

# Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations

Brigadier Nigel Aylwin-Foster, British Army

*A virtue of having coalition partners with a legacy of shared sacrifice during difficult military campaigns is that they can also share candid observations. Such observations are understood to be professional exchanges among friends to promote constructive discussion that can improve the prospects of the coalition successes for which all strive. It was in a constructive spirit, then, that this article was made available to Military Review. The article is a professional commentary by an experienced officer based on his experiences and background. It should also be understood that publishing this article does not imply endorsement of or agreement with its observations by the Combined Arms Center leadership or Military Review. Indeed, some comments are already dated and no longer valid. Nonetheless, this article does provide Military Review readers the thought-provoking assessments of a senior officer with significant experience in counterterrorism operations. And it is offered in that vein—to stimulate discussion.—Editor*

**F**ew could fail to be impressed by the speed and style of the U.S. dominated Coalition victory over Saddam's forces in spring 2003. At the time, it appeared, to sceptics and supporters alike, that the most ambitious military action in the post Cold War era had paid off, and there was an air of heady expectation of things to come. Much of the credit lies rightly with the U.S. Army, which seemed entirely attuned morally, conceptually and physically to the political intent it served.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, 2 years later, notwithstanding ostensible campaign successes such as the elections of January 2005, Iraq is in the grip of a vicious and tenacious insurgency. Few would suggest Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) has followed the path intended by U.S. President George W. Bush when he committed U.S. forces. Pentagon and other Administration staff acknowledge that a moment of opportunity was missed immediately after the toppling of Saddam's regime: that fleeting chance to restore law and order, maintain the momentum, nurture popular support and thus extinguish the inevitable seeds of insurgency sown amongst the ousted ruling elite.

Today, the Coalition is resented by many Iraqis, whilst analysis of attack trends since mid 2003 shows that Coalition forces formed the bulk of the insurgents' target set throughout 2004. In short, despite political and military leaders' justifiable claims of achievement against tough odds, others claim, justifiably on the face of it, that the Coalition has failed to capitalise on initial success.

This change in fortune has been attributed to many factors. The Iraq undertaking was, in any case, 'forbiddingly difficult' and might not have seemed as appealing had the U.S. forces not recently achieved a sudden and decisive victory over Taleban forces in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> Inadequate attention was paid to planning for OIF Phase 4, including Security Sector Reform (SSR), arising in part, according to at least one source, from frictions in the Administration.<sup>3</sup> The CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority] decisions to disband the senior levels of the Baath Party and the entire old Iraqi Army, thus effectively disenfranchising those most likely to resent the new order, have also attracted much criticism. Some argue, however, that the Coalition military, particularly the U.S. Army, were partly to blame, citing aspects of their performance since the cessation of formal hostilities and commencement of Phase 4 of the operation.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, some serving U.S. Army and DOD personnel acknowledge that whilst the Army is indisputably the master of conventional warfighting, it is notably less

---

*This is a reprint of an article originally published in the "Seaford House Papers" and retains its original punctuation, spelling, grammar, and paragraphing. The views herein do not reflect those of the United Kingdom, the U.S. Army, or Military Review.—Editor*

proficient in the Phase 4 type of role, or what the U.S. defence community commonly calls Operations Other Than War (OOTW). The crux of the debate is whether the performance and approach of the U.S. Army have indeed been contributory factors in the deepening crisis in OIF Phase 4, and, if so, what that means for the future development of the Army, particularly given that it has already embarked on a process of transformation. OIF is a joint venture, and dedicated, courageous Americans from all 4 Services and the civil sector risk their lives daily throughout Iraq, but the Army is the pivotal, supported force, and thus the most germane to the issue.

My motivation to study this has arisen from my experience serving with the U.S. Forces in Iraq throughout 2004. There can be few acts more galling than a soldier from one country publicly assessing the performance of those from another. However, this is not an arrogant exercise in national comparisons: there is no other Army in the world that could even have attempted such a venture. It is, rather, an attempt to understand and rationalise the apparently paradoxical currents of strength and weakness witnessed at close hand over the course of a year. Ultimately, the intent is to be helpful to an institution I greatly respect.

The purpose of the paper, therefore, is to assess the impact and root causes of the U.S. Army's approach to and conduct of operations in OIF Phase 4, in order to demonstrate that, whilst not yet another Vietnam, it does need to be recognised as just as critical a watershed in U.S. Army development.

The paper focuses on the moral and conceptual components of capability, since these are likely to prove the most contentious and present the U.S. Army with the greatest challenges. If you are the richest nation in the world, changing structures, systems and platform capabilities is one thing: changing the way your people think, interact and behave under extreme duress is much more difficult. Section 1 will analyse U.S. Army activity from immediately after the defeat of Saddam's forces in conventional combat until mid 2005, when this paper was drafted, in order to identify relevant trends and determine their impact on campaign success. Section 2 will consider these trends in the context of the Army as a whole, in order to offer wider supporting evidence and determine root causes. Section 3 will briefly assess the U.S. Army's response to lessons identified from this period of operations, and conclude. Since the purpose is to analyse an issue, rather than define policy, there are no specific recommendations.

---

---

## Section 1: The Extent to Which U.S. Army Performance in OIF Phase 4 Has Fuelled the Insurgency

---

---

*If I were treated like this, I'd be a terrorist!*—U.S. Army Colonel: Baghdad, September 2004.<sup>5</sup>

Commenting on a contentious current campaign is self-evidently problematic. With the outcome still so much in the balance, no absolute conclusions about the overall effectiveness of the U.S. Army's conduct of operations can safely or legitimately be drawn: only time will tell. Security requirements also constrain the depth of supporting evidence. Nonetheless, there is plenty of unclassified anecdotal and circumstantial evidence from which to deduce trends, at least about the shorter term effects of its operations from 1 May 2003, the formally declared end of combat operations, through to June 2005. Such a short paper can only highlight the issues most salient to the aim, provide snapshots of evidence, and trust that the authenticity and currency of the sources will carry the necessary conviction.

My own experience, serving at the heart of a U.S. dominated command within the Coalition from December 2003 to November 2004, suggests something of an enigma, hence the spur to study the subject further. My overriding impression was of an Army imbued with an unparalleled sense of patriotism, duty, passion, commitment, and determination, with plenty of talent, and in no way lacking in humanity or compassion. Yet it seemed weighed down by bureaucracy, a stiflingly hierarchical outlook, a pre-disposition to offensive operations, and a sense that duty required all issues to be confronted head-on. Many personnel seemed to struggle to understand the nuances of the OIF Phase 4 environment. Moreover, whilst they were almost unfailingly courteous and considerate, at times their cultural insensitivity, almost certainly inadvertent, arguably amounted to institutional racism. To balance that apparent litany of criticisms, the U.S. Army was instrumental in a string of tactical and operational successes through the second half of 2004; so any blanket verdict would be grossly misleading.

Other sources offer similarly divergent evidence. Extreme critics point to Vietnam and predict a

long and bloody struggle, leading eventually to a withdrawal with political objectives at best partially secured. However, there is no weight of a priori evidence to support that view yet, and one senses that its proponents almost wish for failure in order to make some other wider political point. A more balanced view came from a senior British officer, in theatre for 6 months in 2004, who judged that the U.S. Army acted like ‘fuel on a smouldering fire’, but that this was ‘as much owing to their presence as their actions’.<sup>6</sup> Others have been less sanguine. One senior Washington Administration official considered that the Army was unquestionably successful during the combat phase, but much less so subsequently.<sup>7</sup> He noted that General Tommy Franks had assured the Administration that the Army would restore law and order, but in the event it had failed to do so, and thus to some extent Lt Gen (Retired) Jay M. Garner had been replaced because of a failure by the Army, since the absence of law and order had rendered the country ungovernable by the thinly staffed ORHA [Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance].<sup>8</sup> Like many others, he believed that a window of opportunity had been missed in the period immediately after the fall of Saddam, to some extent owing to a failure by the Army to adjust in time to the changing requirement. He thought the Administration had already recognised the need to be better prepared for Irregular Warfare (IW) and post conflict stabilisation and reconstruction (S&R) operations, but the Army had not yet done so.<sup>9</sup> Consistent with his claim, the Department of Defense sponsored *Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) 2006* draft IW Study reports, inter alia, ‘a need for changed approaches to IW’.<sup>10</sup>

The remainder of this section will assess two aspects of the Army’s conduct of the early stages of OIF Phase 4, which are judged key to success, and mutually supporting. These are:

- The Army’s indirect impact on campaign success, through its interaction with the Iraqi population; and,
- Its inherent effectiveness, in terms of its capacity to adapt to the unexpected.

## **U.S. Army Interaction with the Iraqi Population**

Western COIN [counterinsurgency] doctrine generally identifies the ‘hearts and minds campaign’—gaining and maintaining the support of the domestic population in order to isolate the insurgent—as the key to success. It thus sees the

population as a potential instrument of advantage. It further recognises that military operations must contribute to the achievement of this effect and be subordinate to the political campaign. This implies that above all a COIN force must have two skills that are not required in conventional warfighting: first, it must be able to see issues and actions from the perspective of the domestic population; second, it must understand the relative value of force and how easily excessive force, even when apparently justified, can undermine popular support. Likewise, whilst S&R operations imply a more benign environment, nonetheless it is critical that the actions of the military should not serve to alienate the local population. The alternative doctrinal approach concentrates on attrition, through the destruction of the insurgent, and thus sees the population as at best a distraction to this primary aim, and in extremis a target for repression.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, Western liberal democracies cannot resort to repression of the population, but they do have varying perceptions of the balance required between the two doctrinal models and the extent to which military operations should focus on the destruction of the insurgent versus his isolation from the population. The most striking feature of the U.S. Army’s approach during this period of OIF Phase 4 is that universally those consulted for this paper who were not from the U.S. considered that the Army was too ‘kinetic’. This is shorthand for saying U.S. Army personnel were too inclined to consider offensive operations and destruction of the insurgent as the key to a given situation, and conversely failed to understand its downside.

Granted, this verdict partly reflects the difference in perspectives of scale between the U.S. and her Coalition allies, arising from different resourcing levels. For example, during preparatory operations in the November 2004 Fallujah clearance operation, on one night over forty 155mm artillery rounds were fired into a small section of the city. Given the intent to maintain a low profile prior to the launch of the main operation, most armies would consider this bombardment a significant event. Yet it did not feature on the next morning’s update to the 4-Star Force Commander: the local commander considered it to be a minor application of combat power.<sup>12</sup>

Notwithstanding, there is little dispute that U.S. forces in Iraq over this period were more offensively minded than their Coalition counterparts. For a start, U.S. Rules of Engagement (ROE) were more lenient than other nations’, thus encouraging earlier escalation. One senior Coalition officer

noted that too much of the force remained conceptually in warfighting mode in the post combat phase, and failed to understand that every soldier becomes a CIMIC [civil-military cooperation] operator in COIN and S&R operations.<sup>13</sup> Conversely, some U.S. officers held that their allies were too reluctant to use lethal force. They argued that a reluctance to use force merely bolstered the insurgents' courage and resilience, whilst demonstrating Coalition lack of resolve to the domestic population, thus prolonging the conflict. It was apparent that many considered that the only effective, and morally acceptable, COIN strategy was to kill or capture all terrorists and insurgents; they saw military destruction of the enemy as a strategic goal in its own right. It should be stressed that this does not imply some sort of inherent brutality or lack of humanity: examples are legion of the toughest U.S. soldiers in Iraq exercising deeply moving levels of compassion in the face of civilian suffering, and often under extreme provocation. The issue is more a conceptual one about relative views of the value of lethal force.

The same contrast in national perspectives applied at the operational level of command. At various key decision points the instinct of the U.S. senior chain of command differed from its Coalition counterparts. Yet it would be simplistic and misleading to suggest that U.S. senior commanders simply did not understand the importance of popular support. At least 2 evidently did. Major General (MG) David Petraeus, as Commanding General (CG) of the 101st Division and responsible for Northern Iraq in the period after the fall of Saddam, swung his troops routinely between offensive operations and an equally vigorous domestic construction and restoration programme.<sup>14</sup> He is widely accredited with maintaining relative peace and normal functionality in Mosul, a city with an ethnic mix easily liable to ignite into civil conflict. Likewise, MG Pete Chiarelli, CG of 1st Cav Div, responsible for the demanding and volatile Baghdad area of operations in 2004, referred in briefings to his Division's SWETI ops: Sewage, Water, Electricity, Trash, Information. He considered his role to be as much city chief executive as soldier. Before his Division's deployment to Iraq he took his senior commanders and staff on a seminar with U.S. industrialists, because he realised from the outset that they would need to understand how to manage a population and restore and rebuild a city at least as much as they would need to know how to kill and capture terrorists.

The other widely held view, amongst non-U.S. participants in theatre, was that the U.S. Army was too often insensitive to the cultural nuances of the situation. In practical terms this amounts to a variation of the 'too kinetic' theme, since the effect was potentially the same—to undermine popular support for the Coalition campaign.

However, to apply the judgement of cultural insensitivity universally would be similarly misleading. Troops could undoubtedly be damagingly heavy-handed, as they could in any army, but there were many reported instances of U.S. Army courtesy and empathy with the local population. As an illustration of the contrasts, one senior Iraqi official who worked closely with the Coalition had his house twice subjected to routine search by U.S. Army personnel.<sup>15</sup> On one occasion the troops displayed exemplary awareness of cultural sensitivities, such as appropriate treatment of women in the household. On the other, the aggressive behaviour of troops from a battalion newly arrived in theatre led to his formal complaint, with consequent apology from a U.S. General Officer.

Obviously the latter occasion was simply a mistake and betrayed, if anything, a lack of training: it was hardly likely to have been indicative of command intent. Nonetheless, another U.S. General did assert that it was unreasonable and impractical to expect front-line soldiers, given their training and pre-eminent warfighting role, to develop the levels of subtlety or master the wider range of skills predicated by the hearts and minds campaign. He implied that their employment must perforce be restricted to combat tasks, leaving post conflict engagement with the populace largely to other organisations, such as the Army's reservist dominated CIMIC units, and NGOs [nongovernmental organizations].

The QDR IW Study suggests that the latter General Officer held the more common view. It notes that, in an analysis of 127 U.S. pacification operations in Iraq between May 2003 to May 2005, 'most ops were reactive to insurgent activity—seeking to hunt down insurgents. Only 6% of ops were directed specifically to create a secure environment for the population'.<sup>16</sup>

'There was a strong focus on raiding, cordon & search and sweep ops throughout: the one day brigade raid is the preferred tactic'. There was a 'preference for large-scale kinetic maneuver' and 'focus on killing insurgents, not protecting the population'.

U.S. Army personnel, like their colleagues in the other U.S. Services, had a strong sense of moral authority. They fervently believed in the mission's

underlying purpose, the delivery of democracy to Iraq, whereas other nations' forces tended to be more ambivalent about why they were there. This was at once a strength and hindrance to progress. It bolstered U.S. will to continue in the face of setbacks. But it also encouraged the erroneous assumption that given the justness of the cause, actions that occurred in its name would be understood and accepted by the population, even if mistakes and civilian fatalities occurred in the implementation.

This sense of moral righteousness combined with an emotivity that was rarely far from the surface, and in extremis manifested as deep indignation or outrage that could serve to distort collective military judgement. The most striking example during this period occurred in April 2004 when insurgents captured and mutilated 4 U.S. contractors in Fallujah. In classic insurgency doctrine, this act was almost certainly a come-on, designed to invoke a disproportionate response, thereby further polarising the situation and driving a wedge between the domestic population and the Coalition forces. It succeeded. The precise chain of events leading to the committal of U.S. and Iraqi security forces, or reasons for the subsequent failure to clear what had become a terrorist stronghold, lie well beyond the classification of this paper. However, the essential point is that regardless of who gave the order to clear Fallujah of insurgents, even those U.S. commanders and staff who generally took the broader view of the campaign were so deeply affronted on this occasion that they became set on the total destruction of the enemy. Under emotional duress even the most broad-minded and pragmatic reverted to type: kinetic.

Much has also been made in open sources about the failures of intelligence in theatre.<sup>17</sup> A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is germane that U.S. forces put relatively little emphasis on HUMINT [human intelligence], concentrating instead on using technological assets to gather intelligence, the significance being that the latter can serve to keep the troops separated from the local population. This assists force protection, in the short term, particularly in an environment where suicide bombers are the major threat, but it equally helps to encourage the local sentiment that the troops are a distant, impersonal occupying force which has no interest in the population. It denies one avenue for nurturing popular support. Similarly, the *QDR* IW Study notes that during the period studied U.S. forces were relatively isolated from the population they existed to sup-

port: 'they live in fortified camps away from the population and most face-to-face contact . . . is during cordon and search or vehicle checkpoint operations'.<sup>18</sup> Routine foot patrolling, a key means of interacting and thus gathering HUMINT, was the exception.

On balance, and notwithstanding many examples of highly effective interaction with the Iraqi population, the empirical evidence supports the following broad conclusions about the U.S. Army in theatre over this period:

- There was a doctrinal issue: some accepted that the key to success was to gain popular support, in order to drive a wedge between the terrorist and his lifeline. Others believed that the best concept was to concentrate on destruction of the insurgent. Similarly, some commanders believed that there was a pragmatic limit to the range of skills and approaches a front-line soldier could be expected to acquire, which de facto limited their value in terms of significant hearts and minds activity.

- There was a training issue: a significant proportion was unaware of the doctrine, or the relative importance of influencing the population through appropriate interaction.

- Intuitively the use of options other than force came less easily to the U.S. Army than her allies.

- High levels of emotivity, combined with a strong sense of moral authority, could serve to distort collective judgement and invoke responses to insurgent activity that ultimately exacerbated the situation.

- Despite its own multi-cultural nature, the Army was not culturally attuned to the environment.

- U.S. Army personnel instinctively turned to technology to solve problems. Similarly, their instinct was to seek means, including technology, to minimise frequent close contact with the local population, in order to enhance force protection, but this served further to alienate the troops from the population.

## **U.S. Army Adaptability**

The U.S. Army way of command is germane to the argument. According to one source, whilst the U.S. Army may espouse mission command, in Iraq it did not practise it; other observers have echoed this sentiment.<sup>19</sup> Commanders and staff at all levels were strikingly conscious of their duty, but rarely if ever questioned authority, and were reluctant to deviate from precise instructions. Staunch loyalty upward and conformity to one's superior were noticeable traits. Each commander had his own style, but if there was a common trend it was for

micro-management, with many hours devoted to daily briefings and updates. Planning tended to be staff driven and focused on process rather than end effect. The net effect was highly centralised decision-making, which worked when serving a commander with a gift for retaining detail and concurrently managing a plethora of issues, but all too readily developed undue inertia. Moreover, it tended to discourage lower level initiative and adaptability, even when commanders consciously encouraged both.

The U.S. Army's laudable and emphatic 'can-do' approach to operations paradoxically encouraged another trait, which has been described elsewhere as damaging optimism. Self-belief and resilient optimism are recognised necessities for successful command, and all professional forces strive for a strong can-do ethos. However, it is unhelpful if it discourages junior commanders from reporting unwelcome news up the chain of command. The U.S. Army during this period of OIF exemplified both sides of this coin. Most commanders were unfailingly positive, including in briefings and feedback to superior commanders, but there were occasions when their optimism may have served to mislead those trying to gauge progress. In briefings to superiors, intentions and targets could easily become misconstrued as predictions and in turn develop an apparent, but unjustified and misleading degree of certainty.<sup>20</sup> Force commanders and political masters need to know the true state of affairs if they are to reach timely decisions to change plans: arguably, they did not always do so.

Like any deployed force, levels of proficiency were mixed, including a discernible difference between formed units and ad hoc organisations. However, the range of competence amongst deployed U.S. Army personnel seemed more pronounced than in other contributing nations, perhaps reflecting how gravely the inescapable requirement for manpower was over-stretching the structure, leading to excessive deployments for individuals and causing the Army to dig deep into reserves and those parts of the force with the least expertise.<sup>21</sup> Whilst this did not per se prevent adaptation, it did compound the issue, since the lower levels of expertise encountered discouraged commanders all the more from loosening their grip on the reins.

On balance the available evidence indicates these U.S. Army trends:

- Exceptional commitment, sense of duty, and unquestioning loyalty to the wider cause, the mis-

sion, the force and superior officers.

- Insufficient adaptability to the requirements of Phase 4 caused by:

- Process rather than effects orientated command and control regimes.

- A hierarchically conscious command ethos, which encouraged centralisation, and conversely discouraged low level initiative or innovation even when senior commanders stressed the need for them.

- Commander over-optimism, which could sometimes compound the disinclination to adapt plans, since it raised undue confidence in higher headquarters that existing plans were on track.

- A shortage of manpower from which to draw troops into theatre, leading to very varied levels of expertise, which tended to compound the issues noted above.

### Overall Judgement

Much of the above could be explained away as the inevitable friction resulting from operations in a fractured, war-torn country with an ethnically complex population. Nor is there any suggestion that the trends identified above apply universally. However, setting aside the many exogenous factors impacting on the effectiveness of the military campaign in Iraq during this period, there is sufficient weight of empirical evidence to deduce that, following its striking success in the conventional warfighting phase of OIF, and notwithstanding the immense bravery and dedication exhibited throughout the force:

- The Army's approach to and conduct of operations was a contributory factor in the Coalition's failure to exploit success immediately after the fall of Saddam. (That is not to say that the outcome would have been different had the Army operated differently, but it might have been).

- The Army took too long to adapt to the changed requirements arising from Phase 4 operations.

- Although the Army may now be achieving campaign success, it created a harder task for itself by dint of its approach and conduct during the early stages of OIF Phase 4, including well into 2004.

Section 2 will consider the Army more widely, in order to analyse the root causes of the trends identified in this Section. In so doing, it will demonstrate that the trends identified in OIF Phase 4 were characteristic of the Army as a whole, and that the operational state and thinking of the Army in the period leading up to OIF made the outcome assessed above almost inevitable.

---

---

## Section 2: The Root Causes of the OIF Phase 4 Trends Identified in Section 1

---

---

*The United States is fighting the Global War on Terrorism with a mindset shaped by the Cold War. That mindset helped create today's joint force that possesses nearly irresistible powers in conventional wars against nation-states. Unfortunately, the wars the United States must fight today in Afghanistan and Iraq are not of this variety.*—LTC M. Wade Markel, USA<sup>22</sup>

No army can be analysed comprehensively in 5,000 words, least of all the U.S. This section will, therefore, concentrate on those aspects of the U.S. Army's conceptual and moral components judged to hold the key to explaining the features and impacts identified in the OIF snapshot in Section 1. These are a combination of enduring, longer term factors, compounded by shorter term, transient factors, which have collectively conspired to render the U.S. Army conceptually and culturally ill-disposed to OIF Phase 4, and similarly ill-disposed to adapt to the extent required, and thus ironically ill-suited to the path determined for it de facto by U.S. Foreign Policy at the beginning of the 21st Century.

### **The Army's Conventional Warfighting Focus**

The most straightforward reason why the Army struggled in OIF Phase 4 to achieve the effectiveness demonstrated in the preceding combat phase was that it was, by design, relatively ill prepared for it. In spite of COIN and S&R operations having occupied the majority of the Army's operational time since the Cold War, and their being an inevitable consequence of the GWOT [Global War on Terror], these roles have not been considered core Army activities. The Army's focus has been conventional warfighting, and its branches into COIN and S&R have been regarded as a diversion, to be undertaken reluctantly, and preferably by Special Operations Forces and other specialists, many of whom are in the Army reserves. So deeply ingrained is the Army's focus on conventional warfighting that even when HQ 3 Corps was preparing to deploy to Iraq in early 2004 and must have known it would be conducting COIN and S&R operations, with all that that should entail in terms of targeted preparation, its pre-deployment

training still focused on conventional operations.<sup>23</sup>

Surprising though HQ 3 Corps' omission may seem, it is symptomatic of a trend rooted in U.S. Army historical development: the Army has consistently seen itself more or less exclusively as a conventional warfighting organisation, and prepared for operations accordingly. In his seminal book *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, LTC John Nagl contrasts the development of organisational culture in the British and U.S. Armies, in order to determine why the former succeeded in Malaya but the latter failed in Vietnam.<sup>24</sup> The book pre-dates OIF by a year. Nonetheless the parallels with the evidence arising from OIF Phase 4 are too marked to ignore, a feature which evidently did not escape the notice of the COS of the Army, General Peter J. Schoomaker, who in 2005 ordered copies for every 4-Star General Officer currently serving, and provided a Foreword to the second edition.<sup>25</sup>

Nagl notes that 'The American Army's role from its very origins was the eradication of threats to national survival', in contrast to the British Army's history as 'an instrument of limited war, designed to achieve limited goals at limited cost'. And, 'As a consequence, its historical focus was almost unfailingly and exclusively to be a conventional warfighting organisation'.<sup>26</sup> He contends that this focus was so dominant in the American military psyche that the Army of the Vietnam era saw its core task unshakeably as 'the absolute defeat of an enemy on the field of battle'.<sup>27</sup> This attitude was sufficiently well ingrained throughout the Vietnam era that the enemy's destruction on military terms prevailed as the dominant operational intent, despite the many indicators that might have driven the Army towards the necessary realisation that the military objectives must be subordinate to wider political goals.

The trends identified in Section 1 are consistent with this. Likewise, there is plenty of evidence, from Nagl by implication, and from other sources more directly, that this uncompromising focus on conventional warfighting, and concomitant aversion to other roles, have persisted to the present day, or at least until very recently, and were instrumental in shaping the Army's approach to OIF in 2003 and 2004. LTC [Scott M.] Eagen, an instructor at West Point, informs cadets studying COIN: 'the United States has never excelled at fighting insurgencies. In particular, our most disastrous effort, Vietnam, has left a bitter taste for irregular warfare on the historical palate of most Americans'.<sup>28</sup> U.S. Army Colonel (Retired) Don Snider, a senior lecturer in Social Sciences at West Point and an authority on the professional development of the Army, asserted

that Army senior officers ‘only realised recently that OOTW had become an enduring purpose for the Army’.<sup>29</sup> Combined Arms Center staff, in a briefing to the author about Military Transformation, talked exclusively about enhancing warfighting capability and were evidently at a loss when asked what was being done to enhance COIN and S&R capabilities.<sup>30</sup>

Nor does COIN have a strong conceptual and training foundation in the U.S. Army. As LTC Eagen notes: ‘To make matters worse, nowhere in the DOD’s Joint Professional Military Education system is a course that is solely dedicated to the specific study of counter-insurgency’.<sup>31</sup> Written doctrine has also been neglected. The U.S. Army published an interim field manual on COIN only recently, in response to events in Iraq, but too late to assist those who needed to adapt so swiftly in 2003.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, COIN only merits the status of an elective subject at West Point and other officer training establishments, and is not widely studied in any of these: there is little incentive to do so. As Snider observed, from the outset officers are taught that the acid test is army operations in great power battles; they must not be found wanting in this mainstream activity. Careers are shaped accordingly, and the COIN expert has been seen as something of an outsider. Likewise, according to TRADOC [Training and Doctrine Command] staff, COIN is not yet included in their programmes of instruction as a type of operation in its own right, although some relevant military tasks are.

The U.S. Army has not merely been uncompromising in its focus on conventional warfighting. It has also developed an uncompromising approach to conventional warfare that is particularly ill-suited to the nuances of COIN and thus compounds the problem. Nagl again: ‘When the United States finally did develop a national approach to the use of force in international politics, the strategy of annihilation became characteristically the American way of war’.<sup>33</sup> Eliot Cohen cites the two dominant characteristics of American strategic culture as: ‘The preference for massing a large number of men and machines and the predilection for direct and violent assault’.<sup>34</sup> Although a doctrine intended for conventional warfare rather than COIN, it has permeated the American military and renders the transition to the more graduated and subtle responses required for effective COIN all the more difficult.

Nagl also notes the conceptual separation in American military thinking between military and political activity: ‘the American way of war is marked by a belief that the nation is at war or at

peace; the binary nature of war leaves no space for political-military interface’.<sup>35</sup> Granted, modern technology enables lethal force to be applied more precisely, thus helping to minimise collateral damage and reduce the potential for inadvertent alienation of the civilian population. Nonetheless, the characteristic U.S. military intent has remained one of uncompromising destruction of the enemy’s forces, rather than a more finely tuned harnessing of military effect to serve political intent—a distinction in the institutional understanding of military purpose that becomes highly significant when an army attuned to conventional warfare suddenly needs to adapt to the more subtle political framework of a COIN campaign.

In short, the U.S. Army has developed over time a singular focus on conventional warfare, of a particularly swift and violent style, which left it ill-suited to the kind of operation it encountered as soon as conventional warfighting ceased to be the primary focus in OIF. Success thereafter therefore depended on its capacity to adapt, to S&R in the first place, and then to COIN as the insurgency gathered strength during 2003.

### U.S. Army Organisational Culture and Adaptability

The capacity to adapt is always a key contributor to military success. Nagl combines historical analysis with a comprehensive examination of organisational theory to rationalise why, as many of his readers will already intuitively sense, ‘military organisations often demonstrate remarkable resistance to doctrinal change’ and fail to be as adaptive as required.<sup>36</sup> His analysis is helpful in determining why the U.S. Army can appear so innovative in certain respects, and yet paradoxically slow to adapt in others. He notes that: ‘Even under the pressures for change presented by ongoing military conflict, a strong organisational culture can prohibit learning the lessons of the present and can even prevent the organisation’s acknowledging that its current policies are anything other than completely successful’.<sup>37</sup> He suggests that the culture of the British Army encourages a rapid response to changing situations, whereas ‘the culture of the American Army does not, *unless the changed situation falls within the parameters of the kind of war it has defined as its primary mission*’. And, it has ‘evolved a standard organisation and doctrine devoted to ensuring uniformity in the employment of American material and firepower superiority on the battlefield, and encouraged innovation *in line with these proclivities*’.<sup>38</sup> Empirical evidence supports his thesis, namely a

propensity for innovation in pursuit of enhanced conventional warfighting capability, and the converse—that its organisational culture, unquestionably strong, has tended to discourage adaptation to roles deemed outside its primary mission, namely everything other than conventional warfighting.

Nagl goes so far as to suggest that the demands of conventional and unconventional warfare differ so greatly that in extremis it may be very difficult, if not impossible, for an organisation optimised for one to adapt to the other, all the more so when it has a strong organisational culture attuned to its original role.<sup>39</sup> The evidence from Section 1 is consistent with his thesis, but his implied solution, to focus on just the one type of mission, is unrealistic. U.S. foreign and security policy requires forces that can undertake the full spectrum of roles, and the manpower strains arising from OIF Phase 4 illustrate all too clearly that the entire Army needs to be able to engage: any thought of COIN and S&R being the preserve of a specialist force must be banished. Adaptability within the one army remains the prerequisite for success.

## **Compounding Cultural and Conceptual Factors**

If the Army's strong organisational culture, focused on conventional warfighting, has discouraged adaptation to other roles, other conceptual and cultural factors have compounded the difficulties faced.

Armies reflect the culture of the civil society from which they are drawn. According to Snider the Army is characterised, like U.S. domestic society, by an aspiration to achieve quick results.<sup>40</sup> This in turn creates a presumption of quick results, and engenders a command and planning climate that promotes those solutions that appear to favour quick results. In conventional warfighting situations this is likely to be advantageous, but in other operations it often tends to prolong the situation, ironically, as the quick solution turns out to be the wrong one. In COIN terms the most obvious example is the predilection for wide ranging kinetic options (sweep, search and destroy) in preference to the longer term hearts and minds work and intelligence led operations: even though the former may often be the least effective strategy, it always seems the most appealing, since it purports to offer a quicker and more tangible result.

Armies also develop customs and behavioural norms that serve, inter alia, to emphasise to the workforce their necessary distinctness from their civilian origins. The U.S. Army's habits and customs, whilst in some respects very obviously prod-

ucts of American society, are also strikingly distinct, much more so than most militaries, to the extent that some individuals almost seem like military caricatures, so great is their intent on banishing all traces of the civilian within. U.S. Army soldiers are not citizen soldiers: they are unquestionably American in origin, but equally unquestionably divorced from their roots. Likewise, most armies to some extent live apart from their host civilian environment, but the U.S. Army has traditionally been more insular than most, especially when abroad: U.S. Army bases world-wide are a mini-America. Neither trait can make it any the easier for Army personnel to empathise with the local civilian population on operations, particularly when the local cultural norms also happen to be markedly different from Western trends.

It is, on the face of it, quite logical in a force with unparalleled access to high technology, to seek to use technological solutions to compensate for shortages in manpower. That logic is further encouraged when the deployed force is supported by a massive industrial base, with vested business interests in the wider employment of technological solutions, and a powerful Congressional lobby culture. However, the lure of technology can be misleading. In an environment where, above all else, it is imperative that the occupying force be seen as a force for the good, it is counter-productive when technological solutions are employed that promote separation from the population. Furthermore, a predilection with technology arguably encourages the search for the quick, convenient solution, often at the expense of the less obvious, but ultimately more enduring one.

In sum, whilst the Army's organisational culture has discouraged adaptation to non-conventional roles, a range of other cultural and conceptual factors have compounded the trend.

## **U.S. Army De-Professionalisation**

Another reason why the Army has struggled to adapt is simply that it has not been at its professional best in recent years.

Snider contends that the Army 'de-professionalised' during the 1990s.<sup>41</sup> He asserts that the culmination of the Army's post Vietnam re-professionalisation came in the '91 Gulf War, when the Army was probably 'the most integrated and professional yet produced by the USA'. However, over the next 6-8 years it became more bureaucratised, centralised and correspondingly less professional. It was just starting to recover from this when 9/11 happened and it became unavoidably committed to such extensive



DOD

A local resident speaks animatedly after being stopped by Iraqi Army soldiers with the 2d Battalion, 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, in Baghdad.

and challenging operations.

Evidence supporting the notion of de-professionalisation has been widely reported elsewhere, to the extent that it is unlikely to be contentious any longer, but it merits brief consideration, since it offers further clues about the general capacity of the Army to adapt as it embarked on OIF.

A significant symptom, and in time a catalyst for the de-professionalisation of the Army, was the so-called exodus of the captains, now a well documented phenomenon. Captains are a particularly significant rank in the U.S. Army, as they provide the company commanders, and it is arguably company and squad commanders who are the lynchpin in the de-centralised operations that tend to characterise COIN and S&R campaigns. According to Mark R. Lewis, in the mid-90s, junior officers, particularly captains, began leaving the Army in increasing numbers.<sup>42</sup> The captain attrition rate exceeded the in-flow necessary to maintain a steady state, such that by 2000 the Army could fill only 56% of those positions intended for experienced captains with officers of the right quality and experience.

Army studies into the extent and causes of this attrition indicated predictable dissatisfaction with

pay and benefits, and the domestic turbulence caused by the increased operational tempo that has characterised Western military life since the Cold War. However, junior officers also consistently expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs, and with their leaders. These factors are linked: one of the principal reasons for job dissatisfaction was the sense of a zero-defects culture in the Army, which arose indirectly from unit leadership ambition—mistakes in the unit do not, at least on the face of it, show the commander in a good light, with consequent perceived impact on his career. This sense of junior officer dissatisfaction with the leadership became so profound that in one study, commissioned by the then Army COS General Eric Shinseki in the year 2000, it was reported that ‘many officers believe there needs to be a clean sweep of senior leadership’.<sup>43</sup>

Lewis argues convincingly that the captain exodus had degraded Army effectiveness and caused a downward spiral of increasing attrition and inexperience in post. It had also exacerbated the zero-defects culture, since, to plug the resultant gaps, even more junior officers had to be advanced to more demanding posts all the more quickly, causing competence to fall even further, with leaders thus even less

inclined to trust their subordinates and allow them freedom of action. Lewis notes that before 1994 pin-on time to captain was about 54 months, but by 2002 it had dropped to 38 months. And a year later the Army was engaged in the most ambitious and demanding undertaking to date in the careers of most of those serving, OIF, and in particular OIF Phase 4.

This episode strongly suggests that operational standards in the Army had indeed fallen since Gulf War 1. Formal Army examination of it reported as much, and it seems inconceivable that overall levels of competence would not have dropped, given the reduction in pin-on time to captain by over 25%, and their pivotal role of company command.

Similarly, the indications of a zero-defects culture at unit level, and a mistrusting leadership, lend credence to the notion of an inadequately adaptive force. Adaptation requires finely tuned responses to situations encountered at local levels. The more dispersed the force and varied the situations encountered, the more critical it becomes that command be decentralised, such that junior commanders can exercise their initiative and innovate in order to respond appropriately. But this is contingent on leaders trusting their subordinates, and the latter having the competence to warrant that trust, which is hardly synonymous with a zero-defects culture.

## Summary of Analysis of Root Causes

Analysis of the Army's evolution, organisational culture, and other cultural traits, explains in large part why the trends identified in Section 1 occurred. In a sense, it also lends those trends greater credibility, since it illustrates their consistency with characteristics observed in the Army as a whole prior to OIF. In essence, always seeing itself as an instrument of national survival, over time the Army has developed a marked and uncompromising focus on conventional warfighting, leaving it ill-prepared for the unconventional operations that have characterised OIF Phase 4. Moreover, the resultant strong conventional warfighting organisational culture and centralised way of command tended to discourage the necessary swift adaptation to the demands of Phase 4. The Army's cultural singularity and insularity compounded the problem, as did the recent so-called de-professionalisation.

However, the Army is certainly not complacent. The final section will briefly assess its reaction to the lessons it has identified from OIF Phase 4.

---

---

## Section 3: Observations on U.S. Army Response to OIF Lessons

---

---

*We are leveraging the momentum of this war to transform our Army's organisation and culture. . . . For the 21st Century, we must have an Army characterised by a culture of innovation and imagination.*—COS of the Army, General Peter J. Schoomaker.<sup>44</sup>

Tempting though it may be to attribute all the problems in OIF to U.S. institutional ineptitude and a collective closed view of the world, this is simplistic, quite apart from being unjust. Enlightened Americans in theatre, military and civilian, were surprisingly willing, for such a powerful nation, to bare their professional souls and heed advice from other nationals. A visit to various U.S. Army establishments in May 2005 to research this paper revealed a similar open-mindedness, frankness, and hunger to learn and adapt, in order to improve military effectiveness. It was also clear that Army senior leadership was actively engaged.

The Army already intends, for example, to bolster junior leadership training, through a compulsory 6-week Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC), to supplement existing officer initial training and education courses. Army-wide cultural awareness training is also being planned. Meanwhile, HQ Department of the Army is actively discussing the establishment of a formal proponent for OOTW, clearly a timely step. It is also considering adjusting the balance of the Army's core focus to include OOTW missions, but recognises that it cannot forsake its conventional warfighting prowess, nor resource fully the required spectrum of roles; hence the capability for the one force to adapt between roles becomes of paramount importance. At the Defence-wide level, the *QDR* IW Study notes that key improvements could be achieved by efforts to:

- Capture and preserve corporate knowledge on IW, as distilled from historical experience and refined by current practice.
- Develop mechanisms for feeding this knowledge into the wider force and government.
- Do all this before conflict or in the initial stages, in order to avoid the 'fatal learning curve' (experienced at the start of OIF Phase 4, and many previous IW campaigns).
- Improve skills and tactical repertoire for IW across the wider force—broaden the knowledge base

outside Special Operations Forces and Marines.<sup>45</sup> In short, much seemingly apposite work is in progress.

Nonetheless, there are potential pitfalls. For example, it remains to be seen whether a mere 6 weeks of BOLC will prove adequate, or whether a root and branch review of officer training and education would not be more appropriate. U.S. Army officer entrants, surprisingly, receive somewhat less practical vocational leadership training than many of their European counterparts. In the process, the Army could also afford to review the rank and experience levels of company and squad commanders, since these posts are so pivotal to achieving adaptability.

However, the main concern remains whether the Army will really become adaptive in the manner required. In this respect Nagl's work, so helpful in understanding the trends observed in OIF Phase 4 through his analysis of the Army's evolution and organisational culture, is yet again useful, but this

time ironically so. In his Foreword to the Second Edition, drafted in early 2005, Army COS General Schoomaker notes: 'As we capture lessons from military operations, our Army is immediately integrating the lessons into our training, so that each follow-on unit learns from the experience of those in contact with the enemy'.<sup>46</sup> Yet 3 Corps' reported focus on conventional warfighting in its pre-deployment training, discussed in Section 1, hardly chimes with the COS's intent. Nor is that the only example of pre-deployment training being poorly attuned to operational reality.

In similar vein, Nagl reports in his own draft Preface to the Second Edition, composed after he had served in Iraq for a year: 'The Army is adapting to the demands of counterinsurgency in Iraq at many levels, from the tactical and operational through the training base in the United States'.<sup>47</sup> Yet Nagl's service in Iraq pre-dates most of the contrary observations in Section 1, so evidently not all of the Army has been adapting in the manner required. Or

### **The Soldier's Creed**

**I am an American Soldier.**

**I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.**

**I will always place the mission first.**

**I will never accept defeat.**

**I will never quit.**

**I will never leave a fallen comrade.**

**I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. I always maintain my arms, my equipment, and myself.**

**I am an expert and a professional.**

**I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.**

**I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.**

**I am an American Soldier.**

perhaps the discrepancy between Schoomaker and Nagl's assertions and the concurrent reports from other sources indicates that the Army (and Nagl, ironically) is already falling prey to the very danger that Nagl highlights, and discussed in Section 2—that of the strong organisational culture convincing the institution that it is adapting in the way required, when it is instead merely innovating all the more vigorously in line with its perceived primary mission. As Nagl so lucidly recounts, the Army has a history of reacting thus.<sup>48</sup> Or perhaps the discrepancy simply reflects the inevitable variations in adaptability and effectiveness in an organisation as large and diverse as the U.S. Army and thus highlights the extent of the challenge facing General Schoomaker. Certainly, the conventional warfighting pre-disposition is so deeply ingrained in the institution that it will take many years to effect the necessary transformation.

The Army's 'Warrior Ethos' is also illuminating in this respect. It was introduced in 2001, therefore well before OIF, in response to concerns that some branches of the Army lacked basic soldierly skills and the realisation that whatever their specialisation they must first and foremost be combat effective. It was noticeable in Iraq that it was emphasised frequently, in a range of ways. At its core is the Soldier's Creed. Note that it enjoins the soldier to have just the one type of interaction with his enemy—to engage and *destroy* him: not *defeat*, which could permit a number of other politically attuned options, but *destroy*. According to TRADOC, 'lessons learned from OIF re-validated the "need" and influenced the final language, which was officially released in 2003'.<sup>49</sup> Yet it is very decidedly a warfighting creed, which has no doubt served well to promote the much sought conventional warfighting ethos, but cannot be helping soldiers to understand that on many occasions in unconventional situations they have to be soldiers, not warriors. Is the Army really learning to become adaptive to changes in purpose, or is it learning to innovate all the more vigorously in line with its conventional warfighting primary focus?

Similarly, the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] paper *Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach* outlines the key tenets of the intended Defence-wide Force Transformation.<sup>50</sup> It makes much of changing the military culture, and enhancing strategic and operational agility and responsiveness, but is itself uncompromisingly and ironically orientated towards warfighting in tone and content. It leaves the distinct impression that the Transformation project will concentrate too much on harnessing high technology to enhance conventional warfight-

ing capability across Defence, and too little on the much more critical, and demanding, transformation of the human workforce, the key to development of a genuinely adaptive entity.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusions

The U.S. Army's tardiness in adapting to the changing operational imperatives of OIF Phase 4 was indeed a contributory factor in the Coalition's failure to exploit the rapid victory over Saddam achieved in the preceding conventional warfighting phase. Furthermore, its approach during the early stages of OIF Phase 4 exacerbated the task it now faces by alienating significant sections of the population.

However, to conclude, as some do, that the Army is simply incompetent or inflexible, is simplistic and quite erroneous. If anything the Army has been a victim of its own successful development as the ultimate warfighting machine. Always seeing itself as an instrument of national survival, over time the Army has developed a marked and uncompromising focus on conventional warfighting, leaving it ill-prepared for the unconventional operations that characterise OIF Phase 4. Moreover, its strong conventional warfighting organisational culture and centralised way of command have tended to discourage the necessary swift adaptation to the demands of Phase 4. Its cultural singularity and insularity have compounded the problem, as has the recent so-called 'de-professionalisation'.

Though justifiably confident and proud as a warfighting organisation, the Army acknowledges it needs to change. It is, rightly, considering adjusting its core focus to encompass Operations Other Than War, with all that that entails in terms of proponentcy, doctrinal development and a broader training base, although Army planners are keenly aware how difficult it will be to achieve this without compromising unduly the Army's existing warfighting pre-eminence. Likewise, it plans to bolster leadership training and rectify shortcomings in cultural awareness. However, these initiatives may not be enough: the inconsistency between trends observed in OIF Phase 4 and signals from the training base and leadership raise the concern that the Army still does not appreciate the extent of the watershed it faces. To that end, the planned Army Transformation needs to focus less on generating warfighting capability and much more on:

- The realisation that all military activity is subordinate to political intent, and must be attuned accordingly: mere destruction of the enemy is not the answer.
- The development of a workforce that is genuinely adaptive to changes in purpose, as opposed to

merely adapting to be even better at conventional warfighting.

- Keeping the lure of technology in perspective, and realising that the human component is the key to adaptability.

As important, the Army needs to learn to see itself as others do, particularly its actual or potential opponents and their supporters. They are the ones who need to be persuaded to succumb, since the alternative approach is to kill or capture them all, and that hardly seems practicable, even for

the most powerful Army in the world.

General Schoomaker asks, rhetorically: ‘When the historians review the events of our day, will the record for our Army at the start of the 21st Century show an adaptive and learning organisation? I think so, and we are committed to making it so’.<sup>52</sup> His intent is absolutely right. But he faces a challenge potentially no less tough than his post-Vietnam forebears, and it is to be hoped that the historians from all nations, not just America, will agree with his provisional verdict. **MR**

## NOTES

1. British military doctrine uses the terms “morally,” “conceptually,” and “physically” to encompass the constituent components of a force’s fighting power.

2. The epithet “forbiddingly difficult” is taken from a Royal College of Defence Studies lecture.

3. Phase 4 was intended to be stabilisation operations following the formal cessation of combat after the defeat of Saddam’s forces. Although Security Sector Reform (SSR) eventually became an Army-led activity, I do not discuss it in this article because it would entail discussing too many extraneous factors to use it as a gauge of Army effectiveness. Various sources, including discussions with a senior U.S. official, support the contention that administrative frictions caused inadequate attention to be paid to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Phase 4 planning. However, detailed analysis is outside the scope of this article. For a hard-hitting analysis, see Correlli Barnett, “Post-conquest Civil Affairs, Comparing War’s End in Iraq and in Germany,” The Foreign Policy Centre, London, February 2005, on-line at <<http://fpc.org.uk/publications/144>>, accessed 2 November 2005.

4. A plethora of media articles lay the blame for disbanding the Baath Party and the Old Iraqi Army partly on the coalition military and the U.S. Army. See “Special Report on Iraq,” *The Economist* (18 June 2005): 25.

5. Anonymous U.S. Army colonel, Baghdad, September 2004.

6. MG A.J.N. Graham, Deputy Commanding General, Multi-National Corps–Iraq, interview by author, May 2005.

7. Anonymous, interview by author, May 2005.

8. GEN Tommy Franks, Commander, U.S. Central Command, was responsible for OIF until early in Phase 4.

9. “Irregular warfare” is a term commonly used in U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) literature. Counterinsurgency operations might be considered a subset of irregular warfare.

10. DOD, *Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) 2006*, vers. 3.1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], 23 May 2005). The QDR will be presented to Congress in early 2006 but was the focus of much study during 2005.

11. For an excellent, concise discussion of the two contrasting doctrines, see John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (New York: Praeger, 2002), 26.

12. The bombardment was a U.S. Marine Corps operation, not an Army one. Still, it illustrates the issue—the markedly differing national perspectives about scales of combat power.

13. Anonymous, interview by author, May 2005.

14. MG David H. Petraeus was subsequently promoted to the rank of lieutenant general (LTG) in June 2004 and took command of coalition SSR operations. I was privileged to share an office with this inspirational officer for 4 months.

15. The house of LTG Nasier Abadi (with whom I had frequent contact and who later became the vice chief of the defence staff in the newly created Iraqi Ministry of Defense) was searched twice.

16. *QDR 2006*.

17. For a concise discussion of the intelligence operation, read Anthony H. Cordesman, *The War after the War: Strategic Lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Press, 2005).

18. *QDR 2006*.

19. Anonymous, interview by author, May 2005.

20. Misconstruing predictions as certainty seemed evident in the reporting of progress against SSR milestones to Washington during the latter half of 2004. On at least two occasions, one senior officer in the reporting chain expressed frustration that he was not receiving an accurate picture of progress, although a senior National Security Council official later asserted in a December 2004 interview that the White House, at the end of the chain, had accurate situational awareness.

21. Of course, the corollary to the observation of excessive deployments and digging into reserves is that if other nations shouldered more of the burden, there would be correspondingly less strain on the U.S. Army, but this article is not about burden-sharing.

22. LTC M. Wade Markel, “Winning Our Own Hearts and Minds: Promotion in Wartime,” *Military Review* (November–December 2004): 25; *QDR 2006*.

23. Discussions with U.S. exercise observers in theatre, Iraq, 2004.

24. Nagl.

25. The *National Review Online* noted that Nagl’s work had become “must reading for high-level officers in Iraq because its lessons seem so directly applicable to the situation there.” See on-line at <[www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/567702.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/567702.html)>, accessed 2 November 2005.

26. Nagl, 43.

27. *Ibid.*, 50.

28. LTC Scott M. Eagen, memorandum for cadets enrolled in study module MS460, Counterinsurgency Operations, West Point, New York, 21 September 2004. 1. Eagen overstates the case, in fact. As Nagl notes, the United States has sometimes been successful, particularly against Filipino guerrillas in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War at the turn of the 19th century, where the emphasis was on isolating guerrillas from the population. Unfortunately, the lessons were quickly lost as institutional focus was diverted elsewhere by the next conflict. (See Nagl, 46.)

29. Anonymous, interview by author, 24 May 2005.

30. *Ibid.*, 25 May 2005.

31. Eagen, 1.

32. U.S. Army, Field Manual–Interim 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 1 October 2004).

33. Nagl, 43.

34. Eliot A. Cohen, “The Strategy of Innocence? The United States, 1920–1945,” in Nagl, 44.

35. Nagl, 43.

36. *Ibid.*, 8.

37. *Ibid.*, 217.

38. *Ibid.*, 218.

39. *Ibid.*, 219.

40. Snider, interview by author, 24 May 2005.

41. *Ibid.*

42. See Mark R. Lewis, “Army Transformation and the Junior Officer Exodus,” *Armed Forces and Society*, 31, 1 (Fall 2004): 63–93.

43. Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) Eric K. Shinseki, Leadership Survey, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2000, quoted in Lewis.

44. GEN Peter J. Schoomaker, prepublished draft foreword to the second edition of Nagl.

45. *QDR 2006*.

46. Schoomaker in Nagl.

47. Nagl.

48. Nagl, 43–50.

49. MAJ Donald Ellerthorpe, Executive Officer to the Deputy CSA, Operations and Training. (No other information given.)

50. Office of the Secretary of Defense, “Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach,” Pentagon, Washington, D.C., 2003.

51. *The Economist* (18 June 2005), 12, notes that “Mr. Rumsfeld has a visionary’s fixation on the high-tech ‘transformation’ of America’s military and a misplaced disdain for the plain old infantry.”

52. Schoomaker in Nagl.

*Brigadier Nigel Aylwin-Foster, British Army, is the Deputy Commander of the Office of Security Transition in the Coalition Office for Training and Organizing Iraq’s Armed Forces.*