

# S O P D



Senior Officer Professional Digest

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

This month the Editors of the *Senior Officer Professional Digest* recommend ten articles drawn from professional and academic journals on the subjects of Sun Tzu, China, Africa, Taiwan, amphibious warships, asymmetric conflict and the technology of terrorism.

Derek M C Yuen offers an excellent exposition of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* specifically formulated for Western military professionals. Of Sun Tzu's many focal points, one was the management of alliances, and Serge Michel's article on China's engagement with Africa would reveal an approach to alliances that would be familiar to Sun Tzu today. The focus this month on Chinese strategy concludes with Baohui Zhang's article on Chinese nuclear strategy for Taiwan Strait contingencies, and what this will mean for the United States.

With the arrival of Australia's new CANBERRA class LHDs drawing closer, Joseph Sensi's article on non-traditional missions for this platform is timely. Project Land 17 is also rapidly approaching maturity, and Matthew B Smith's article on precision artillery focuses on the tactical and operational applications of this capability in Iraq.

While fire support is crucial in modern conflict, finding the targets against which it is directed is even more critical. Increasingly, this task relies upon cultural sensitivity and mental prowess rather than sensors and computers, and Tim Benbow examines one of the major concepts behind this realisation—fourth generation warfare. This type of warfare, typified by the Iraq War, involves a battle for the 'hearts and minds' of a population, and Leonard J DeFrancisci examines the role that money has played in this struggle. Philip Seib analyses al-Qaeda's own efforts in this fight, focusing specifically on their manipulation of the media.

Finally, the editors recommend two articles on the technology of the War on Terror—Robert J Bunker examines the terrorist use of laser weaponry while Niels C Sorrells scrutinises the use of wiretapping in antiterrorist operations.

Enjoy  
The Editors

Derek M C Yuen, 'Deciphering Sun Tzu', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 27, Iss. 2, pp. 183–200.

Sun Tzu stands as one of the greatest strategists and theorists of war, second only perhaps to Carl von Clausewitz. Like Clausewitz's *On War*, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* was a work of its time, and drew on the philosophical, political and strategic elements of that period. While the context of Clausewitz's work is familiar to Western readers, that of Sun Tzu's work is not, and its mainstream interpretation has suffered accordingly. Derek M C Yuen sets out to rectify this problem in this article.

Many authors purport to 'reveal the secrets' of Sun Tzu's strategic thinking, but because they ignore or omit the historical and philosophical backdrop against which *The Art of War* was created, they fail to draw out the most important lessons of this great strategist's work. Yuen's thorough understanding of Sun Tzu is obvious, and he draws upon it selectively and to the depth necessary to illustrate the logic and point of Sun Tzu's deepest insights into the nature of war and strategy. Yuen also references elements of Clausewitz and John Boyd to compare and contrast Sun Tzu's works, making even the most enigmatic of Sun Tzu's arguments easily accessible to a Western audience.

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**'While Westerners are often impressed by the famous sayings of Sun Tzu, they tend to omit the most of the hidden premises and abstract reserves or find them difficult to understand.'**

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The ADF's doctrine, strategy and tactics all emphasise the pursuit of asymmetric advantages such as precision, speed, psychological attack and decision superiority. Sun Tzu had similar ideas, and his treatment of what today would be called 'preparation of the battlespace' is illuminated brilliantly by Yuen's article.

*Derek M C Yuen is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Strategic Studies, University of Reading, UK. He is studying under the supervision of Professor Colin S Gray.*

Serge Michel, 'When China Met Africa', *Foreign Policy*, Iss. 166, May/June 2008, pp. 39–46.

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**'In Africa, white visitors usually hear greetings like "hello, mista" or "hey whitey", but these smiling kids have expanded their repertoire. They yell "hello" in Chinese ... to them, all foreigners are Chinese. And there's good reason for that.'**

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Serge Michel points out that Africa has long been something of an economic enigma—despite its wealth of natural resources and abundance of cheap labour it has been unable to produce broadbased economic growth. The reasons for this conundrum are myriad, with the various schools of thought arguing that their reasons—and their solutions—are the only correct ones. Many African states see the Western preference to study the problem as a lack of commitment, and have thus turned to a newly generous China.

Commentators in the West raised concerns when China began to lavish billions of dollars on Africa, claiming that the Chinese would quickly overtake the European Union and the United States as the dominant strategic 'patron' on the continent. This, they claimed, would be disastrous—without a firm engagement in Africa, the West would lose its ability to influence events in a part of the world where transnational criminality, terrorism, disease and religious, racial and political extremism were only barely held in check. However, as Michel makes clear, China is learning all of the lessons about dealing with Africa that the West has, and it is learning them the hard way. There are 'no free lunches' for China in Africa, no matter how many of them it hands out itself.

This article serves as a corrective to some of the more alarmist claims made in the literature. It reads well and is quite engaging. Senior officers would do well to read this article above any else as a means to keep them abreast of the strategic environment in Africa, and the potential future of Western engagement with this region.

*Serge Michel is the West Africa correspondent for Le Monde. His latest work, co-authored with Michel Beuret and Paolo Woods is ChinAfrica: On the Trail of Beijing's Expansion on the Dark Continent.*

**Baohui Zhang, 'The Taiwan Strait and the Future of China's No-First-Use Nuclear Policy', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 164–82.**

China has a declared 'no first use' nuclear policy. It claims that it will never use nuclear weapons first, regardless of the level of threat to its national security. However, as Baohui Zhang writes, many scholars and officers in China now believe that this policy should be revised.

Zhang's assertion stems from the fact that the majority of China's strategy community believe that China cannot prevail in a conventional conflict over Taiwan. Accordingly, many in the Chinese military and academia have called for either an overt denunciation of the no-first-use policy, or a more subtle 'fine-tuning' of certain elements. They believe that this will increase the deterrent effect of China's rapidly modernising nuclear arsenal to the extent that the United States will not intervene in a Taiwan Strait contingency.

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**'Some suggest changing the No First Use statement to: When national security and unification face serious threats from foreign intervention, China maintains the right of using nuclear weapons.'**

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The increased risk of nuclear escalation arising from a change in Chinese policy is of obvious importance to the senior officers of the ADF and to Commonwealth policymakers. Zhang's article offers the reader an excellent demonstration of why this is the case.

*Dr Baohui Zhang is an Associate Professor at Lingnan University, Hong Kong.*

Joseph Sensi *et al*, 'Alternative LHD-1 Class Warship Missions', *Proceedings*, Vol. 134, Iss. 4, pp. 78–9.

The first of Australia's CANBERRA class LHDs is scheduled to enter service in approximately five years, at which time it will significantly boost the ADF's capability to project force. However, while they are purpose-built amphibious assault platforms, their flexible design makes them capable of many more missions. Joseph Sensi and his fellow authors all served together on the USS *Kearsarge*, a *Wasp* class ship whose capabilities are almost identical to the future Australian LHDs.

In their article, the authors propose several roles for LHD-type ships. With their well-deck, LHDs can act as 'motherships' to large numbers of watercraft, and with their large flight decks, they can embark a whole range of specialised rotary wing aircraft. In peacetime roles, the LHDs also excel. They are able to provide extensive medical and humanitarian relief facilities in a disaster situation quicker and more persistently than any other warship.

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**'[T]he ship's many capabilities could and should be used to support a growing number of non-traditional missions.'**

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Senior officers would do well to read Sensi's brief article, and use it as a basis for debate on new, less-traditional roles for the Australian LHDs. Such debate could also allow senior officers to prepare for the many and varied roles they may one day be called upon to carry out in conjunction with these new and flexible warships.

*Captain Sensi served as Commanding Officer of the USS Kearsarge. The officers who served with him aboard the Kearsarge and who wrote this article with him were: Captain Pagano and Commanders Guzman, Hils, Conner, Henderson, Sherck, Connor and Vogt.*

Matthew B Smith, 'Revolutionary to Conventional—Evolution of GMLRS', *Fires*, March/April 2008, pp. 32–4,

<[http://sill-www.army.mil/firesbulletin/2008/Mar Apr 2008/Mar Apr 2008 pages 32 34.pdf](http://sill-www.army.mil/firesbulletin/2008/Mar_Apr_2008/Mar_Apr_2008_pages_32_34.pdf)>.

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**'The need for precision guided munitions ... will increase in direct proportion to the success Coalition Forces demonstrate against the insurgency ... —as this conflict achieves ... objectives, the battlefield's size will shrink and potential targets will become more entwined with collateral damage considerations.'**

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Like armour, artillery is often thought of as a capability that is not generally useful in a counterinsurgency (COIN) operation. Readers of the *SOPD* may recall that the Editors previously recommended an article by the British Major General Jonathan Bailey, in which he argued that artillery still maintains the ability to contribute to today's complex operations. Smith's article, while more tactically focused than Bailey's theoretical piece, still provides a powerful case-study that supports that thesis.

The Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) is usually associated with the cataclysmic Fulda Gap armoured battles that NATO and Soviet land force commanders planned for during the Cold War. At the time of the MLRS's introduction, its capability to destroy armour was hailed by many as revolutionary. Today, however, many professionals see the MLRS as an anachronistic remnant of superpower confrontation. They believe that its tremendous—and indiscriminate—firepower has no place in COIN. However, advocates of the system have pursued the acquisition of a new munition, the Guided MLRS (GMLRS): a precision-guided munition fitted with a unitary high-explosive warhead in place of the original, less-discriminating bomblet payload.

While the Australian Army does not field the MLRS, this article is still worthy of a senior officer's consideration as it proves the fallacy of the claim that artillery is inapplicable to COIN. Indeed, Smith highlights how GMLRS has been remarkably successful in Iraq, where it provides ground forces with a high-precision, rapid response, all-weather capable weapon which has outshone aircraft-delivered PGMs on many occasions.

The United States' experience using GMLRS in Iraq is applicable to the ADF. From this article, senior officers can clearly see that artillery, regardless of its nature continues to play a major part on the battlefield *so long as it can apply its effects precisely*. Smith's article proves that this holds true even when fighting insurgents on a complex battlefield.

*Captain Matthew B Smith is a US Field Artillery officer who is currently serving as an Artillery Observer/Trainer for the Battle Command Training Program, Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. Prior to this appointment he commanded C Battery, 2 Battalion, 4 Field Artillery Regiment in Iraq.*

### **Tim Benbow, 'Talking 'Bout Our Generation? Assessing the Concept of "Fourth-Generation Warfare"', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 27, Iss. 2, pp. 148–63.**

Thomas X Hammes' 'Fourth-Generation Warfare' (4GW) article proved to be one of the most prescient that emerged from the strategy community in the late twentieth century. While it received very little attention when it was published, it is now the subject of a widespread and sometimes fierce discourse. Almost twenty years after the first appearance of 4GW, Tim Benbow takes stock of this concept's development, and the ongoing debate surrounding it.

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**'It could still be argued that the theory ... rests on taking the longstanding theory of insurgency and giving it a novel gloss by overgeneralising from a temporary increase in its salience in US and British policy.'**

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Like any concept that has been scrutinised by scholars, 4GW has undergone some refinement. The most significant of these changes is the subject of a substantial proportion of Benbow's article. Benbow's commentary on 4GW, presented along with the constituent elements of 4GW, is excellent, and is of considerable value to senior officers.

'Fourth Generation Warfare' is not without its critics, and Benbow carefully highlights its most striking critiques. Like his analysis of 4GW itself, the author examines the various

arguments and offers his commentary in a clear and concise fashion. He finally concludes that, while not without fault, 4GW has served as a corrective to the often-overshadowing preoccupation with conventional warfighting that has been prevalent in some Western military organisations. While Benbow's conclusion does serve as a valuable reminder to senior officers looking towards the ADF's future after Operations CATALYST and SLIPPER, the main value of his article lies in the neat summary it provides of the current state of 4GW, and the scholarly and professional debate that surrounds this important strategic concept.

*Dr Tim Benbow is a member of the faculty at the Defence Studies Department of King's College, London. His latest work, co-edited with Rod Thornton, is Confronting Insurgencies: Historical Experience and Policy Response.*

**Leonard J DeFrancisci, 'Money as a Force Multiplier in COIN', *Military Review*, Vol. 88, Iss. 3, May–June 2008, pp. 21–8,**  
<<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/English/MayJun08/DeFrancisciEngMayJun08.pdf>>.

Money has an amazing ability to co-opt support. While this aspect of money in the context of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations is well known, the process by which it is distributed is often overlooked. It is here, Leonard J DeFrancisci argues, that the application of money to counterinsurgency often falls down.

DeFrancisci writes that financial compensation was and remains a common counterinsurgency tactic in Iraq. However, receiving payment was often an overly long and complicated process for those seeking compensation. This led ordinary aggrieved Iraqis seeking compensation to the very feelings of frustration and hatred for US forces that the payments had been designed to prevent.

During their operation to secure Fallujah in 2004, the US Marine Corps' First Regimental Combat Team (RCT-1) also employed cash payments in an attempt to alleviate immediate human suffering, compensate for battle damaged property and alleviate mental anguish caused. Where RCT-1 differed in its payment of compensation was that it delegated the authority to pay money to the junior ranks, thus truly empowering its 'strategic privates' on the ground to quash discontent before it could be exploited by insurgent information operations. RCT-1 procedures were significantly abbreviated—within limits—and sped up the compensation process dramatically. The results of this approach, examined within DeFrancisci's article, speak for themselves.

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**'Previously, securing funds required approval at division level or higher ... This time lag between identifying a need and disbursing money was an unacceptable operational delay that made outcomes far less effective.'**

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Senior officers are of course aware that cash payments can play an important role in winning 'hearts and minds' in COIN, and DeFrancisci's article offers nothing new of note here. Rather, this article is valuable in that it provides solid evidence that junior ranks can indeed be

entrusted with something that is normally tightly controlled. Similarly, many commentators have called—without answer—for the devolution of release authority over media products to lower levels in the military so as to counter the time-sensitive information campaigns waged by insurgents and terrorists. Senior officers can see in DeFrancisci's article that the junior ranks of Western forces are now ready for the increased responsibilities of the 'strategic private'.

*Lieutenant Colonel Leonard J DeFrancisci is a US Marine Corps Reserve infantry officer. He currently serves with Fourth Civil Affairs Group in Washington, DC.*

**Philip Seib, 'The Al-Qaeda Media Machine', *Military Review*, Vol. 88, Iss. 3, May/June 2008, pp. 74–80,**  
<<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/English/MayJun08/SeibEngMayJun08.pdf>>.

Timely and accurate media products are essential in the battle of wills between insurgent groups on one hand and the civilian populations of targeted countries on the other. Philip Seib offers a concise analysis of one of the most potent exploiters of media—al-Qaeda.

Seib's article is a deftly combined mix of information concerning al-Qaeda's media operations. It is part structural diagram, part conceptual analysis, part operational history. Interleaved throughout is a constant commentary on al-Qaeda's media goals and methods. It is, accordingly, an information-dense article, but to the senior officer familiar with much of the background material, it is easily digested.

*Professor Philip Seib holds both a JD from Southern Methodist University and an AB from Princeton University. He is Professor of Journalism and Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California.*

**Robert J Bunker, 'Terrorists and Laser Weapons Use: An Emergent Threat', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 35, Iss. 5, pp. 434–55.**

While readers of the *SOPD* are no doubt familiar with the recent spate of laser illumination of aircraft in major cities in Australia, many would likely dismiss these acts as 'pranks' and of no concern to the ADF. However, as Robert J Bunker argues, these attacks could be lethal if carried out by a determined terrorist.

Bunker provides a revealing comparison of blinding lasers and man portable air defence systems (MANPADS), and concludes that lasers are the far more potent weapon for terrorists. They are cheap, readily available, need little training, require no special/expensive ammunition and have a reasonable kill-probability. Bunker offers approximately a dozen cases of the use of blinding lasers which show their effects. Military-designed blinding lasers are also examined although only limited information is publicly available.

The trend of improving performance and decreasing cost leads Bunker to conclude that terrorist use of laser weapons is almost inevitable. Senior officers and policymakers will appreciate Bunker's clear,

well-structured argument and his thorough treatment of the sources available. Laser weapons present a particularly difficult threat to counter, and represent just one of the many directed-energy weapons that senior ADF officers will increasingly need to consider in the future. Bunker's article provides an excellent stepping-off point for such thinking.

*Dr Robert J Bunker teaches at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. He also works for the Counter-OPFOR Corporation of Claremont, California and is an external researcher for the US Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute.*

**Niels C Sorrells, 'Taps and Terrorism: A German Approach?', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 23, Iss. 2, pp. 176–97.**

While wiretapping is an important weapon in the arsenal of antiterrorist or intelligence organisations, Niels C Sorrells argues that its effectiveness is often overstated.

To this end, Sorrells examines several high profile terrorism cases that were tried in Germany. In these instances, he conclusively demonstrates that the cases were either all solved without the benefit of wiretap intelligence, or, where wiretap intelligence either existed or was used, it proved inconclusive or insufficient by itself. Sorrells examines a similar number of high profile terrorism cases in the United States, and reaches a similar conclusion. Like other scholars of terrorism and criminality, Sorrells concludes that in these cases the most useful evidence came from public tip-offs.

Wiretapping is also extremely intrusive. Sorrells argues that democratic governments that push too vigorously for greater wiretapping rights run the risk of creating a public backlash that may end up hampering their ability to investigate cases of terrorism. Sorrells argues that the loss of public cooperation is not worth the dubious utility of increased wiretapping powers.

Policymakers and senior intelligence figures, both in the ADF and the wider intelligence community, will find Sorrells's study a thoughtful and thought-provoking piece. His conclusions regarding the push for increasingly intrusive surveillance powers and the possibility of a public reaction hampering those powers is an important point to make. Finally, his suggestions for improving the capability of intelligence gathering within the existing checks

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**'If wiretaps were essential to stopping terrorist plots or arresting terrorists on the run, one would expect them to play a more pivotal role in breaking up plans or putting the terrorists into jail ... Instead ... wiretaps have generally been incidental, unnecessary or ignored.'**

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and balances of Western legal practice will also be of utility to senior officers and intelligence professionals as a source for further reflection on this important point.

*Niels C Sorrells is a journalist living in Berlin, currently working for Dow Jones Newswires. Previously, he worked for Congressional Quarterly, covering defence and intelligence policy. In 2004–05 he was the recipient of a Federal Chancellor Fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.*

*'Reflections' has been designed by the Editors of the SOPD to showcase the most influential texts from history regarding operations, strategy and politics. This month the Editors of the SOPD recommend:*

**Dwight D Eisenhower, Farewell Address, 17 January 1961,**  
<<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/dwightdeisenhowerfarewell.html>>.

Dwight D Eisenhower was one of the most distinguished public servants of the United States, responsible for the Western Allies' efforts to defeat Nazi Germany in the Second World War, then serving as Supreme Commander of NATO, before finally serving for two terms as President of the United States.

Given his close affinity with the armed forces, it was surprising that Eisenhower chose to warn his fellow countrymen against the influence of the defence industry, labelling it a 'complex' with 'grave implications' for the 'very structure of ... society.' While democratic governments the world over have largely heeded Eisenhower's advice, and have built sophisticated checks and balances into their contracting policies, a quick look at the contents of this edition of the *SOPD* reveals that technological and platform issues have become far more important than they once were.

For the senior officer, Eisenhower's speech offers an eloquent and telling warning against the obscuration of human issues in today's strategic and operational concerns. While technological issues are important, without the broader focus that Eisenhower (and others) bring, 'task forces of scientists' and a 'scientific-technological elite' can capture the attention of decision-makers, much to the detriment of the most critical component of the Army's 'system-of-systems' – the soldier.

*Dwight D Eisenhower was born on 14 October 1890. A veteran of the First World War, he was promoted general in 1943, and given command of US forces in Europe. In December 1943 he was made Supreme Allied Commander Europe, the role in which he oversaw Operation OVERLORD. On 20 December 1944 he was promoted general of the army, a five-star rank, in recognition of his efforts fighting Nazi Germany. Between 1945 and 1948, he served as US Army Chief of Staff, after which he served as the first Supreme Commander of NATO. Between 1953 and 1961 he was President of the United States. He died on 28 March 1969.*