Cultures and Irregular Warfare
Building Learning Institutions

Dr. John Nagl
Minerva at West Point Workshop
April 17, 2012
Unprepared

“In the years following the Vietnam War, the Army relegated unconventional war to the margins of training, doctrine, and budget priorities…. [This] left the service unprepared to deal with the operations that followed: Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans, and more recently Afghanistan and Iraq – the consequences and costs of which we are still struggling with today.”

-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates
October 10, 2007
Organizational Learning

“A process by which an organization uses new knowledge or understanding gained from experience or study to adjust institutional norms, doctrine and procedures in ways designed to minimize previous gaps in performance and maximize future successes.”

- COL (Retired) Richard Downie, PhD
  The U.S. Army as Learning Institution
The Organizational Learning Cycle

Richard Downie, *Learning from Conflict*

1. Individual Action/Attention to Events
   - Change in Situation or Organizational Behavior
   - Transmit Interpretation: Publish Doctrine
   - Organizational Performance Gap Identified
   - Search for Alternative Organizational Actions
   - Sustained Consensus: Alternative Solution Accepted
CPT Travis Patriquin
KIA Ramadi December 6, 2006

LtCol John Darin Loftis
KIA Kabul 25 February 2012
Our Task

“In Iraq, we’ve seen how an army that was basically a smaller version of the Cold War force can over time become an effective instrument of counterinsurgency. But that came at a frightful human, financial, and political cost. For every heroic and resourceful innovation by troops and commanders on the battlefield, there was some institutional shortcoming at the Pentagon they had to overcome. Your task…is to support the institutional changes necessary so the next set of colonels, captains, and sergeants will not have to be quite so heroic or quite so resourceful.”

-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates
September 29, 2008