuade the voting population to pressure the regime’s policy decisions with regard to military involvement in Iraq. Contrasting this aim with the various intentions of bombings in Iraq reflects how diversely objectives can fluctuate even within unified insurgent efforts. This conclusion may seem intuitive—and it is, but it is very tempting to cut and paste the objectives or specific aims of one part an insurgency onto that of another. Why insurgents bomb in Baghdad and Mosul may be significantly different, even if all other evidence, including employment, construction, and resources, vary.

There are seven doctrinal dynamics to each insurgency. The type of objectives is one, but the others include leadership, ideology, external support, environment and geography, phasing and timing, and organizational and operational patterns. Each of these varies between insurgencies and also within insurgencies. Therefore, the possible number of combinations of insurgent types is into the tens of thousands. Subsequently, the number of combinations of counter-insurgent types should vary respectively. Cutting-and-pasting TTPs that work against one insurgency or one part of an insurgency onto another insurgency without a deliberate and meticulous IPB process that integrates all seven insurgent dynamics is reckless if not negligent.

Finally, insurgencies have three subcomponents: the guerrilla, the underground, and the auxiliary. Soldiers and analysts, alike, should consider these to be subordinate unit types, each with its own function and composition. How these components function specifically and what comprises them will (again) vary between insurgencies, but understanding what they are as a

attack them. For the purposes of the e-column, I invite readers to consider only how UW’s doctrinal template applies to our insurgent enemies. Special Forces soldiers have validated this doctrine with recent and historical experience and research.

³ FM 3-05.201, *Unconventional Warfare*, p. 1-3.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 1-4. Numerals and semi-colons added.

doctrinal template helps one better template them in war. Today, we will only discuss the guerrilla.

The guerrilla (also spelled “guerilla”) is the overt element in the insurgency. In recent decades, he earns combatant status and organizes into conventional units like squads, platoons, companies (maybe even battalions, regiments, or brigades, but rarely so). One should consider them a force that seeks decisive engagement, but only when, where, and how they prefer. Guerrilla forces usually organize from the “bottom-up” almost as a grass roots initiative, forming as smaller units first, then linking smaller units together to form larger units. Guerrilla forces within al Qaeda are quite rare, though one may find them amongst the subsidiary organizations allied with al Qaeda. Nevertheless, guerrilla forces facing the U.S. are quite rare simply because the proficiency of our combat arms forces in open battle is difficult to match, making “overt” and “decisive engagements” very risky for this type of insurgent. Notice that guerrillas—doctrinally speaking—do not organize into cells.

Parts II and III of this *Irregular Warfare Message* will continue this discussion of insurgency order of battle. Readers should remember that every insurgency is different, so the exact distinctions between insurgency dynamics or insurgent subcomponents may not always be as clear as we would prefer. However, step 3 of the IPB process recommends the use of a doctrinal *template* as a lens through which analysts can view the enemy. Special Forces soldiers have spent decades applying, refining, and researching their insurgency doctrine which can double as an applicable tool to assist the regular army in understanding its contemporary enemies.