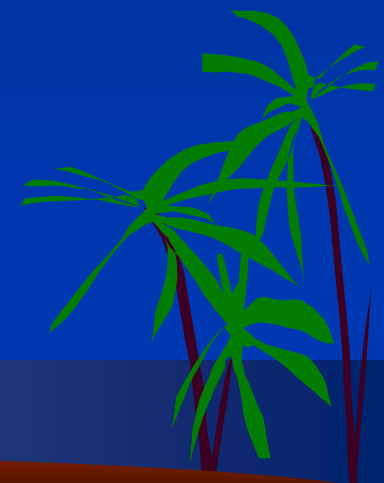
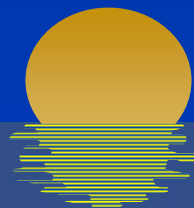


Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya, Vietnam, and Iraq

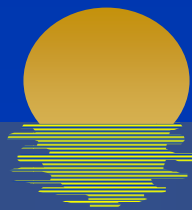
LTC John Nagl
U.S. Army



Making “war upon rebellion
was messy and slow, like
eating soup with a knife.”

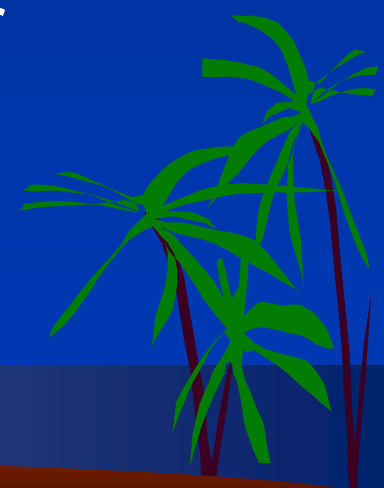
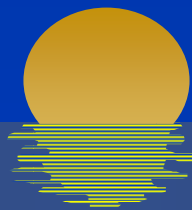
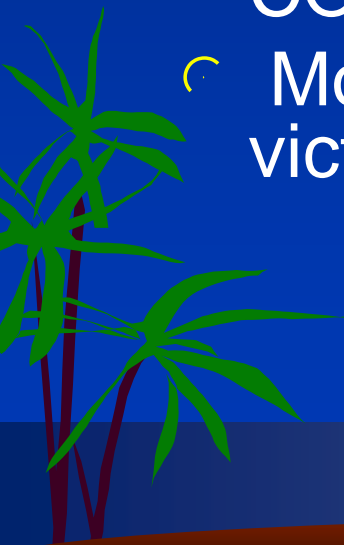
- T.E. Lawrence,

Seven Pillars of Wisdom



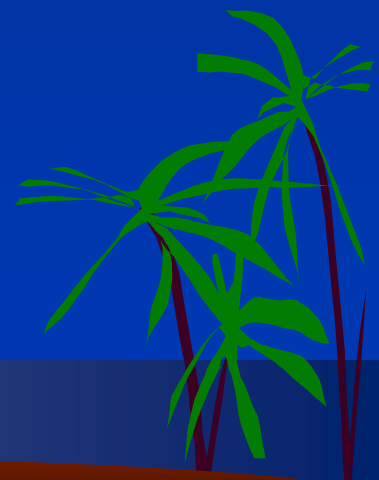
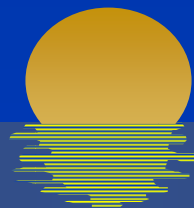
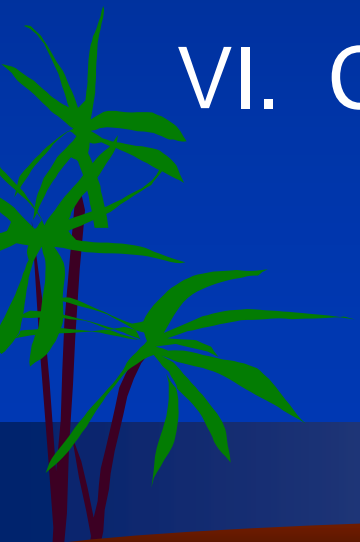
Thesis

- The organizational culture of the British Army allowed it to learn and implement effective counterinsurgency methods in Malaya.
- The organizational culture of the American Army prevented such learning in Vietnam, but...
- The American Army is rapidly adapting to COIN in Iraq.
- More to be done to set the USG up for victory in The Long War.



OUTLINE

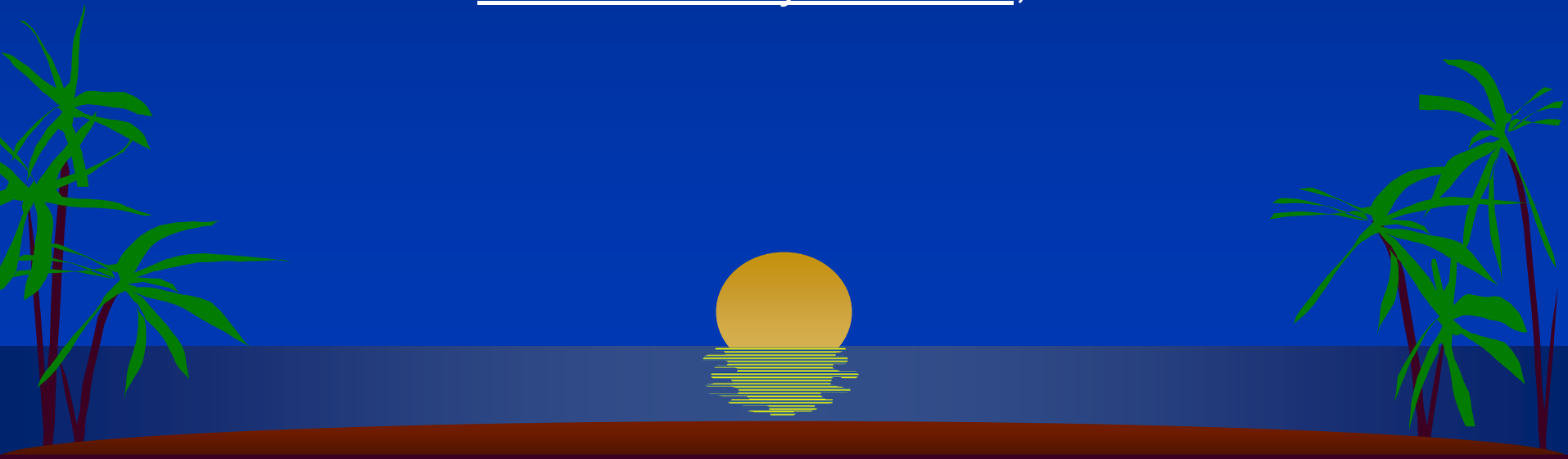
- I. Insurgency and Counterinsurgency
- II. Learning in Military Organizations
- III. British COIN in Malaya
- IV. American COIN in Vietnam
- V. American COIN in Iraq
- VI. Comparisons and Conclusions



Insurgency

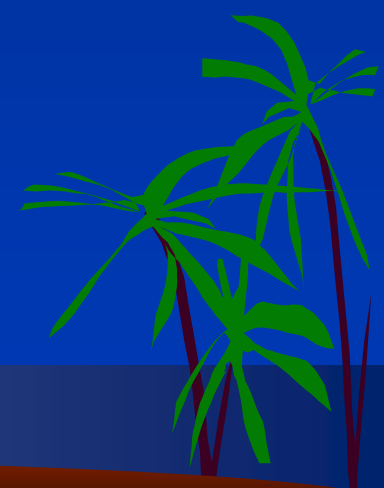
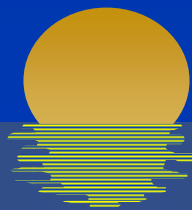
- “Illegal measures including the use of force to overthrow a government or to persuade or force people to do things they do not want to do.”

- British Military Doctrine, 1987



Counterinsurgency

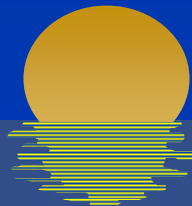
- “A coordinated attempt to defeat insurgents, usually relying upon both civilian and military authorities either of the afflicted government or of its allies.”
 - U.S. Field Manual 100-20,
Low Intensity Conflict, 1994.



Military Forces Hate COIN

- “The long list of unsuccessful operations conducted against guerrilla activities is a product of the inflexibility of many military leaders as well as their intransigent attitude concerning the abandonment of conventional tactics. This military arteriosclerosis has existed down through the ages...”

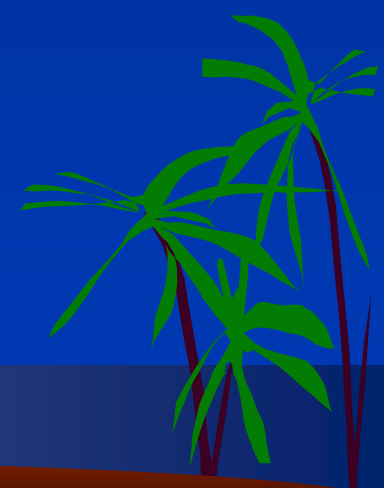
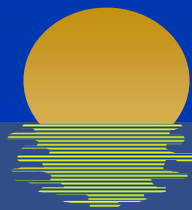
– LTC Joseph Kutger, USAF, 1960



Organizational Culture

- “Every organization has a culture, that is, a persistent, patterned way of thinking about the central tasks of and human relationships within an organization.”

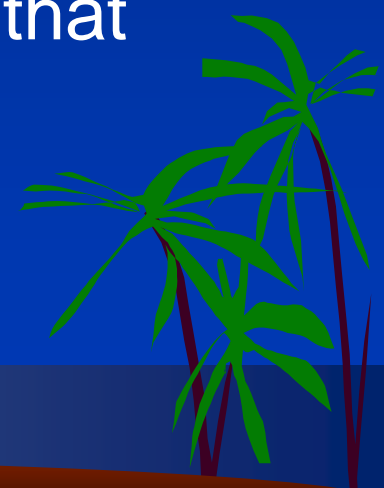
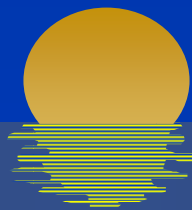
- James Q. Wilson, Bureaucracy



U.S. Army Organizational Culture

- “The American view of war emphasizes combat, set-piece battles between organized units as the centrality of conflict. Americans also put a high priority upon the use of firepower and high mobility...The desirable aim of combat has been seen as the destruction of the enemy’s army in the field, with the inevitable consequence being that the enemy must submit.”

- Larry Cable, Conflict of Myths

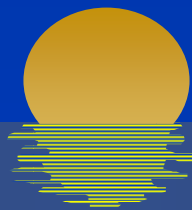


British Army Organizational Culture

- “Historical experience has taught [the British officer] not to expect a flood of assistance from Britain--there was usually little to be spared--nor to look to some sacrosanct body of ‘doctrine’ for advice; there was none. Instead he must make do...In short, he must adapt.”

- David Charters,

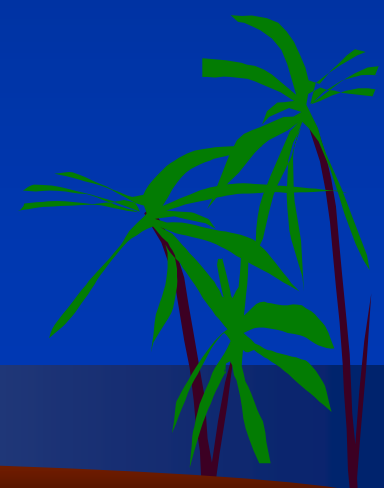
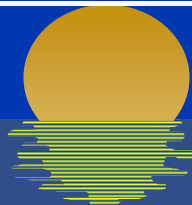
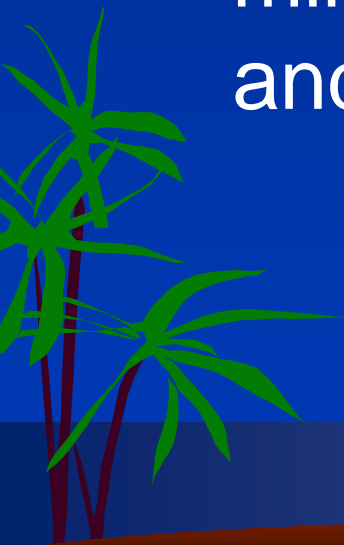
“From Palestine to Northern Ireland”



Organizational Learning

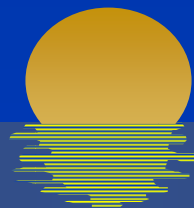
- “A process by which an organization uses new knowledge or understanding gained from experience or study to adjust institutional norms, doctrine and procedures in ways designed to minimize previous gaps in performance and maximize future successes.”

- Richard Downie,
The U.S. Army as Learning Institution



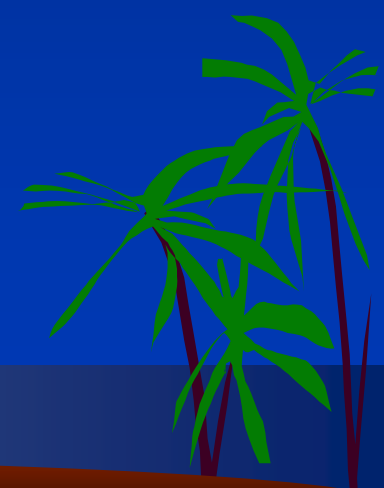
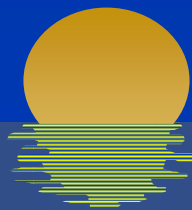
“Did the Army develop a successful COIN doctrine?”

- Victory
- Objective
- Unity of Command
- Economy of Force
- Mass



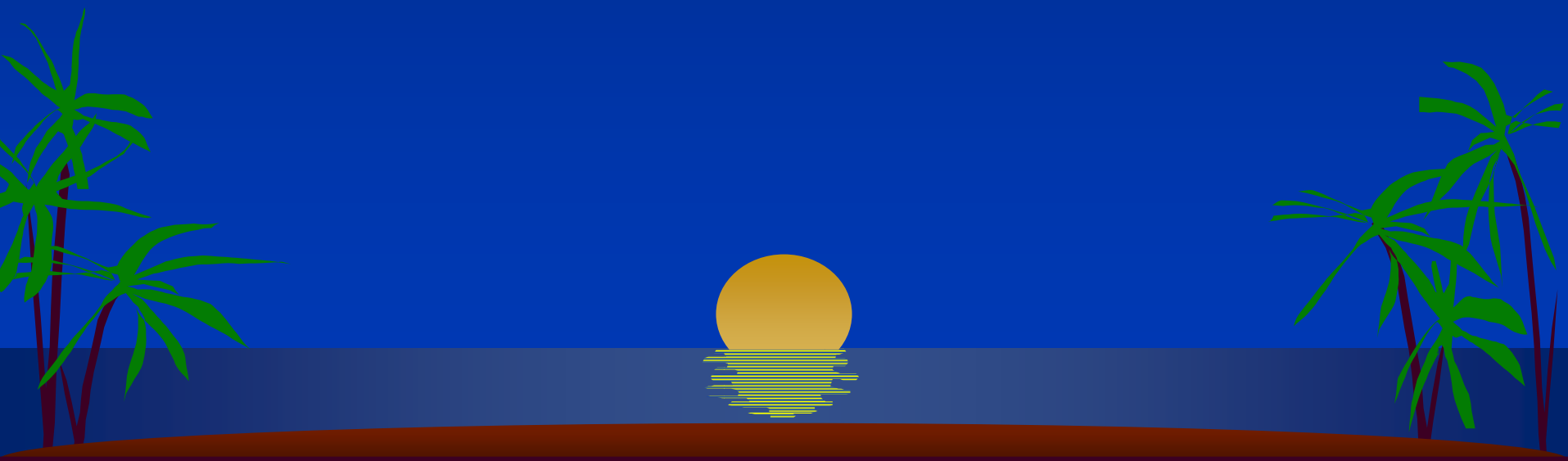
“Was the Army a Learning Institution?”

- Bottom-Up Input?
- Superiors Questioned, Available?
- Theoretical Thinking?
- Local Doctrine Development?
- Local Training Centres?
- Small, Responsive Staff?



British COIN in Malaya: Successful Organizational Learning

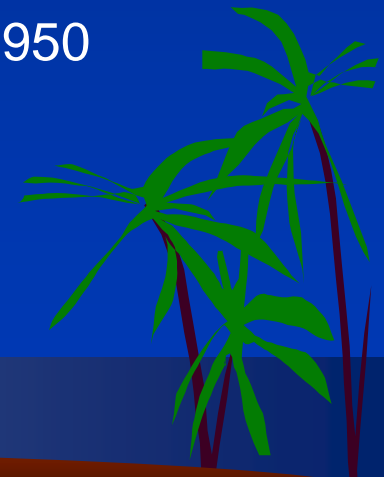
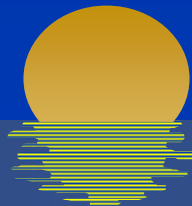
- ◉ Initial British Response
- ◉ A Modern Lieutenant General



Initial British Response

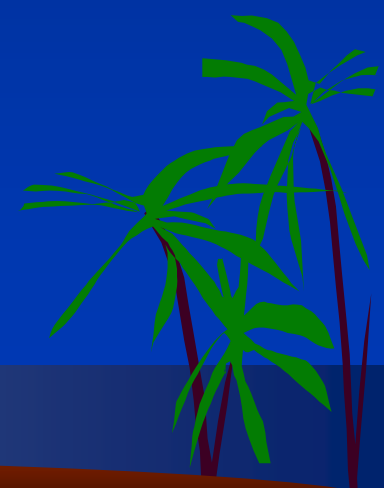
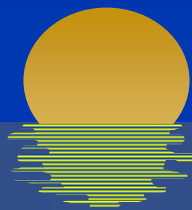
- War of the Big Battalions
- “Can’t Miss, Old Boy.”
- “At this stage it has become a military problem to which we have not been able to find the answer.”

– Colonial Secretary James Griffiths, 27 Oct 1950



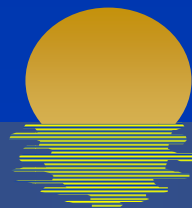
A Modern Lieutenant General

- Templer Takes Over
- ATOM
- Operational Research Section (Malaya)
- Intelligence as Basis for Operations
- “Hearts and Minds”



The U.S. Army in Vietnam: Organizational Culture Overpowers Learning

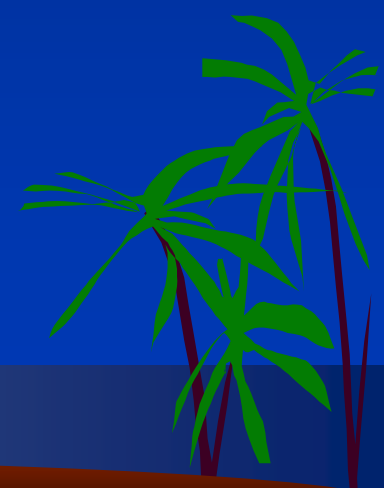
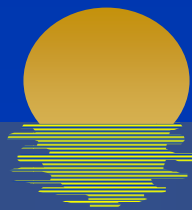
- The Army and Counterinsurgency
- Institutional Culture over Learning
- USMC and Combined Action Platoons



The Army and Counterinsurgency

- “The tactical doctrine for the employment of regular forces against insurgent guerrilla forces has not been adequately developed, and the Army does not have a clear concept...”

– LTG Hamilton Howze, 28 January 1962



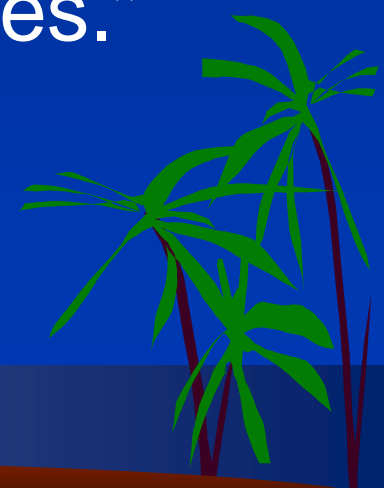
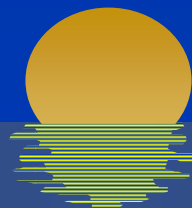
Institutional Culture over Leaning

- “The solution in Vietnam is more bombs, more shells, more napalm...till the other side cracks and gives up.”

– MG William E. DePuy, 1st Infantry Division, 1966

- “We’d end up shooting at everything—men, women, kids, and the buffaloes.”

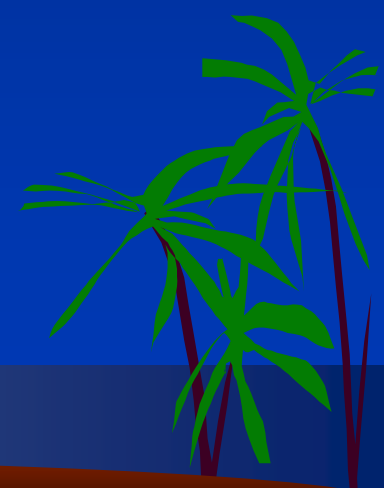
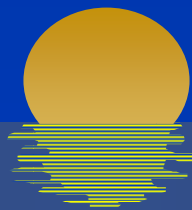
– LTC John Paul Vann, 1965



USMC and the Combined Action Platoon

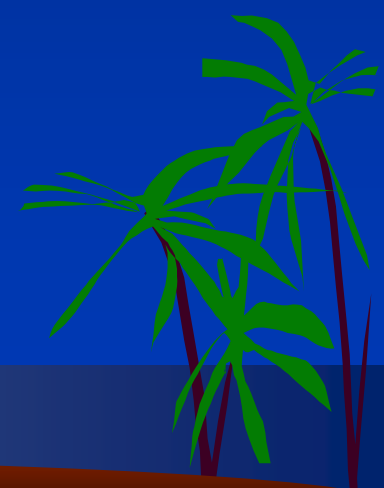
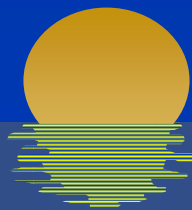
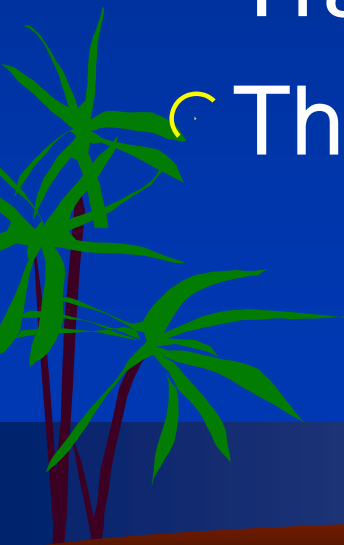
- Regional Coordinating Council
- Combined Action Platoons
- “You cannot win militarily. You have to win totally, or you are not winning at all.”

– Marine LTG Krulak, July 1966



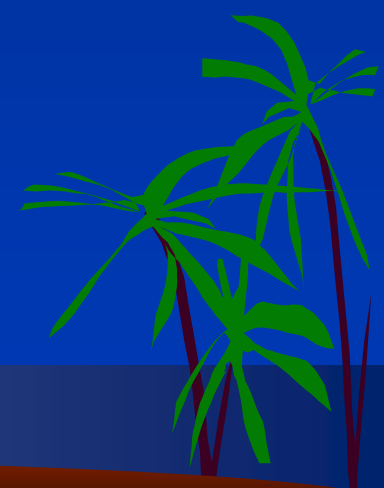
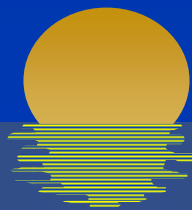
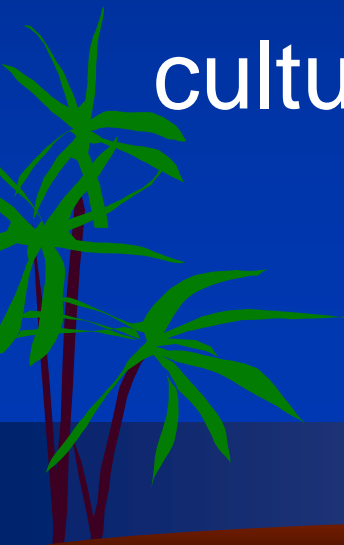
The U.S. Army in Iraq: Learning under Fire

- Bottom-up Learning
- Intelligence
- CERP and SWET
- Training Local Forces
- The Interagency Fight



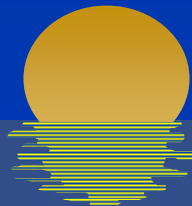
U.S. Army COIN Learning in Iraq: Why the Change?

- Bottom-up Learning Enabled by the Internet (www.companycommand.com)
- All-Professional force
- Bosnia/Kosovo Experience changed culture of U.S. Army?



Conclusions

- ◉ Counterinsurgency and Armies
- ◉ Armies as Learning Institutions
- ◉ Transformation for the Long War



☪ “How many Americans, out of 500,000, were only defending each other, writing memos to each other, and how many were actually making a positive contribution to the future security of Vietnam? It would make an interesting Ph.D. thesis for a maverick Lieutenant Colonel who is not seeking promotion...”

– Sir Robert Thompson, Make for the Hills

