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This edition of the Australian Army Journal reflects on the Tet offensive of forty years ago. Tet has come to symbolise the difficulties of waging what we now term ‘wars amongst the people’ while being scrutinised by a hostile media and attempting to maintain the allegiance both of one’s own population as well as that of the nation being supported. This complexity and ambiguity is now regarded as inherent in the nature of war, though at the time many veterans of the Vietnam conflict felt bewildered at the political controversy over their service, especially in the aftermath of the Tet offensive when initial support for Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War declined.

Due to the iconic significance of the Tet offensive we commissioned James H Willbanks to write the lead article in this edition ‘Reconsidering the 1968 Tet Offensive’. As Willbanks correctly observes, historians are cautious in drawing direct lessons from historical events—no matter how enticing the parallels between them. As he writes: ‘This is particularly true when comparing the wars in Vietnam and Iraq. There are more differences than similarities between the two wars and because they differ in so many significant ways, attempting to apply any lessons from Vietnam to the situation in Iraq is fraught with peril.’

While heeding Willbanks’s caution, we maintain that one thing Tet, and indeed the wider Vietnam conflict, makes clear is that military supremacy at the tactical and operational levels is no guarantor of strategic success. At a time when the Chief of Army is directing much of Army’s efforts to upgrading its doctrine for counter-insurgency warfare, this is an important revelation. Indeed, Colonel John Frewen emphasises the inextricable nexus between political and military elements of counterinsurgency in his excellent article analysing his recent service in Afghanistan. To further illustrate this enduring aspect of counterinsurgency we devote the Retrospect section of this edition to a detailed account of Australian politico-military operations in Phuoc Tuy Province that was written around the time of the Tet offensive.

The intricate balance between the use of force and the achievement of national political ends is perhaps the greatest challenge facing contemporary military forces. In his seminal work The Utility of Force—The Art of War in the Modern World, General Sir Rupert Smith argues persuasively that the old paradigm of interstate industrial war is
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no longer relevant. Today military forces must be capable of engaging in conflict along a continuum. Ultimately there is no substitute for the professional mastery of violence at the tactical level. As he argues ‘The outcome of tactics is simple: kill or be killed’.

General Smith also notes that the decision to enter conflicts and the manner in which they are conducted lies with the political leadership of the nation. Such decisions provide context and meaning for the use of military forces. The rules of engagement, the composition of force elements, the level of risk acceptable to the achievement of certain national ends and the duration of commitments, are all matters that lie within the legitimate realm of government decision-making.

Two of the articles in this edition directly relate to the decisions made at the highest level regarding force composition. In Messes across the nation, serving members of all ranks continue to discuss who is being sent on operations, and who is not. It is acknowledged that there is discontent in some quarters that not everyone is getting a chance to ‘fight the good fight’. But to argue that any tasks short of offensive manoeuvre are unworthy of real soldiers is to misunderstand the changing character of war, and the role of military forces as an instrument of statecraft. In an era of ‘war amongst the people’ there will be occasions when vital national interests are best secured, not by offensive manoeuvre, but by mere presence or coercion without resort to force in the traditional sense. To argue otherwise is to misunderstand the ‘utility of force’. Again, if Tet demonstrated one thing it was that tactical excellence cannot compensate for faulty political management. Soldiers, no matter how skilled, must cede these decisions to their legitimate political leaders. Nonetheless, we publish each of these articles in a spirit of professional debate. We welcome responses to them from other arms and the Special Forces community.

The Army Journal continues to go from strength to strength. This is due in large part to the efforts of its editorial advisory board. Over recent months the Chief of Army has approved certain changes to the composition of the board, as the terms of the original members have ended. In particular, we wish to thank Major General John Hartley (retired) for his contribution to the Army Journal. The Chief of Army accepted his resignation form the Board in December. Likewise, we extend our thanks to Major General Michael O’Brien (retired), Brigadier John Essex-Clark (retired), Professor Carl Thayer and Dr Peter Londey whose terms have expired. All of these board members made significant contributions to the excellence of the Journal. In their places we welcome Professor Kim Beazley, a highly respected former Minister for Defence; Professor David Horner, a distinguished former Army Officer and one of Australia’s most respected military historians; and Major General Mike Smith (retired), a distinguished former soldier with command experience at the highest levels. We are confident that the Australian Army Journal will continue to achieve the highest professional and intellectual standards under the new Board.

Good soldiering.
January marked the fortieth anniversary of the 1968 Tet Offensive. This event proved to be the turning point of the Vietnam War and its effects were far-reaching. Despite the fact that the Communists were soundly defeated at the tactical level, the Tet Offensive resulted in a great psychological victory for the other side at the strategic level that set into motion the events that would lead to Richard Nixon's election, the long and bloody US withdrawal from South-East Asia, and ultimately to the fall of South Vietnam.

To understand how and why this happened, one must first go back to the previous year. After more than two years of bitter fighting, many in the United States believed that the war had degenerated into a bloody stalemate. General William Westmoreland, senior US commander in Vietnam, did not see it that way and by his primary metric—the body count—the US and allied forces were making significant
headway against the enemy on the battlefield. Based on Westmoreland’s optimistic assessments and beset by the growing anti-war movement at home, President Lyndon Johnson initiated what we would now call an information campaign to convince the population of the United States that the war was being won and that administration policies were succeeding. As part of this effort, he brought Westmoreland home in mid November 1967 to make the administration’s case. In a number of venues, he did just that; upon his arrival at Andrews Air Force Base, Westmoreland told waiting reporters that he was ‘very, very encouraged’ by recent events. Two days later, at a press conference, he said that he thought American troops could begin to withdraw ‘within two years or less’.1 During an address at the National Press Club, he claimed that ‘we have reached an important point where the end begins to come into view’.2 Westmoreland later said that he was concerned at the time about fulfilling the public relations task, but he nevertheless gave a positive, up-beat account of how things were going in the war, clearly believing that a corner had been turned.

Meanwhile, in Vietnam, even as Westmoreland spoke, the Communists were finalising preparations for a country-wide offensive designed to break the stalemate and ‘liberate’ South Vietnam. The decision to launch the general offensive was the result of years of internal struggle and heated debates over both policy and military strategy within the Communist camp. These struggles were principally over the timing involved in shifting from a protracted war toward a more decisive approach to winning the war, but, in the end, the more cautious proponents of protracted war were defeated by those who advocated a nationwide general offensive.

With the new offensive the Communists hoped to ‘to gain a decisive victory.’ The plan for the offensive, dubbed Tong Cong Kich-Tong Khoi Nghia, was designed to ignite a general uprising among the people of South Vietnam, shatter the South Vietnamese armed forces, topple the Saigon regime, and convince the United States that the war was unwinnable. At the very least, the decision makers in Hanoi hoped to position themselves for any follow-on negotiations, which conformed to their ‘fighting while negotiating’ strategy.

The planning for the offensive began in the summer months of 1967; the target date for launching the offensive was the beginning of Tet, the lunar New Year. During the second half of 1967, in what we would today call shaping operations, the Communists launched a number of attacks to draw US and allied attention away from the population centres, which would be the ultimate objectives for the offensive in early 1968. Communist attacks on US Marine positions in the hills
around Khe Sanh, near the Laotian border in I Corps Tactical Zone (I CTZ) and the siege of the Marine base at Con Thien just south of the Demilitarized Zone, also in I CTZ, coupled with additional enemy attacks at Loc Ninh, Song Be, and Dak To served to divert allied forces to the remote border areas. While these battles raged, additional Communist forces made preparations for the coming offensive and began infiltrating into the urban areas.

US military intelligence analysts knew that the Communists were planning some kind of large-scale attack, but did not believe it would come during Tet or that it would be nationwide. Still, there were many indicators that the enemy was planning to make a major shift in its strategy to win the war. In late November, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) station in Saigon compiled all the various intelligence indicators and published a report called ‘The Big Gamble’. This was not really a formal intelligence estimate or even a prediction, but rather ‘a collection of scraps’ that concluded that the Communists were preparing to escalate the fighting. This report also put enemy strength at a much higher level than previously supposed. Military intelligence analysts at Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) strongly disagreed with the CIA’s estimate, because at the time, the command was changing the way it was accounting for the enemy and was reducing its estimate of enemy capabilities.

Nevertheless, as more intelligence poured in, Westmoreland and his staff came to the conclusion that a major enemy effort was probable. All the signs pointed to a new offensive. Still, most of the increased enemy activity had been along the DMZ and in the remote border areas. In late December 1967, additional signals intelligence revealed that there was a significant enemy build-up in the Khe Sanh area. Deciding that this was where the main enemy threat lay, General Westmoreland focused much of his attention on the northern-most provinces.

Concerned with the situation developing at Khe Sanh and a new round of intelligence indicators, Westmoreland requested that the South Vietnamese cancel the coming countrywide Tet ceasefire. On 8 January 1968, the chief of the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff (JGS), General Cao Van Vien, told Westmoreland that he would try to limit the truce to twenty-four hours. However, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu argued that to cancel the forty-eight-hour truce would adversely affect the morale of his troops and the South Vietnamese people. Nevertheless, he agreed to limit the ceasefire to thirty-six hours, beginning on the evening of 29 January. Traditionally, South Vietnamese soldiers returned to their homes for the Tet holiday and this fact would play a major role in the desperate fighting to come.
On 21 January, the North Vietnamese began the first large-scale shelling of the Marine base at Khe Sanh, which was followed by renewed sharp fights between the enemy troops and the Marines in the hills surrounding the base. Westmoreland was sure that this was the opening of the long anticipated general offensive. The fact that the Khe Sanh situation looked similar to that which the French had faced when they were decisively defeated at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 only added increased urgency to the unfolding events there.

Accordingly, Westmoreland ordered the commencement of Operation NIAGARA II, a massive bombing campaign focused on suspected enemy positions around Khe Sanh. He also ordered the 1st Cavalry Division from the Central Highlands to Phu Bai just south of Hue. Additionally, he sent one brigade of the 101st Airborne Division to I Corps to strengthen the defences of the two northernmost provinces. By the end of January, more than half of all US combat manoeuvre battalions were located in the I Corps area, ready to meet any new threat.

Essentially, the Allied forces were preparing for the wrong battle. The Tet Offensive represented, in the words of National Security Council staff member William Jorden, writing in a February 1968 cable to presidential advisor Walt Rostow, ‘the worst intelligence failure of the war.’ Many historians and other observers have endeavoured to understand how the Communists were able to achieve such a stunning level of surprise. There are a number of possible explanations. First, allied estimates of enemy strengths and intentions were flawed. Part of the problem was that MACV had changed the way that it computed enemy order of battle and downgraded the intelligence estimates about Viet Cong (VC)/ People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) strength, no longer counting the National Liberation Front local militias in the enemy order of battle. CIA analyst Sam Adams later charged that MACV actually falsified intelligence reports to show progress in the war. Whether this accusation was true is subject to debate, but it is a fact that MACV revised enemy strength downward from almost 300,000 to 235,000 in December 1967. US military intelligence analysts apparently believed their own revised estimates and largely disregarded the mounting evidence that the Communists not only retained a significant combat capability but also planned to use that capability in a dramatic fashion.

Given those grossly flawed intelligence estimates, senior allied military leaders and most of their intelligence analysts greatly underestimated the capabilities of the enemy and dismissed new intelligence indicators because they too greatly contradicted prevailing assumptions about the enemy’s strength and capabilities. It was thought that enemy capabilities were insufficient to support a nationwide campaign.
One analyst later admitted that he and his colleagues had become 'mesmerized by statistics of known doubtful validity ... choosing to place our faith in the ones that showed progress'. These entrenched beliefs about the enemy served as blinders to the facts, colouring the perceptions of senior allied commanders and intelligence officers when they were presented with intelligence that differed so drastically with their preconceived notions.

Another problem that had an impact on the intelligence failures in Tet deals with what is known today as 'fusion'. Given the large number of indicators drawn from a number of sources operating around South Vietnam, the data collected was difficult to assemble into a complete and cohesive picture of what the Communists were doing. The analysts often failed to integrate cumulative information, even though they were charged with the production of estimates that should have facilitated the combination of different indicators into an overall analysis. Part of this problem can be traced to the lack of coordination between allied intelligence agencies. Most of these organisations operated independently and rarely shared their information with each other. This lack of coordination and failure to share information impeded the synthesis of all the intelligence that was available and precluded the fusion necessary to predict enemy intentions and prevent the surprise of the enemy offensive when it came.

Even if the allied intelligence apparatus had been better at fusion, it would still have had to deal with widely conflicting reports that further clouded the issue. While the aforementioned intelligence indicated that a general offensive was in the offing, there were a number of other intelligence reports indicating that the enemy was facing extreme hardships in the field and that his morale had declined markedly. It was difficult to determine which reports to believe. Additionally, some indicators that should have caused alarm among intelligence analysts got lost in the noise of developments related to more obvious and more widely expected adversary threats. Faced with evidence of increasing enemy activity near urban areas and along the borders of the country, the allies were forced to decide where, when, and how the main blow would fall. They failed in this effort, choosing to focus on the increasing intensity of activity and engagements at Khe Sanh and in the other remote areas.

Westmoreland and his analysts failed to foresee a countrywide offensive, thinking that there would be perhaps a 'show of force', but otherwise the enemy's main effort would be directed at the northern provinces. When indications that North Vietnamese Army units were massing near Khe Sanh were confirmed by the attack on the Marine base on 21 January, this fit well with what Westmoreland and
his analysts already expected. Thus, they evaluated the intelligence in light of what they already believed, focusing on Khe Sanh and discounting most of the rest of the indicators that did not 'fit' with their preconceived notions about enemy capabilities and intentions.

For these reasons, the Tet Offensive achieved almost total surprise. This is true even though a number of attacks were launched prematurely against five provincial capitals in II Corps Tactical Zone and Da Nang in I Corps Tactical Zone in the early morning hours of 30 January. These early attacks, now credited to enemy coordination problems, provided at least some warning, but many in Saigon continued to believe that these attacks were only meant to divert attention away from Khe Sanh. The next night, the situation became clearer when the bulk of the Communist forces struck with a fury that was breathtaking in both its scope and suddenness. More than 84,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers launched coordinated, nearly simultaneous attacks against major cities, towns, and military installations that ranged from the Demilitarized Zone in the north far to the Ca Mau Peninsula on the southernmost-tip of South Vietnam. North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops attacked thirty-nine of South Vietnam’s forty-four provincial capitals, five of the six largest cities including Saigon, seventy-one of 242 district capitals, some fifty hamlets, virtually every allied airfield, and many other key military targets, including all four military region headquarters. A US general remarked that the situation map depicting enemy attacks ‘lit up like a pinball machine.’ In Saigon, the Communists attacked every major installation, including Tan Son Nhut Air Base, the presidential palace, and the headquarters of South Vietnam’s general staff. In one of the most spectacular attacks of the entire offensive, nineteen Viet Cong sappers conducted a daring raid on the new US Embassy, which had just been occupied in September. Far to the north, 7500 NLF and North Vietnamese overran and occupied Hue, the ancient imperial capital that had been the home of the emperors of the Kingdom of Annam.

The spectacular attacks, unprecedented in their magnitude and ferocity, were completely unexpected, because they contradicted both the key assumptions made by the military and the optimistic reports that came out of the Johnson administration in the closing months of 1967. Television news anchor Walter Cronkite perhaps said it best when he asked, no doubt voicing the sentiment of many in the United States, ‘What the hell is going on: I thought we were winning the war.’6

In truth, the Tet Offensive turned out to be a disaster for the Communists, at least at the tactical level. While the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong enjoyed initial successes with their surprise attacks, allied forces recovered their balance and responded quickly, containing and driving back the attackers in most areas. The first
surge of the offensive was over by the second week of February and most of the battles were over in a few days, but heavy fighting continued for awhile in Kontum and Ban Me Thuot in the Central Highlands, Can Tho and Ben Tre in the Mekong Delta, and the Marines were still under siege at Khe Sanh. Protracted battles would also rage for several weeks in Saigon and Hue, but in the end, allied forces used superior mobility and firepower to rout the Communists, who failed to hold any of their military objectives. As for the much anticipated general uprising of the South Vietnamese people, it never materialised. The Communists had planned the offensive, counting on the general uprising to reinforce their attacks; when it didn’t happen, they lost the initiative and were forced to withdraw or die in the face of the allied response.

During the bitter fighting, the Communists sustained staggering casualties. Conservative estimates put Communist losses in 1968 at around 45,000 killed with an additional 7,000 captured. The estimate of enemy killed has been disputed, but it is clear that their losses were huge and the numbers continued to grow as subsequent fighting extended into the Autumn months. By September, when the offensive had run its course, the Viet Cong, who bore the brunt of much of the heaviest fighting in the cities, had been dealt a significant blow from which they never completely recovered; the major fighting for the rest of the war was done by the North Vietnamese Army.

The offensive resulted in an overwhelming defeat of the Communist forces at the tactical level, but the fact that the enemy had pulled off such a widespread offensive and caught the allies by surprise ultimately contributed to victory for the Communists at the strategic level. Although the US and allied casualties were much lower than those of the enemy, they were still very high; on 18 February 1968, Military Assistance Command Vietnam posted the highest US casualty figure for a single week during the entire war—543 killed and over 2,500 wounded. Altogether for the offensive, US, Australian, New Zealand, South Korean and Thai forces suffered over 1,500 killed and some 7,000 wounded in action. The South Vietnamese had about 2,800 killed and over 8,000 wounded. These casualty figures combined with the sheer scope and ferocity of the offensive and the vivid images of the savage fighting on the nightly television news stunned the people of the United States, who were astonished that the enemy was capable of such an effort (the charges about biased reporting and its impact on public perceptions will not be addressed here). They were unprepared for the intense and disturbing scenes they saw on television because Westmoreland and the administration had told them that the United States was winning and that the enemy was on its last legs.
Although there was a brief upturn in the support for the administration in the days immediately following the launching of the offensive, this was short-lived and subsequently the president’s approval rating plummeted. Having accepted the optimistic reports of military and government officials in late 1967, it now appeared to many in the United States that there was no end to the war in sight. The Tet Offensive severely strained the administration’s credibility with the US population and increased public discontent with the war.

The Tet Offensive also had a major impact on the White House. It profoundly shook the confidence of the president and his advisors. Despite Westmoreland’s claims that the Tet Offensive had been a great victory for the allied forces, Johnson, like the majority of the United States, was stunned by the ability of the Communists to launch such widespread attacks. One advisor later commented that an ‘air of gloom’ hung over the White House. When Westmoreland, urged on by General Earle Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, asked for an additional 206,000 troops to ‘take advantage of the situation’; the president balked and ordered a detailed review of US policy in Vietnam by Clark Clifford, who was to replace Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defense. According to the Pentagon Papers, ‘A fork in the road had been reached and the alternatives stood out in stark reality.’ The Tet Offensive fractured the administration’s consensus on the conduct of the war and Clifford’s reassessment permitted the airing of those alternatives. The civilians in the Pentagon recommended that allied efforts focus on population security and that the South Vietnamese be forced to assume more responsibility for the fighting while the United States pursued a negotiated settlement. The Joint Chiefs naturally took exception to this approach and recommended that Westmoreland be given the troop increase he had requested and be permitted to pursue enemy forces into Laos and Cambodia. Completing his study, Clifford recommended that Johnson reject the military’s request and shift effort toward de-escalation. Although publicly optimistic, Johnson had concluded that the current course in Vietnam was not working. He was further convinced that a change in policy was needed after the ‘Wise Men’, a group of senior statesmen whom he had earlier turned to for counsel and who had previously been very supportive of administration Vietnam policies, advised that de-escalation should begin immediately.

With these debates ongoing in the White House, Congress got into the act on 11 March when the Senate Foreign Relations Committee began hearings on the war. The House of Representatives initiated their own review of Vietnam policy the following week.
Meanwhile, public opinion polls revealed the continuing downward trend in the president’s approval rating and his handling of the war. This situation manifested itself in the Democratic Party presidential primary in New Hampshire, where the president barely defeated challenger Senator Eugene McCarthy, a situation which convinced Robert Kennedy to enter the presidential race as an antiwar candidate.

Beset politically by challengers from within his own party and seemingly still in shock from the spectacular Tet attacks, Johnson went on national television on the evening of 31 March 1968, and announced a partial suspension of the bombing campaign against North Vietnam and called for negotiations. He then stunned the television audience by announcing that he would not run for re-election; the Tet Offensive had claimed its final victim.

The following November, Richard Nixon won the presidential election and began the long US withdrawal from Vietnam.

Historians are reluctant to draw ‘lessons learned’ from historical events. History never repeats itself; there are just too many variables involved in situations that are separated in time. This is particularly true when comparing the wars in Vietnam and Iraq. There are more differences than similarities between the two wars and because they differ in so many significant ways, attempting to apply any lessons from Vietnam to the situation in Iraq is fraught with peril. That being said, however, there are some broad, general lessons learned in Vietnam that can inform US actions, not only in Iraq, but in any contemporary situation in which the government of the United States, or any national government for that matter, contemplates intervention and the use of military force; this is particularly true with regard to the 1968 Tet Offensive.

There are two very important and closely related lessons that can be gleaned from the Tet Offensive. The first has to do with the importance of objectivity in intelligence. Westmoreland and other senior officials were blinded to the indications that a countrywide offensive was imminent because they did not conform to their own preconceived notions about the enemy capabilities and allied progress in the war. Even when the offensive was launched, the initial reaction at Westmoreland’s headquarters was to place the attacks within the framework of those notions, seeing them as diversionary actions meant to focus attention away from what was seen as the main objective at Khe Sanh. Military planners must remain open-minded with regard to enemy capabilities and intentions, particularly when indicators run in the face of previous assessments. In the case of the Tet Offensive, intelligence...
became an extension of Westmoreland’s optimism and not an accurate reflection of the enemy’s capabilities. This gross failure of intelligence set the stage for the spectacular impact of the Tet attacks.

The second lesson drawn from the Tet Offensive is closely intertwined with the intelligence issue. Senior military commanders and policy makers must recognise the importance of building realistic expectations while resisting the inclination to put the best face on the military situation for political or public relations reasons. Johnson and Westmoreland built a set of, as it turned out, false expectations about the situation in Vietnam in order to win support for the administration’s handling of the war and dampen the anti-war sentiment. These expectations, based on a severely flawed (or manipulated if one believes Sam Adams)9 intelligence picture, played a major role in the impact of the Tet Offensive. The images and news stories of the bitter fighting seemed to put the lie to the administration’s claims of progress in the war and stretched the credibility gap to the breaking point. The tactical victory quickly became a strategic defeat for the United States and led to the virtual abdication of the president. North Vietnamese General Tran Do perhaps said it best when he acknowledged that the offensive failed to achieve its major tactical objectives, but said, ‘As for making an impact in the United States, it had not been our intention—but it turned out to be a fortunate result’.10 That result occurred because Westmoreland and the Johnson Administration let political considerations overwhelm an objective appraisal of the military situation. In doing so, they used flawed intelligence to portray an image of enemy capabilities in order to garner public support. When this was revealed by the vivid images of the Tet fighting, the resulting loss of credibility for the president and the military high command in Saigon was devastating both to the Johnson Administration and the allied war effort.

These lessons are just as applicable today. Senior US commanders in Iraq appear to have heeded them. They have been very measured in their discussion of the successes of the surge and progress in the war. They have studiously avoided building any undue expectations and have repeatedly said that there will be tough times ahead. Their avoidance of the same kind of public relations ploy that came back to haunt Westmoreland and Johnson will be instrumental in helping to contain the impact of any future Tet-like offensive by the insurgents. This is particularly important in a US election year, when the political future of the US military commitment in Iraq hangs in the balance.

Military planners must remain open-minded with regard to enemy capabilities and intentions …
The Tet Offensive and its aftermath significantly altered the nature of the war in Vietnam. The resounding tactical victory was seen as a defeat in the United States. It proved to many in the United States that the war was unwinnable, effectively toppled a president, convinced the new president to ‘Vietnamize’ the war, and paved the way for the ultimate triumph of the Communist forces in 1975. In assessing the Tet Offensive and the lessons to be learned from it, perhaps journalist Don Oberdorfer said it best when he wrote, “The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong lost a battle. The United States Government lost something even more important — the confidence of its people at home.” That’s a lesson that is just as critical today as it was forty years ago.

Disclaimer: The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US Army, the US Department of Defense or the US Government.

ENDNOTES

7 -- The Pentagon Papers, Vol. IV, p. 549.
Sam Adams, a CIA analyst, charged that MACV had falsified enemy strength figures in order to show progress in the war. These charges led to a CBS News TV documentary entitled ‘The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception’. General Westmoreland subsequently sued the television network for $120 million for defaming his honour, naming Adams as one of the co-defendants. Westmoreland withdrew his suit before it went to trial. See Sam Adams, *War of Numbers: An Intelligence Memoir*, Steerforth, South Royalton, 1994 and Don Kowet, *A Matter of Honor*, Macmillan, New York, 1984.


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CONTESTED NATION-BUILDING

THE CHALLENGE OF COUNTERING INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN IN 2007

COLONEL JOHN FREWEN

ABSTRACT

With this account of his time in Afghanistan, the author describes some of the challenges of ‘contested nation-building’ in that country. This article explores the difficulties of developing civilian capacity while also participating in a counterinsurgency campaign. The author contends that Coalition military forces in Afghanistan must remain responsive to the needs and directions of the fledgling national government while developing the infrastructure required for law and order.

*Peace will come*
*With tranquillity and splendour*
*On the wheels of fire*

Bob Dylan, Changing of the Guards
In a military sense, 2007 was the Coalition’s year in Afghanistan. The Coalition defeated the Taliban tactically at every turn, forcing them to resort to indiscriminate attacks with explosives and suicide bombers—tactics which risk alienating the local population. The Taliban’s much-vaunted ‘Spring offensive’ failed to materialise and they suffered substantial losses, including the death of key leaders such as Mullah Dadullah by Coalition actions. They lost freedom of action in former sanctuaries such as the Upper Garesh and Chora valleys, and had Musa Qala—a town the Taliban vowed they would never surrender—seized from them as the 2007 fighting season drew to a close. While international media reports have played up the headline-grabbing ‘Coalition’s deadliest year’, only one side of the ledger has been considered. The increase in Coalition fatalities from 191 in 2006 to 232 in 2007 also points to a heightened engagement with the enemy that has produced good results. Throughout last year the Taliban saw support from sanctuaries in Pakistan erode, and a better-trained and more capable Afghan Army played a leading role in the assault on Musa Qala. By military standards 2007 was an awful year for the Taliban. Yet their resolve and influence persists, and more must be done through non-military means to achieve peace for Afghanistan.

Though the Taliban are struggling, their insurgency will not be fully defeated until governmental and bureaucratic progress matches military successes. Overwhelmingly, the people of Afghanistan do not want to return to Taliban rule or the associated international isolation and stunted progress. However, there is increasing frustration with perceived corruption and inaction by President Karzai’s Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA). Some Afghans argue they receive no support from their government and the reconstruction and development promised by the international community has not materialised. It is surely a test of their patience, as ongoing military operations cause damage and civilian casualties without removing the scourge of the Taliban. The challenge in Afghanistan now is to augment military operations with civilian efforts to move the country from rule of the gun to the rule of law.

This article describes some of the challenges of ‘contested nation-building’ in Afghanistan. Contested nation-building aims to engender democratic processes and capacity, while simultaneously fighting an insurgent campaign. Both are complex tasks, which become even more difficult when attempted in parallel. A priority for Afghanistan in 2008 should be the rapid development of the justice sector. Effective police, judges, lawyers, courts and prisons will ensure criminal consequences result from insurgent action, narcotics trading and corruption.
Right now, military responses reinforce the rule of the gun and delay a shift to civil society. Postponing the development of infrastructure—particularly legal frameworks—because of perceived dangers to non-military agencies consigns military operations to a repetitious treadmill of killing and capturing insurgents then waiting for more to take their place. In military quarters it has become known as ‘mowing the grass’.

The views expressed in this article are based on my time with NATO in Afghanistan between April and November 2007. My experience as an Australian military officer in Afghanistan was unique in that I held two distinctly different roles. Initially I was the Senior Australian Commander. I witnessed the daily machinations of NATO headquarters and the diplomatic community in Kabul, while overseeing and visiting all Australian forces throughout the country. Then, for the final four months, I was attached to the NATO regional headquarters in Kandahar, with responsibility for NATO efforts to rebuild the Afghan army and the police in the troubled south. I travelled widely across the southern provinces and worked closely with Afghan Army and Police leadership, including observing their operations among the Afghan people. I gained first-hand experience across the military spectrum from the tactical to the strategic, and interacted with a wide array of Afghan government officials and villagers.

Broadly, Afghanistan’s population view the foreign military Coalition, to which Australia contributes, as a force for good and an agent of progress. However, military operations will not, in themselves, rebuild Afghanistan into a stable and dependable country. Success in Afghanistan can only come from a careful integration of political, military and developmental means, in a manner that wins the support of the local people and denies the Taliban freedom and legitimacy.

Since returning, I have been struck by the Australian media’s limited coverage of Afghanistan. The insurgency there is dangerous and difficult but has been overshadowed by the conflict in Iraq. In part, this has been due to a negative image of the Iraq war, which is widely portrayed as an unjustified or ‘bad’ war. The difficulty of travelling in Afghanistan has also, obviously, limited coverage of the conflict. The Australian media’s focus may shift in 2008, but for now Australian casualties spark most interest and Afghanistan’s plight remains poorly understood.

As with the ‘great games’ played in Afghanistan in previous times, events occurring there now will greatly impact upon the broader international community, and—as ever before—are layered with nuance.

Afghanistan’s population view the foreign military Coalition … as a force for good and an agent of progress.
AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a spectacular country blessed with majestic mountains, vast deserts, rich fertile belts, tough resilient tribal people, and climatic extremes from Arctic cold to baking heat. It is a land of striking contrasts. Many of the areas where Australian forces operate remain reminiscent of biblical times and belie the sophistication of local allegiances and communications networks. Other parts of the country, such as Kabul, are modern and thriving. The Afghans themselves, who have seen little peace over recent centuries are, above all else, proud and pragmatic. It is said that, ‘you can’t buy an Afghan, only rent him’ and one is wise to keep this in mind. They have seen foreign armies come and go since before Alexander the Great and are yet to decide if the new Afghan government and their Coalition allies will prevail—or if the Taliban will return. Despite this, those opposed to extremism are optimistic by nature and retain a robust sense of humour. These Afghans are hospitable and welcoming, and want the Coalition of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Against this backdrop, Coalition military forces are conducting a dogged counterinsurgency. The campaign has been running in one form or another since 2001. The Coalition is waging counterinsurgency with the most sophisticated technology and weaponry available, yet the conflict harks back to earlier military ventures such as the British-Afghan Wars of the nineteenth century and the Soviet invasion of the 1980s. The shadow of wars and conflicts hangs over the land and a cautionary sense of those gone before prevails. Sophisticated warfighting technology is now to the fore, but as ever in Afghanistan the landscape remains foreboding and the close combat brutal. Defeating the insurgency on a military level is a dirty and dangerous endeavour. Foot soldiers are still the fundamental currency to separate the enemy from the population. Consequently, foreign nations—now surprised by their costly and prolonged deployments and rising casualty rates—are debating whether to remain in Afghanistan. The country stands at a crossroad. Australia and the wider international community must come to a decision about their commitment to remain in Afghanistan.

Over recent decades Afghanistan has been a major sanctuary for international terrorism including—most notoriously—for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Afghanistan will again foment terrorism if allowed to slide back under extremist control. The Taliban delivered an intolerant and brutally oppressive Islamic government in the 1990s. Taliban rule was particularly repressive of women and violently
disposed against artists and homosexuals. An alliance of US and Afghan forces ended Taliban rule in 2001. However, the Taliban regained influence (possibly due to the diversion of forces for the invasion of Iraq in 2003), and once again threatens Afghanistan’s stability.

Since 2006 the United States and NATO have renewed their emphasis on defeating the Taliban and have called for international assistance. Australia’s national interests are threatened by global terrorism and served by the defence of human dignity and the strength of our alliances. Australia’s current military deployment is frustrating Taliban activities, improving the lives of Afghans, and validating international efforts.

Enduring success for Afghanistan implies a stable democracy, a healthy economy and indigenous security forces which can defy internal and external threats. These goals are achievable but are difficult ‘works in progress’ that Afghanistan simply cannot achieve without foreign assistance. To leave Afghanistan to fend for itself now would be callous and irresponsible. The spread of Islamic extremism will only be defeated by determined civilian and military effort. Success is possible in Afghanistan and crucial to a broader refutation of extremism.

**THE LAY OF THE LAND**

Afghanistan is operationally divided into five NATO regional commands; North, South, East, West and Central (for the capital Kabul). The effort in the North of the country is led by the Germans. The effort in the East is led by the Italians. Both regions are relatively quiet. The East is controlled by the United States and sees frequent heavy combat, particularly near the border areas with Pakistan. Region Central is Kabul, a large modern city that has experienced a wave of suicide bombings in 2007 and into 2008, which has shaken the otherwise thriving capital. The bombings have received widespread coverage (among them the attack on the Serena Hotel housing the Australian Embassy in mid-January), and give the appearance of a deteriorating situation in the country. Such an appearance should not be taken at face value.

Region South, dominated by the Pashtun tribal belt and the iconic Pashtun city of Kandahar, is currently under overall command of a British general. The post was previously held by a Dutch general and will be held by a Canadian general in 2008. Afghanistan’s Southern Region generally experiences the most lethal fighting. The Eastern Region generally is the next most volatile. Regional Command South is divided into four sub-areas, or provinces—Helmand Province led by the United Kingdom; Kandahar Province (Canadian); Zabul Province (Romanian); and Oruzgun Province (Dutch/Australian).
Contested Nation-Building

The bulk of Australia’s forces operate in partnership under overall Dutch command in Oruzgun province, an area long considered a sanctuary for the Taliban. It is Region South—subject to the pervasive Pashtun influence—that most requires additional troops to break the back of the insurgency. Larger NATO nations such as Germany who are not represented in the South are being encouraged, unsuccessfully in the main, to deploy combat forces there. Rightly or wrongly, the perception exists in-theatre that there are ‘those in the South’ and ‘those who are not’ (i.e. avoiding it). This debate elevates the importance of Australia’s contribution in Oruzgun and, although small, we gain credibility for being in the South.

Coalition conventional military operations in Region South range from section-level foot patrolling to brigade-sized airmobile assaults against defended locations. The region sees regular use of mortars, artillery, close air-support and attack helicopters. The Canadians employ main battle tanks. These were found to be essential in defeating entrenched positions and minimising Canadian casualties during significant battles to the west of Kandahar City in late 2006. Danger to Coalition troops comes predominantly from rockets; small arms up to rocket propelled grenades (RPGs); and from suicide bombers. But it is improvised explosive devices, known as IEDs, which are the biggest killer of Coalition and Afghan forces. Afghanistan is also a war of perceptions which, to a concerning extent, the Taliban appear more adept at exploiting than the Coalition. I will return to this last point later.

A Coalition of the Unwilling?

In Afghanistan there are two discrete campaigns underway. The ongoing US-led Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) (essentially the War on Terror, or more loosely the hunt for al-Qaeda) is being carried out by around 25 000 US servicemen. In addition, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) assumed overall responsibility for operations in Afghanistan from the United States in mid 2007. ISAF has approximately 40 000 troops from thirty-seven predominantly European nations. Although Australia is not a NATO member, we provide approximately 1000 troops and were the eighth largest contributor in 2007. Australia’s commitment is noteworthy in light of increasing public criticism of NATO, particularly by the United States, that member countries are not shouldering their share of the burden in Afghanistan—let alone their share of the combat there.

NATO has an agreed force structure for the mission in Afghanistan. The structure was revised in 2007 but widely viewed as underdone. More specifically, the structure can be criticised as retaining the building blocks of conventional warfare rather than
targeting the specialist capabilities—critical to counterinsurgency—such as human intelligence, forensic exploitation, and information operations. Regardless, NATO commanders are short of combat troops and helicopters. Some forces on the agreed NATO list for Afghanistan are yet to be offered by any member countries, and some NATO nations have failed to meet even their own agreed contribution levels.

There is an awareness in Afghanistan that some NATO countries are not only avoiding the dangerous South but combat in general, leaving it to the United States, United Kingdom and Canada in the main. The United States is taking up much of the slack by providing NATO ongoing support from OEF helicopters (covering deficits in NATO helicopter contributions) and by deploying a further 3200 US Marines for direct combat in 2008.

Although the US and NATO missions are complementary, other tensions exist beyond resourcing. Philosophically, the US forces are disposed to aggressively taking the fight to the Taliban at every opportunity. Other NATO contributing nations, even those engaging in close combat, are generally more circumspect in countering the Taliban. While perhaps such distinctions generalise and oversimplify the differences, the general thrust was felt recently when the US Secretary of Defense criticised the NATO approach to counterinsurgency. The United States may perceive NATO's method as soft-handed, or limited by resources, but conversely NATO nations more commonly stress a 'hearts and minds' attitude for undermining insurgency. US/NATO tensions, though subtle, are constantly at play and are exacerbated by the US forces' ability to act rapidly and unilaterally while NATO seeks consensus. In addition, all NATO and US activity must be condoned by President Karzai—yet another impediment to unified action on vexed issues such as national counter-narcotic strategies.

Opium lurks ominously behind all efforts to build a stable Afghanistan. The curse of the cash crop is a significant hurdle but is ultimately subordinate to the objective of separating the population from the Taliban. The ability to protect, influence and monitor the civilian population will ultimately determine the result in Afghanistan. Present Coalition troop levels do not offer soldier-to-civilian ratios that can separate the Taliban from local communities. Optimal density recommendations range between twenty and twenty-five counter-insurgents for every 1000 inhabitants and while Petraeus dismisses fixed troops-to-civilian ratios, he makes the point that counterinsurgency is 'manpower-intensive'. In Afghanistan, with a population of around 31 million, and including all Coalition and Afghan troops, the current ratio is about five troops per 1000 civilians. Coalition military commitments to Afghanistan can, at best, be considered 'economy of force'...
contributions that provide the minimum capability and coverage. Only the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada (and possibly the Netherlands) are meeting the challenge with a good proportion of their combat assets.

The lack of friendly forces permits selective (and usually temporary) decisive action, and makes comprehensive control of population centres difficult. Constructive and enduring control of the population is impeded by the Coalition and Afghan Army’s habitation of ‘super-bases’. The base mentality results in the population being visited rather than permeated by Coalition and government forces, thereby ceding the night to the Taliban. The Taliban dominates communities by consent or by coercion wherever permitted to—whether overtly or subversively. Not only will additional Coalition troops be necessary in the short-term to defeat the Taliban. It will be essential for Coalition and Afghan forces to live in closer proximity to contested communities.

Even with the troops NATO has, the nature of Coalition warfare makes getting the most from them difficult. Allies have broadly different national caveats and restrictions that range from ‘all green’ to ‘all red’ by certain measures. Some nations have liberal and aggressive rules of engagement (e.g. the United States); while others are very limited in the range of tasks they will undertake and the areas in which they will operate. These caveats, along with complex political and cultural requirements, shape the operating environment and daily actions of everyone from senior NATO commanders to soldiers in the field. For example, President Karzai has expressly forbidden certain Coalition actions, while others require his personal approval.

NATO has also issued detailed requirements for the use of offensive weapons in built-up areas to limit civilian casualties. Planning therefore requires an understanding of what certain partners will and won’t do—or can and can’t do; and what the approval levels and lead times are. An understanding of how these constraints will impact on soldiers engaged with an aggressive and elusive enemy—often hidden among the civilian population—is also important. For soldiers, it is sometimes difficult to appreciate the political and cultural imperatives shaping tactical guidance from on high. To them, detailed and qualified directions appear to be restricting their ability to bring all means to bear against a lethal and ruthless enemy.

For soldiers, it is sometimes difficult to appreciate the political and cultural imperatives shaping tactical guidance from on high.
THE TALIBAN

So who precisely are the Taliban? Like many things in Afghanistan the answer is not straightforward. At the highest levels they are ideologically driven by an extreme view of Islam but whether they have a coherent ‘grand strategy’ is uncertain. At the tactical level their capabilities and motivations are mixed. Hardcore ‘Tier 1’ Taliban fighters are in the minority. Many of these are not Afghans but foreigners—hired guns, very capable but not popular with the xenophobic local population. The next rung, ‘Tier 2’, are predominantly local men who fight seasonally and turn their hand to the lucrative poppy trade at harvest time. These villagers may be genuinely driven by a desire to drive infidels from Afghanistan but this is not always certain. The lowest quality Taliban fighters, ‘Tier 3’, may be poorly trained enthusiasts, compelled by tribal deals, or coerced to fight. Nonetheless the Taliban are well armed, capable and skilful in the use of cunning, deadly tactics.

Most significantly, the Taliban understand the importance of controlling the population. To this end the Taliban wield violence and information adeptly, and are politically aware and active. They also utilise emerging technology both in their bomb-making and their communications networks, which keep them well informed of Coalition activity. However, the Taliban were damaged in 2006 and 2007, and their increased use of IEDs and suicide bombings can be interpreted as a desperate measure.

Culturally, bombings and suicide tactics do not sit well with Afghans. Such actions are difficult to justify within the rules of Islam and exponents earn little honour. Attempts by Taliban-affiliated militias to ‘join’ to the government ranks and by senior Taliban leaders to enter legitimate political processes such as ‘peace jirgas’ (Afghan councils) are an indication that the Taliban are losing faith in their ability to seize power by force. Among Coalition forces these moves are a cause for some optimism. The broader question of whether the Taliban should be engaged in dialogue and reintegrated as yet finds no consensus. It is likely to be a topic of debate in 2008 among Coalition nations, and inside the Afghan government.

While the Taliban currently operate at the military and political levels, they cannot offer development or progress, and they are hamstrung by this weakness. In fact, they inherently represent the opposite—a point that is not lost on the general population and one which should be exploited. Curiously, Afghans hold mixed feelings for the Soviet times. Afghans feared and despised Soviet massed artillery but greatly admired, and continue to benefit from, their infrastructure development.
They have no such illusions about what the Taliban did for Afghanistan. It is worth noting that the flagship Australian contribution to Afghanistan, the Reconstruction Task Force (RTF), is specifically designed to deliver development in non-permissive regions of Afghanistan. The Afghans appreciate this work but unfortunately the RTF is a unique capability in-theatre, and the South is not seeing widespread development as yet in contested areas.

Conversely, the Taliban may be brutal and retrograde but among the Afghan villagers they do not carry the same stigma of endemic corruption as that of the current Afghan government. From a villager’s viewpoint, the Taliban may not represent a cohesive grand collective at all, merely a loose group of well-funded extremists who are simply ‘not the government’. It is rare for communities to actively support the Taliban without vested interests or coercion but some locals passively support them because there is no other way to voice political opposition. That the distaste for the government is strong enough to make the Taliban tolerable in some areas is a serious impediment. For a comprehensive solution to be found, the Karzai Government must respond justly and positively in the eyes of its local communities.

Encouragingly, in 2007 there were many examples of villagers courageously standing up to the Taliban. Such actions will inspire others, particularly as the presence of the Coalition and Afghan forces spreads.

**CONTESTED NATION-BUILDING**

Clearly, defeating an insurgency and establishing democracy make awkward bedfellows. Peace in Afghanistan is attainable but is no certain proposition. Enduring peace will only come with the continued resolve of the international community. Sadly, this demands the further expenditure of ‘blood and treasure’ for some time yet. But blood and treasure alone will not be enough. Peace also requires the full integration of military, political and developmental means which are equally important to variable degrees. Aligning the military, political and developmental efforts of the host and contributing nations is the real challenge to success in Afghanistan as it moves from ‘rule of the gun’ to ‘the rule of law’.

Contested nation-building in its contemporary form requires a Coalition military to defeat an enemy while building the capacity of the indigenous military. It must also remain responsive to the needs and directions of a fledgling national government which may require nurturing and mentoring by military personnel. The dual requirement of nurturing and operating is the lot of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Military officers are spread throughout the Afghan government and the security forces. In some ways this leaves the military in an unenviable position of responsibility without authority. While the military has dominant, but not
complete, control of ‘hard-power’, it has little authority over ‘soft-power’. Conversely, the fledgling government has incomplete control of ‘soft-power’ and a tendency to manipulate military operations when feeling pressured. This conundrum compounds the difficulty of cohesively integrating soft- and hard-power, even before competing Coalition interests and vested national aims come into play. And overshadowing all efforts is an enemy who seeks to undermine, destabilise and destroy. For success in this environment, agreed aims and enduring resolve are vital to safeguard against the type of ‘policy on the go’ that nearly always dilutes military and political benefits.

In Afghanistan, contested nation-building may be viewed as three dimensional chess. At a national level a democratic government is being established in an Islamic society with neither democratic traditions nor sound judicial processes. At the community level, tribes, warlords, insurgents, drug lords, corrupt officials, and pernicious international influences compete for the hearts and minds of the masses in rudimentary conditions but with modern communications. Meanwhile, counterinsurgency forces with differing approaches and means create localised conditions that do not necessarily accord with a national strategy.

MODERN COUNTERINSURGENCY

By traditional readings of military history this Afghan campaign has three key points of difference to earlier counterinsurgencies. The first is that the Coalition military does not have overall power to set national priorities, impose laws, or exercise pervasive powers of search as might have been the case in Malaya or Algeria. The second is that the nature of the NATO Coalition sees contributing nations providing very different force mixes, with different operating philosophies, and with uncertain tenures. Resulting military operations can be a daily dance of compromise and reassurance. Not an insurmountable challenge but a significant one the British did not face in Northern Ireland nor, in any real sense, the US-dominated coalition in Vietnam. The third difference is the requirement to establish a democratic government before the insurgency is defeated. This sets a weak platform for robust and unequivocal action against those defying the new government or operating outside the law.

The contested nature of national authority invites a reflexive, rather than steady, approach to policy. Such an approach is susceptible to the vagaries of shifting domestic and international events. The Taliban are well tuned to this weakness and take tactical and strategic advantages handed to them at every opportunity. At times
they have purposefully targeted the troops of nations engaged in public debate about the withdrawal of their military contributions. In previous eras, military counterinsurgencies have more commonly been conducted in support of established (although not necessarily popular) national or colonial governments. In more successful models, the military have been responsible for exercising full executive authority until power can be transferred to a civilian government. The modern reality is that coalition military operations must strive for success in spite of the command and control arrangements and limitations necessarily imposed on them.

A justice system is a central tenet of society and essential to resolving modern conflict. Military operations, development and the delivery of justice must be intertwined even in areas considered dangerous or non-permissive. Increasingly, the Coalition must support activities that criminalise insurgent behaviour. Reinforcement of the rule of law is paramount. A judicial authority and effective policing are essential to delegitimising enemy actions and criminalising insurgent violence. Therefore, the development of an effective police force and the establishment of a justice sector should be the highest priorities for Afghanistan right now. No insurgency can be defeated without effective policing and the criminalisation of insurgent behaviour.

Non-military organisations must be prepared to work closely with the military in areas still contested by insurgents to bring development and justice. It is the soft-power of reliable civil administration that will bring societal change to Afghanistan.

THE AUSTRALIAN WAY

Development is considered by many as something separate from military operations. On the contrary one should complement the other. A common criticism from Afghans across the South is that, 'you have done much to defeat the Taliban but we see no development to support employment and commerce.' This is not an altogether accurate criticism but it should not be ignored. Much of the developmental aid in Afghanistan is presently channelled through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (or PRTs) which use local labour to undertake construction. The difficulty with this approach is that large amounts of international money (money being easier to provide than troops) is being poured into an economy that does not have the skilled labour force to deliver anywhere near the number of funded projects. The resulting impression is of many promises but little progress.
The Australian contingent is making a very meaningful and valued contribution to the campaign on a number of levels. All of our soldiers are performing strongly, be they special forces; conventional combat troops; engineers leading construction and development; or specialist support troops. Our forces are well-trained, well-led, cunning, brave and disciplined. They are maintaining the traditions of those Australians that have gone before, and have earned the respect of our Coalition partners and our foes. Australian military equipment is among, if not the best in theatre, and is consistently saving Australian lives. Our nation has much to be proud of and our allies would like to see more of our troops in Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan is now a test of NATO resolve and commitment—which NATO must deliver on.

The greatest feature of our flagship contribution, the Australian Reconstruction Task Force—a combination of engineers, mounted infantry and other enablers—is that it can deliver development in remote and hazardous areas. The RTF’s integral close protection troops allow engineers to employ soft-power in areas that only hard-power would dare to tread. Ours is a unique contribution to Afghanistan. Australia’s ability to deliver development in non-permissive areas is valued by the locals and acknowledged as well-considered and meaningful assistance. The RTF has also established a highly popular and successful Trade Training School which provides local men carpentry skills that are immediately sought by the burgeoning Afghan construction industry. The Trade Training School is another distinctive contribution by Australia that is highly popular with the locals. These two facets of the RTF’s operations are a guide to how development and the benefits of central government can be delivered in strongly contested areas.

The RTF is delivering immediate tangible development in the face of the Taliban and increasing the skills of the local population in ways that create capacity and avoid welfare dependency. Additional military contributions of this type would be useful to complement combat operations until the general environment becomes more permissive. Other agencies could progressively join the RTF to spread other skills, be they developmental, policing or administrative, to round out development in a more holistic and balanced way. The RTF may be a hybrid but counterinsurgency requires extraordinary measures that shift shape as the conflict inevitably will. Too many of the contributions to Afghanistan fit either a conventional war model or a misplaced permissive nation-building model.

**THE AFGHAN WAY**

The Afghan government must, of course, ultimately take responsibility for the outcome of the current conflict. However, the international community, including contributing nations and their participating military forces, have an investment in the outcome that implies more than merely ‘all due care’. Participating nations can expect to share the
Contested Nation-Building blame with the Karzai Government if the Taliban retake the country. Building Afghan national institutions is, therefore, a priority. The Army and the Police are the most obvious security sector institutions that will progressively take over from NATO.

The Afghan Army and the Police are each building to around 80,000. The Army are well on the way in terms of numbers and effectiveness. They have a strong military culture, a depth of experience, and are renowned as a brave force that goes forward under fire. The Army is recruited and employed nationally, and is proudly resistant (but of course not immune) to tribal influences. The Army has benefited from a large injection of international (predominantly US) resources, and a comprehensive military mentoring scheme. They still need to work on their planning ability and logistics but, in the main, they are respected and trustworthy.

The Afghan Police present a different story. They have not enjoyed the same degree of attention or resources to date. Their development largely descended into a debate on the nature of policing and an emphasis on quality over quantity despite a pressing urgency for law enforcement. They are now probably three years behind the Army. Insurgents are more likely to face military consequences rather than the systematic criminal prosecution they deserve as perpetrators of illegal violence. Much evidence that might have been helpful to the restoration of normalcy has been squandered. And the use of policing methods including searching, detaining and questioning should have been more widely applied as part of a coherent counterinsurgency effort. The balance must now shift toward police-led, military-supported operations which are more appropriate for defeating an insurgency.

Unfortunately, the Police are widely regarded as corrupt and symptomatic of much that is wrong with the Karzai Government. In fact, they have been poorly selected, poorly trained and are only lightly equipped and armed in a country where heavy weapons are in no short supply. In the field the Police are isolated and infrequently paid. They present a soft target for the Taliban and are ostracised by their Army counterparts who will only reluctantly be demeaned by working with them. In reality, the Afghan Police are bearing the brunt of the war and taking casualties at rates up to twenty times higher than the Army. From this point it is likely the Police have hit rock bottom and their capabilities should now only improve. One positive indication was the delivery of the long-awaited Police pay and rank review in 2007 where Police pay achieved parity with the Army for the first time. Pay reform bolstered recruiting and prestige and has set a better base for the expansion of a capable and trustworthy police force.
Out of necessity, in 2008 the Police will undergo a dramatic makeover. Afghan Police will be bolstered by similar levels of resourcing and mentoring to those the Army has experienced, and those failing to reach training and ethical standards will be dismissed. Coalition police mentoring teams will be the main agent of change and should now be the priority for international effort. Appropriate priority of effort on mentoring the Afghan Police can bring them a long way quickly and should be paralleled by investment in the judiciary and prison systems, without which policing becomes almost pointless. The majority of police mentoring will be conducted by military personnel for the foreseeable future which is not ideal.

Progress is being made in the justice sector but all too slowly. The bulk of police mentoring will be conducted by military forces until international police can be convinced to deploy into dangerous areas in sufficient numbers. Similarly, other agencies are not yet well engaged in the rest of the judicial sector. Soldiers are not the ideal trainers of police, nor are they well suited to running prisons or mentoring accountants and bureaucrats. Here, other government agencies must progressively become involved in Afghanistan. Justice sector reform cannot wait until the insurgency is defeated; it must happen concurrently with military operations in contested areas. Other agencies must rely on the military for protection while they deliver expertise as a necessary part of contested nation-building. Ongoing debates in foreign parliaments about troop levels are missing the point when the pressing need is actually for developmental and administrative assistance. The insurgency will only lose traction when progress and sound governance take hold.

MOVING BEYOND MOWING THE GRASS

Afghanistan has some experience of central hierarchical governance but it has always been balanced by the reality of staunchly tribal and collective local authority and justice. Considerable effort is being made to attribute Coalition successes and related development to the central government to boost its credibility and that of democracy as a whole. For the Afghan people the most overt symbols of central government are the provincial governors, the Afghan Army and the Afghan Police. Regrettably, the average person’s experience of central government is wholly unsatisfactory. Afghans regularly face corruption such as the extortion of money by police at checkpoints or by petty bureaucrats during administrative dealings. The drug lords have a strong culture of impunity. The population cannot help but feel bitter and helpless when their governor, their judges and their police chief are
Complicit. A sense of justice and trust in a central authority will not take root where police, courts and prisons are ineffective. Corruption also permits the Taliban to deliver ‘justice’ locally and to build legitimacy with the population.

There are some signs that corruption is being tackled, albeit slowly and selectively. For example, the poorly performing Governor and Police Chief of Oruzgun province were replaced by better quality candidates in late 2007. But not enough is being done to rein in the widespread government corruption and cronyism that, in the worst cases, is turning people to the Taliban. Unfortunately, President Karzai is widely regarded as having squandered his opportunity by not taking hard decisions, by succumbing to tribalism, and by failing to stamp out corruption.

The Coalition and the international community need to take a strong stand against corruption within the Afghan government. Pragmatism is not an appropriate response to government corruption in the medium- to long-term as the Afghan people have limited patience. The Karzai Government is becoming increasingly despised which in time may rub off on the now popular Coalition.

For the military, supporting the national will of a host government can be frustrating when the strategy is not clear. Within the Coalition some may feel they are fighting with ‘one arm tied’ or being drawn into political manoeuvrings that undermine their own legitimacy. Conversely, the government of a contested state walks a tightrope of maintaining power bases and popular support, particularly when unrestrained Coalition military force can cause cultural offence (such as the searching of private houses) or collateral damage (typically by the use of artillery or airpower). In the current mix of power and politics in Afghanistan soldiers must be prepared to face this awkward reality. The military remain central to building the conditions for progress and development but operations must be conducted with carefully chosen objectives that are integrated with political and social aims—and are flexible enough to withstand shifts in national and international sentiment.

**INFORMATION WARFARE**

Though counterinsurgency has ever been complex, the wielding of ‘soft and hard’ power is now analysed under a microscope. It should be no surprise that the degree of legal and media scrutiny of soldiers far from home is a significant factor for both civilians and soldiers seeking to defeat the insurgents. Media scrutiny is equally applied to our adversaries in neither a factual sense nor from a moral dimension. Nonetheless the media is now part of the operational landscape and must be duly considered in a modern counterinsurgency. The Taliban know this well and are beating the Coalition in the information war.
The Taliban efficiently exploit themes and messages which undermine the government or the Coalition—whether by word of mouth, by night letters, or openly through local and international media. Truthfulness and accuracy are fundamental to the Coalition’s information strategies and great care and time is taken to ensure factual reporting. Getting the Coalition message out can take days, if it is released at all. The Taliban—understanding the primacy of timely (albeit inaccurate) messages—will deliver information into the public domain within hours of an event. The Coalition and the Afghan government must develop procedures to seize the information initiative and quickly counter Taliban propaganda. Speed is of the essence in the domain of information warfare as the first release often creates the lasting perception.

Ongoing military operations alienate and disrupt local populations. Civilian casualties were a major political contention for the Karzai Government in 2007 and the Taliban deliberately exploited the government’s predicament by drawing fighting into civilian areas—often holding hostages to ensure civilian casualties were caused by Coalition forces. The Taliban target Coalition building projects, and troops belonging to those nations that are debating their force commitments. The Taliban make every effort to attack schools and forums for women. They also circulate misinformation, blaming the Coalition for civilian deaths they themselves caused, or falsely accusing the Coalition of desecrating the Koran for example.

Insurgency is about achieving support and legitimacy, even if by fear and lies. An alternative Taliban government, with an alternative constitution, challenges the legitimacy of the Karzai Government. The enemy understand it is the perception that counts and it is the initial perception that will most persistently sway the local villager to actively support, passively tolerate, or turn a blind eye to the Taliban.

In 2008 the government of Afghanistan and the Coalition will need to do much better at the timely dissemination of messages and themes that refute Taliban lies and challenge their legitimacy. It will be necessary to delegate responsibility for media releases to lower levels—accepting risk for greater benefits. More can also be done to undermine the insurgents, such as the service of mullahs to broadcast theological repudiations of violence in the name of Islam. The real story of Afghanistan is not being told in the Western media. Last year was tremendously successful for the Coalition and crowned by...
the capture of the Musa Qala citadel in late November. Much of the Western media, fallaciously, already has Afghanistan lost. In 2008, inter-agency ‘information warfare’ must swing the advantage back to the Afghanistan government.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Despite their parlous state, the Taliban watch the very public debate in the West which downplays operational progress and questions the reasoning behind continuing commitments to Afghanistan. No doubt the enemy take great heart from the wavering resolve of the ‘infidel nations’ and steel themselves to hold on for one more year. The aphorism, ‘we have all the watches but the Taliban have all the time’ rings true in this respect. The Taliban must not be let off the hook by simply waiting us out. NATO’s resolve must transcend its member nations’ domestic politics to be effective in the long-term. The aims of denying extremists sanctuaries, defending human rights, and preserving human dignity demand success. Once resolved to stay the course, the solution will be in the aligning of soft- and hard-power in an enduring way.

Conflicts of recent decades have unearthed forgotten truths about the importance of dominating terrain and populations with people—not platforms. You cannot influence Afghans without looking them in the eye. Nor can you convince Afghans that their long-term security and prosperity is best served by a government propped up by foreign forces if military contributions are annually reviewed, and life-enhancing development is not forthcoming. War and counterinsurgency remain a Clausewitzian battle of will between opponents—political will, public will and military will. The keys to success in Afghanistan are resolve, integrated strategies and enduring commitments that balance combat and development.

Australia, NATO and the broader international community of free-minded nations must think in terms of decades, not annual fighting seasons, to bed in a lasting solution. Military solutions on ‘wheels of fire’ will not be enough in themselves. Planning for contested nation-building in 2008 and beyond requires clever thinking to ensure all the pieces of the puzzle—military, civilian, cultural—are interlocked in ways that win over the Afghan people and isolate and marginalise the Taliban.

Afghanistan can find peace, a peace with serenity and splendour. They have the majestic countryside and stoic people to do just that. The Afghans are progressively taking responsibility for their own future but for now this dangerous and uncertain transition from ‘rule of the gun’ to the ‘rule of law’ requires sustained foreign assistance. Help not only from soldiers but from politicians, police, judges, bureaucrats and administrators.
Military operations are delivering military objectives in Afghanistan. In the case of the RTF, military efforts are delivering progress and building trust with the local population—in but one small area of Afghanistan. When military forces remain in an area the Taliban must leave. Soon after the military depart, the Taliban return, even if the poorly performing Afghan Police remain. When the Taliban suffer heavy casualties, they shift focus to bombings until they can regenerate. Strong and capable local police, soldiers to protect them if necessary, and a court system to ensure there are consequences for all criminal behaviour is what will bring the rule of law to small communities. It is the rule of law that will ensure military operations are not merely mowing the grass in Afghanistan.

ENDNOTES

2 Also commonly referred to as Uruzgun Province (the Russian spelling).
5 Also referred to as kinetic and non-kinetic, where kinetic implies using weapons and non-kinetic using less aggressive means such as trading and sanctions.

THE AUTHOR

Colonel John Frewen is a career Infantryman who has served in 1 RAR, 2 RAR and the School of Infantry. In 2003, as CO 2 RAR, he led the initial regional military intervention force to re-establish law and order in Solomon Islands. Other operational service includes Rwanda and, in 2007, Afghanistan. In 2006 he was the Military Assistant to the Chief of Army. He has been posted with the armies of New Zealand and the United States and holds a Masters of Defence Studies from the University of NSW. Colonel Frewen is currently the Director Military Strategic Commitments in the Australian Defence Headquarters.
WE WERE SOLDIERS ONCE ...

THE DECLINE OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY CORPS?

MAJOR JIM HAMMETT

ABSTRACT

This provocative article questions the use of the Infantry Corps in the current high-tempo period of deployments, asking if the Infantry is being used to its full potential. The author claims to represent the views of frustrated Royal Australian Infantry members who feel that they are not being employed to their full potential in current operations.

SITUATION

The Royal Australian Regiment has been conducting operations continuously since the intervention into East Timor in 1999. These operations have spanned a variety of theatres and comprised of a variety of missions. This period of operations is frequently cited as evidence of our professionalism, leadership and ability, and as cementing Australia’s place as a regional leader and putative global ally. Beyond dispute is the fact that the Army, and in particular the Infantry, have been busier and deployed overseas more often than at any time since the Vietnam War. The current cycle of operations does not appear to be losing
momentum; and the recent Enhanced Land Force (ELF) initiatives that implement the raising of two new Battalions prove beyond doubt that the Corps of Infantry is certainly a growth industry.

Across the Infantry's ranks, however, there is a common theme that is constantly being discussed, debated and passionately argued in messes, barracks, training establishments and generally anywhere that Infantrymen cross paths and engage in professional discourse: What is the future of the Infantry Corps? Has the specific role that is unique to the Infantry Corps been assigned elsewhere? Why, in an era of global operations and unity of purpose against common enemies, are Australian Infantrymen conspicuously absent from the fighting, whilst our allies are engaging in sustained combat operations?

The purpose of this article is to introduce the ubiquitous concerns of serving Infantrymen into a wider arena for further debate. It will examine the reasons underpinning a growing perception that we will never perform our stated role; with the result that our collective psyche is being weakened by frustration, conflicting institutional stressors and a growing belief that the Infantry Corps is rated as a distant second choice for combat operations behind the Special Operations Forces.

COMBAT INDICATORS?

The growing sense of professional frustration borne by the Corps has, until recently, been subordinated by discipline, institutional loyalty and adherence to the motto of the Royal Australian Regiment—‘Duty First’. The current generation of Infantrymen, despite their youth, are well aware of the ‘barren years’; some two and a half decades of peacetime soldiering and exercises that was the lot of the Army between Vietnam and the 1999 deployment of INTERFET to East Timor. Certainly, the Infantry Corps has benefited from recent operational experience, however, the Corps has yet to be called on to demonstrate its full potential or capability in performance of its primary role, namely seeking out the enemy and engaging in close combat.

There are indicators that the feelings of angst prevalent within the Infantry Corps have festered to the point of public dissent and critical questioning of the Corps’ raison d’être. This is reflected not only by questions posed to our leadership (including the Minister for Defence and the Chief of Army) across three theatres of operation, but also by recent articles published in mainstream media. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence would suggest that disillusionment regarding the employment and future of the Infantry Corps has been a significant contributing factor to the discharge of personnel from the Corps.
‘WE ARE AN ARMY AT WAR’

Chief of Army, LTGEN P Leahy, AC.

The majority of Infantrymen would disagree with the Chief of Army’s statement. Elements of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) are engaged in combat operations, however, the Army as an entity is not. Mobilised, yes—at war, no. It is understood and accepted across the Corps that Australia’s strategic interests and objectives will entail the conduct of lower intensity operations in pursuit of our political objectives. It is also accepted that the ADF is not capable of, nor tasked with conducting high intensity conventional warfighting.

The contribution to offensive, warlike operations has, since 2001 consisted primarily of ‘niche capabilities’ which, in lay terms, translates to the deployment of Special Forces. An examination of both the role of the Infantry and the role of Special Forces, in comparison to the nature of employment of both on recent operations, provides an insight into one of the causes of the current discontent within the Infantry Corps.

The role of the Infantry is to seek out and close with the enemy, to kill or capture them, to seize and hold ground and to repel attack by day and night, regardless of season, weather or terrain. This role is unambiguous.

The specific and detailed roles of Special Forces remain subject to security classifications; however, it is openly acknowledged they are tasked with ‘the conduct of operations that have strategic consequences at the national level’. This role is vague, and implies that the rest of the Army is only capable of achieving tactical effects — an inference that is at odds with not only the strategic soldier concept, but also implies that the ‘wider army’ is incapable of implementing the effects defined in LWD 1. Amplification of the role of Special Forces, however, is provided by further definition of the types of special operations:

SASR conduct a wide range of special operations beyond the scope and capability of other ADF elements. This includes rescuing personnel, unconventional warfare, information operations, and environmental, offensive and close target reconnaissance.

The commandos undertake offensive operations, including raids, recovery operations and support operations that cannot be performed by ‘conventional ADF forces’.

Amongst their other roles, Special Operations Forces are tasked with a function titled ‘Direct Action’. Direct Action is defined as ‘short duration strikes that are used when Special Forces want to seize, capture, recover or destroy enemy weapons and information or recover designated personnel or material’.
Clearly there is the potential for overlap of the two roles, particularly with regard to the effects provided by Direct Action. Has the defined caveat of ‘short duration’ and ‘small scale actions’ evolved into a Special Forces generated mission creep that usurps the role of the Infantry? A history of recent deployments would indicate so:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theatre</th>
<th>Role of Infantry</th>
<th>Role of Special Forces</th>
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<tr>
<td>East Timor INTERFET</td>
<td>Security and stability</td>
<td>Offensive Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Timor UNTAET</td>
<td>Stability and support</td>
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<td>Afghanistan 2001–06</td>
<td>Did not deploy</td>
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<td>Iraq War</td>
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<td>Iraq SECDET</td>
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<td>Iraq OBG(W)</td>
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<td>Timor Leste 2006-07</td>
<td>Stability and support</td>
<td>Offensive Response/ Manoeuvre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afghanistan 2007</td>
<td>Force Protection</td>
<td>Offensive Manoeuvre</td>
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The Infantry have not been tasked with conducting offensive action since Vietnam; Special Forces have been engaged in combat operations almost continuously since 2001. When comparing the role of the Infantry with that of Special Operations Forces (SOF), in contrast to the nature of deployments, the logical deduction is that either the role of the Infantry is now defunct, or that only SOF are considered capable of the role.

‘This cult of special forces is as sensible as to form a Royal Corps of Tree Climbers and say that no soldier, who does not wear its green hat with a bunch of oak leaves stuck in it should be expected to climb a tree’. Field Marshall Sir William Slim was remarkably prophetic when he cautioned against the inclination to consider some tasks capable of being fulfilled by Special Forces only. The parallels between Slim’s ‘Royal Corps of Tree Climbers’ analogy and the current trend of operational deployments accurately summarise the frustrations of the Royal Australian Infantry Corps, who, despite the lack of a ‘green hat’ (or possibly Sherwood Green or ‘Sandy’ beret), consider themselves more than capable of ‘climbing trees’.
CAN THE INFANTRY DO THE JOB?

The Infantry Corps is better equipped than ever before, and boasts world class firepower, communications and protective equipment. The emphasis on Infantry specialist and career courses (as well as Army’s All Corps Officer Training Continuum courses) has, for many years, been dedicated to complex warfighting. The School of Infantry’s Initial Employment Training rifleman course has recovered from the training constraints and minimalist approach of the mid 1990s and is producing robust, competent soldiers whose basic training surpasses that of their forebears. The Infantry Regimental Officers’ Basic Course has evolved from the lacklustre attendance course of ten days duration to a twelve-week regimen that truly prepares Infantry officers for the full spectrum of conflict. The Combat Training Centre has matured and routinely provides world class training to prepare sub-units and units for combat operations. The Centre of Army Lessons provides real-world lessons based on the current operations of other armies. Joint exercises are regularly conducted with coalition allies, with an emphasis on warfighting. The ADF, and the Infantry in particular, have never before been at such a collective level of readiness for combat operations. It could be argued that the Infantry Corps, in relation to warfighting operations, is over-trained yet under-experienced.

The US, British and Canadian militaries have employed their ‘regular’ Infantry in combat operations without hesitation in Iraq or Afghanistan, and sometimes both, since the conflicts in those countries commenced. A very small percentage of Australian Infantrymen have participated in such operations through exchange postings. Anecdotal evidence provided by these individuals indicates that there is nothing that the British are doing in Basrah, Maysan or Helmand provinces that an Australian battalion could not do equally as well. These opinions have been proven by the recent actions of Infantrymen in Afghanistan, who have on several recent occasions, in the course of their protective duties, engaged in battle against enemy initiated offensive action—and been resoundingly successful.

DADDY, WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE WAR?

Tantalus, of Greek mythology, was deliberately tormented by the gods—he was immersed up to his neck in water, yet every time he bent his head to drink, it drained away; a variety of fruit hung above and around him, but every time he reached for it the winds would blow the branches beyond his reach. The frustrating nature of operations conducted by Australian Infantry in both Iraq and Afghanistan are akin to the predicament that beset Tantalus.
In Iraq SECDET is a purely force protection mission largely confined to Baghdad’s ‘Green Zone’. In southern Iraq, the role of the deployed Battle Group (whose manoeuvre elements consist of only one Infantry company and one ASLAV squadron) has evolved from providing force protection to the Japanese to adopting the role of Overwatch Battle Group (West). This organisation remains subject to significant limitations regarding freedom of manoeuvre due to force protection policies, and has not been deployed in an intervention task since assuming the role, despite periodic local defeats of Iraqi Security Forces and the loss of Iraqi Government control; most notably in An Nasiriyah during the period 17–19 June 2007, but also in Al Muthanna Province.

Notwithstanding recent combat actions performed by Infantrymen in Afghanistan, the role of the Infantry component of the Reconstruction Task Force is limited to force protection—rigidly imposed to the point whereby participants have been required to sign formal documents declaring that they have not provoked combat operations—whilst their fellow countrymen from the Special Operations Task Group actively pursue engagement with enemy forces, having been publicly praised by defence and governmental hierarchy for previous tours of duty that involved daily contact with the enemy. In the same theatre, armies with whom we possess a standardisation program (US, Britain and Canada) are employing their Infantry aggressively against the enemy. The lack of Australian participation in combat has drawn adverse comment and questions from the international press.

In Timor Leste, the mission of the resident Infantry battalion is to conduct stability and support operations, and to provide support to UN Police as a tiered response to disorder. In this theatre alone the Infantry does have the freedom of action to conduct manoeuvre at will, however, whilst this allows refinement and development of procedures and techniques, there exists no enemy against which to provide quantifiable analysis. The actions of Reinado and his petitioners in February and March 2007 did initially present as an opportunity for the Infantry to perform their primary role. The deployment of the Special Forces task group to assume this task resulted in the Infantry being subordinated to conducting very minor support roles at the periphery of the battlespace.

I'M AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

The restrictions placed on deployed elements as a result of force protection and national policies have, at times, made Infantrymen ashamed of wearing their Australian uniform and regimental hat badge. Today’s Australian soldiers have been imbued with the proud history of their forebears—their fighting spirit, their tenacity, their battle honours. The past achievements of Australian Infantrymen are acclaimed across the military community: barracks are named after famous battles,
bases are named after famous commanders, and battle honours are commemorated annually by the modern generation. The Infantrymen of today want to be proud of their own actions. The Army’s emphasis on history and recognition of past achievements has inculcated into today’s soldier a subconscious need to uphold the traditions forged by his predecessors and an aspiration to overcome the unique challenges that are presented only in the arena of combat.

Since 11 September 2001 Australia’s allies have become embroiled in violent conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia. Australia has professed itself a staunch ally of the Americans in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and indeed has received significant political kudos for what has been termed as unwavering support.24 At the coalface, however, such sentiments are dismissed as political rhetoric, as serving members from the United States, Britain and Canada lay their lives on the line in support of their government’s objectives whilst the Australian Infantry appear to do little more than act as interested spectators from the sideline.

Notwithstanding the mutual accolades provided between international political bodies in the interests of diplomacy, Australia’s contributions to both Iraq and Afghanistan have been derided and scorned by soldiers and officers alike from other nations who are more vigorously engaged in combat operations.25 In Iraq, the much heralded deployment of Al Muthanna Task Group-1 was met with incredulity by British forces deployed on Operation TELIC V. The stringent force protection measures and limitations to manoeuvre applied to the newly arrived (yet very well equipped) Australians were in stark contrast to the British approach of using the benign Al Muthanna province as a respite locality for (not very well equipped) troops who had been in sustained action in either Basra or Al Amarah.26

The initial caution of such a deployment is both prudent and understandable, however the ongoing inaction and lack of contribution to counterinsurgency and offensive operations has resulted in collective disdain and at times near contempt by personnel from other contributing nations for the publicity-shrouded yet force-protected Australian troops.

The restrictions and policies enforced on Infantrymen in Iraq have resulted in the widespread perception that our Army is plagued by institutional cowardice. Rebuttal of such opinions is difficult when all staff at Iraq’s Multi-National Division (South East) Headquarters are formally briefed that the Australian contingent’s national caveats strictly prohibit offensive operations, attack and pursuit.27 Of the phases of war, this leaves only defence and withdrawal.
CORE ACTIVITY …

The Chief of Army recently defined his expectations of what defines the Australian soldier by virtue of nine core behaviours that have been established as aspirational benchmarks. Within the statement of these behaviours, the terms ‘close combat’, ‘close-quarter combat’, ‘unarmed combat’, ‘complex warfighting’, ‘battle’ and ‘war’ appear regularly. These are terms that clearly indicate to every Infantryman that they should prepare themselves for such environments, as the core behaviours imply that the rigours of battle are, if not routinely experienced by the Army, then certainly to be expected.

But is the concept of Australian Infantry joining battle a realistic expectation? Despite the promulgation of Core Behaviours designed to better prepare modern soldiers for complex warfighting and close-quarter combat, these functions do not appear in the Chief of Army’s intent for the Hardened and Networked Army:

Army must be prepared to face a very broad range of activities from the conventional defence of Australia to peacekeeping to peace making to nation building to humanitarian operations and the threat of terrorism.

Within the intent of the Hardened and Networked Army, and the specified functions that Army are to prepare for, the terms ‘close combat’, ‘close-quarter combat’, ‘unarmed combat’, ‘complex warfighting’, ‘battle’ and ‘war’ are conspicuous by their absence.

What, therefore, is the primary core activity of the Army as a whole? Is it force protection and avoidance of exposure to the enemy? A stated aim of the Hardened and Networked Army implementation is to ‘provide as many soldiers as possible—whether from the combat arms or the support elements — with a seat in an armoured protected vehicle.’ The refutation of such an ambition as being potentially flawed is certainly the domain of another forum, however, a stated desired endstate does not auger well for the future employment of the Infantryman. The ‘Alcyoneus principle’ as it would apply in the Australian context appears doomed, unless perhaps the aim is to ultimately dislocate opposing forces by not accepting engagement.

FUTURE OPERATIONS …?

Today’s Army projects the image of an operationally experienced, battle ‘savvy’ organisation with an emphasis on complex warfighting and close-quarter combat. Certainly there are within the ranks of the Infantry numerous personnel who are veterans of multiple operations; however, the majority of the Infantry’s collective
experience applies only to the lower strata of the spectrum of conflict. Our experience is limited to that which can be gained from participation in operations charged with security and stability tasks in benign environments, or force protection roles in the more active areas of operations. In an unprecedented era of Infantry and Army Combat Badges, the fact remains that Australian Infantrymen, since Vietnam, have been involved in little more than fleeting contacts or brief skirmishes with an enemy; none of them planned, none of them deliberate.

In the opinion of many Infantrymen, the lauding of their contributions to recent operations does not ring true. Soldiers of all corps perform as well as they can on operations; they are constrained by their mission and tasks, however. Why do people join the Infantry Corps? The answer is simple: to fulfil the role of the Infantry; or to use simpler terms, to fight. But the Infantry are not fighting; they are trained to fight, equipped to fight, and being indoctrinated to expect to fight—they are doing many other things, but not fighting. That function is being fulfilled by Special Forces.

The Australian Government (both pre- and post-2007 election) has demonstrated the political will to commit troops to combat, and on numerous occasions has warned the public to expect casualties. There appears to be no reluctance on the part of the Government for forces to seek out and close with the enemy. But why have such roles been allocated to Special Forces? One deduction that may be made is that Army itself does not consider the Infantry capable of the job, and trusts only the ability of Special Forces.

Is the current trend going to continue? While our counterparts from allied nations are desperately fighting tenacious enemies in two theatres, will the Australian Infantry be limited to supporting roles only, and be allowed freedom of action only in theatres that are devoid of an enemy? Despite being trained, prepared and equipped for a role, that role remains elusive. If the status quo is maintained, it is not unlikely that the Infantry will become denuded of the very type of soldier it requires, for while some will be lured to Special Forces, many more will demonstrate their discontent by seeking transfer or discharge. Have we entered an era that will foreshadow the decline of the Infantry Corps as the Army’s fighting arm? Have the higher echelons of Special Forces shaped contemporary military and political thinking to the point where they alone are considered combat capable? The Infantry Corps desperately hopes not, but many within its ranks suspect that the role of the Infantry has already been consigned to history.
ENDNOTES


2 As discussed by CAs’s staff during CA visit to Timor Leste, 17 June 2007.


4 Seven soldiers and NCOs of A Coy, 1 RAR, during their ‘OC’s interview’ on submitting their application for discharge in 2006, cited frustration at the contrasts between the role of Infantry and the nature of employment on operations as a major factor regarding their decision to leave the army.


13 The author served in Iraq with the British Army between October 2004 and May 2005.

14 Corroborative statements made by Iraq veterans (2 x AATTI, 3 x MND(SE) and 1 x TCD), 2–4 July 2007.

15 Brian Toohey, 'PM pretends he's fighting terror', *West Australian*, 9 July 2007, p. 17.


18 John Howard quoted in Mark Colvin, ‘Howard warns of Afghan security situation’, PM, radio program, ABC Radio, 9 August 2006, at <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2006/s1711012.htm>. ‘The Reconstruction Task Force deployment will include an infantry company group of about 120 personnel to provide enhanced force protection’.

19 Afghanistan veterans (2 x RTF, 1 x HQ JTF 633), interview with author, 29 June – 2 July 2007.


21 Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston and Major General Michael Hindmarsh quoted in Craig Skehan, ‘Special Forces may face total recall’, Sydney Morning Herald, 28 September 2006, p. 2.


23 Iraq veterans (2 x AATTI, 1 x MND(SE)), interviews with author, 2–4 July 2007.


25 ‘Our Australian neighbours are looking good inside the Camp with their armour and swanky Bushmasters, but we are getting out and doing the job in Land Rovers’. Operations Captain, UK 2nd Parachute Regiment, conversation with Colonel Andy Mason during an operations brief to visiting multi-national dignitaries, Al Muthanna, Iraq, January 2005. But one of many examples.

26 Author’s experience, Iraq, May 2005.

27 Public briefings provided to MND(SE) personnel and visitors as part of the MND(SE) ‘standard briefing format’ that detailed all contributing nations’ national caveats for employment of their forces. Iraq veteran of HQ MND(SE), interview with author, 2 July 2007.


30 Ibid.
31 The Army Website (Department of Defence (Army Headquarters), The Australian Army, accessed at <http://www.defence.gov.au/army/> displays numerous links detailing operational experience and warfighting innovation, amongst which can be found the following statements: ‘We are fighting alongside you (USMC) in Iraq and Afghanistan,’ Peter Leahy, Speech by the Chief of Australian Army Lieutenant General P F Leahy AO to the United States Marine Corps Staff College, USMC Staff College, 2 May 2007, Quantico, accessed at <http://www.defence.gov.au/army/PUBS/CAspeeches/20070502.pdf>. Regarding the emergence of the complex environment, ‘The current insurgency in Iraq epitomises this trend, but we (Australia) have been on notice since the battle of Mogadishu in 1993,’ Speech by the Chief of Australian Army Lieutenant General P F Leahy AO to the Royal United Services Institute of the United Kingdom, 8 June 2006, Whitehall, accessed at <http://www.defence.gov.au/army/PUBS/CAspeeches/20060608.pdf>.

THE AUTHOR

Major Jim Hammett graduated from RMC in 1996 having served as a soldier and JNCO in 1 RAR between 1989 and 1994. He has served in a variety of regimental and instructional appointments, including 1 RAR, 2 RAR, RMC, School of Infantry and as an exchange Officer with 1st Bn Scots Guards. His operational service includes deployments to Somalia in 1993 (1 RAR), East Timor in 1999-2000 (2 RAR), Iraq 2004–2005 (Scots Guards), Timor Leste 2006 (1 RAR), Tonga 2006 (1 RAR) and Timor Leste 2007 (1 RAR). He is currently a student at Australian Command and Staff College, Canberra.
ENHANCING OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY

MAKING INFANTRY MORE DEPLOYABLE

CAPTAIN GREG COLTON

ABSTRACT

As the Australian Army continues to deploy troops to operations across the globe, questions are being asked both within and outside the Army as to why certain forces are being deployed. This article explores the role of the Royal Australian Infantry, and suggests changes that would increase options for its deployment.

Armies do not win wars by means of a few bodies of super-soldiers but by the average quality of their standard units... The level of initiative, individual training, and weapon skill required in, say, a commando, is admirable; what is not admirable is that it should be confined to a few small units. Any well trained infantry battalion should be able to do what a commando can do; in the Fourteenth Army they could and did.

Field Marshall The Viscount Slim¹
INTRODUCTION

The success of any military mission can only be measured by how well it has achieved its aims, and at what cost. By these measures, therefore, the involvement of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in Iraq and Afghanistan can only be seen as a resounding success. The survivability and lethality shown recently by the Security Task Group attached to Reconstruction Task Force 3 (RTF 3) is testimony to this. We should take care, though, to ensure that this very success does not blind us to the nature of the threat which we have faced, nor should we derive false conclusions from the experience. If Australian forces had been tasked to counter the insurgencies in a district of downtown Baghdad, Basra, or Helmand province, they would have undoubtedly faced a far more torrid existence, casualties would have been almost inevitable, and military lessons learned would have most likely been different. Instead, the operations faced by Australian conventional forces over the last ten years have been defensive, or at the most protective, in nature and therefore should be examined in that context. It would be equally misleading, however, to assume that involvement in future conflicts will be of a similar nature and that conventional forces will not be required to undertake offensive operations and tasks similar in nature to those that our sister units in the US, British and Canadian armies are currently undertaking.

To that end, there is a growing sense of frustration within the ranks of the Infantry that regular infantry units are only receiving perceived second rate operational taskings, while the government and Army hierarchy seem to favour Special Forces for deliberate offensive operations and tasks. This is causing a double dilemma. While there is little doubt that Australian Special Forces have performed to a standard that has made Australia a valued partner in the ‘War on Terror’, they are increasingly finding themselves straying from undertaking operations of a strategic nature which are their raison d’être, into more conventional operations because as a military force they are a proven quantity. However, this has the consequence that while the Special Forces community is finding itself stretched by back to back tours, Australian company and battalion commanders of regular infantry units are missing an excellent opportunity to gain contemporary operational experience. It is this experience that the Infantry, and indeed the Army, needs their commanders to take with them as they progress into influential, higher command positions within the Army. At a lower level the diggers, NCOs and junior officers are starting to question the Infantry’s role and their part in it, which is having a
tangible effect on morale. Whatever the reasons for this reluctance for Australia to deploy its regular infantry to conduct offensive operations, the Infantry can seek to address it by ensuring that it is a more attractive option for its military and political masters. Deployment of regular infantry would enable Special Forces to revert to their doctrinal role of shaping the environment at the strategic level while the Infantry conduct offensive, defensive and security operations.

This article seeks to highlight three ways in which the Royal Australian Infantry can seek to make itself a more attractive option for deployment:

a. the swift adoption, and enhancement, of structural changes based on Infantry 2012,

b. the development of the Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Battlefield Operating System (BOS) within the infantry battalion,

c. the insistence on a more logical training and deployment cycle.

**INFANTRY 2012 STRUCTURAL CHANGES**

The Infantry fire team represents the basic building block for the modular Infantry unit. It provides for the adoption of the modular concept to meet the demands of future operations within the complex warfighting construct.

LWD 3-3-7 Employment of Infantry

The proposed adaptation of Infantry 2012 is probably the most seismic event in the evolution of the Australian Infantry since the end of the pentropic experiment in 1964. It is therefore a controversial move, and has caused a great deal of debate, not only within the Infantry itself but within the Army as a whole, and at all levels. The important point which must be understood before Infantry 2012 is implemented is that the present system is not broken. Indeed it has performed admirably for a generation of soldiers. So the question then inevitably raises itself, ‘if it isn’t broken then why fix it?’ The answer is that while the old system works adequately in most conditions, the new structure under Infantry 2012 is so much better. As the nature of both high-intensity and counterinsurgency warfare has evolved, so the Infantry's need for a structure to suit all phases of war has become more apparent. In tandem, as technology has changed, so has our ability to create smaller groups of soldiers that are more lethal and usable, and yet more survivable, than ever before. The introduction of Personal Role Radio and the Global Positioning System, for example, has meant that sections no longer necessarily need to be all in constant sight of the section commander to receive instructions from field hand signals. The information networking of the Army is now present down to individual soldier level and is set to increase in its scope as technology improves. To that end, the modular approach
incorporated in *Infantry 2012* gives both greater flexibility, in that it gives the commander the *ability* to reorganise his force to meet the changing operational requirements he is faced with, and greater adaptability, which for the purposes of this article means the speed with which the commander is able physically to reorganise and reorientate to the changing threat. This theme is elaborated below.

The structure of the infantry battalion is laid out within the Australian Army publication, *LWD 3-3-7 Employment of Infantry*. This publication clearly sets out the four-man fire team, as illustrated in Figure 1, as the basic block within the rifle company. It can be seen that a four man fire team comprises a commander, grenadier, gunner and marksman. A section is formed from two identical fire teams, one of which is commanded by a corporal, and the other a lance corporal. This is a departure from the traditional infantry section of nine, comprising of scout group, gun group and rifle group. There are many who will debate whether the tried and tested old system needs to change at all, but it should be remembered that the inherent strength in the new system is its flexibility, and thus its adaptability. Mathematically, four is an incredibly versatile number. A section of eight can easily be turned into a multiple of twelve with the addition of a third fire team. In addition, because of mirrored weapons systems, each fire team is able to assault or suppress depending on the situation. No more awkward rebalancing of groups by the section commander under contact because the rifle group happened to be in the ideal fire support position for his gun group. More importantly, in

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... the present system is not broken.

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![Figure 1. The Fire Team](image)

Commander  
F88 + EOS  
CPL/LCPL  

Marksman  
F88 + EOS  
PTE  

Gunner  
F89  
PTE  

Grenadier  
F88 + GLA  
PTE  

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the evolving nature of combat team orientated operations, fire teams of four can more readily be combined with other assets, especially protected mobility assets, to increase combat capabilities. The Bushmaster when used as a transport vehicle is designed to carry a light infantry section of eight, for example.3

The big change at the platoon level comes with the creation of the manoeuvre support section (MSS). Within LWD 3-3-7 each light infantry platoon contains a manoeuvre support section, consisting of three teams of four men. Each team consists of a commander, marksman, grenadier and machine gunner, and the section’s purpose is to operate and tactically employ precision direct fire, area suppression, and multipurpose weapon systems to reduce or defeat enemy fortifications, bunkers and armoured vehicles.4 In essence, and at its most basic, this means that at the platoon level there are three light role MAG 58s and three specifically equipped marksmen. Together these will be able to give suppressive fire which will increase the platoon’s effective influence out to 1100 metres on the battlefield. There is also discussion as to whether there should be a mixture of machine guns and anti-armour weapons depending on the tactical situation, or even the addition to the MSS arsenal of a medium-range automatic grenade launcher. Again the strength in this system is its modularity. The company commander is able, depending on the tactical situation, to brigade these manoeuvre support sections together into a company manoeuvre support group, commanded by a company weapons sergeant.

Figure 2. The Light Role Infantry Platoon
who works in company headquarters, to allow him to fix the enemy while he
manoeuvres his assaulting platoons. Not only does this allow both platoon and
corporal commanders to have the required forces to truly achieve the principles of
‘find, fix, and finish’, but the modular concept allows for alternate structures with
varying equipment to be made dependent on the task, threat and environment. This
then fulfils both the requirement for an increase in the survivability of a deployed
land force by increasing combat weight and firepower,
and makes the company more capable and adaptable
over a wider range of likely tasks, as demanded by the
principles behind the philosophy of the Hardened and
Networked Army.

Infantry 2012 is a significant structural change for
the Infantry, but its advantages over the status quo lie
in its flexibility, modular structure, increase in lethality
through organic firepower, and the ability to rapidly
reorganise to face a changing threat. It is true that Infantry 2012 has not been
welcomed with open arms by all, even if it does formalise what in effect has been
adopted by troops on the ground on operations for the last few years. Suffice to say,
however, that if the Infantry as a Corps is delaying implementation because it is
arguing internally about whether a section should comprise eight soldiers or nine,
or debating what weapon system a marksman should be equipped with, then it is
missing the point and doing its soldiers a disservice. The strength of the changes
laid out in Infantry 2012 is in its modular approach, enabling commanders the flex-
ibility to regroup at short notice for mission specific tasks. Indeed, both the infantry
section and the infantry platoon as laid out in Infantry 2012 possess more organic
firepower than any Australian regular infantry section or platoon before it. Study of
the Order of Battle (ORBAT) of a Commando company from 4 RAR, although itself
subtly different from Infantry 2012, and their experiences on operations, shows that
the adoption of a modular, highly potent approach which utilises organic combined
effects and synergies works, and that this inherent flexibility gives greater capability
across a range of operational taskings. Moreover, by delaying implementation of
Infantry 2012 the Infantry are sending a signal to the rest of the Army, and its
military and political masters, that it is not yet ready to face the challenges of the
modern battlespace. While this image remains, many fear that the Infantry will
continue to find itself escorting federal policemen to polling booths rather than
engaging and defeating the enemy in close combat.

[T]he strength in
this system is its
modularity.
INCREASE IN ISR BOS CAPABILITY

Our greatest weakness now is the lack of early and accurate information of the enemy’s strength, dispositions and intentions. For lack of information an enormous amount of military effort is being necessarily absorbed on prophylactic and will o’ the wisp patrolling.

General Sir John Harding, Malaya, 1950

Now, more than at any time since 1945, the ADF is faced with the dilemma of having to be always prepared for the possibility of interstate war, combined with the probability of being involved in intrastate conflict. As the nature of operations has evolved since the end of the Cold War, so have the military-academic attempts to pigeonhole contemporary conflict into a catchy phrase. However, regardless of whether it is described as ‘3-Block War’, Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW), asymmetric warfare, complex warfighting, or ‘war amongst the people’, what modern conflicts all have in common is the dispersion of enemy combatants into the civilian population. They have learned the hard way how to avoid being targeted by modern military technological capabilities. This is not just during counterinsurgency campaigns. Even in the latter stages of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, conventional Iraqi Army troops were dispersing amongst towns and villages to increase their survivability against a technologically superior, largely conventional enemy which enjoyed air supremacy. So the Army, and the Infantry in particular, needs to increase its effectiveness in operating in a dispersed battlespace while still maintaining the ability to conduct high-intensity, interstate warfighting.

This emptying of the battlespace and dispersion of the enemy will ensure that the ISR BOS, which performs the ‘know’ combat function, will continue to become increasingly important. The ability to find the enemy and then fix them in time and space (i.e. to track them) is paramount to success on the modern battlefield. Indeed, with politicians and their electorates being fed a constant live-feed from our operational theatres by a 24-hour media, the accuracy and timeliness of the ISR BOS is likely to become the mission critical aspect of any commander’s plan.

For the Infantry to become a more attractive option for combat deployments, it needs to focus on what infantry battalions contribute to the ISR BOS. At present this is based on the reconnaissance and surveillance platoon and the intelligence cell, (not withstanding that all manoeuvre elements contribute to the ‘know’ function in their own right). Both these elements are at present located in a support company. The recommendation is that we increase the ISR capability by re-raising D Company as a dedicated ISR company and renaming Support Company as manoeuvre support (MSpt) company. The MSpt company will consist of mortar platoon, direct fire support weapons platoon and command and signals platoon, all of which will assist...
the commander by supporting his ability to manoeuvre. These organisations would look much as they do now. The force structure of the ISR company, however, is expanded on below. It should be noted that under Infantry 2012 there is an increased manning liability within infantry battalions, and the raising of the ISR company would further increase this liability by a company headquarters staff and some extra snipers and intelligence analysts. It is suggested that this resulting manning bill is more than offset by the increased capability. The local population liaison cells (LPLCs), which are described below, are expected to come from outside the manning of an infantry battalion but would be attached to them as and when required.

D (ISR) COMPANY

The role of the ISR company would be to conduct and coordinate ISR, analyse information gathered, interpret it and disseminate the results. The officer commanding would be in effect the battalion ISR officer working in battalion headquarters. This should not be mistaken as the old patrols master role. Rather they are responsible for coordinating a multi-layered approach to gaining information, and processing it in concert with the intelligence officer into intelligence that gives the manoeuvre commander, in this case the commanding officer, situational awareness on which to base decisions. The ISR company would be comprised of the following elements:

The Recon and Surveillance (R&S) Platoon. The R&S platoon would include, as it does now, both recon patrols and surveillance patrols. However, if the Army is serious about the concept of ‘recon pull’, and wants to maintain true operational tempo, then these assets need to be given mobility, and consequently increased reach and survivability. It is recommended that in light role battalions the R&S platoon is equipped with recon Landrovers equipped in the same manner as those which the RFSUs use now. The training and logistical bill for these simple vehicles would be small, and would be far outweighed by the tactical advantage offered by their employment. It is recommended that mechanised infantry battalions cease using the M113 for recon tasks and are equipped with ASLAVs. Before the Royal Australian Armoured Corps gets too excited we should remember that the ASLAV is not a cavalry vehicle, it is a capability platform. If it is good enough to be used by the Australian Army’s two reconnaissance regiments then it should be good enough to be used by the R&S platoons of the two mechanised infantry battalions. These would be crewed and commanded by recon-qualified Infantry soldiers.

Infantry … needs to focus on what infantry battalions contribute to the ISR BOS.
Enhancing Operational Capability

Sniper Platoon. Snipers should be organised into a separate platoon both for training purposes, and also as they are an increasingly important force multiplier in their own right. Their utility has been proven in Iraq, Afghanistan and Timor Leste. It is suggested that they are commanded by a warrant officer class two.

Intelligence Platoon. Headed up by the battalion's IO, the Intelligence platoon is critical to the ISR BOS, both for the direction of intelligence collation, and in interpreting the results. While the IO would still work in battalion HQ, the inclusion of the platoon in the ISR company would encourage better liaison between the elements responsible for the ‘know’ function. On deployment many of its specialists would be deployed to advise manoeuvre elements, such as rifle companies, on information gathering and perform initial analysis.

Local Population Liaison Cells (LPLC). In the future the Australian Army is increasingly likely to find itself conducting operations in countries with markedly different customs, cultures and language to our own. The ability to operate effectively in these foreign environments without alienating the local population could arguably mean the difference between operational success and mission failure. The role of the LPLCs therefore are twofold; firstly to plug into the local communities in which the manoeuvre elements are operating, and secondly to provide a trained CIMIC capability. These are two distinct functions and will be discussed in turn.

By introducing capability bricks into the Infantry battalion that have the language and cultural awareness to allow them to penetrate the local community, there is the ability to fix the enemy in time and space (i.e. to track them). Soldiers in the LPLCs should be both linguists and intelligence trained specialists, and accompany manoeuvre elements on patrols so as to maximise the amount of information elicited from the local population. This will be a significant capability increase for the Infantry battalion, but as a capability brick can be attached or detached as required for theatre-wide flexibility. The use of Field Human Intelligence Teams (FHTs), which is a similar but more specialised concept, by both British and US forces has led to notable successes in Iraq and Afghanistan. The introduction of LPLCs at the battalion level would be a recognition and response to this success right down to grassroots level.

Secondly, CIMIC projects are an important part of both separating the insurgent from his support and long-term planning for a post-insurgency future. As in any other area of soldiering, properly trained soldiers will deliver far better results than those who are given the task as ‘another hat to wear’. Soldiers working in CIMIC positions will deliver more focused, targeted projects, which in turn will have a greater consent-winning effect, if they are fully instructed in the culture and development needs of the country in question. In turn, the incorporation of LPLC’s as an integrated part of the battalion will allow a much greater understanding of CIMIC issues by commanders and soldiers alike.
LOGICAL TRAINING AND DEPLOYMENT CYCLES

Their training was so demanding, in fact, that the German Infantry were ultimately glad for the relief provided by war.

Colonel A Goutard, 1940

The rapid fall of Poland and then France at the beginning of the Second World War was in no small part due to the inter-war training regime adopted by the German Army in the form of the *Reichswehr* and, after 1935, the *Wehrmacht*. Free of the modern shackles of occupational health and safety and corporate governance their officers devoted their time to training their soldiers in warfighting, especially offensive operations. The intensity of their training paid dividends when war broke out. It is worth remembering that the great mass of that army, which so crushed the Anglo-French forces in France in 1940, was the German infantry. Indeed the number of tanks at the Allies’ disposal outnumbered the fabled *panzers*, and it was the superiority of the German infantry, their understanding of the all-arms battle, and their sustained maintenance of a superior tempo which were the key factors in the German victory, rather than purely having a greater armoured capability. All this was incorporated in their knowledge, and practice of combined arms theory, much of which still guides our doctrine today. Fast forward to the twenty-first century, and, like the other allied armies, the Australian Army trains its soldiers to conduct high-intensity warfighting operations. This adheres to the philosophy that soldiers trained to such a level can operate across the whole spectrum of operations, while those only trained in, for example, peacekeeping will not be able to step up to conduct sustained high-intensity warfighting. This is a sound principle which has stood the test of time and worked well for the Germans.

However, just as important as training for warfighting is the manner in which that training is conducted. Training should be structured so that it is progressive, operationally focused and both physically and mentally demanding. It should begin with individual training, progress through small unit collective training up to company and battalion level, and then ultimately theatre specific pre-deployment training prior to units deploying. After pre-deployment leave the cycle starts again with individual training and so it progresses. This training cycle becomes more complex when both individual posting cycles and unit deployments need to be deconflicted, but it must be maintained in order for soldiers and units to be properly trained prior to deploying on operations.

The Australian Army trains its soldiers to conduct high-intensity warfighting operations.
At the time of writing the regular Infantry has approximately six subunits and two battalion headquarters deployed on operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Timor Leste. That is a total of less than two battalions. Yet the deployment cycle has become so complicated that in 2006, 3 RAR as Battlegroup Faithful in Timor Leste had under command a rifle company from each of 1 RAR, 2 RAR and 3 RAR. This is not battlegrouping; it is organisational confusion. The fundamental principle which underpins training is that soldiers train together to prepare them for deployment on operations. This cannot happen if the Infantry are seen merely as a finite number of subunits to be thrown together at the next problem that raises itself. There is also the real danger that in the future the Australian Army could create an organisational fracture line if it continues to see its battalions and brigades as fulfilling merely the raise, train, sustain function, and who are ultimately simply required to fill slots in an operational Manning Document (OMD). The flip side of this coin is that the OMD is raised by staff in HQ Joint Operational Command, who in turn themselves have to be careful not to become divorced from the real-time training requirements needed by Land Command to develop and provide soldiers to be ready for deployment on operations.

It is no coincidence that the makeup of the present Infantry battalion includes its own integral combat service support (CSS) assets. These are designed to support the battalion on operations, so that when the battalion becomes the core nucleus of a battlegroup it remains at the heart an organisation which has lived and trained together. Developing a more capable Infantry battalion should not be seen as turning away from the concept of battlegrouping. Indeed it is quite the opposite. A more capable Infantry battalion ensures that on one hand the core base around which other parts are added is much stronger than before, and on the other has more inherent capability to offer other battlegroups based on armoured, cavalry or aviation regiments. Success, therefore, should be measured by how quickly it as an organisation can incorporate attached arms; how quickly they can combine their strengths to win in battle. By comparison, the current system of deploying forces, perceived by many at battalion level to be little more than an ad hoc solution, undermines unit cohesion, capability and efficiency. To that end, with programmed implementation of Infantry 2012 just over four years away, now would seem to be the ideal time to start planning, and where possible implementing, a logical training and deployment cycle.

With the units available under the Enhanced Land Force, and with the operational commitments that the Infantry is presently undertaking, it should be possible to create a solid Formation Readiness Cycle (FRC) that allows structured progressive training, operational deployments, and an Infantry battalion to remain on high
readiness as a spearhead battalion to deploy overseas on short notice. The spearhead battalion, as part of its continuation training during the year, could send three company groups on three month rotations to Rifle Company Butterworth (RCB) in Malaysia. This would see RCB being utilised as a versatile training opportunity, not as a deployment in its own right, and the airfield at RCB would allow short notice onward deployment of an acclimatised company group to any potential trouble spots within Australia’s area of strategic interest. It is suggested that the fourth rotation each year is taken by the Infantry Regimental Officers Basic course, which will train young Infantry officers in preparing for, and deploying on, operations. This would, however, require a significant change in thinking by the ADF on what RCB can or should provide the Army. It is suggested that now is as good a time as any for this challenge to institutional thinking to be laid down.

To further increase training efficiency, and with current troop deployments, Infantry could simplify its deployments by having a Middle East Area of Operations battalion commitment, a Timor Leste battalion commitment, and readiness battlegroup commitment. As current taskings stand, the MEAO battalion would be responsible for providing a battlegroup headquarters and two companies to Iraq (includes the SECDET task) and a company to Afghanistan. If Overwatch Battlegroup (West) winds up in the near future, as expected, then this will further relieve pressure and allow individuals to rotate from theatre to attend promotion courses and further trade training back in Australia.

The FRC can be linked to the postings cycle so that, for example, an officer commanding (OC) arrives at the beginning of the training phase, trains the company, and then deploys with them all within an eighteen month period. In a three-year posting to an Infantry battalion a major would therefore be in a position to complete two postings; once in a rifle company then as OC ISR, operations officer or executive officer. This system would also allow company commanders to spend more time commanding their companies, rather than the ten months or so that they get now, for as a Canadian officer who fought in Korea points out:

The success of Kapyong was due to mainly high morale, and to good company, platoon and section commanders … that is something that we should never overlook in our military training. Too much officer training is aimed at high levels of command and not enough at the company and platoon level … It is surprising how easy it is to command a battalion when you have had success in commanding a company.9

Success … should be measured by how quickly it as an organisation can incorporate attached arms
Enhancing Operational Capability

An example of a five-year FRC is shown below. Note that mechanised and motorised battalions are able to fulfil their core skill set and deploy as Light Role Infantry as and when required.

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<tr>
<td>5 RAR</td>
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Figure 3. Five Year FRC

Conclusion

The Infantry needs to have the capability and confidence to undertake a more offensive role on operations. Although during recent deployments we have not been tasked to undertake the same offensive operational tasks as our sister units in the US, British and Canadian armies, when the question has been asked of the Australian Infantry, as it was during Reconstruction Task Force 3, we have not been found wanting. Hopefully this recent experience will allow the regular infantry to be considered for more aggressive roles in the future. To promote this concept this article has sought to highlight three ways in which the Infantry as a Corps can make the infantry battalion a more capable organisation for deployment on operations. The Infantry as a forward thinking, dynamic organisation needs to take up the mantle and ensure that it is as operationally flexible as possible to meet the challenges of the future. It can go a long way towards achieving this by embracing, and even enhancing, the changes due under Infantry 2012. The ISR company would greatly increase the Australian
Infantry battalion’s ability to perform the ‘know’ combat function, which in turn shapes all other activities in both high-intensity and counterinsurgency warfare. This increase of capability would in itself make the regular Infantry battalion a far more attractive option to deploy on combat operations. Finally, if the Infantry can insist on a logical FRC that allows for individual and collective training prior to operational deployments, then its soldiers will be better prepared to meet and defeat the enemy in close combat. All this will combine to make the Infantry a more attractive option for the political and military hierarchy to commit to offensive operations.

ENDNOTES

2 Commonwealth of Australia (Australian Army), LWD 3-3-7 Employment of Infantry, Land Warfare Development Centre, Puckapunyal, 2005, p. 3A-1.
4 LWD 3-3-7 Employment of Infantry, 2005, p. 3A-1.
6 John A English, On Infantry, p. 80.
7 Ibid, p. 67.
8 Iraq: 1 x BG HQ and 1 x Coy OWBG, 1 x Coy (-) SECDET, Afghanistan: 1 x Coy, Timor Leste: 1 x BG HQ and 3 x Coys.

THE AUTHOR

Captain Greg Colton is currently serving as a rifle company second-in-command with 3 RAR, in Holsworthy, Sydney. Prior to becoming an Australian he was a British Infantry Officer in The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment. His operational experience includes two years active service in Northern Ireland, as well as a seven-month deployment to southern Iraq in 2006. He was awarded a BA (Hons) in Contemporary East European Studies from the University of London, during which he spent four months working in the Romanian Ministry of National Defence. While there he researched and wrote his dissertation on the proposed reformation of the Romanian Armed Forces prior to the country’s accession into NATO.
TOWARDS A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY FOR AUSTRALIA

MAJOR STEVE FORREST

ABSTRACT

This article examines the need for a National Security Strategy in Australia. The author looks at what is meant by the term, discusses what a National Security Strategy should achieve, and outlines how such a strategy should come about in Australia.

The debate over the need for, and shape of, a National Security Strategy (NSS) is analogous to the debate over an Australian Republic. The post-mortem conducted by the Australian Republican Movement after the 1999 referendum indicated that 'the majority of Australians know that we will become a Republic and want it to be so'; however, it acknowledges that change in Australia is a difficult endeavour, and that the question of how the republic would work was the limiting factor. Similarly, there appears to be broad support for an NSS across Australian academia and think-tanks, yet the concept has never been adopted as government policy, and there are differences of opinion on the shape and content of an NSS.
Calls for an NSS are not new. The Australian Defence Force Journal published an article in 1997 that called on the Australian Government to espouse, develop and coordinate a National Security Policy. In 2000 the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade recommended that the Government develop and maintain a national security policy. Both of these were published before the more complex security environment of post-11 September 2001. The need for a coordinated national approach to security is greater now than ever before, and previously divergent voices now agree. This article will discuss what is meant by an NSS and what it might achieve, before analysing how an NSS could be devised and implemented in Australia.

A STRATEGY FOR SECURITY

There are many aspects to national security. It could simply be described as the territorial integrity and political independence of a state, or the definition could be broadened to include the protection of a state’s people, values, institutions, interests and prosperity. This broader definition appears to have been favoured by most commentators in the debate about an NSS. They cite phenomena such as globalisation and transnational crime as justifications for a close link between the security of the world, the region and the state, and the reason for the involvement of less traditional apparatus of the state (such as education and health) in ensuring national security. This will be the approach taken in this article.

A strategy is simply a long-term plan to achieve a goal. A good strategy articulates the end that is to be achieved, the way in which it will be achieved, and the means by which it will be achieved. This articulation of ends, ways and means is also apparent in good policy. For this reason, the terms ‘national security strategy’ and ‘national security policy’ are often used interchangeably. Both refer to coordinated statements of how a state sees its place and role in the world, how it intends to realise and secure this position, and what means it will use to ensure this. In Australia the parliamentary white paper has been the customary vehicle for such statements.

While the importance of national security is something agreed by most, there is little in the way of a long-term focus on the challenges that national security presents. Michael O’Connor is not alone in the opinion that:

Australians generally lack a genuine strategic view of national security, relying instead upon short term responses to events over which they have no control. Thus, most politicians, commentators and even professionals currently discuss national security policy in terms of the response to terrorism.
A scan of current security policy documents and departmental annual reports indicates that the term 'national security' primarily encompasses countering the twin threats of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, with adjunct consideration given to issues such as border protection. National security is, however, broader than just those three points; it also encompasses economic and resource security, the environment, and regional capacity- and nation-building, etc.

Critics have argued that the current national security policies are reactive and suffer from 'short-termism.' A properly structured NSS would provide guidance on what the Government views as national security issues as well as the roles and responsibilities of agencies in a coordinated environment. This is important in today's world of joint, inter-agency and multinational operations. It would ensure that there are fewer gaps and overlaps between departments, and provide leadership on development priorities across departments.

**A UNIFIED APPROACH**

An NSS can be seen as either a single, holistic document or a series of texts, statements, institutions, policies and processes that interact to become a strategy. For example, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade has twice (in 2000 and 2004) recommended an NSS as a single document to guide Australia's national security apparatus. In its review of the Army released in 2000, the Committee recommended that:

> the Government develop and maintain a national security policy. This policy should, amongst other things, guide the Defence Forces on their role in an integrated national concept for promoting and achieving international prosperity, peace and security.10

This recommendation was agreed to by the then Government, with qualification, in their 2003 reply—although which part of the recommendation was agreed to is difficult to determine. The response cites the formation of the National Security Committee of Cabinet and the Secretaries Committee on National Security as the mechanisms by which Australia maintains a coordinated policy approach on national security issues.11

The 2004 Standing Committee report, *Australia's Maritime Strategy*, also recommended that 'the Government develop a national security strategy (NSS)' that should 'clearly articulate and demonstrate that there is a coherent and coordinated
approach by Government to securing our national interests’. The Howard Government responded to the 2004 report in 2006 by highlighting eight policy documents, the role of the National Security Committee of Cabinet, the establishment of the National Security Division within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the ‘network of formal Inter-Departmental Committees that provides a venue for inter-departmental coordination of agencies with national security responsibilities’. From this, it would appear that the former Government viewed an NSS as a series of policies and coordinating structures rather than a single holistic entity.

A weakness of this decentralised approach lies in the fact that white papers and other policy documents and statements are generally produced by separate departments; they are often vertically aligned with little regard to interaction between departments. In the security sphere there have been some notable exceptions to this, such as Protecting Australia Against Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Australia’s Role in Fighting Proliferation (though this is a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade document). Many of the criticisms of the current structure and the subsequent recommendations for an NSS have centred on this stove-piping and the absence of a unified statement of national security objectives.

A number of individuals and organisations outside of the public sector have commented on the need for an NSS, and couched it in terms of a unifying document. The Australia Defence Association believes that there needs to be an ‘integrated national security white paper’. Professor Alan Dupont describes the need for a ‘grand strategy’ that involves a range of agencies including, but not limited to, Defence and Foreign Affairs and Trade. For him, it would become a ‘road map for prioritising our national security objectives and identifying the most effective instruments and policies for achieving these objectives’. A recent Kokoda Foundation paper, National Security Community 2020, provides six practical recommendations for creating a national security community, beginning with a feasibility study into a national security strategy. It stops short of recommending the development of an NSS, with the author claiming that even a green paper would be ‘too sensitive to employ’. The Kokoda Foundation has also published an article by Allan Behm, a former senior Defence official. He is highly critical of the ‘pragmatic handling of security-related issues,’ outlines the case for an NSS, and provides some planning principles to ‘maximise national security while remaining affordable’.
INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

At a national level, Defence White Papers need to be used in conjunction with other departmental policies when developing higher levels of defence planning in the absence of an overarching strategy. The Defence Update 2003 states that ‘the changed strategic and security environment requires responses from a number of government agencies’, and the Defence Update 2005 includes a chapter on ‘Whole of Government Responses’. The Defence Update 2007 provides a little more explanation as to when and how Defence will operate as part of an integrated, whole-of-government response; however, it does not provide guidance to any other agencies. These Defence Updates could be criticised for being statements of what has been done rather than articulating any future developments or providing guidance on a way forward. There is still uncertainty as to what the other departmental approaches are, or at least should be. Even though the new Government has promised that the Defence White Paper will be re-written, an effective NSS would better communicate the Government’s priorities and improve departmental coordination to reduce this uncertainty.

An example of the issues that could be clarified by the initiation of an NSS is the relationship between Defence and organisations such as the Australian Federal Police’s (AFP) Operational Response Group and the Australian Customs’ Border Protection Command. In the Operational Response Group’s case, it is difficult to see from the existing literature how this agency will coordinate with Defence, particularly since the recent authorised increase in the size of the group from 500 to 1200 and the planned procurement of armoured vehicles for the group. The ADF and the AFP have taken steps to improve interoperability, though this just serves to highlight the ad hoc nature of inter-departmental arrangements that are born out of necessity rather than strategic guidance. In the Border Protection Command case, is Defence’s commitment a permanent one? How should Defence’s capability planners respond to a loss of assets such as AP-3Cs, a capability that is finding increasing operational utility? Project Air 7000 includes manned and unmanned maritime patrol and response aircraft to eventually replace the AP-3C, yet the Defence Capability Plan 2006–2016 makes no mention of inter-agency operations or requirements. In a true, whole-of-government environment, the requirement to work with agencies such as Border Protection Command need to be considered. Indeed, by considering the requirements of all departments, synergies and economies of scale could be created. In all cases, it is not clear if there are … organisations outside of the public sector have commented on the need for an NSS …
gaps or overlaps, and what funding implications there are. Again, an effective NSS would communicate priorities and improve communication in order to clarify development priorities.

When it comes to national security, supporting institutions such as state governments and private industry must currently develop their policies on fragmented information, public opinion and market forces. Academics, when participating in national discourse on security, do not always get a clear understanding of overarching government policy, so an important input to policy development is stifled. An effective NSS would improve the links between the federal Government and the other institutions that influence national security, thus developing the whole-of-nation approach to national security.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES

Above all, an NSS should improve the performance of governments with respect to national security. The former Prime Minister John Howard cited national security as the 'first responsibility of Government', so analysing the performance of the agencies involved in national security should be a high priority. The framework for the assessment of performance is through the federal budget process, specifically the Outcomes and Outputs framework provided by the Department of Finance and Administration. According to the guidance, the framework helps answer three fundamental questions: what does the Government want to achieve? (outcomes); how does it achieve this? (outputs and administered items); and how does it know if it is succeeding? (performance reporting). The framework has two basic objectives: improving agencies' corporate governance and enhancing public accountability. In Defence, the White Paper and other elements of strategic guidance cascade through a series of planning frameworks that, among other things, results in a Portfolio Budget Submission, and then the Budget. Portfolio Budget Statements support the Budget once it is tabled in Parliament, and Annual Reports then provide the mechanism by which Parliament can assess the performance of an agency. It does this predominantly through the parliamentary committee system, including committee reviews of Annual Reports and Senate estimates committees.

Like any performance management system, the outputs are only as good as the inputs and the criteria by which the reporting is done. Given the link between the Defence White Paper and Parliament's performance management system for
agencies, an NSS that clearly articulates which agencies are responsible for national security—and their role within this responsibility—should also link to the Budget and to Annual Reports. This would reduce the gaps and overlaps between agencies and lead to better performance and accountability. In line with this, personal accountability frameworks can also be informed by an NSS. Ministerial Directives to departmental and agency heads, and the flow-on Organisational Performance Agreements, could refer to outcomes of an NSS and specify results to be delivered in order to achieve the guidance from an NSS.

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

As has been stated above, there are numerous justifications for the development of an NSS. Potentially the most difficult problem is how it could be achieved, and many commentators are curiously silent on this. There are a number of issues to be considered here. Who would be responsible for writing and maintaining it? What would the scope be and which agencies would be included? What format would it take and what would it say? These questions will be examined in turn.

WRITING AND MAINTAINING AN NSS

In an article published by the Kokoda Foundation in 2006 (though it appears to have been written in 2001), Anthony Forestier cites a number of individuals and organisations that recommend the formation of a National Security Agency, and does so himself. These recommendations pre-date the establishment of the National Security Division within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Others have recommended the creation of a Department of Homeland Security or the establishment of a Coordinating Minister for National Security. The Australia Defence Association does not believe that there is a requirement for a Department of Homeland Security (as in the United States); however, it does believe that there is a requirement for a National Security Council. In his speech to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in August 2007, the then opposition leader Kevin Rudd announced that, if elected, an Office of National Security would be established within the Prime Minister’s portfolio. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute’s Dr Anthony Bergin and Dr Mark Thompson believe that it is this organisation that should develop an NSS (before the re-write of the Defence White Paper). This makes sense. The stated role of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet is to achieve ‘good connections in this government and good connections between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments,’
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and the closest organisation at the moment to an Office of National Security—the National Security Division—provides advice on national security issues and plays a coordinating leadership role in the development of integrated, whole-of-government national security policy. In the existing structure, it would appear that the National Security Division is best placed to write and be responsible for an NSS. If formed, the Office of National Security, with a National Security Advisor as its head would be the organisation to lead the creation of an NSS. This may involve the requirement for additional staff, but more staff would be preferable to an existing, subordinate, department taking a lead, or a new department being established, as departmental parochialism is one of the criticisms of the current system.

THE SCOPE AND BREADTH OF AN NSS

As seen within the definition, national security can cover a broad range of areas. There is a breadth of current policy that both directly and indirectly affects national security, and there is hardly a federal agency that cannot lay claim to being involved in national security. In 2006 the then Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, discussed the close link between national security and international security. He also stated that ‘capacity building and nation building are crucial elements in any national security strategy’, before providing some examples of areas in which Australia is providing this support. Agencies included Defence, Immigration, Customs, Transport and Regional Services, Australian Federal Police, various intelligence agencies, Treasury, Department of Finance and Administration, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and AusAID. He also discussed economic security, defence, law and order, border protection, health, and the environment as elements that affect national security. Mark Thompson, in attempting to determine the extent of national security spending, included funding from agencies such as the Australian Federal Police, AusAID, Australian Secret Intelligence Service, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Immigration, and the Office of National Assessments. He also mentions the role of Customs. There is no easy or definitive answer to the question of scope of agencies to include, which may be the biggest reason for calls for an NSS going unheeded.

A detailed discussion of scope is beyond the means of this article, though the elements outlined in the current Defence White Paper—Defence 2000—would be a good start. The first sections outline the ends to be achieved by, and the ways of achieving, the Defence strategy. Later sections then reinforce this and provide the means by which the strategy will be achieved. In its first iteration, an NSS should harness existing policy and machinery as much as possible, thereby reducing the friction that inevitably follows. As far as
the inclusion of agencies is concerned, there are some, such as Defence and Foreign Affairs and Trade, that seem self-evident; however, the role of departments such as Health and Education cannot be underestimated. Any NSS should therefore include statements for every federal department, and it should outline their role as part of the national security framework. It must be a living document.

FORMAT AND CONTENT OF AN NSS

Once the scope has been determined, the other difficulty is format and content. Good strategy, and good policy, should articulate ends, ways and means. There are a number of examples of security-related policy that can be examined and critiqued to inform this part of the debate. Alan Dupont points to *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* as an example to inform thinking for an Australian NSS. The United States NSS is interesting in that it is aspirational policy, and appears devoid of the means to go with the stated ends. Despite having an NSS, a lack of coordination across US agencies has been blamed for failures in Iraq and as well as failures in the response to Hurricane Katrina. The United States NSS makes scant mention of any of the Departments of State nor provides clarity of roles. For these reasons, the United States NSS does not provide the coordination that is called for within Australia. In the Australian sphere, *Defence 2000* and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade White Paper—*Advancing the National Interest*—provide an interesting contrast. *Defence 2000* attempts to clearly articulate ends, ways and means, whereas *Advancing the National Interest* does not and is more along the United States NSS lines of aspirational policy. Any Australian NSS needs to go beyond aspirational policy or a list of what has been achieved to date. It needs to ensure that it coherently outlines the ends, ways and means by which security of the nation will be achieved.

CONCLUSION

Up to this point, no Australian Government has formally adopted an NSS. The position of the previous Coalition Government was that the existing policies and mechanisms were sufficient to coordinate and develop national security. The recently elected Labor Government has promised that it will re-write the Defence White Paper, establish an Office of National Security within the Prime Minister’s portfolio and produce a National Security Statement, but it has not said that it will develop a full NSS. The arguments for the *status quo* are strong—do not fix what is not broken—and those who oppose an NSS would say that that the current...
system works. Yet there are many prominent security analysts who have argued for a unifying NSS. They argue that the current system is reactive, stove-piped, only looks at a narrow range of threats and contingencies, and suffers from 'short-termism'. More does need to be done in order to ensure that Australia's security apparatus operates with unity of effort and continues to develop to a common end. A national security strategy is the logical start point for achieving this. The problem is how it is to be achieved.

It is clear that the agency to lead the development of a more coherent NSS should be the Office of National Security if it is formed, or in the current structure, the National Security Division. These agencies are uniquely (and deliberately) placed as overarching and coordinating bodies that can overcome parochialism and make the hard prioritisation decisions that are required. The NSS should include statements of ends, ways and means, and provide strategic guidance to all departments on their contribution to national security. Whether this is done in a single white paper or with capstone and subordinate documents is immaterial. What needs to be avoided is a non-committal policy that departments can evade if it does not suit their perceived purpose.

The contest over an NSS is not new and is far from over, much like that which surrounds the idea of Australia becoming a republic. The benefit in an NSS may not necessarily be in the final product, but in the process of debate, analysis and change that goes with the effort.

ENDNOTES

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10 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, From Phantom to Force, p. 181.


12 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Australia’s Maritime Strategy, p. 32.

13 These include policy documents from the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Advancing the National Interest: Australia’s Foreign and Trade Policy Paper, Transnational Terrorism: The Threat to Australia, and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Australia’s Role in Fighting Proliferation — Practical responses to new challenges) and Defence (Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force), and two strategic reviews (Australia’s National Security: A Defence Update 2003 and Australia’s National Security: A Defence Update 2005). Protecting Australia Against Terrorism: Australia’s National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Arrangements, released by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the National Counter-Terrorism Plan are the primary documents on Australia’s national counter-terrorism policy and arrangements, and set out collaborative arrangements between the Commonwealth and States and Territories for preventing, preparing for and responding to terrorist incidents within Australia.’ This also highlights the point made by Michael O’Connor about national security policy being dominated by a response to terrorism. Department of Defence, Government Response to Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade: Australia’s Maritime Strategy, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2006.
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14 Ibid.
16 This is a view shared by the likes of Peter Jennings (see Peter Jennings, 'The Policy Shift the Media Missed: Australia's Emerging National Security Strategy', Policy, Vol. 20, Iss. 2, 2004, p. 38) and Athol Yates (see Athol Yates, Engineering A Safer Australia: Securing Critical Infrastructure and the Built Environment, Institution of Engineers Australia, Barton, 2003, p. 107).
27 Rudd, Fresh Ideas for Future Challenges.
29 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, About PM&C: What we do and how we do it, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 2007.
31 He also states that ‘Prompted by the events of 9/11, it’s now recognised that no single agency has the capacity, or range of capabilities, necessary to ensure our security. The threat of terrorism in Australia, and to Australians abroad, has forced a whole-of-government approach to national security at the Federal level. Even beyond the threat of terrorism, it’s increasingly recognised that our national security interests are best served by a coordinated approach that uses all the levers available to government.’ Mark Thompson, *The Cost of Defence: ASPI Defence Budget Brief 2006-2007 (Executive Summary)*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, 2006, p. 10, accessed at <http://www.aspi.org.au/publications/publication_details.aspx?ContentID=93> on 29 April 2007.

32 It has been argued that, post the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the US State Department was unable to commit to the post conventional warfighting phase as they were understaffed and unready to do so, and that this is one of the causes of the difficulties faced presently. T E Ricks, *Fiasco: the American Military Adventure in Iraq*, Penguin Press, New York, 2006; R Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*, Alfred A Knopf, New York, 2006; Gwyn Dyer, *The Mess They Made: The Middle East After Iraq*, Scribe, Melbourne, 2007.

33 ‘Emergency management’s greatest challenge is improving coordination among its parts as the number of disaster-related organizations grows along with the kinds of hazards, including terrorism and pandemic disease in addition to natural and industrial disasters,’ and ‘if individual emergency managers understand their jobs as part of an “all hazards, all phases” process, they might make decisions based less on turf claims and more on a desire to reduce the damage that disasters wreak on citizens who deserve better from their governments’. Patrick Roberts, ‘FEMA after Katrina: Redefining Responsiveness’, *Policy Review*, No. 137, June/July 2006, accessed at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/3402076.html> on 18 June 2007; ‘Coordination problems between proliferating and overlapping federal bureaus impede efficient decision-making, which is clearly the case with both intelligence and disaster response.’ Chris Edwards, ‘Know Thy Place: Federalism is a good strategy, even, if not especially, in disasters’; nationalreviewonline, 2005, accessed at <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/edwards200509260807.asp> on 18 June 2007.

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FUTURE CONCEPTS AND FORCE DEVELOPMENT

AUSTRALIAN ARMY AVIATION AND COMMAND IN THE COMBINED ARMS ENVIRONMENT

A CULTURAL SHIFT REQUIRED?

MAJOR KIM GILFILLAN

ABSTRACT

This article outlines the current Australian Army Aviation (AAAvn) General Service Officer (GSO) career profile and discusses proposed modifications to career requirements that the author recommends for the AAAvn GSO to function effectively in the combined arms environment.
INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the Tiger Armed Reconnaissance helicopter (ARH) considerably expands the role of Australian Army Aviation (AAAvn) and increases the complexities and professional challenges confronting officers who command this capability. In the first instance it represents a significant increase in complexity faced by the individuals who operate the aircraft, something that will take time to address but also something that AAAvn has well in hand. There is a second and more daunting challenge confronting AAAvn, however, a challenge that will require significant cultural change to overcome. The inclusion of AAAvn in the Manoeuvre Battlespace Operating System (BOS) and the corresponding doctrinal requirement to command combined arms organisations in combat raises expectations of AAAvn commanders and their ability to develop the necessary broad skill and experience base. AAAvn’s current General Service Officer (GSO) career construct, based on specialist skill development, is suitable for employment as a supporting arm but not as a manoeuvre arm. In order to gain the trust of the Army to command ground troops and other BOS in combat, AAAvn must redefine the career requirements of its GSO to ensure development of the necessary skills, knowledge and experience.

This article will describe the current AAAvn GSO career profile up to lieutenant colonel, and then compare that structure against manoeuvre arm requirements and against examples from the British Army Air Corps (AAC) and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). It will also consider the AAAvn troop command construct, before showing that in order to define AAAvn GSO career development requirements, it is first necessary to identify and address two contradictory assumptions.

The first assumption is that AAAvn GSO need to follow the generic Army GSO model, and the second is that AAAvn GSO need significant flying experience to be capable of fulfilling their duties as aviation commanders. It seems widely acknowledged that it is difficult, if not impossible, to satisfy these two competing requirements simultaneously.1 This article will show that the first assumption is valid and must be adhered to if AAAvn is to become a true manoeuvre arm. It will challenge the second assumption by suggesting that AAAvn could reduce the pure flying experience it gives to GSO without compromising command or safety. Flowing on from this, this article will show that the AAAvn GSO career profile should be modified to focus less on the development of specialist aviation skill sets, and more on the development of a generalist and wider understanding of the Army and the ADF. It is only by doing this that AAAvn will be able to grow GSO with the requisite intricate and tested knowledge of the employment of combined arms tactics.
DISCUSSION

ARMY GSO CAREER MODELS

The span of employment of a GSO encompasses regimental, training and staff appointments. The rationale for this broad employment is that varied experience contributes to the development of attributes that will enhance an officer’s effectiveness as a commander or senior staff officer. A GSO may spend up to eight of the fifteen years between graduation from the Royal Military College and promotion to lieutenant colonel in training and staff postings. These years are used to develop the broad skill set and understanding necessary for command and senior staff positions. While not explicitly stated in any of the guiding documentation, this career structure or profile is based on the premise that officers are employed to command and manage, but not necessarily to do other than in the context of gaining a suitable understanding of what their soldiers do so that they will be equipped to employ the latter correctly.

AAAVn GSO CAREER STRUCTURE AND PROFILE

AAAVn GSO career development is governed by DI(A) PERS 47-1, although it does not refer to AAAvn GSO directly. Other references include the AAAvn Career Guide, and an AAAvn Manning Review from December 2001. There is little evidence of other research pertinent to AAAvn GSO career development, although presumably there was work done in this area at the time the Corps was expanded to absorb RAAF utility helicopters.

The AAAvn Career Guide defines three pilot specialisations. Officers start in the Regimental stream, where they gain the foundation skills and knowledge ‘necessary’ for subsequent supervisory or staff appointments, and then either continue in the Command and General Staff stream or the Technical stream. Although the Guide acknowledges DI(A) PERS 47-1 as the authoritative document, it differs in its guidance to AAAvn GSO by stipulating that they will spend the majority of their time-in-rank as captain within Aviation units and that some may also compete for career broadening non-corps appointments. In effect, and in contrast to a possible eight years in the generic GSO model, the AAAvn GSO profile allows for a maximum of only four years in career broadening postings prior to promotion to lieutenant colonel, and even allows for none whatsoever. In this can be seen the outline of the unstated assumption about not only how much flying and aviation experience is ‘necessary’ for an AAAvn GSO, but also about how much of the generalist model should apply to AAAvn.
This in turn is evidence of the extent to which a ‘specialist’ culture exists in AAAvn, a culture that emphasises the importance of flying hours in credible decision-making. This creates conflict in the minds of AAAvn GSO between their personal desire to specialise in an aviation career, AAAvn guidance that supports this, and their perception that the Army requires them to be managed as generalist officers. While there is a place for some GSO to continue into the Technical stream, for AAAvn to take its place in the manoeuvre BOS and for its GSO to achieve the level of combined arms competence required, this culture needs to change. GSO must be chosen early for the Command and General Staff stream, potentially at senior lieutenant or junior captain level, in order to develop the appropriate attributes.

The existence of this ‘specialist’ culture is further evidenced by the fact that many GSO continue flying throughout their time as junior officers. A recent survey of the careers of a sample of AAAvn lieutenant colonels revealed that only 30 per cent had completed the four years in non-flying positions outlined in the AAAvn Career Guide, with some completing only half that time. The trend to specialise remains current and is reflected in the fact that in 2007, two squadron commanders had remained in flying positions throughout their careers. While this may be suitable for GSO who wish to continue in the Technical stream, it does not satisfy Army requirements for the Command and General Staff stream and is potentially detrimental to both the individuals’ future careers and to AAAvn’s place in the Manoeuvre BOS.

GSO/SSO DICHOTOMY

Since the introduction of the AAAvn Specialist Service Officer (SSO) Pilot Scheme in the late 1980s, there seems to have been a merging or overlapping of GSO and SSO career streams. This has been caused partly because the two schemes run the same rank structure, making it difficult to differentiate between the two types of officer. In fact, the Manning Review goes so far as to suggest that the AAAvn Officer structure has diverged so far from the standard Army model that recovery is no longer practicable; instead, it postulates a removal of all boundaries between GSO and SSO. It does this despite also recognising the increasing importance of AAAvn Officers developing the skills, knowledge and experience for command in a manoeuvre environment.

This situation has been exacerbated by a desire, and plan, to see GSO and SSO as equals. While it may be possible for an SSO to follow a GSO profile and build GSO competencies through on-the-job training, this does not take into account the eighteen months training invested in GSO at RMC. To assume that this training can...
be replicated for SSO by the rank of captain is akin to suggesting that pilot qualifications could be achieved by the rank of captain without completing a pilots course. Of course, this would be very difficult to achieve without moving all the training mechanisms from Tamworth and Oakey to the regiments. The Review does not specify how eighteen months of RMC training would be achieved in the regiments other than through attendance at the normal career courses; courses that are designed to further develop officers who did attend RMC. This assumption becomes even more invalid when considered in the context of the introduction of ARH, its requirements for synchronisation within the combined arms team, and the development of the Aviation Battle Group. Command can no longer be confined to aviation elements, but now includes the potential of responsibility for ground troops in combat.

The *Rand Symposium on Pilot Training and the Pilot Career: Final Report* was published in 1970 for the US Air Force; however, it not only retains relevance but also identifies critical information relevant to AAAvn. One of the principle problems that it grapples with is the dichotomy of pilot/officer and the competing requirements of technical proficiency and the development of future leadership. It identifies that the staff officer of the future will need to manage even more complex systems and that, as a result, even more diverse staff training and experience will be required, and, while acknowledging the lack of an accepted definition, suggested that between 1000–1500 hours might be enough to satisfy experience requirements (for squadron command). This could reduce the number of years required in a flying role to perhaps four to five and would leave potentially three to four years at captain level to complete career broadening postings. The symposium report gives further credence to the Army GSO model and the requirement that AAAvn GSO destined for the Command and General Staff stream follow it.

The British Army Air Corps (AAC) has a similar concept to AAAvn in terms of specialist aircrew and a command/staff stream; however, the way this is accomplished is markedly different. SSO equivalent within the AAC are senior non-commissioned officers (SNCO) rather than officers, and this makes it substantially easier for the AAC to manage its officers under the same construct as the rest of the officer corps. In fact, the staff officer responsible for AAC officer management reported that ‘Basically, AAC officers follow a career structure identical to other officers within the Army, with the [only] added requirement being to complete Pilot Training and Conversion to type.’ In effect, the AAC gives its officers enough ‘aviation experience’ to equip them to make appropriate decisions while ensuring that they are also developed as generalist officers. AAC officers are given the experience to understand
what their soldiers do in order that they can plan their employment effectively. In contrast to AAAvn, the AAC has demonstrated that not only is it possible to do this, but that it has also yielded good results on operations from Northern Ireland to Sierra Leone and Iraq.

Would the AAC structure be employable in AAAvn? The principal reason it would not is the common rank structure within AAAvn. A sergeant who has more aviation experience than an officer and who provides advice while respecting the rank difference is somewhat different to the SSO captain who provides that specialist advice to the GSO troop commander, who may be of equal rank. In AAAvn, the common rank structure does not provide the optimum situation for the GSO to make command decisions while at the junior captain level, and militates against early troop command. However, the principal concept that can be drawn from the AAC example is that officers in AAAvn would have command capability by being able to rely on specialist advice rather than by being the holders of specialist knowledge themselves.

TROOP COMMAND

Aviation is one of the only places in any military, if not the only place, where junior officers are placed in command without appropriate provision of separation between themselves and those they command. The troop commander is generally placed in command of a group of his peers who are possibly from the same troop, likely from the same squadron, and highly likely to be from the same regiment. The situation exists because of a combination of a number of factors including common rank structure, the size of the organisation, and an attempt to mirror the generic Army model as closely as possible. It poses a difficult circumstance for the junior leader who is now in command of those other troop members who until ‘yesterday’ were his peers. Some, perhaps many, AAAvn troop commanders have had the strength of character to perform strongly despite these conditions; however, few have been tested in combat. It is interesting to note that when deploying AAAvn capabilities on operations, the level of command has often been increased relative to the level of capability. Perhaps this has been done in recognition of the flaw in our command structure.

The cultural differences between the Army and the RAAF are large enough to militate against broad comparison; however, there is one area from which AAAvn could draw ideas. Perhaps to cater for specialisation requirements, all command positions in the RAAF are now filled by one rank higher than the Army equivalents. For example, a flight is now commanded by a squadron leader instead of a flight
lieutenant, a squadron by a wing commander, and a wing by a group captain. One of the benefits of this model is additional time for pilots to generate experience prior to command. It also builds in a time and space gap between the flight commander and the other members of the flight provided by a posting away from the operational unit during the mid-late flight lieutenant period.

While the increase in rank may not be suitable for Army, the model does bear some consideration in the AAAvn context as it may help to resolve the time conflict present in the current GSO career profile. A potential solution would be to move some way toward the RAAF model without crossing the rank boundary. Most GSO currently achieve troop command in their early years as captain. Moving that milestone back to late captain would provide additional time to achieve flying competencies as well as broadening experience. More importantly, it would provide time separation between the troop commander and the troop members by allowing (or requiring) an intermediate posting away from the regiment. In the context of ARH this would mean that troop commanders would be given a broader understanding of the wider army and their place in it. It would also allow time for completion of the Combat Officers Advanced Course, something that would further enhance the synchronisation of ARH effects in the combined arms team.

**COMMAND EXPECTATIONS**

An Infantry platoon commander must rely on the experience of his platoon sergeant to help him as he gains his own experience. The AAC flight commander relies on the experience of his flight second in command (normally a SNCO). AAAvn, however, appears to have arrived at a position where GSO are expected to have gained sufficient experience to command the troop without having to rely on a more experienced member of the troop for advice. This relates back again to the question of what is expected of AAAvn GSO. Jans identifies a ‘professional-identity conflict’ for AAAvn GSO between their roles as professional aviators and military officers.11 They are required at once to be both ‘the best aviators they can be’ and capable of answering their own specialist questions, while at the same time they are expected to conform to the Army generalist model.

RMC trains GSO to be able to accept specialist advice and make appropriate decisions. AAAvn confounds this training by expecting its GSO to know enough about aviation to be able to provide their own specialist advice. Why does AAAvn have SSO if not to provide that specialist advice? How is it that the other corps can train their young GSO to make appropriate decisions in dangerous environments.
without having to provide years of additional experience, but AAAvn cannot? In this lies the key contradiction that must be resolved. AAAvn has created a command climate in opposition to that of the rest of the Army, a climate where GSO are expected to be ‘specialist’ rather than generalist. This paper proposes that AAAvn GSO must be trained to make good decisions as combined arms commanders, not necessarily trained to be ‘the best aviators’. This will entail a significant cultural shift and will require mentoring from senior aviators to ensure that junior AAAvn GSO are prompted in the right direction.

COMBINED ARMS REQUIREMENTS

The introduction of the ARH, and the coincidental inclusion of AAAvn in the Manoeuvre BOS, makes it even more important that we get the career development of our GSO right. It means that AAAvn GSO must be capable of commanding air and ground assets in combat. AAAvn officers are able to learn quickly, but this is no substitute for experience and repetition. Jans and Schmidtchen suggest that Air Force people of all ranks pride themselves on their technical excellence and tend to be more narrowly technically expert than those in the Army. They note, by way of comparison, that the Air Force pilot might be considered a Samurai Knight, with the commanding officer (CO) of the squadron being the Head Knight, while the CO of an Army regiment might instead be likened to a Chess Master. Air Force commanders have an explicit requirement to be as technically proficient as those they are commanding. The Army, however, relies on its soldiers to be the holders of technical proficiency, and requires its officers to understand the best tactical employment of those soldiers. The RAAF specialist approach to career progression, in-line with Jans’s ‘Knight’ metaphor, seems to have been transferred to AAAvn culture, perhaps at the same time as the transfer of responsibility of battlefield helicopters from RAAF to Army.

Of course, AAAvn sits uncomfortably between these two positions, being neither entirely part of ground manoeuvre nor part of the Air Force. It is perhaps in an attempt to straddle this divide that AAAvn has arrived at a juncture where it must choose what it requires from its GSO. In any event, as part of the Manoeuvre BOS, AAAvn GSO now have a responsibility to understand the best tactical employment not only of their aircraft but also of Infantry, Armour, and the other BOS. In essence, AAAvn GSO need to become Chess Masters rather than Head Knights. To do this, AAAvn GSO in the Command and General Staff stream must be equipped with suitable non-corps experience to the same standard as their peers from the other combat arms.
TRUST

Mission command is a core element of the Army’s philosophy and is underpinned by trust and strong leadership. Mutual trust between superior and subordinate is essential to the application of mission command. The commander must be able to trust his subordinate to carry out tasks in accordance with his intent, while conversely the subordinate must be able to trust his commander to make appropriate decisions. The development of this trust takes time and training, and is based on common understanding and respect for rank, position and experience.

Common understanding is something that AAAvn must build. This will be achieved, to some extent, through common training and will be facilitated by the co-location of 1 Aviation Regiment with 1 Brigade. However, respect for the ‘experience’ of AAAvn and AAAvn GSO will only be developed by broader exposure of AAAvn GSO to demanding staff appointments, particularly at the tactical level. In essence, in order to gain the trust of the Army, AAAvn and AAAvn GSO will have to show that they are worthy of it, to prove that they are capable of planning and conducting combat missions to the same standard as their Infantry and Armour peers. It is difficult to see this being achieved under the current ‘specialist’ structure.

TIME SPAN OF DISCRETION

Jans and Schmidtchen also discuss the notion of the time span of discretion, a notion that each position has a time span of discretion associated with it, and that that time span increases with the amount of responsibility associated with the position. It is related to the time that it may take to implement policies and see them through to fruition. It is important to note, however, that Jans makes a distinction between command positions that do not have a long time span of discretion (at least at sub-unit and unit level) and staff positions that do.

In junior ranks this time span can be measured in months, so a junior officer can learn and implement much in a year. The corollary is that the same junior officer may be moved relatively frequently, to the mutual benefit of the individual and organisation. Current retention concerns relating to short-term postings to multiple locations could be offset by back-to-back postings to the same location, but to different units and roles. In relation to AAAvn, this adds weight to the possibility of increasing the number of postings that an AAAvn GSO could fill and still meet flying experience requirements. In essence, in a two- or three-year period, the
GSO could be exposed to two or three different training and staff positions. There is a small risk to the organisation in terms of consistently having to train people in a new role flowing from reduced tenure at the junior officer level; however, the added benefits to AAAvn would be significant.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of ARH and inclusion in the Manoeuvre BOS requires AAAvn to be capable of fielding combat teams and battle groups and commanding not only air assets but also ground troops in combat. This in turn requires GSO with more than just specialised aviation knowledge. It requires AAAvn GSO with an intricate and tested knowledge of the employment and tactics of all aspects of the combined arms team. To achieve this, AAAvn must redefine what it requires from its GSO and must develop a career profile that guarantees provision to AAAvn Command and Staff GSO of the necessary knowledge and experience. Transition to true generalist GSO will be a significant cultural transformation for AAAvn, and it will be only through strong leadership from Army and senior AAAvn officers that it will succeed. Young AAAvn GSO must be convinced of the benefits of a generalist career that leads to becoming a Chess Master. Failure to do so may be detrimental to AAAvn’s ability to be employed effectively as a manoeuvre arm, and will be manifested by an inability to understand, command and employ combined arms in combat.

ENDNOTES

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2 Department of Defence (Army Headquarters), Defence Instruction (Army) Personnel 47-1 Career Management of Australian Army Officers, Department of Defence (Army Headquarters), Canberra, 4 May 2007.
3 M Wheatley, email dated 14 November 2007. Colonel Wheatley was the inaugural Career Advisor AAAvn (1990–91).
4 N Jans, To become ‘the best aviators they can be’: Retention strategies for Rotary Wing Pilots and Observers, Sigma Consultancy, Canberra, 2005, p. 2.
7 Ibid, p. 6.
THE AUTHOR

Major Kim Gilfillan graduated to AAAvn in 1997 and following the pilots course was posted to 161 Reconnaissance Squadron where he deployed to Timor Leste on a number of occasions. In 2003 he was posted to the Australian Defence Force Academy as a Divisional Officer and was subsequently selected for an exchange with the British Army in Germany in 2005. In 2006 he deployed to Iraq as the Commander of the British Army Air Corps Lynx (helicopter) Detachment. He recently completed his Master of Science and Technology (Aviation) through the University of NSW, and is currently serving as the Officer Instructor Aviation, Combat Command Wing, at the School of Armour in Puckapunyal where he instructs on the Combat Officers Advanced Course.
IDEAS AND ISSUES

PRIMACY AND THE UNIPOLAR MOMENT

THE DEBATE OVER AMERICAN POWER IN AN ASYMMETRICAL WORLD*

WILLIAM THOMAS ALLISON

ABSTRACT

The debate about the importance of the United States, and whether it is the leader in a unipolar global order, continues to provoke leading thinkers in the world of International Relations. This article explores some of the intellectual positions that have led to current thinking about the United States and its place in an asymmetrical world.

* This article is an expanded version of a lecture given at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, 24 September 2007, published exclusively by the Australian Army Journal.
There are few things to stir the intellectual emotions during our time as the United States role in the world. There is wide disagreement about the merit and legitimacy of the recent upsurge in what appears to be unilaterism with attitude. In particular, the US invasion of Iraq has intensified this debate that is less about the actual power of the United States and more about how the United States should use this power for its security and the greater good. Well before 11 September 2001, the world had seen a range of threats to US and global security, including ethnic and national conflict, rogue states seeking and in some cases acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and transnational terrorism, to name but a few. There is little conventional symmetry in this world since the end of the Cold War. Unilateralism and multilateralism in this rather asymmetrical global order are hotly debated, as they should be, and will characterise the conversation about international affairs for some time to come, especially as the United States seems to be providing fewer ‘global public goods’, like security and protection of free markets, while at the same time increasing irritation among allies and other friends through its heavy-handed hegemonic behaviour. Moreover, history has shown, at least since Westphalia, that major powers prefer multilateralism over unilaterism, though it must be conceded that never in this period was there a sole superpower.

In a 1991 article in Foreign Affairs, Charles Krauthammer described what he called ‘The Unipolar Moment’ of US power. Krauthammer took issue with three basic notions that many observers in the waning days of the Cold War believed would take hold. These assumptions were based upon the supposition that a new multipolar world would replace the old bipolar Cold War world. First, with the Soviet Union becoming defunct, Europe, Japan, and China would quickly rise in the new world order as major powers. Second, US domestic opinion would supposedly welcome this new multipolar world with a new consensus for an internationalist foreign policy. Such a consensus would apparently be possible now that Vietnam and anti-Communist hysteria had been vanquished from the US memory. Finally, the new post-Cold War strategic environment, with its shining new multipolar world order, would be one in which the threat of war would be ‘dramatically diminished’.

Writing before the Gulf War had actually taken place, Krauthammer found all three of these assumptions ‘mistaken’. Europe, he argued, would take its place not as equal partner but as a vassal attendant of the United States. The US internationalist consensus would quickly fade, if it indeed ever became evident in the first place. An internationalist approach to US foreign policy is historically, after all, much like an
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Primacy and the Unipolar Moment

independent state of Poland—it has rarely existed. Instead, Krauthammer predicted a conservative approach to foreign affairs would prevail. And instead of a world where the threat of war was lessened, the collapse of the Cold War power dynamic would create a world in which what Krauthammer called ‘small aggressive states’ would seek weapons of mass destruction and fill regional power vacuums left open by the decline of the Soviet–US power dynamic. In such a world, the United States would not be part of a multipolar world, but instead would seek to create a world in which its national security would be secure through maintaining order across the globe, or at least where US security interests, broadly defined, might be threatened. Such a world would be unipolar, as the United States would be a hyperpower, the first one of its kind since the height of the Roman Empire.4

The United States as hyperpower. What did this mean? What made it possible? And how would the United States exercise this unprecedented power and how long would this ‘unipolar moment’ actually last? The Gulf crisis of 1990–91 provided a preview of things to come. Europe, and to a lesser extent Great Britain, uncomfortably took a backseat during the crisis and ensuing war, taking its first step towards becoming—as some thought at the time—irrelevant. The Soviet Union could do little to influence this event, as Russia would later do just as little in many others. The Gulf crisis had brought into sharp focus a new world order in which the United States, with its Western allies in tow, was the single pole of power. Only the United States could marshal the diplomatic, military, economic, and political tools from its national security apparatus to involve itself in any situation, any crisis, anywhere in the world, at its own choosing, and do so unilaterally. The Gulf War of 1991 was for the first modern war of choice, the first exercise of overt unilateral US power.

For Krauthammer, the Gulf crisis ‘inadvertently’ revealed to the world the United States’ unipolar moment. It also exposed the uncomfortable fact that whatever multilateralism that had and currently existed was superficial rather than real. Real multilateralism is based upon some semblance of equal partners acting in concert, in the tradition of the alliance against Napoleon or the Grand Alliance of the Second World War. Superficial or apparent multilateralism is cooperative action that is in essence a pretext or veil for the unipolar actor. The Gulf War of 1991 was certainly an instance of apparent rather than real multilateralism. No multilateral organisation led the way, neither the United Nations nor NATO. Instead, the United Nations Security Council resolutions, the logistical build-up, war planning, and the token military and admittedly in some cases significant economic contributions were all the result of US leadership or prodding.5
It should be no surprise that the United States has exercised overt unilateralism and has occasionally disguised its unilateralism in multilateralist clothes, especially when involving use of force. Unilateralism has been, after all, a mainstay of the United States diplomatic and national security tradition. The Founding Fathers went out of their way to ensure that the young Republic would not become the vassal state of some European power. They excused the brief alliance with France during the American War for Independence as one of necessity—only when US liberty was directly threatened would an alliance or multilateral approach be taken. Otherwise, it would have to be a one-horse show, lest the Republic be taken advantage of by the belligerent and overbearing European powers. Hoping that the US independent economic potential would appeal more to European states than its potential as part of a European empire, the United States believed that its national security could only be maintained through unilateralism. Witness the Barbary Wars of the early 1800s, the War of 1812, the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, the War with Mexico of 1846–48, and indeed the Civil War itself, where the Confederacy attempted to violate this holy writ by trying to bring Great Britain and France into the conflict. President Abraham Lincoln, in perhaps one of his greatest political triumphs, managed to prevent such an alliance against the Union by simply freeing slaves.6

Having a great two-ocean moat to make invading the United States impractical if not impossible made such a unilateralist approach possible for such a young and militarily weak nation. However, by the 1880s, as industrialisation took hold and the modern arms race accelerated with great speed, the United States invited increased vulnerability by indeed becoming an economic heavy-weight and a modernising naval player. Unilateral policies and military action became the norm for a nation that seemed ready to stretch its economic and military legs—the War with Spain in 1898, the Philippine Insurrection, the Punitive Expedition in Mexico, and even the American strategic approach to the Great War, despite Wilson’s idealism, were unilateral uses of force. The Boxer Rebellion alone represented an odd foray into the multilateral world, but only locally and only because of necessity rather than choice.

The 1920s and 1930s saw the United States embrace both multilateral and unilateral approaches to its own national security problems and interests. The Washington Naval Treaties of 1922, for example, were designed from a US perspective to safeguard US interests in the Pacific through a multilateral agreement. The Smoot-Hawley Tariff, however, was a decidedly unilateral if not counterproductive protectionist policy. The Second World War brought the great aberration in the US

Real multilateralism is based upon some semblance of equal partners acting in concert…
military experience and represents the one time that the United States had to discard its unilateralist tradition for real multilateralism. Not without its problems and far from perfect at the time and as a historical example, the Grand Alliance was indeed a real multilateral effort.

The post-Second World War environment threatened American national security in an entirely new manner. Now a superpower sharing a bipolar world with the Soviet Union, the United States linked its own security to that of the free world. Now, American security required a free world that embraced American values. Faced with a like-minded adversary, however, the United States in turn had to embrace new strategies to obtain this security. The proliferation of multilateral organisations after the Second World War—organisations such as the United Nations, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization, and others—were ultimately superficial multilateral organisations. These organisations and agreements were designed by the United States, for the United States, and were dominated (and arguably still are) by the United States. For the first time in its diplomatic tradition, the United States found multilateralism useful on a broad scale.

American use of force during the Cold War era reflected this. Korea was no more a multilateral operation than was the Gulf War of 1991. Under the guise of the United Nations, the Korean conflict was an American commanded, supplied, and fought war for American interests. The French Indochina War and the Suez Crisis both had an American puppet master. Vietnam was an American model with a SEATO hood ornament. NATO was dominated by American funding, American equipment, and American military doctrine.

But American unilateralism and the nation’s none too subtle use of multilateralism for its own security goals was palatable to many allies and friends because European and Pacific Rim security had become intertwined with American security. Other nations more or less willingly allowed the United States to conduct such a strategy because it was in their interest to do so. That the United States appeared to be a non-threatening hegemonic power (unusual in the human experience) helped Great Britain, Germany, Japan, even Australia, swallow the bitter pill of playing second fiddle in an American band.

While Krauthammer did not get it all right, he assuredly did not get it all wrong. By the end of the 1990s, the United States was in a definite unipolar moment, with Europe seeking relevancy, Japanese economic strength on the wane, and Russia
wallowing in its own self-created political and economic mess. China advanced, but remained so far behind the United States that, at least it appeared at the end of the 1990s, it might take decades for China to catch up to the United States even if the United States stood still. Rogue states seeking increased WMD capability (Libya, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, etc.), however, made the world a dangerous place, as did transnational, non-state actors, like al-Qaeda, and ethnic and national movements in the wake of the collapse of the Cold War world, such as in the Balkans and several former Soviet Republics, not to mention Africa. Krauthammer had to confess that the United States, however, had not experienced a resurgence of isolationism; rather a sort of post-Second World War need for engagement had taken hold.7

11 September 2001 only added more authority to US unipolarity. Krauthammer maintained that 11 September ‘heightened the asymmetry’ in three profound ways. First, US military power, used unilaterally, was revealed in all its might for the world to see. The 1999 air campaign over Kosovo and Serbia had hinted at the great technological gulf between the United States and military capabilities of Europe, Russia and China. To destroy the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001 in only a matter weeks, at a distance of several thousand miles, with only minimal casualties was clear and unquestionable evidence to the world of the capabilities of US military might and political will. What the world had suspected to exist had now been exposed in all its ‘fury’. Second, September 11 showed the ‘recuperative powers’ of the US economy and political processes. Despite being shut down for days, US stock exchanges rebounded. Despite being physically attacked, the Department of Defense, the Congress, and the Presidency responded without a hitch. Last, September 11 forced a realignment of other powers. Pakistan, India, Russia, and others showed support in a variety of ways for the US War on Terror. Historically, other powers tend to band together to counterbalance the hegemon, but in 2001 they banded together to support the hegemon.8

Not all are convinced by Krauthammer’s unipolar concept. Writing in 1999, Samuel Huntington used the time-honoured framework that global politics is ‘about power and the struggle for power’ to describe the emerging post-Cold War world order. Huntington freely accepted that the United States was the sole superpower, but disagreed with the idea that this fact made the world unipolar. For Huntington, bipolar and

While Krauthammer did not get it all right, he assuredly did not get it all wrong.

11 September 2001 only added more authority to US unipolarity.
multipolar models also fell short in describing the new order. Instead, he proposed a *uni-*multipolar system of a single superpower and several regional major powers. Under this system, all major international issues and crises demand action by the superpower and some combination of the major powers. However, action taken by combinations of major powers can be summarily rejected by the superpower.

The United States, with its global reach and pre-eminence in all categories of power, is the superpower, of course. The major powers are categorised thus because although they enjoy regional pre-eminence, they do not have global reach economically, diplomatically, or militarily as the United States does. These major powers include the German-French combination in Europe, Russia in Eurasia, China in East Asia, India in South Asia, Iran in Southwest Asia, Brazil or perhaps now Venezuela in Latin America, and Nigeria in Africa. Among secondary powers, Huntington includes Great Britain, Ukraine, Japan, South Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Argentina. Obviously the list is debatable, but Huntington's categories hold merit.

As in all world systems, great powers have an interest in maintaining the system. Under this *uni-*multipolar system, the United States would prefer a unipolar approach and often behaves as though the system was indeed unipolar. According to Huntington, the major powers would prefer a multipolar system in which interests could be pursued both unilaterally and multilaterally without interference or oversight from the hegemonic superpower, and the major powers increasingly assert their own interests despite sometimes being at odds with US interests. Major powers perceive the US pursuit of unipolarism as a threat to their ability to act regionally, while the United States experiences frustration at not being able to achieve true unipolar hegemony. The dilemma for both is that as the United States tries harder to achieve a unipolar system, the major powers try harder to create a true multipolar system. For Huntington, the United States passed through the bipolar world of the Cold War, into a brief unipolar moment during the Gulf Crisis of 1990–91, and then entered a uni-multipolar phase before ultimately reaching a true multipolar world system sometime in the twenty-first century.

If Huntington's model has merit, and I think it does, then September 11 only intensified unipolar–multipolar competition. The dynamic was well in place before that day, as the first Bush and Clinton administrations both boasted of US economic might and military prowess, implying that while the United States welcomes friends and allies, it could, if it had to, go it alone. Multilateralism if needed, unilateralism if necessary.

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*Not all are convinced by Krauthammer's unipolar concept.*
At the heart of this struggle between a desired unipolar world on the one hand and a multipolar world on the other is the global perception of US hegemony. The United States prefers to see itself as a benign hegemon or a non-imperialist superpower, one which believes that its values are world values, and thus it strives to promote those values through a variety of standards: US concepts of rule of law, and democracy; US military power; and US rather than international principles on human rights, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction proliferation, religious freedom, environmentalism, and international criminal and war crimes courts. Those that fail to 'drink the Kool Aid' are punished through a variety of means: economic sanctions; control of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund; foreign aid with many strings attached; unilaterally ostracising rogue states and disagreeable transnational organisations; and controlling the leadership appointments of the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and other supposed multilateral organisations.

For Huntington, the United States has two overwhelmingly powerful tools at its disposal, and diplomacy is not one of them. Economic sanctions and military intervention, rather, give the United States unprecedented unilateral capability to ensure its security and defend its national interests around the globe. However, bringing to bear these powerful weapons upon a dictator, rogue state, or terrorist organisation can have, and often has had, the unintended consequence of making these regimes and organisations even more popular among followers and occasionally non-followers alike.

Interestingly, Huntington notes that Americans themselves do not want a unipolar role and cites several polls to that effect. Unlike Krauthammer, who sees an internationalist consensus, Huntington maintains that ‘the United States lacks a domestic political base to create a unipolar world’. Thus, while US leaders can posture *ad nauseam* on the international stage, the representative nature of the US political system has the potential to restrain unipolar desires. Similarly, when US leaders say they speak on behalf of the international community, increasingly few of the major powers desire to be included in that catch-all phrase. So, it seems Joe and Betty Citizen in the heartland of America have something in common with Russia, China, France, Germany, and several other nation-states: all are leery of American unipolarism.

So, if the United States does not speak for the international community even though it says it does, is not then the United States a rogue state? Or, as Huntington suggests, a rogue superpower? While many would not consider the United States a military threat to their national existence, they do see the United States, in
Huntington’s words, as ‘a menace to their integrity, autonomy, prosperity, and freedom of action.’ The major powers view the United States as ‘intrusive, interventionist, exploitive, unilateralist, hegemonic, hypocritical, and applying double standards,’ and using financial, cultural, and intellectual imperialism to pursue its own goals while stiling those of the major powers. The world’s business is US business. Thus, for a major power like India, the United States has the capability to veto or at least bring together enough international pressure to prevent India from pursuing any number of regional and international strategies. For India, the United States is a political and diplomatic threat, as it is for China, Russia, Japan, and the regional powers of the Middle East.9

Around the same time as Huntington proposed the uni-multipolar system as a more accurate view of the new world order, Coral Bell took Krauthammer’s unipolar concept even further, suggesting that the ‘unipolar moment’ of American power will last at least another four decades—much longer than a ‘moment’. For Bell, the gap that US peer competitors had to overcome to transform the unipolar system into a multipolar system is currently insurmountable. For a major power such as China, Russia, or Europe to challenge American supremacy, many diverse obstacles would have to be overcome. In fact, for Bell, multipolarism may not be the best option in the long run. A return to a bipolar system with either China or Russia as the balancing superpower is much more likely.

Like Krauthammer, Bell points to the United States preference for apparent multilateralism in the way the United States approaches its unipolar vision: ‘The unipolar world should be run as if it were a concert of powers’. The post-Second World War, US-made organisations now must be used to at least give the appearance of multilateralism and legitimacy to US action. Witness using the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions or condemn the action of another major power. It helps ease the burden of the unilateralist impulse to use multilateral organisations to put the stamp of international legitimacy on US-desired action. Thus, the United States uses the pretence of concert as part of its unipolar strategy. Lately, the United States seems to be doing this quite poorly.

In some ways, what Bell suggests is more akin to Huntington. For the United States to avoid appearing unipolar it must use multilateral organisations and enlist the support of the major powers of the uni-multipolar system. Finally, for Bell, the policy of containment during the Cold War created the unipolar moment for the United States, which is unprecedented. This moment will in turn alter the international system over the next decades. And with no counterbalance to US hegemony on the horizon, at least in Bell’s opinion, the next step in this evolution is difficult to discern.10
How then do major powers bring about a multipolar system or at least begin to balance US hegemonic power? After all, it is an ‘ironclad rule of international history that hegemons always provoke, and are defeated by, the counter-hegemonic balancing of other great powers’. Hard-power, or military force, counter-balancing seems out of the question, considering the disparity between US military power and that of its distant military rivals. Moreover, the risk-reward calculus of such a strategy of counter-balancing would favour none of the potential challengers. Some argue that soft-balancing strategies that are non-military in nature, like diplomacy, international law, multilateral international institutions, or transnational organisations, can limit hegemonic, or in this case US, behaviour. Such a peaceful approach does not overtly threaten or unnecessarily provoke the superpower. While this might be good on paper, such approaches have not had much success in recent years in counter-balancing US hegemony, mainly because of the impotency of international institutions.

Christopher Layne offers an intriguing alternative to hard-power and soft-power counter-balancing. In what he terms ‘leash-slipping’, Layne suggests that US hard-power is a ‘nonexistential’ threat to the autonomy and interest of other powers. Other powers see US hegemony as a real threat to their security interests. Moreover, Layne holds that traditional balance-of-power politics is still alive and well, and because of this other powers will act to counter-balance the hegemon regardless of the nature of the hegemonic threat. In order to obtain the ability to act independent of the United States to pursue security objectives, other powers must build up military capabilities to act regionally without the need or behest of the United States. As more states attain such capability, they can more easily ‘slip free of the hegemon’s leash-like grip and compel the United States to respect their foreign policy interests’. For Layne, ‘leash-slipping’ is not a hard-power counter to US power because it is does not counter an ‘existential’ threat. Layne argues that successful ‘leash-slipping’ would restore a multipolar system and bring the brief American unipolar moment to an end. However, the United States can stave off this counter-balancing by adopting ‘an offshore strategy of self restraint’. In order to lessen the fear of American power, the United States will have to restrain its use of military force, accommodate the ‘rise of new great powers, and abandon the myth that American national security is dependent upon a globalised image of itself for the traditional metrics of great power grand strategy’. Thus, accepting a multipolar system, unilaterally practicing ideological restraint, and depending less upon unilateral use of force—offshore balancing—will perhaps ensure US primacy in a more accommodating multipolar system.
There are dozens of other variations on the above arguments, many of which are just as compelling. John Van Oudenaren argues that just because the United States is in a unipolar moment does not imply that it must act unilaterally. The problem, for Oudenaren, is that 'multilateralism is itself up for grabs in the international system, with both the leading and aspirant powers seeking to define it and use it in ways that serve their interests'. Perhaps US unipolar leadership in multilateral approaches would help better define multilateralism by giving multilateral institutions more strength and thus more legitimacy. Frank C Schuller and Thomas D Grant go beyond redefining multilateralism to suggest that unilateralism and multilateralism have outlived their usefulness as a dichotomy to categorise approaches to international affairs. Executive diplomacy, using consensus and integration, might be a better model for the modern 'management of power'.

Either way, G John Ikenberry maintains that the United States must operate within an 'international order organized around rules and institutional cooperation', otherwise the United States cannot fully achieve its security goals. The current state of the United Nations is a case in point. According to Stephen John Stedman, the United States has been and is transforming the United Nations into an effective outlet for its own interests, while other powers, notably Europe, if faced with a choice would rather see the United Nations remain dysfunctional rather than the unwitting promoter of US designs.

Unipolar or uni-multipolar or multipolar? Unilateral or multilateral? Hard-power or soft-power? Of course, the answer to each of these is not black and white and is intensely debated. The fact is that the United States is a superpower in a world of lesser powers and to defend its interests will have to act unilaterally, especially when multilateral institutions seem unwilling or incapable of acting instead. But it is a two-way street—Europe, for example, needs to 'matter' again and assert itself in world affairs, especially with its advantage in soft-power approaches. However, the United States would do well among the other powers to engage in real multilateralism, especially in dealing with regional crises and issues. Moreover, the United States needs to lessen its reliance on the use of force and allow the soft-power tools in its national security tool kit a true opportunity to sort things out before reaching for the hard-power hammer. US power carries with it great responsibilities and privileges, as this power obviously does affect the broader world. Thus, the United States cannot be too narrow in its security pursuits in order to be mindful of the 'general welfare'. Policies like unilateral preemption outlined in the 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States can, if poorly managed, do so much more harm than good. Iraq, unfortunately, is proving to be a grand example.
What the United States needs is something that it has not had since the end of the Cold War—strategic vision. More soft-power and more multilateral approaches may or may not transition the world system from unipolar to multipolar, but it will serve the United States untold fortune in good will among the rest of the world, and make it easier for the United States to pursue its national security goals without trampling on the national security goals of others.

ENDNOTES

Primacy and the Unipolar Moment


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Ideas and Issues

From Red to Blue

China and Peacekeeping

Loro Horta

Abstract

Until the early 1990s Chinese participation in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations was rather insignificant. Since the mid-1990s, however, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has steadily increased its commitment to UN missions and moved from a position of marginality to become one of the main contributors to such missions. China’s participation in UN peacekeeping operations and its growing engagement with the UN in general has become an important component of the PRC’s diplomacy and its efforts to expand its influence in world affairs.

Introduction

Since its founding in 1949 the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has had a rather marginal participation in UN missions. Military activities in particular were viewed by Beijing with extreme suspicion and a certain amount of disdain. For decades China regarded the world body as nothing more than a front for Western interests and a vehicle by which the United States tried to legitimise its alleged imperialistic and hegemonic policies. Until recently, memories of the
Korean conflict in which UN forces under US command confronted the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), with great loss of life on both sides, remained a point of particular bitterness. However, the past decade has witnessed a remarkable change in the PRC’s attitude toward the United Nations in general and more significantly to peacekeeping missions, an area Beijing once considered taboo.

FROM MARGINALITY TO CENTRALITY

From a position of near-total indifference and outright hostility toward the world body, China is increasingly emerging as one of the organisation’s most active supporters and participants. Well into the late 1980s, China’s involvement with the United Nations was restricted to the Security Council, where Beijing made full use of its veto power to frustrate and irritate the two superpowers. In recent years, however, China’s participation and involvement with the United Nations has assumed a far more positive and constructive dimension.

In 1988, China joined the United Nations Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and a year later made its first contribution to a UN mission when it sent twenty civilian observers to take part in the UN mission that supervised Namibia’s independence process. This was followed in 1990 by a small team of military observers to the Middle East, China’s first ever military contribution to the United Nations and the PLA’s first deployment on a peacekeeping mission. The early 1990s marked the beginning of a surge in China’s participation in UN peacekeeping missions.

In 1992 the PLA deployed an 800-strong military engineer battalion to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), China’s first ‘blue-helmet’ contingent. This was followed by smaller detachments to Mozambique between 1993–94; Liberia from 1993–97, and a second commitment to that country in 2003 to present; and further commitments to Sierra Leone and Western Sahara. These operations were followed by a series of expanding and more robust contributions, such as the deployment of fifty-five police personnel to Timor Leste in 2000, China’s first police participation in such missions. The deployment of a 175 member engineer company and a forty-five person medical detachment to MONUC (Mission de l’Organisation des Nations Unies en Republique Democratique du Congo) the UN mission in Congo, in 2003, was the country’s first deployment of female personnel.1
Some members of the Chinese contingent played important roles in Timor Leste with a Chinese officer being appointed head of the security detail of the then Timorese Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, a man widely known for his sympathies for Beijing. Chinese officers also trained the Timorese police in skills such as martial arts and anti-riot techniques. Other contributions by the Chinese, such as teaching local police human rights courses, was viewed with scepticism by some. In 2007 China made its second deployment to Timor Leste with ten police officers and three military observers taking part in UNMIT, the UN mission charged with stabilising the country after the May 2006 military crisis.

In 2004 China simultaneously undertook two major force deployments to UN missions, with 125 riot police to Haiti and 185 engineering personnel to Lebanon. In December 2006 China made another major commitment with the deployment of 500 peacekeepers to war-torn Liberia. As mentioned above, China’s commitment to Liberia started in 1993, lasting through 1997, and then resumed again in 2003—in all Chinese peacekeepers have been serving in that country for more than seven years, an indication of China’s long-term commitment to UN missions. China has also deployed three contingents of troops to southern Sudan since May 2006, with the deployment of the third taking place in September 2007 and consisting of 435 personnel.

Since 1990 China had deployed 5654 people to UN peacekeeping missions and currently has 1819 military and police personnel participating in eleven UN missions around the globe. To manage this growing commitment, in December 2001 the Chinese government created a Peacekeeping Affairs Office at the Ministry of Defense. A month later, China joined Level One of the United Nations Standby Arrangement System, putting at the disposal of the organisation an engineering battalion of 525 members, a medical element of twenty-five members, and two transportation companies of 160 members ready to join UN peacekeeping operations at any moment. Beijing has also been investing in the capabilities of the People’s Armed Police (PAP) for such missions. A new peacekeeping operations academy is currently under construction in the outskirts of the Chinese capital. The massive centre estimated at the cost of several million dollars is expected to meet the PAP’s growing need for qualified personal to sustain its growing involvement in such missions. In 2006 thirty Chinese police officers were sent for peacekeeping training courses overseas, and as of October 2007 the PAP had deployed 177 officers to UN operations.
Perhaps as an indication of China’s growing confidence and ambitions, the planned academy is also expected to train large numbers of foreign personnel. Considering the lack of alternatives, and Beijing’s generous encouragement, developing nations in particular are likely to send significant numbers to China for such training.7 Taking into account the fact that developing countries contribute the bulk of personnel to most UN operations, with the developed world usually preferring to contribute financially, China is likely to obtain significant diplomatic rewards for such an initiative—Bangladesh, a country where Chinese influence has been on the rise, is the largest contributor of forces to UN missions, and Beijing’s close friend Pakistan is also among the top contributors. The training of foreign peacekeepers in Chinese schools can only contribute to an increase in China’s influence in the United Nations and throughout the developing world.

Until 2006 China was the largest force contributor to UN missions among the five members of the Security Council, a position it lost when France deployed its large force to Lebanon. However, the PRC is likely to regain its lead position, with its planned deployment to Lebanon expected to be its largest ever.8 The PLA plans to deploy a 1000-strong contingent to Lebanon that may for the first time include a combat element. This will be a significant milestone in China’s involvement in UN military operations and is further indication of Beijing’s growing confidence, and perhaps assertiveness, as a world power.

On the financial front, China currently contributes 3 per cent of the costs of all UN peacekeeping missions and is expected to double its contribution in the near term. While the PRC’s financial contributions have grown substantially in the past decade they still pale when compared with the other major powers. For instance, the United States is the main contributor to the UN budget, currently paying for 23 per cent of UN budget needs, while Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and France make up the rest of the top five contributors. The PRC comes at number seven, behind Italy and Canada and just slightly ahead of Spain. Despite its relatively modest contribution China has made substantial diplomatic gains and is slowly increasing its influence within the world body.

Until 2006 China was the largest force contributor to UN missions among the five members of the Security Council …
EXPLAINING THE SHIFT

With the end of the Cold War, the United Nations was called upon to police numerous areas of conflict around the world. Some of these, such as Cambodia, were of significant political and economic importance for China. China therefore began to see its participation in certain UN missions as a way to influence events in other countries and territories. It is perhaps no coincidence that China’s first ever deployment of a ‘blue helmet’ contingent was to Cambodia, a country traditionally regarded by Beijing as being within its sphere of influence. China’s military deployment to Cambodia was aimed at complementing the political and economic offensive undertaken after the departure of Vietnamese troops, with the objective of China regaining its lost pre-eminence in that country. China fought a brief war with Vietnam in 1978 as a result of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and subsequent toppling of China’s murderous client Pol Pot.9 With this invasion China hoped to teach Vietnam a lesson not to meddle in China’s backyard. However, decimated by the excess of the cultural revolution of the 1960s, the PLA performed poorly and instead of teaching a lesson got a full curriculum from the tenacious and combat hardened Vietnamese. Since China’s reengagement with Cambodia in the early 1990s, Cambodia has steadily come under Beijing’s economic and political influence.

China also uses its peacekeeping efforts to influence potential new friends on the world stage. In 2004 China deployed 125 riot police to Haiti, a country with which the PRC did not have diplomatic relations because Haiti recognised Taiwan. With the police deployment and other political and economic moves, China intended to influence events in its favour once a new government had emerged after the crisis. Considering that Taiwan’s oldest and most committed supporters are found in Central America and the Caribbean, Beijing’s interest in the area should not be underestimated. Indeed, in the last decade the PRC has been engaged in a major diplomatic and economic offensive to penetrate this traditionally secured Taiwanese redoubt. Beijing obtained its first victory in Central America in July 2007 when, after six decades of diplomatic ties with Taiwan, Costa Rica ditched Taipei for Beijing.10

China’s police deployment to Timor Leste can be seen in a similar context. China was the first country to recognise the territory’s independence in May 2002 and has since been a generous supporter of the fledgling state. By participating in the territory’s stabilisation and by continuing its support after independence, the PRC hopes to counter any possible chequebook diplomacy on the part of Taiwan and secure
as a friend, however small, a future member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Timor Leste oil and gas reserves are unlikely to have gone unnoticed by the PRC, with China’s largest oil company, Petrochina, reported to have conducted major seismic studies to assess these potential resources.\textsuperscript{11}

Chinese commitments to Namibia, Liberia and Congo, while not solely motivated by economic interests, were strongly influenced by them. All three African countries are rich in energy resources and other raw materials desperately needed by China to sustain its economic growth. Beijing’s influence in both Liberia and Congo has been on the rise in recent years, particularly in Liberia, where China is reported to have significant investments in the energy sector. In Liberia, Chinese companies have been active looking for oil and other valuable resources such as gold, iron and manganese.\textsuperscript{12} Beijing has also provided generous financial aid and has assumed the costs of Liberia’s diplomatic mission in Beijing for the next ten years. It is perhaps also worth noting that the deployment to Liberia came just years after that country had broken diplomatic ties with Taiwan and established diplomatic relations with the PRC.

While China’s military and police deployments span the globe, the bulk of its forces have been sent on missions in the African continent. Of the 1819 Chinese military and police personnel deployed in 2007 on UN peacemaking operations, 1512 were deployed to missions in Africa.\textsuperscript{13} China’s steadily growing demand for energy resources, in particular oil and natural gas, has made Africa an increasingly important component of China’s future economic prosperity. Therefore, in the past decade or so Beijing has intensified its relations with the region in order to consolidate its position in this strategically important area. Its large contributions to UN missions in Africa are a complement to other economic and political measures aimed at furthering its vital interests.

While economic concerns underpin much of China’s strategic manoeuvring, some of its aims are bigger than furthering financial interests. Being a rising world power, China wants to be seen as playing a major and constructive role in the shaping of world affairs in the same way that Western powers do. China is eager to assure the world that its rising power is not a threat and that it can play a constructive role in world affairs.\textsuperscript{14} By participating in UN missions Beijing seeks to demonstrate its willingness to contribute its growing wealth to the benefit of the UN and the international community at large. Its participation in humanitarian efforts such as disaster relief, support to refugees and infrastructure development helps create the image of benign and humanitarian power and gives credence to its peaceful rise claims. This explains to a large extent its preference for deploying non-combat units such as medical teams and engineers instead of combat troops. In other words, a dragon in blue is much less frightening.
Increased involvement with the UN also allows the PRC to increase its influence in world affairs. Thus China sees its participation in such missions as a way to balance and limit the influence of Western powers, in particular the United States. The Bush Administration’s disregard for the United Nations in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq allowed China to capitalise on its UN credentials by portraying itself as a responsible power championing the cause of multilateralism, against US unilateralism and disrespect for international norms. China’s growing contribution, both in terms of personnel and capital, is slowly increasing its influence within the organisation.

In January 2007 the first Chinese official was appointed to a senior UN post when Dr Margaret Chan was elected the director of the World Health Organization (WHO). This was followed in August by the appointment of Major General Zhao Jingmin as Force Commander of the UN mission in Western Sahara tasked with monitoring the ceasefire between the Polisaro Front and the Moroccan Army. General Zhao is the first Chinese military officer to command a UN mission, and his appointment shows the PRC’s growing influence within the organisation and in world affairs. A final, but important, point to remember is that today’s China has the money to afford such activities as peacekeeping operations, and gamble on their possible benefits.

CONCLUSION

After decades of limited involvement and suspicion toward peacekeeping operations, China is emerging as one of the leading participants and supporters of such missions—as China’s economic and political power grows, so does the scope of its interests. China can no longer afford to stay at the margins while others shape the world’s agenda, and it is therefore eager to make its presence felt and ensure that its interests are taken into account. It remains to be seen what sort of impact Beijing’s newfound passion for multilateralism will have on peacekeeping operations and other UN missions. Two things seem certain. First, a China that embraces multilateralism within the spirit of the United Nations contributes to an environment far more conducive to peace than a closed and suspicious China. Therefore Beijing’s current enthusiasm for the UN should be encouraged. Second, China will increasingly play a determining role in the outcome of such missions and by doing so increase its influence in world affairs. While China may have interests other than just being a good international citizen that does not preclude it from playing a positive role; indeed national interests are always part of the considerations of any

FROM RED TO BLUE

Increased involvement with the UN also allows the PRC to increase its influence in world affairs.
country’s decision on whether to participate in a given mission and by no means are exclusive to China. As China’s economic power rises so will the scope of its interests and its interests in the affairs of the UN. Beijing’s current enthusiasm for the UN is likely to increase, as a wealthier and confident China is eager to make an impression on the world stage. As noted by PLA Colonel Yang Hua, a peacekeeping expert at the Chinese National Defense University, ‘You will see the blue in us’.16

ENDNOTES

1 Most of this article is based on information from lectures and visits to PLA and PAP institutions while the author was attending the one year defence and strategy course at the National Defense University of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLANDU) between September 2006 and August 2007 and various informal interviews with PLA and PAP officers.

2 The author worked as an advisor to the East Timorese Defence Department between 2000 and 2002, during which period the Chinese police deployment took place, and personally met many of the PAP officers.


5 Ibid.

6 The author visited various PAP installations and attended a lecture given by a two-star PAP general in which the issues were mentioned.

7 Interview with a PAP colonel and instructor at PAP academy, Beijing, 17 May 2007.


Interview with Augustine Larmin, Liberian Ministry of Defense, Beijing, 14 November 2006.


Interview with Colonel Yang Hua, Professor at the College of Defense Studies at the PLANDU, who served in several UN missions as a military observer, Beijing, 6 June 2007.

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Incentive options for performance-based logistic contracts

Elizabeth Barber

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explain some of the various types of incentives that can be awarded within sustainment contracts and that will benefit both the contractor and the client—in this case, the Australian Defence Force (ADF). This article describes a variety of financial and non-financial incentives including those currently employed by the ADF in its Performance Based Logistics (PBL) contracts.

Introduction

A number of Australian Defence Force (ADF) outsourced logistics contracts have shown signs of a paradigm shift in focus from functional to outcome-based performance. At the same time, aligned financial payments have shifted from a cost-based to an outcome-based requirement. Traditionally, logistics

* This article has been peer-reviewed.
requirements have been outsourced and remunerated with contractual agreements involving payments on a timely basis for functions undertaken. Performance Based Logistics (PBL) is based on the notion of rewarding outcomes rather than the traditional functional inputs. Although this form of incentive-based contracting represents a fairly new concept, it has been endorsed by the ADF and is expected to gain prominence in logistic support contracts in the future. The current situation appears to involve a separation between the acquisition of a capability and the sustainment of that capability over its useful life. The associated contracts are referred to as ‘acquisition contracts’ and ‘support’ or ‘sustainment contracts’ and, while there are compelling arguments for the integration of sustainment contracts with acquisition contracts at the time of the development and research of the relevant capabilities, the separation of the two appears set to continue. This article reflects that trend, separating the two types of contract and concentrating on the financial and non-financial incentives associated with the sustainment component of defence contracts.

It has long been argued that, by working closely together, companies and their suppliers and logistics providers can create highly efficient and effective supply chains. Failing to collaborate may, in fact, result in the distortion of information as it moves through a supply chain. This distortion leads, in turn, to costly inefficiencies as demonstrated by the notorious ‘bullwhip effect’ which results in excess inventories, slow response, and lost profits, all through a lack of close relationships. Through more open, frequent and accurate exchanges of information and the ‘right’ performance incentives, many of these problems can be eliminated. The new ADF performance-based sustainment contracts are based on performance-based logistics metrics and are clearly aimed at finding the ‘right’ performance incentives to encourage continuous efficiencies from their outsourced providers. These contracts will be referred to as PBL contracts throughout this article.

**BRIEF BACKGROUND**

The US Defense Force was a driving force in implementing performance-based logistics contracts. This first section of the article will provide a brief background on the use of PBL contracts within the US Department of Defense (DoD). The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review Report provided the impetus for the US Department of Defense’s logistics processes and procedures to move to adopt a needs-based concept. This capability-based logistics approach focused on improving visibility into supply chain logistics costs and performance and on building a foundation for continuous improvements in performance. PBL was regarded as a means of optimising the productive output of the overall military supply chains. A review of private sector best practices used in managing supply chain partnering relationships by the US DoD in 2003 found PBL to be a best business practice. Since this review,
Incentive options for performance-based logistic contracts

the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics) has lent strong support to the use of PBL contracts. The subsequent DoD Directive 5000.1 entitled ‘The Defense Acquisition System’ (dated 12 May 2003), stipulated mandatory policies and procedures for managing all acquisition programs including the implementation of PBL strategies.7

Performance-based contracting has spread throughout the health and pharmaceutical, fuel and consumer industries, all of which focus on required outcomes.8 Typically, all performance-based logistics contracts are based on ‘incentivising’ the performance of the outsourced contractor. For the ADF logistical contractor, PBL is linked to RAM (reliability, availability and maintainability) of large platforms and, again typically, most risks are transferred from the ADF to the contractor for the support and sustainment of equipment. This concept of risk transfer to the contractor is common across all industries using performance-based contracting.

Definitions

PBL covers the purchasing of any sustainment process to ensure that the process is integrated, affordable and designed to optimise any Defence Systems Readiness. PBL contracts state that the provider is held accountable for the delivery of customer-oriented performance requirements such as reliability improvement, availability improvement and supply chain efficiencies. The performance is outcome-based and employs metrics such as readiness, availability, reliability and sustainability of readiness.

PBL provides an alternative logistics support solution. It transfers the logistics support to an outsourced supplier for a guaranteed level of performance at the same cost—or less—than providing the support itself. The performance changes from input-based performance (shortened turnaround times in terminals, for example) to outcome-based performance. The incentives in a PBL contract are associated or tied to the performance levels of the outcomes required. This concept follows the concept of diagnostic maintenance in which an engine is only repaired or scheduled for maintenance when the unit demonstrates that it requires repair or maintenance. Thus repairs or maintenance are not performed on a regular basis in a preventative schedule, but rather in accordance with a demand-based schedule. Maintenance only occurs when it is required. Although this form of contract is still linked to an input-based concept in that the part is only repaired when it is broken or needs maintenance.

PBL was regarded as a means of optimising the productive output of the overall military supply chains.
to maintain its level of reliability, the contract will stipulate a required level of reliability not a required level of repair or maintenance. The complete outcome-based performance metric will be associated with the level of reliability of the equipment for use, rather than the regularity or quality of the maintenance performed as demanded diagnostically.

Some of the common areas in which PBL contracting is used include transportation and inventory management. In its most integrated form, PBL should fully automate a resupply system. Usage rates and inventory levels at the customer outlets would be used to maintain a stock level, removing the requirement for procurement orders. The repairable item management system, obsolescence, and configuration management systems would all feed into the overall resupply system to provide real-time visibility of the resupply flows.

The key differences between the traditional and PBL inventory management system are illustrated below:

Table 1. PBL versus traditional inventory management (British Aerospace PBL)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Critical Element</th>
<th>Role of Provider</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Inventory-based</td>
<td>Lowest prices</td>
<td>Manage supplies</td>
<td>Focus on supply availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Problem solving by stocking more inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBL</td>
<td>Performance-based</td>
<td>Best Value</td>
<td>Manage suppliers</td>
<td>Focus on customer service and readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Problem solving by buying response time, quality and reliability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

There are many forms of financial remuneration suitable for use as incentives or rewards for performance. Ideally, financial incentives should be tied into a contract that links them to performance. The long-term nature of the partnership requires a mutual recognition of needs. PBL contracts may evolve as the capability support system matures. The most beneficial result from the contractor’s perspective is the consistent revenue stream. This permits the contractor to maintain business viability while attempting to win the proffered performance incentives. As a consequence, most PBL contracts will be written on a cost plus basis of some sort. This means that the contractor will always recoup the costs involved in producing the service regardless of the performance targets. While there are many types of cost plus contracts, the common ones include:

- **CPFF (cost plus fixed fee)**
  - used when cost and pricing risk is maximum
  - basically reimburses contractor for level of effort work.

- **CPIF (cost plus incentive fee)**
  - used early in program when metric baseline is immature
  - primarily oriented towards cost (allowable and targets)
  - can include some performance incentives other than cost

- **CPAF (cost plus award fee)**
  - used when subjective assessment of contractor performance is required (i.e. customer satisfaction)
  - usually used in combination with CPIF.

  CPFF provides a non-negotiable fixed price. Although the base price is not adjustable and thus easy to administer, the overall price does include some proportion of profit margin.

  CPIF provides a fixed cost component and a performance-oriented incentive component. Like CPFF contracts, the aim is to cover the cost base (thus maintaining the consistent revenue stream for the contractors) as well as ‘incentivising’ for performance. The performance metrics used are tied to outcome requirements.

  CPAF includes the cost component plus a base fee for performance, but this performance fee is fixed. The award fee is a ‘yes/no’ element based on judgment of some level of subjective performance such as customer satisfaction. These are often used when the cost and resource baseline is fully mature and pricing risk is minimal. These contracts place the highest risk on the contractor and the lowest risk on the client.

  PBL contracts can fall into any of these types, although generally the objective is to work towards a fixed price contact. Fixed price contracts are self-motivating in that the more efficient the contractor becomes, the lower the costs incurred,
implying a higher profit margin. Thus, in the long term, PBL contracts aim to purchase defined outcomes at a defined price (see Table 2). Typically, this depends on the degree of pricing risk inherent in the support costs. Contracts in a complex capability support system may progress through a series of phases.

Table 2. Types of performance contracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm Fixed Price</th>
<th>Cost Plus Incentive Fee</th>
<th>Cost Plus Award Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price not adjustable</td>
<td>Price has allowable costs plus incentive fee</td>
<td>Price has allowable costs, base fee and award fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifies target price, i.e. price ceiling plus profit</td>
<td>Incentive fee based on metric target achievements</td>
<td>Base fee does not vary with performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum risk on contractor</td>
<td>May include cost gain sharing (comparing actual to target cost and sharing the savings)</td>
<td>Award fee is based on subjective evaluation of performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum administrative burden on all parties</td>
<td>Established relationships made between fees and metrics</td>
<td>Award fee payments are unilateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements are well defined</td>
<td></td>
<td>Subjective requirements, e.g. customer satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish fair and reasonable pricing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Performance-based sustainment contracts can develop towards the final fixed price plus awards structure through a number of interim contractor support stages. For example, during the initial pre-operational state of the capability and early production periods where products and testing and initial spares and maintenance training occurs, a cost plus fixed fee contract will be set in place. As the costs stabilise, a transition contract will evolve towards a cost plus an incentive or an award fee basis. This interim contract will remain in place while the costs and resource baselines are tracked and refined. Finally, in the third or final phase, the contract will change/evolve into a fully fixed price plus award fee contract. Before a CPAF contract can evolve, all the costs and resource baselines need to be well documented, risks lowered and both parties should define incentives and performance outcomes with a high degree of confidence.
HOW THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES WORK

Financial incentives are typically based on a sliding scale of achievable performance targets. The performance metrics in PBL contracts are outcome based. These incentives relate to the ‘on time in full’ (OTIF) metric of all logistics suppliers. They receive the full payment if the total order is fulfilled and delivered in the right location at the required time without damage. In the fast moving goods retail industry, delivery windows are often set so that the full order must be delivered within set time windows. Heavy penalties are applied if the delivery occurs outside these timeframes. In PBL contracts utilised by the ADF, the emphasis is placed on rewarding good performance rather than imposing penalties for poor performance. While poor performance is not rewarded, penalties are not applied unless a series of poor performances warrants termination of the contract.

In a typical example, a PBL metric may be a non-mission capable supply (NMCS) which measures the percentage of time that a system is not mission capable due to the lack of a critical part. Assume that the typical percentage target is 5 per cent (on a per annum basis). Thus the defence capability is mission ready for 95 per cent per year. Correspondingly decreasing incentives at 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 per cent would occur and the contractor would earn no incentive if the non-mission capable supply levels reached 11 per cent.

Table 3. PBL metric for non-mission capable supply

| NMCS% | 5% | 6% | 7% | 8% | 9% | 10% | 11%+
<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Award Fee Points</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case the contractor would receive the full performance award fee if the system was available 95 per cent of the time during the year. Note the consistent relationship between the 1 per cent changes responding to a 20 per cent change in award fee points. The calculation of the adjusted performance result and the corresponding award points or incentive payments need not be consistent. For example, payment of a reward may only occur if the contractor provides a greater than 100 per cent score. On the other hand, a penalty may be incurred if a greater than 100 per cent service is provided, for example, the provision of additional aircraft which may, in fact, be a superfluous service as there are no pilots available to fly them. Over-servicing in such instances is inefficient and wasteful. Similarly, the rewards may drop dramatically after a set acceptable level of performance. For example, after an NMCS percentage of 6 per cent, award fee points may drop to twenty, while at 7 per cent, no incentive will be earned. The ‘bands’ of incentives may be consistent or may drop rapidly depending on the importance to the customer of the performance outcome.
Ideas and Issues

Elizabeth Barber

Incentive options for performance-based logistic contracts

Fixed price contracts

The overall objective of most contractors is the achievement of a fixed price contact. Under fixed price contracts, the contractor is motivated to continuously improve efficiency, lowering costs and thus earning a higher profit. PBL contracts aim to purchase defined outcomes at a defined price. Outsourced suppliers are motivated to procure super reliable parts and perform high quality repair and maintenance as they will benefit from cost reductions resulting from fewer repairs over the longer term.

Benefits of fixed price contracts generally include:
• contracts are inherently cost controlled
• no payments are made unless the goods/services are provided
• forecasting and trend planning is easier to manage
• financial expectations are less uncertain.

Non-financial incentives

Typical non-financial recognition schemes involve certification of awards and achievement levels, letters of commendation, certificates of achievement and ‘best supplier of the year’ awards. Contract extensions can be written into PBL contracts in recognition of satisfactory performance. Contract extensions can merge with upgrade priority systems giving priority considerations to existing high performance contractors. While this is a discriminating factor, it acts as a strong incentive to perform well in one contract when there is a possibility of gaining all the upgrade contracts associated with the capability in the future.

Gaining and building reputations is an elusive performance indicator. A sound reputation is one of the strongest competitive advantages that a firm can secure. Understanding the performance gap between a contractor’s level of service and the best in class practice can lead to the building of an enviable reputation.

Consequently, one of the strongest incentives that a firm can be given is the possibility of becoming the best in class within its industry. The publication of logistics operational service levels and KPI achievements, especially by a prestigious defence department, will enhance the reputation of any service provider.
Incentive options for performance-based logistic contracts

Benchmarking of supplier and maintenance logistics providers against contractually defined performance levels is an elusive but extremely powerful incentive. Best-practice status in an industry is difficult to confirm. As distinctions between ownership and control become blurred, supply chains become increasingly twisted although, surprisingly, some global manufacturing operations achieve a remarkable degree of transparency. For example, Cisco Systems, which recorded sales of $28 billion in 2006, does not own the vast majority of factories making its products; yet the performance of these outsourced factories and distribution providers is recognised as one of the most agile, adaptable and speedy in the world. Similarly, Boeing began its development of the 787 aircraft by seeking its suppliers’ advice.

TQM is alive but still developing

It is possible for contractors to gain an incentive payment if all performance awards have been achieved over a set period of time. For example, if the top performance of 5 per cent non-mission readiness is achieved for all systems, or if the top performance is achieved for every performance metric, then an additional or bonus payment is awarded for achievement effort. This is where the total quality management (TQM) concept of continuous improvement is currently being applied in PBL contracts with the ADF. The TQM philosophy states that each firm should continually strive to improve its efficiencies. This will benefit society through reductions in waste, higher productivity and greater effectiveness and quality of service. Consequently, there is an option for contractors to achieve over and above their cost plus performance awards if excellent performance is achieved in all outcome metrics over a given period of time such as three months. If these incentives are offered, the contractors will be encouraged to continually improve their performance via the fixed cost component, the monthly award achievements and an aggregated bonus for consistency of performance. It is debatable whether these improvement incentives should be applied on a sliding scale or applied differently for different metrics or even applied equally as illustrated in the diagram below.

This diagram illustrates that, over the three month period, the contractor reached the full performance requirement consistently for each of the three metrics of availability, reliability and supportability. In achieving these targets, the contractor received performance award payments and also received the extra reward labelled ‘improvement incentives’ because of the consistency of the performance levels.

In this case, the gains may lead to a review of the performance targets or a movement from one type of contract to a more fixed price form of contract. Regular reviews of performance achievements are necessary to continuously improve the relationship and the performance of both parties. Gain- or loss-sharing contractual models require periodic reviews to establish the extent of the sharing of the risks.
Incentive options for performance-based logistic contracts and rewards of cost changes during any period. Profit or gains in the one period are affected by cost performance in the previous period and, as such, any cost overruns can result in reduced profits in the next period. Consequently, all gain- or loss-sharing incentives will have a lagged effect.

**BENEFITS TO THE CUSTOMER**

Both parties benefit from PBL contracts in that both experience a goal convergence. The overall goal of the customer involves a drive for best results from the provision of logistical support and sustainment in a cost-efficient and most effective manner. The goals of the contractor via the self-motivating drive for profits include cost efficiency in all aspects of the logistical provision at the operational level, thus driving down costs and increasing the contractor’s profits. The goal of achieving ‘best practice’ will earn the contractor a sound reputation that will stimulate the growth of the firm. In this way, the goal convergence of both parties is achieved.

The ADF’s preferred core outcomes include:

- systems readiness
- light footprint
- mission success
- assurances of supply.

From the customer perspective, the logistical benefits include:

- high level of support for its capabilities
- best value sourcing for inventory, infrastructures, maintenance and service functions

Diagram 1. Cost plus award with improvement incentive payments
• reduced cycle times, inventory, total ownership costs and improved reliability and obsolescence management problems
• payment for results only, not activity
• transfer of risks.

**BENEFITS TO THE CONTRACTOR**

The primary goals of the ADF are generally outcome-based and expressed in terms of mission success measured by readiness, light footprint and assurance of supply. The main goals of any commercial contractor, however, lie in profit maximisation, good returns on investment and overall growth. While these two diverse sets of aims reflect the limited likelihood of goal convergence, the processes of achieving these goals are, in fact, quite similar.

The contractor’s means of performance evaluation includes comparisons with previous records so as to improve productivity and reduce cost baselines, and comparison with or benchmarking of competitors so as to remain competitive and achieve the status of order-qualifiers and order-winners in the future. In the current environment, successful firms must be innovative, attain a sound knowledge base and recruit high-quality personnel, be medium risk-takers and offer superior quality products or services. Logistic providers must have an intimate knowledge of the supply chain in which they operate. Capacity of any given supply chain is measured by the flow of physical, information and financial movements over a given period of time. The main flow restrictions concern capacity and utilisation of physical flows through nodal points along the chain. Throughput flow is typically less than designed capacity; utilisation is the proportion of this designed capacity that is actually used. In PBL contracts, the former is more commonly measured although the latter is more useful for surge considerations.

The contractor has to assess the risks of utilisation of the total supply chain. This assessment implies the maintenance of a high level of detailed knowledge on the part of the contractor to equip them to continue to achieve the desired goals of competitive advantage, profit maximisation, successful operations and growth.

The financial goals of the contractor are expressed in terms of the return on investments (ROI), the direct product profit ratios (DPPs), the customer profitability matrix (CPM), the market value added (MVA) of any contract and the economic value added (EVA). Analysis of these inputs allows the profit after tax minus the true cost of capital employed to be calculated.
The contractor’s assessment of productivity will include total productivity, which is measured by the total throughput divided by the total resources used or partial- or single-factor productivity measures, which might include labour, equipment, capital or energy productivity. Contractors generally aim for overall total productivity improvements that cover the service/cost trade-offs. In this respect, PBL contracts tend to obstruct the contractors’ objectives, as PBL contracts reward only the service levels regardless of costs to the contractor.

**CHALLENGES**

The main challenges include:
- developing a collaborative environment among all stakeholders
- overcoming organisational transformation issues
- effectively implementing PBCs in highly regulated environments
- if the trends in globalisation and services continue, developing effective policies and practices that will allow the ADF to benefit most from the future globally based industrial base
- identification of the changing risks.

Challenges that are emerging from the US DoD:
- switching paradigms at the congressional and senior leadership level with respect to money
- overcoming organic resistance to implementation of PBL on a broader scale (stovepipe)
- long-term contract strategy options
- reduced competition
- effective metrics to ensure value gained
- fear of loss of organic capability (Title 10)
- corporate survivability
- accurate reflection of ‘as is’ vice ‘should be’.19

Some of these challenges (with the exception of the Title 10 requirements) will also be evident in the Australian supply environment.

More detailed analysis of challenges reveals a number of issues. One key challenge lies in maintaining a continuously improving performance level. PBL contracts do not offer the traditional penalties for non-delivery; rather there is simply no reward. The 3PL or contractor does not pay a penalty for faulty performance, nor does the customer pay a performance incentive. The challenge is to level the fixed cost component to include only partial covering of the opportunity costs, thus indicating to the contractor that performance will have to improve for the contractor to viably remain in the contract.
The timing of the change of contractual phases is often difficult to gauge. Is the contractor taking too long to sort out the repairs schedules or bed down the maintenance schedules? With three or four different phases in a PBL contract associated with a large capability, it is difficult to achieve maximum improvements in the shortest possible time so as to attain the goal of a fixed price PBL contract.20

Non-financial awards that are fair and equitable in a market place so as to not incur high barriers of entry but, rather, stimulate best in class including innovation and entrepreneurship, are difficult to achieve across total supply chains. The long-term nature of lifetime partnerships for the lifecycle of the logistics system are certainly enviable contracts to achieve, but must not encourage inertia.

Innovation take-ups and continuous improvement once the firm has achieved the fixed price phase may also be difficult to motivate. The self-motivation associated with fixed price contracts is often not rewarded sufficiently and the contract develops into a ‘cash cow’ for the contractor while other more competitive and rewarding contracts are pursued. To prevent inertia pervading the fixed contract involving a long-term partnership, other rewards must be offered so as to motivate the firm to continue to strive to be the best within the industry in the absence of competitive force. Metrics such as industry standards do not stimulate companies to strive for greater competitive advantage in an industry. Competitive standards ensure that the contractor matches the average performer in the industry not the most competitive performer in the industry—simply the order-qualifier, rather than the order-winner.

Legal concerns may be aroused over the economic impacts and competitive barriers that can be erected with sole sourcing and sole support contracts. Unfair competitive advantage may attract the scrutiny of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) over time, particularly as upgrades to capabilities may provide an unfair advantage in any tendering of logistical support to the existing contractor. As the industrial base expands globally, however, the ACCC may lose its power to control and protect Australian industries. In the aerospace industry, for example, the global giants of Lockheed Martin and Boeing compete fiercely for long-life contracts for their equipment and planes. While this is currently a strong oligopolistic market, the legalities look set to become complex with the increasing incidence of mergers and takeovers within the dynamic supply chain industry. Contractual terms and conditions need to increasingly clarify such complexities as the contracts extend their web of terms and conditions.

The identification and establishment of metrics should be clear and measurable. The metrics for reliability, availability and maintainability must be equitable over a number of capabilities. The outcome-based metrics focus on customer satisfaction rates which need to be clearly defined beyond the intangible of perception versus actual satisfaction.
For PBL contracts to work successfully over time, a team approach is required; one of the greatest challenges in this approach is the ‘people factor’. The formation of the team and stakeholder identification and interest is difficult to achieve over the changing life of a large capability. Clarity of roles and responsibilities will recede as the contract shifts through the lifecycle phases and as performance-based agreement evolves in line with upgrades and maintenance requirements. Continuous and open communications must be effected at a personal level as well as at an automatic level. The prevention of inertia is difficult to achieve over long periods of time and, although the continuous improvement incentives will assist in preventing inertia to some extent, this should be offset by the continuous flow of revenue.

CONCLUSION

PBL contracts are typically long-term, focusing on financial rewards as incentives to improve performance that can develop over phases. PBL contracts are, in fact, continuing to evolve. They are becoming more complex with the inclusion of options for gain- and loss-sharing and more detailed 'health' indicators.

PBL contracts in the ADF continue to evolve given the need to include performance metrics, such as rewarding light footprints and accurate breakdowns so as to ensure ‘mission success.’ Often, mission success relies on using capabilities differently in different missions. Incentives to cover these forms of variegates have yet to be fully developed.

Financial and non-financial incentives are, however, being successfully employed. There is evidence that PBL contracts are providing better quality service and this is expected to continue in the future.

Having clarified a number of the financial and non-financial incentives currently used, additional research should focus on analysis of motivation within fixed cost contracts. Further research is needed to explore the rewards for innovation or the rapid and efficient utilisation of innovation within the increasingly dynamic supply chain industry.
INCENTIVE OPTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE-BASED LOGISTIC CONTRACTS

ENDNOTES

5 Performance-based contracting (PBC) is the term applied by the Defence Materiel Organisation within the ADF. The US DoD uses the term PBL to describe the concept of sustainment contracts, which tend to be separate contracts from those acquisition contracts presently utilised in ADF contractual arrangements. The essential element is that performance-based logistical outcome measures are used as the basis for financial payments under lifelong support or sustainment contracts for a military capability.
6 In 2001 the US DoD mandated that PBL be considered for the support for all new weapons systems.
Ideas and Issues

Elizabeth Barber

20 Varma et al., 'Implementing supply chain management in a firm: issues and remedies', pp. 223–43.

The Author

Elizabeth Barber’s academic career spans the past twenty years, including teaching at the University of Queensland, Australian National University, University of Canberra and University of New South Wales. For the past ten years she has been involved in military logistics, including researching logistics and supply chain initiatives for the Australian Defence Force. She is the Editor of *Asset Visibility in Military Logistics* (Australian Defence Studies Centre, 2002) and has written on the Logistics of the Timor Leste Campaign.
In this edition we renew our focus on the Australian Army’s experience in the Vietnam War by reprinting an article by Captain Ian Hutchison, which originally appeared in the April 1968 *Australian Army Journal*. We considered it appropriate to publish the article by James Willbanks on the Tet offensive given the recent fortieth anniversary of that decisive campaign. The Tet offensive is generally regarded as the turning point of the Second Indo-China conflict. Examination of Vietnam through the prism of Tet reminds us of the seamless inter-play of political and military factors in war. Tet, although a tactical military success undermined the political resolve of the United States and its allies to prosecute the war.

Captain Ian Hutchinson’s comprehensive study of the Australian area of operations in Phuoc Tuy province provides an Australian context to Willbanks’s article on Tet. Readers may be struck by the similarities in methodology and approach between Captain Ian Hutchinson’s experiences in South Vietnam with those of Colonel John Frewen’s service in Afghanistan as presented in the current edition.

Both writers appreciate the inextricable linkages between political, social, geographic and economic factors in shaping the environment in Phuoc Tuy and Oruzgan provinces. Both authors demonstrate a grasp of the key elements of counterinsurgency warfare, with its population-centric rather than enemy-centric focus. The conflict in Vietnam exhibited the essential traits of the current concept of
‘war amongst the people’ long before the term became fashionable. To use modern terminology, Australian forces in Vietnam operated on all ‘three blocks’ of that war through a combination of conventional and counterinsurgency operations, as well training indigenous forces and some civil affairs and humanitarian tasks. Our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are performing these roles today.

Indeed the title of Captain Ian Hutchison’s article alludes to another similarity to operations in Afghanistan. The term ‘Red Rats’ refers to the red kangaroo insignia painted on the vehicles of the Australian Task force in Phuoc Tuy province. Recently, in a presentation to the Chief of Army’s seminar on Counterinsurgency doctrine at Puckapunyal, Lieutenant Colonel Mick Ryan, who led the first Reconstruction Task Force (RTF) in Afghanistan, revealed that his troops consciously employed the red kangaroo to distinguish Australian engineers from those of allied nations. He believes that the local population responded very positively to the heirs of the original ‘Red Rats.’

The Chief of Army has commissioned the urgent writing of up to date counter-insurgency doctrine by the Army in response to the challenges of contemporary operations ‘amongst the people’ in complex terrain.

The conflict in Vietnam exhibited the essential traits of the current concept of ‘war amongst the people’ long before the term became fashionable.
THE ‘RED RATS’
AND PHUOC TUY*

CAPTAIN IAN HUTCHISON, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY

A purely academic study of war by itself is today unrewarding. It is important that the future Commander or Staff Officer should understand the inter-action of political, geographic, economic and military factors in the various parts of the world and that our military studies be set in these realistic settings.

Major-General M A H Butler CB, CBE, DSO, MC
(Commandant, Staff College, Camberly) 1 March 1967

INTRODUCTION

On 8 March 1966 the Prime Minister of Australia announced that an Australian task force would be despatched to Vietnam as part of Australia’s increasing military commitment.¹

On 23 April 1966 the reception, disembarkation and processing of personnel and equipment of the major units of the 1st Australian Task Force through the surface and aerial ports of Vung Tau and Saigon commenced. By 5 June 1966 the majority of the task force had deployed by helicopter from Vung Tau to its area of operations in Phuoc Tuy Province, where it established itself at Nui Dat in torrential monsoonal rain.

* This article first appeared in the Australian Army Journal, No. 227, April 1968.
Province boundaries of South Vietnam
The reasons for the deployment of the task force to Phuoc Tuy Province were two-fold. The military reason was to end the Viet Cong domination of the area with a view to securing National Highway 15 for major military movement from Vung Tau to Saigon. This was necessary in order to allow the development of the port of Vung Tau and thus relieve the congestion of military shipping in the port of Saigon. The political reason was to assist in providing the security necessary for the Government of the Republic of Vietnam to proceed with its Revolutionary Development programme in the province.

AIM
The aim of this article is to briefly study the inter-action between the political, geographic, and economic environment of Phuoc Tuy Province and the activities of the 1st Australian Task Force.

THE CONTEMPORARY SETTING
Phuoc Tuy Province is one of eleven provinces comprising III Corps Tactical Zone. It is divided into the five districts of Long Le, Long Dien, Dat Do, Duc Thanh and Xuyen Moc. Phuoc Tuy Province is located some forty kilometres south-east of Saigon. Its average length is approximately fifty kilometres and its average depth approximately forty kilometres, with a total land area of some 1958 square kilometres.

TOPOGRAPHY
Most of the land area within the province consists of piedmont alluvial plain which varies from flat to undulating in nature. Isolated low hills protrude above the plain, the two most notable of these being Nui Dat and Horseshoe Hill on which units of the task force are based. Nui Dat is a granite outcrop 101 metres high and is covered with clear forest and scrub, whilst Horseshoe Hill is an extinct volcanic cone which is almost devoid of vegetation and is eighty-two metres high. Areas of evergreen forest, rubber plantations, padi, and lalang type grass cover the surrounding alluvial plain which has been the stage for many Task Force operations. Readily available helicopter landing sites exist in the numerous cultivations and clearings. During the dry season (November to April) the M113 armoured personnel carrier can traverse most of the terrain, the evergreen forests imposing the greatest restrictions on movement.

Foot movement is unrestricted across open areas but is limited to about 500 metres per hour in the evergreen forests. The rate of movement is slower during the wet season (May to October) when the red brown soil turns to mud and large areas,
mainly padi, are inundated. M113 rates of movement are reduced by waterlogged soil, although the higher water level reduces the height of stream banks and makes them easier to traverse. The Song Rai is the major river in the region. From its headwaters in Long Khanh Province it flows generally south through Phuoc Tuy Province before meandering across its flood plain and finally entering the South China Sea.

Rising above the piedmont alluvial plain are four hill regions. In the north-east the May Tao region rises to a height of 704 metres on the boundary of Phuoc Tuy, Binh Tuy and Long Khanh Provinces. To the south lies the Long Hai region, a granite promontory which rises to a height of 327 metres. Both these hill regions are shrouded in dense evergreen forest and are dissected by non-perennial streams. To the south-west of the piedmont alluvial plain is the Nui Dinh region in which 6 RAR conducted a search and destroy operation codenamed ‘Vaucluse’ in September 1966. It is a horseshoe shaped granite hill mass with a deep ravine from north-east to south-west which separates the two arms and forms the draw of the horseshoe. The highest point of the hill mass is 504 metres. The area is deeply dissected with non-perennial

Phuoc Tuy Province
streams. However, these streams do not constitute serious obstacles to movement. Gradients vary from 1 in 2 to 1 in 4. Dense vegetation, comprising mainly bamboo and low scrub with vines and creepers, covers the area. Visibility is limited in most areas to twenty to thirty metres and tactical foot movement is sometimes noisy and restricted to no more than 500 metres per hour. Good observation is obtained in all directions from the feature, particularly over the Task Force base camp and Highway 15, although visibility is, at times, impaired by haze, cloud or mist.

Adjoining the north-west edge of this hill region is the Nui Thi Vai and Nui Toc Tien hill region in which 5 RAR conducted two search and destroy operations code-named 'Canberra' and 'Queanbeyan' in October 1966. This region is shaped like a butterfly, the two features being joined by a wind gap or saddle. Nui Thi Vai forms the western wing and Nui Toc Tien the eastern wing. The non-perennial streams have their headwaters in the vicinity of the saddle, both streams terminating in the mangrove swamps of the Rung Sat. The region attains a height of 467 metres and is deeply dissected by watercourses, whilst steep gradients, granite outcrops, caves and cliff faces are characteristic. A fairly dense growth of evergreen forest cloaks the area. Foot movement is difficult and slow on the steep slopes except where trails have been established.

To the south-east of the province are the coastal littorals, a wide strip of white sandy beaches bordering the South China Sea. These are backed by lateral sand dunes, stunted sparse vegetation and decaying pillboxes—a remnant of the French colonial era. Inland, the piedmont alluvial plain is flat and low lying with extensive tracts of padi and clear forest interspersed. Foot and M113 movement is generally unrestricted.

Bordering the south-west of the province is the periphery of the Rung Sat. It was in this region that the task force conducted Operation 'Hayman' in November 1966, a search and destroy mission in which task force headquarters (main) deployed forward onto Long Son Island. It is a region of dense mangrove swamp interlaced with tidal rivers and streams and is inundated throughout the year. The island of Long Son is in the centre of this region. The mangroves vary between three and five metres in height and afford protection from air observation. Foot movement is greatly restricted. The many streams and waterways afford easy movement for sampans and other light craft. However, movement by boat is restricted at low tide, the mean difference between high and low tides being eight feet. Tidal currents restrict M113s to operating around the landward periphery. Nui Nua, located on the eastern area of Long Son Island, rises to a height of 183 metres and dominates the skyline of this low-lying area. The main village of Long Son nestles at its base on the eastern extremity of the island. Low brush, clear forest, padi and isolated areas of dense forest or jungle cover the island. Some helicopter landing sites are available in the region and rappelling techniques may prove useful.
The province has a population of approximately 103 000, the major population centres being located in the central, southern and western areas of the province. Those formerly living in isolated settlements have been largely resettled into these areas as part of the Government’s Resettlement Programme. As a result, about 90 per cent of the population are now living in government controlled arras.

ECONOMY

The economy of the province is based upon agricultural production and related agricultural industries. Major cultivated crops are rice, rubber, peanuts and corn. Minor crops are manioc, sweet potatoes, fruits such as bananas and pineapples, pepper, sugarcane, vegetables and coffee. Rubber plantations are scattered throughout the central and northern areas of the province, the three largest being the French owned Gallia plantation at Binh Ba, the Courtenay plantation with its headquarters at Cam My in Long Khanh Province, and the Vietnamese owned plantation around Nui Dat within which the Task Force is based. Neither the Nui Dat plantation nor other plantations which are located in Viet Cong controlled areas of the province are at present being worked by rubber tappers, and subsequent loss of income to owners is reimbursed by war claims payments.

Other industries providing a source of livelihood are fishing, timbergetting, sawmilling, charcoal production, rice milling and salt processing. The majority of the salt evaporating ponds in the province are located in the Long Dien District, with others in the vicinity of Long Son Island and the village of Phuoc Hoa.

Miscellaneous business activities include blacksmith and welding shops, service stations, tailors’ shops, pottery and weaving. The provincial ice works, laundry and a salt processing plant are situated in the provincial capital Ba Ria. Ba Ria is generally out of bounds to Australian personnel, the exception being that selected personnel are allowed to proceed on duty to the laundry contractor and to Sector Headquarters.

The task force has periodically assisted Vietnamese Government forces on Security Operations at the request of the Province Chief. November to January are particularly important months for the conduct of such operations as this is the period of the rice harvest and its denial to the Viet Cong.
ROADS AND TOWNS

Major towns and villages are situated along the three main highways and along the coast. Of these, the most important is National Route 15, covering a distance of approximately 100 kilometres from Bien Hoa City, through the western and southern periphery of Phuoc Tuy Province, to Vung Tau City.

Route 15 has a bituminous surface in fair to good condition which varies in width from fourteen to sixteen feet. The highway traverses a sparsely settled alluvial plain from Bien Hoa City to the village of Phu My, whilst south of Phu My it frequently passes through or adjacent to the mangrove swamps. Those portions of the highway which lie in close proximity to the mangrove swamps require frequent maintenance due to the poor drainage and relatively heavy military traffic. Thirty-one bridges, with widths of ten feet or less are interspersed throughout the 100 kilometres from Bien Hoa City to Vung Tau City. Due to their narrow width the bridges constitute critical points. West of Route 15 the terrain is generally open, whereas the area to the east of the highway is generally wooded. Movement off the road to the east is restricted by swamps in the south and rice padi in the north.

Route 15 was the scene of four Security Operations in late 1966 when the task force secured the route between Ba Ria and Phu My for the movement of newly arrived United States formations from Vung Tau into the hinterland of III Corps Tactical Zone.

The provincial capital, Ba Ria, is situated at the junction of Route 15 and Inter-Provincial Route 2. The latter highway snakes North from Ba Ria to Xuan Loc in Long Khanh Provincc. Between Ba Ria and Hoa Long it has a bituminous surface in fair condition, but from Hoa Long northward past Nui Dat it is surfaced with laterite. Width of the road varies from ten to sixteen feet. The Nui Dinh hill region overlooks both highways in the vicinity of Ba Ria. Ammunition, equipment, rations, and other supplies vital to the existence of the Task Force base camp at Nui Dat are conveyed by daily convoys along National Route 15 from the Australian Logistic Support Group at Vung Tau to Ba Ria, and thence along Inter-Provincial Route 2.

The district towns of Long Dien, Dat Do and Xuyen Moc are situated along Provincial Route 23, whilst the villages of Long Hai and Phuoc Hai are situated along the coast on Provincial Route 44.
In August and September 1966 the 5 RAR group conducted two ‘Road Runner’ operations from Nui Dat to Phuoc Hai. Whilst neither of these operations resulted in contact with Viet Cong forces, it was a most impressive sight to see the armoured column of mounted infantry, supported by artillery and an umbrella of air cover, motoring along Routes 2 and 44 at a time when Route 44 was regarded as a Viet Cong domain.

In the centre of the province, along Inter-Provincial Route 2, is the Roman Catholic resettlement village of Binh Gia and the Montagnard resettlement area at Duc Thanh. In close proximity to the task force base camp are the villages of Hoa Long, Binh Ba, and the site of the former Viet Cong fortified village of Long Phuoc. Hoa Long village is located four kilometres north of Ba Ria and two kilometres south of the task force base camp, being astride the junction of Inter-Provincial Route 2 and provincial Route 52. The village is situated on gently sloping ground, is oval in shape, and covers an area of approximately four square kilometres. It is surrounded by an earth embankment varying in height from one to two metres, forward of which is a ditch of corresponding size.

The people obtain their water from wells. Some engage in the family industry of weaving, whilst others labour in the padi fields, the rice mill, or the sawmill. Many of the houses are constructed in timber and are surrounded by vegetable patches and banana trees.

Produce is sold in the local market which was constructed in November 1966 at the request of the people under the auspices of the provincial administration with local material and artisans assisted by task force engineers and financed by Australian civic action funds. By constructing the market in this manner the Government’s Revolutionary Development Programme was assisted; the Australians were held in esteem for having the villagers’ interests at heart: the villagers were not forced to accept something which they did not want and their traditional Vietnamese pride was not hurt because they had assisted in the project themselves and did not feel that it was a hand-out to the underprivileged.

Also located in the village is the District headquarters, an old fort, an orphanage, a school, a dispensary, and a pagoda.

During the cordon of Hoa Long by the task force and its search by Vietnamese military forces on ‘Operation Bundaberg’ in October 1966 the Viet Cong infrastructure in the village was largely eliminated. The only complaint made by a villager concerning this operation was made by the village chief. Apparently he
was so preoccupied in assisting in his official capacity that he missed seeing the Vietnamese movie show which was provided for the friendly villagers by the then ad hoc task force civil affairs unit after the Viet Cong suspects had been detained. To the north, east and west of the village the terrain is generally flat and is covered with a variety of vegetation—open grassland, banana plantations and secondary growth, none of which constitutes a serious obstacle to movement. To the south and south-west the village is surrounded by rice padi. This area was cordoned by the 1st Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron, dismounted so as to not damage the rice crop as harvest time was imminent.

One kilometre to the east of Hoa Long and two kilometres south of the task force base camp is the site of the former Viet Cong fortified village of Long Phuoc. The village was located astride Provincial Highway 52 which bisected the village SSW to NNE and was situated on a gentle slope on the southern side of a low hill sixty-three metres in height. The village was irregular in shape and covered an area of two square kilometres. Between 25 May and 5 July 1966 most of the known Viet Cong in the village were apprehended, the other villagers were resettled in Hoa Long, and the tunnel complexes and fortified houses were subsequently destroyed by 6 RAR and 1st Field Squadron on Operation ‘Enoggera’. Numerous artillery bombardments and air-strikes caused some damage to buildings and extensive cratering of open ground. Prior to this period well constructed dwellings with teak furniture had nestled amongst shade trees and numerous cultivations of bananas, pineapples, grain and root crops. Much of this vegetation and numerous hedges and fences still interlace the area. A stand of mature, generally clean rubber exists to the south of the former village, whilst padi surrounds most of the remaining area. Due to the vegetational cover fields of fire are generally limited, varying between thirty metres and 200 metres, but often being the former.

Some five kilometres north of the task force base camp is the village of Binh Ba. The vegetation between the base camp at Nui Dat, and this village consists of rubber plantations, numerous swamps and disused padi fields.

Binh Ba is located on flat ground. The village is rectangular in shape with minor cultivations of fruit and vegetables existing within the area. It is situated adjacent to, and to the west of Inter-Provincial Route 2 and is surrounded by the French owned Gallia rubber plantation which is the major source of income for the villagers. A dispensary is operated by the French for the mutual benefit of themselves and their employees and two short range transport airfields are also located in the area. In order to keep the plantation operating, prior to the development of the task force

Due to the vegetational cover fields of fire are generally limited …
influence in the area, the French owners paid taxes levied by the Viet Cong. In August 1966 the task force cordoned and searched the area and rendered the Viet Cong infrastructure ineffective during ‘Operation Holsworthy’. The pacification of the village was carried out by 5 RAR in conjunction with Vietnamese Government forces. Activities such as medical treatment, soccer matches and soldiers attending church with the villagers assisted in improving relations with the villagers. Inter-Provincial Route 2 was secured and people were able to travel without paying Viet Cong tax for the first time in three years. Thus villagers were able to travel to Ba Ria, market their produce and return home without losing most of their profits to the Viet Cong toll-keepers.

It is in this geographical environment that the Provincial Government has been faced with the task of defeating the Viet Cong in the field whilst simultaneously trying to govern and develop the province politically, economically and socially. The government has strived, with notable success, to achieve these ends due to a co-ordinated military and civil effort.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Within Phuoc Tuy Province military officers occupy key governmental positions in every level of the local government organization, their positions combining military and civil functions in a single office. This is a foreseeable long term trend as many of the most able and experienced Vietnamese administrators are in uniform. It is important to note this distinction between those officers with both military and civil functions, and the purely military officers in field units, as the actual responsibility of the former officer category varies considerably from rank held.

**THE PROVINCE CHIEF**

Until September 1967 the Province Chief of Phuoc Tuy was Lieutenant-Colonel Le Duc Dat who had been appointed by Ngo Dinh Diem when he was President of the Republic of Vietnam. Like so many of the recent leading figures in South Vietnam, Lieutenant-Colonel Dat was born in the north. Furthermore he was the only province chief who had retained office since Ngo Dinh Diem’s assassination on 1 November 1963 in spite of numerous Viet Cong attempts on his life.
Due to the insecurity in Vietnam and the need for the concentration of civil and military power in the hands of province chiefs they are usually chosen from military men of the rank of major, or, as in the case of Le Duc Dat, lieutenant-colonel. Although he is assisted by various staff organizations (Chart 1) the Province Chief is personally responsible for all governmental functions within his province.

The functions of the Province Chief are political, administrative, financial, and military. In many respects these functions resemble those of the prefect in France (a resultant influence of the period of French colonization).

Politically, the Province Chief is directly responsible to the Prime Minister as the representative of the Government in the Province. In this capacity he has the overall responsibility of supervising the operations of all services in the province; the authority to recommend the transfer of civil servants working in field offices of the ministries; the authority to recommend his own candidates for appointment as district chiefs, and the symbolic duty of presiding over all official ceremonies.

Administratively, the Province Chief is consulted on and makes suggestions on the establishment or implementation of government projects in the province, and co-ordinates all activities performed by both the overhead services under the provincial administration and the technical services under the supervision of the Government Ministries concerned. In this and in his financial capacity he is assisted by the Deputy Province Chief for Administration who is a career-civil servant.
Co-operating with the Province Chief in the administration of the province is the *Provincial Council* whose members are directly elected by the electorate. Its meetings are attended by the Province Chief or his representative and are open to the public except when matters concerning national security are being considered. Before implementation, decisions on some matters must be ratified by the Prime Minister, or by the Minister concerned.

Whilst a detailed analysis of the foregoing is beyond the scope of this article, an example of how this provincial machinery has affected the operations of the 1st Australian Task Force is of interest. After the decision was made to deploy the task force to a forward operational base at Nui Dat the task force commander decided that, in order to enhance the security of the base, it would be necessary to resettle civilians living in isolated hamlets in close proximity to the base. This would give task force patrols, artillery, and mortars a free fire zone surrounding the base. It necessitated not only the resettlement of the local populace but also an order restricting civilian entry to the zone and explaining the dangers inherent in such entry. In order to realize this aim it was necessary for the Province Chief to be advised, for the matter to be considered and approved by the *Provincial Council*, and for local government agencies to resettle civilians and promulgate the warning. The difficulty experienced by the District Chief in ensuring that all people in the area were advised of this decision was compounded by the fact that there were no newspapers or radio and television stations in the province (such modern media were confined, in the main, to Saigon).

**Financially,** the Province Chief directs the execution of the provincial budget after its formulation by the *Provincial Council* and its approval by the Prime Minister through the Minister for Finance. Funds for the budget are derived from income from provincial lands, property taxes and licence fees, taxes paid for the ownership of boats, vehicles and draft animals, and other taxes such as those on amusements and patronage of bars and restaurants, parking fees for communal vehicles and junks, vehicle inspection and registration taxes, and head taxes on residents born outside the province. However, the funds raised from these sources are insufficient and the budget is subsidized by funds allocated to the Province Chief in the national budget. Additional funds are allocated by the national government to the heads of technical services in the province.

**Militarily,** the Province Chief is responsible to the Commander of III Corps Tactical Zone for security and public order. He co-ordinates the activities of the Police, the Military forces, and special agents within the province. He is assisted
by the Deputy Province Chief for Security, a career Army Officer, by his District or Military Sub-Sector Chiefs, and by the Sector Senior Advisor (a United States Army lieutenant-colonel).

The Province Chief is also Chairman of the Provincial Revolutionary Development Council. This council has a Permanent Bureau of nine military officers and two civil servants as its executive agency. Enhancing continuity of effort and improving administration within the Revolutionary Development structure, the chairman at each echelon is a member of the council at the next higher level. Hence the Province Chief is a member of the Divisional Revolutionary Development Council which is subordinate in turn to the Regional and Central Revolutionary Development Councils whilst the District Chiefs are members of the Provincial Revolutionary Development Council.

The Province Chief prepares the Revolutionary Development Plan for his province based on the guidelines published by the Ministry of Revolutionary Development in Saigon. After review and approval of the plan at Divisional, Regional, and Ministry level, the Province Chief is then responsible for its detailed execution. Military plans, including those of the task force (when appropriate), are co-ordinated with the Provincial Revolutionary Development Plan.

The task of the military forces in support of Revolutionary Development is to attain the requisite level of security in and around selected hamlets and villages so that civil activities can proceed. Within areas selected for Revolutionary Development military forces conduct Clearing and Securing Operations to rid the areas of Viet Cong Main Forces\(^\text{13}\) and to establish and maintain local authority. Concurrently, other military forces are employed in surrounding areas to establish a protective shield against Viet Cong forces that seek to penetrate the areas where Revolutionary Development is in progress. Military psychological operations\(^\text{14}\) and civic action\(^\text{15}\) are conducted as part of the military support for Revolutionary Development with considerable effect.

Civilian moves to improve political, economic and social development within the hamlets and villages run concurrently with the military operations. They aim to win over the population and to establish firm governmental control of the area. South Vietnamese Civil Revolutionary Development Teams\(^\text{16}\) and Province Representatives of the United States Mission Agency, designated as the Office of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS),\(^\text{17}\) assist in this regard.
THE DISTRICT CHIEFS

Subordinate to the Province Chief are the five district chiefs who constitute the lowest territorial echelon of governmental administration (Chart 2). These district chiefs are career military officers of the rank of captain who are appointed by the Minister of the Interior on the recommendation of the Province Chief and the Commander of III Corps Tactical Zone. They are prepared for their administrative functions by training courses at the National Institute of Administration. They co-ordinate all administrative activities in their district and are in continual contact with the local population, directly through inspection tours and matters requiring their decisions and indirectly through communal committees chosen from the people. In technical matters they can call on the services of the ministries represented in their districts.

Each district chief is assisted by two deputies (administration and security) who deal with routine matters and hence allow the chief to give more attention to Revolutionary Development in his area. In his military capacity he has direct control over the Vietnamese military forces stationed in the district and the head of the district branch of the National Police is responsible to him. He is assisted by the Sub-Sector Advisor (a United States Army captain).

Within each district, every village and hamlet has its own administrative organization consisting of a popularly elected Village or Hamlet Citizens’ Council and a Village or Hamlet Chief who is appointed by the Council.

Chart 2. District organisation
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Since mid-1966, in spite of hostilities, the Government of the Republic of South Vietnam has introduced democratic methods of Election, viz:

- On 11 September 1966 for a Constituent Assembly.
- In April 1967 for Village and Hamlet Councils.
- On 3 September 1967 for the Presidency, Vice-Presidency and Senate.
- On 22 October 1967 for the Lower House of the National Assembly. Despite Viet Cong threats to kill some voters, officials and candidates; to bomb polling booths and to destroy ballot boxes, a very high percentage of the eligible voters in Phuoc Tuy Province cast their votes. Understandably however, the political maturity of the electorate is still in its infancy. The report of the Australian delegation on the election of 3 September 1967, for example, describe how:

Very few of the candidates have any substantial organized support, and political parties in the Australian sense do not exist. In some areas it is too dangerous to hold election meetings unless armed protection is provided, and often it is not possible to move by road from one place to another without protection. When the election was first announced, many people did not understand what an election of this sort meant, and some means of explaining this to poorly educated people was needed. It was necessary therefore in this election for the government administration to lend assistance to candidates in situations where in other countries it is customary for the candidate to be left to his own devices.

THE AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE

CHANNELS OF COMMAND, CO-ORDINATION AND OPERATIONAL CONTROL

From the foregoing it is understandable that the 1st Australian Task Force channels of command, co-ordination and operational control are complex in nature (Chart 3). The task force is under the operational control of II Field Force Vietnam—the United States Army Corps deployed in the III ARVN Corps Tactical Zone; is under command of Headquarters Australian Force Vietnam in Saigon on national, administrative and logistic matters; and effects co-ordination with the Headquarters of the ARVN Division in whose tactical area it operates, the 1st Australian Logistic Support Group at Vung Tau, and the provincial authorities. These authorities include the Province and District Chiefs, the Sector and Sub-sector Advisors, and the Provincial representative of CORDS.
OPERATIONS—CONCEPT AND EXECUTION

The Task Force was allotted a tactical area of responsibility (TAOR) which either included the major centres of population or which was interposed between these areas to the South and the suspected locations of the Main Force Viet Cong to the north. The Task Force has been successfully conducting operations in the province which have progressively removed Viet Cong influence from the TAOR and established a vacuum zone in which the Viet Cong can gain little or no intelligence and from which he cannot supply local force or main force troops. These TAOR operations, and operations in areas outside the TAOR, have created a security umbrella over the densely populated areas which has enabled the implementation of the Provincial Revolutionary Development Plan in these areas.

As operations have progressed the Viet Cong have been forced to react by attacking Task Force combat elements and by attempting to penetrate back into areas which have been thoroughly searched and cleared by the Task Force and

Chart 3. 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF) channels of command, coordination and operational control
which have subsequently been kept under ground and aerial surveillance. This is understandable as the alternative course of action open to the Viet Cong, namely to accept loss of control over the civil population and loss of influence over the main lines of communication, has been unacceptable.

It is now history that a Viet Cong Main Force Regiment—reinforced by a North Vietnamese Battalion, and a Viet Cong Local Force Battalion reacted to the early achievements of the Task Force by attempting to attack the Task Force operational base at Nui Dat on the night 18/19 August 1966. D Company of the Sixth Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, was on a routine company fighting patrol in the area of Long Tan, some 3000 metres east of the Task Force base, when it encountered the enemy force. In conjunction with the Third Armoured Personnel Carrier Troop, and supported by Task Force artillery and air support, heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy force. The enemy sustained 245 killed, confirmed by body count the following morning, and extensive equipment and material losses, whilst the Task Force units suffered seventeen killed and twenty-two wounded (one soldier subsequently dying of wounds) and negligible equipment and material losses (one M16 Armalite rifle).

Despite achieving heartening results in reducing the influence of the Viet Cong Main Force and Local Force units, which still pose a constant threat however, the Task Force has still had to contend with Viet Cong Guerrillas and the Viet Cong infrastructure. Small guerrilla groups are frequently encountered by patrols in the TAOR and it is a difficult process to identify and eliminate clandestine Viet Cong organizations operating in government controlled villages.

Operation ‘Bundaberg’, planned and conducted by the Task Force Headquarters and Phuoc Tuy Sector Headquarters in October 1966, is a notable example, not only of the difficulty of eliminating the Viet Cong infrastructure, but also of the co-ordination and co-operation between the Task Force and the Provincial military and civil organisations.

Until late May 1966 the village of Long Phuoc was Viet Cong dominated. It was used as a Viet Cong base area and safe haven and was extensively fortified and tunnelled. As a result of a combined joint United States and ARVN operation Long Phuoc was cleared of known Viet Cong and the remainder of the population was resettled in Hoa Long and Long Dien. Some 1460 people were relocated in Hoa Long which itself had been Viet Cong dominated until May 1966.

Since its arrival in the area on 5 June 1966, the Task Force had expended considerable effort in the pacification of the village by supporting the operations of the District Chief in providing armour, artillery and infantry support to the Regional Force and Popular Force units stationed in the village with a view to enhancing the security of the village, and by conducting civic action programmes in the village. A government census in September 1966 recorded the village population as being 3756.
Despite the combined efforts the province intelligence agencies found that the village population was infiltrated with Viet Cong guerrillas, families and relatives of the Viet Cong, Viet Cong intelligence agents and cadre members. Viet Cong sympathisers and previously neutral villagers and refugees who were anti-government and anti-allied forces due to recent resettlement and curfew restrictions.

Viet Cong activities in the vicinity of Hoa Long had consisted of:

- Attempts to aggravate the obvious grievances of previously neutral villagers and refugees in order to recruit Viet Cong sympathisers, agents and guerrillas, and to foster anti-government and anti-Australian sentiments.
- Continual intelligence gathering activities by Viet Cong agents within the village.
- Infiltration within the village in order to commit acts of terrorism against the village elders, the District Headquarters, and pro-government citizens; to collect food and taxes and to visit relatives and friends.
- Attempts by Viet Cong local force units to carry out harassing and intimidation raids against friendly forces in the village.
- Attempts at mining, booby trapping and sniping which were primarily directed against government and allied forces in the area—especially along Inter Provincial Route 2.

It was therefore decided to conduct a combined Task Force/Phuoc Tuy Sector operation to destroy the Viet Cong infrastructure in the village. A planning conference was then held at Task Force Headquarters to co-ordinate the operation, the conference being attended by the Province Chief (Sector Commander), the United States Sector Senior Advisor, and Task Force officers holding key appointments.

On 30 October 1966 the Task Force cordoned Hoa Long village with two battalions (5 RAR and 6 RAR), the Third Special Air Service Squadron, and the 1st Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron, and provided civil affairs, civic action, and psychological operations Support. This support was provided for both the civilians evacuated to the Province Interrogation Centre at Ba Ria and to those civilians permitted to remain in Hoa Long. Every effort was made to display to the civilians that the action being taken was for their own benefit and with sincere intentions. This action included medical treatment, dental treatment, provision of Vietnamese entertainment type movies and music, assistance in feeding arrangements, distribution of psychological leaflets, and the use of a psychological operations audio broadcast aircraft and vehicles. Phuoc Tuy sector forces, comprising an ARVN
infantry battalion, a NFFP company, and another company size unit, conducted a search of all dwellings in Hoa Long Village and arranged for the evacuation of selected villagers to the Province Interrogation Centre at Ba Ria. Determination of status of evacuees after interrogation was done by members of the Task Force assisted by Phuoc Tuy Sector personnel.

Despite the collection and collation of detailed intelligence information on the people in the village, co-ordinated planning, the maintenance of security regarding the operation—which included a credible cover plan—and the efficient conduct of the operation, in retrospect it was only possible to assess that the Viet Cong infrastructure in the village had been severely disrupted and not eliminated, despite the interrogation of 630 detainees which resulted in thirty-eight Viet Cong, forty-one Viet Cong suspects and eighteen draft dodgers being apprehended.

In summary, the 1st Australian Task Force has:

- Conducted operations to clear Viet Cong Main Force and Local Force units from areas of the Province in accordance with the Provincial Revolutionary Development Plan.
- Conducted combined operations with ARVN and/or NFFP to destroy Viet Cong guerrillas and infrastructure in selected villages.
- Conducted Population Control and Resource Denial Operations in the coastal areas to prevent infiltration of Viet Cong personnel and supplies from outside the province.
- Conducted Military Civic Action in accordance with the Provincial Revolutionary Development Programme.
- Assisted the Province Chief and District Chiefs in training ARVN and RF units.
- Conducted psychological operations in support of the Vietnamese Chieu Hoi Programme.28
- Constructed RF and PF posts.
- Repaired some provincial roads and bridges.
- Constructed, recorded, and maintained minefields.
- Provided tactical support to provincial military units when requested by the Province Chief.
- Liaised with provincial agencies in the dissemination of intelligence.
- Conducted route security operations along National Route 15 during major military movement from Vung Tau to the hinterland.
- Conducted other security operations, such as rice denial, at the request of the Province Chief.
- Conducted 'Road Runner' operations along major provincial highways.
CONCLUSION

In Phuoc Tuy Province, as in other provinces in Vietnam, Allied military and civil authorities are endeavouring to fight a war against an enemy from without and within its borders whilst simultaneously striving to satisfy the basic aspirations of the people, to establish firm governmental control, and to initiate political, economic, and social development.

Working arrangements based on mutual respect and trust have developed between the Province, District, Village and Hamlet Chiefs, the United States military advisors, and those members of the Task Force who daily co-ordinate matters affecting the well-being of the province.

Tangible results of operations by the Task Force were reflected in a survey conducted by the Provincial Government in early 1967 into the attitude of the villagers in government-controlled areas towards the Task Force. The villagers appreciated the protection provided against Viet Cong forces, the military civic action, and the professional competence of the Australian Task Force.

ENDNOTES

2 Individuals of either South or North Vietnamese origin who actively and willingly support activities of the National Liberation front of South Vietnam, by participating in or supporting attacks, subversion, or sabotage directed against nationals, facilities, installations or military units of the Republic of Vietnam, United States, or Free World Military Assistance Forces. (This, and similar footnotes in this article, state the working definitions approved by the various allied military forces in South Vietnam).
3 The integrated military and civil process to restore, consolidate and expand government control so that nation building can progress throughout the Republic of Vietnam. It consists of those co-ordinated military and civil actions to liberate the people from Viet Cong control; restore public security; initiate political, economic and social development; extend effective Government authority and win the willing support of the people toward these ends.
4 Data for this article was obtained by research and field experience during the author’s tour of duty in South Vietnam.
5 An offensive operation conducted for the purpose of seeking out and destroying enemy forces, installations, resources and base areas.
6 Operations designed to protect friendly resources or installations. For example: district capitals, populated areas, lines of communication, food stores, production areas, depots and base areas.
The concept of ‘Road Runner’ is a specially tailored force traversing main and secondary roads to demonstrate the intention and ability to use and keep open existing roads.

An operation in which forces encircle a village, hamlet or area to prevent entrance to or exit from the area, and to provide security to forces inside the encircled area while they perform searches for Viet Cong, Viet Cong infrastructure, draft dodgers, illegal residents, contraband, etc.

The overt and covert administrative, political, and intelligence organization and networks which have been established by Viet Cong to control and administer areas they dominate or to carry out their subversive programmes in areas they cannot control.


National Field Force Police (NFFP). The basic operational unit is the company. Personnel are trained to perform the tasks of civil police or soldiers as required. The Company-size unit is lightly armed and is capable of operating in a minor field tactical context (e.g. mobile defence of villages and hamlets against Viet Cong guerrilla groups, whilst PF platoons provide static defence). NFFP unites operate in ‘task districts’ which are selected by the Province Chief and included in the Provincial Revolutionary Development Plan. NFFP also participate in combined operations with the Australian Task Force to eliminate Viet Cong infrastructure in selected villages.

Vietnamese Military Forces

a. Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) units stationed in the province in support of the Provincial Revolutionary Development Programme are under the operational control of the Province Chief—the Commander of Phuoc Tuy Military Sector. Tasks include the conduct of clearing and securing operations, security operations, psychological operations and military civic actions. On occasions they participate in combined operations with the Australian Task Force to eliminate Viet Cong infrastructure in selected villages.

b. Regional Force (RF) units in the Province are under command of the Province Chief, although he may place some of them under the operational control of his District Chiefs. The basic combat unit is the infantry company, RF units are normally recruited and deployed within the province. Tasks include the destruction of Viet Cong guerrilla forces and Viet Cong infrastructure; the security of key points and lines of communications’ assistance to Popular Force units in protecting villages, and the provision of a province reaction force for assisting village and hamlet defence forces.

c. Popular Force (PF) units are recruited from and deployed in their parent villages. They are organized and equipped as infantry platoons, their commanders being responsible through their Village Chief to the District Chief. Their task is to maintain security in and around their village.
Those Viet Cong military units which are directly subordinate to the Central Office South Vietnam, a Viet Cong Military region, or sub-region.

These operations in Phuoc Tuy Province are designed to:

a. Win the hearts and minds of the people with a view to gaining their co-operation. To achieve this aim it is necessary to instil in the people confidence in their government—its measures to improve their well-being, defeat the Viet Cong and ensure their security.

b. Lower the morale of the Viet Cong and induce them to defect by capitalizing on weaknesses of leaders, defeats and shortages, and the advantages of surrender.

The term describes the use of military forces on projects contributing to social and economic development of the local population in such a way as to improve the standing of the established government with the people. The Australian Task Force Civil Affairs Unit is employed directly on such projects but seeks to remain in the background and assist indirectly through civilian agencies. In this way the maximum possible credit accrues to the Provincial Government.

Once the many and varied government military forces have achieved the required degree of security in an area, Civil Revolutionary Development Teams, each fifty-nine men in strength, are deployed into each village. Their tasks are to plan, motivate and assist the villagers in self-help projects; to develop the political, cultural, social and economic posture of the village; and to organize and train a village self defence force.

The Province Representative of CORDS is responsible for all United States civil activities within Phuoc Tuy and for the co-ordination of civil activities with military operations. CORDS is supported by the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Activities include New Life Development, psychological operations, participation in the Chieu Hoi Programme, and aspects of public safety. As a specific example, the Office of Public Safety, USAID, is responsible for providing advisors to the NFFP.


Ibid.

The term indicates that the commander who has operational control can employ the formation, unit or sub-unit in accordance with his operational plan, but the parent formation or unit remains responsible for administration and logistics.

That area within which a commander, after co-ordination with and approval by the commander having senior tactical responsibility for the area, assumes primary tactical responsibility and need not obtain further tactical approval to conduct operations. The commanders of the TAOR does have the following continuing responsibilities to be co-ordinated as necessary with the responsible military and civil authorities:

a. Defence of key installations,
b. Conduct of operations, including such reaction operations as are necessary to secure the area against organized military forces,
c. Support of Government Revolutionary Development activities as required.

22 Those Viet Cong military units which are directly subordinate to the Provincial Party Committee.

23 An area outside the TAOR in which a unit will operate tactically for prescribed periods of time. These areas and the responsibilities and authorities of the military units within them will be co-ordinated with responsible military and civil officials in the course of operational planning.

24 An operation conducted by forces of two or more nations acting together for the stay in their home village or hamlets. Typical missions for guerrillas are collection of taxes, propaganda, protection of village party committees, and terrorist and sabotage activities. Guerrilla elements are subordinate to village and hamlet level Viet Cong organization.

25 An operation conducted by forces of two or more nations acting together for the accomplishment of a single mission.

26 An operation conducted by two or more services of one nation.

27 These include the National Police and Military Security Services (MSS).

28 This term, when literally translated, means ‘Open Arms’. The aim of the Chieu Hoi Programme is to cause insurgent forces to surrender to government forces and become normal citizens.

THE AUTHOR

Captain Hutchison graduated from the Royal Military College in December 1960 and was allotted to infantry. He served with 2 RAR until January 1965 as a platoon commander in Malaya and later as OC Demonstration Platoon Jungle Training Centre Canungra and 2IC Support Company.

Between January 1965 and February 1967 he was GSO3 (Trg) TF HQ, HQ 1 Div and later GSO3 (Ops) HQ 1 ATF in South Vietnam.

The term ‘Red Rats’ was affectionately bestowed on the 1st Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy Province by the South Vietnamese peasants. Its derivation stems from the red kangaroo which was initially painted on all the Task Force vehicles. As the Vietnamese had never seen a kangaroo, and as there was therefore no comparable word for it in their language, they inevitably called it ‘the red rat’.

Reviewed by Brigadier David Buring, AM (Retd)

Greg Lockhart’s book on the Australian Army’s mine warfare experience in Vietnam has its basis in a history of the barrier fence and minefield laid in southern Phuoc Tuy province in 1967. The consequences of laying this obstacle were extensive and serious; eventually it was largely cleared but with difficulty.

The author tells the story passionately, casting a wide net that catches more than was really necessary to do justice to the subject. It is an extraordinary effort, with an extensive and detailed collection of material, especially from the participants. Lockhart describes in significant detail nearly every mine incident involving Australian soldiers. He gives a graphic description of the events, identifies most of the people affected, and illustrates how mine warfare was conducted, especially by the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN). He contends that General John Wilton incorrectly located the 1 Australian Task Force (1ATF) base. Brigadier Stuart Graham’s barrier fence and minefield plan allegedly arose from a barrier mentality generated by fighting against Japan in the Second World War, which was subsequently extrapolated into the ‘domino’ theory of Asian communist expansion, and the need to provide resistance. The perennial military lesson not to underestimate your enemy is starkly emphasised by the extensive effort of NLF combatants to recover and re-lay mines that had not been satisfactorily protected. Lockhart also illustrates the principle that a counter-insurgency campaign will not succeed without gaining and securing the effective
support of the people being supported. Finally he draws parallels between Vietnam and Gallipoli as failed campaigns leading to what he regards as unsound legends for Australia.

In approaching this subject, much of the advice from Colonel E G Keogh in his recently reprinted article ‘The Study of Military History’ is particularly helpful. Care is needed in developing a historical evaluation of the Vietnam War. A historian’s task is recognisably difficult when many participants are still alive and able to either multiply or to contest the presented viewpoints. That difficulty is more intense when the analysis involved needs to work through the genuine pain of the friends and families of war victims and surviving veterans to fathom and evaluate dead commanders’ motives. In applying Keogh’s recommended critical approach, Lockhart’s book potentially generates a myriad of detailed responses, but this review aims only to offer some selected matters for consideration.

SOLDIERS AND MINES

Thirty years ago in *The Face of Battle*, John Keegan wrote of battlefield accidents, ‘Mine laying and, even more so, mine-lifting are procedures which kill sappers, who are also very much at risk when arranging demolitions, and there are a variety of other ways in which military engineering can harm its practitioners.’ This comment also suggests the difficulty in appreciating hazardous work in fields such as bomb disposal, special action forces, police, military combat, disease control, nuclear technology, oil drilling and many similar activities. Outside observers are, not surprisingly, likely to perceive the work as much more hazardous than the practitioners do. The book reflects this characteristic to some extent—for the sappers, laying mines was a completely normal task.

Mines are perceived as highly emotional weapons, more so than bullets, bombs or shells. Stepping or driving on them has an own-goal characteristic that is even stronger if the mines originally came from a friendly source. Mine incidents can therefore combine guilt with injury for all those affected, giving an added psychological advantage to the enemy, which can often feed into decisions about mine placement. The related battlefield discipline is different, because the normal combat responses of moving, taking cover, or shooting back are not freely available. (Such responses are of course forced if the mines support an ambush.) These are good reasons why the related psychological damage can be as serious as the physical damage.
The barrier minefield was not the whole story of mines in Vietnam. In the Phuoc Tuy/Long Dat area minefields other than the barrier field contained nearly as many M16 mines as the barrier—plenty for the NLF/PAVN to choose from. And the official history of the Royal Australian Engineers points out that mine casualties would have been high with or without the barrier field. Booby traps, stick grenades, Claymore-type mines, and unexploded shells and bombs were widely used at all times. Efforts by the NLF/PAVN to recover and re-lay mines and grenades from the barrier field were extensive and costly to both sides. According to the book’s epilogue, the total civilian and military casualties on the Vietnamese side were probably of a similar order to those suffered by the United States and its allies, and occurring for a long time afterwards.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The word ‘strategy’ is often overused when writing about military matters. Its applicability can usually be clarified by considering the division between the strategic, operational and tactical levels of thinking and acting (allowing that these ideas have gained their main credence since the Vietnam era). Australia’s strategic choices expired with the decision to join in the conflict, the choice of the province to work in, and the size of the force involved. Maintaining community support for involvement is also a strategic element. Matters of vital ground, the design of deployments, and methods of controlling populations and resources such as rice, are operational matters. Minefield siting and content, and also precautions and behaviour in mined areas, are tactical aspects. A more strategic overlap occurs in a counterinsurgency campaign when all these matters influence the loyalties of the target population.

The criticism that Lockhart levels at the Army for not applying sanctions to Brigadier Stuart Graham, and for issuing understated press releases about mine casualties, overlooks the state of hostilities that still existed. Responses such as firing a senior officer or having a high profile public and political argument about mine casualties would have handed the enemy a major propaganda victory. In the worldwide strategic battle for public opinion, this would have been pre-emptive capitulation.

Lockhart argues that the superior military authorities in Saigon or Canberra should have countermanded the minefield plan. In principle, higher headquarters interfering in operational command and planning is undesirable. Doing so would require strong reasons that did not exist at the time. To withdraw on your own
initiative from a conflict that cannot be won might be a strategic failure, but it is not an operational defeat. Nobody entering any contest aims to lose, and early stages of a campaign will normally be optimistic. The minefield was conceived within the first few months of the 1ATF deployment in Phuoc Tuy province.

Unsuccessful military operations and campaigns can inspire deep soul searching. To argue that because they did not succeed, they should not have been attempted, is too facile. For a full understanding it is far better to examine thoroughly why the activities were undertaken, respecting the attitudes and values of the time, and gauging the balance of reasons why success was not achieved.

**OPERATIONAL ASPECTS**

Lockhart criticises locating the 1ATF base at Nui Dat, and the only apparent alternative suggested is Vung Tau. Other sources explain this choice fully and satisfactorily. A main factor had to be freedom of action: the ability of the task force to fire its guns, mortars and machine guns in defence, which would have been heavily curtailed within Vung Tau. General Wilton’s preparations and consultations were sufficient that the choice of Nui Dat was not a unilateral decision. The task force faced a permanent dilemma whether to chase main force units or to ambush and patrol against local NLF/PAVN groups. Combat power in 1ATF was probably more suitable for the bigger operations, as preferred by the United States, but the smaller operations generated more apparent success and had direct influence locally. The minefield was clearly an attempt to create a force multiplier for the limited manpower of 1ATF in 1967.

Lockhart discusses the categorisation of the minefield without understanding that purpose and siting define a minefield’s category, not its content. He refers to a memo from the Chief Engineer Australian Force Vietnam (CE AFV) that would have had force in that theatre, but does not qualify as a channel for changing mine warfare doctrine. The author challenges Brigadier Graham’s authority to lay the barrier minefield, because there was no Australian divisional commander present. This diminishes the role of Headquarters 2 Field Force Vietnam (HQ2FFV); their operational influence over 1ATF was real and legitimate, and clearly, they could not have released over 20 000 mines and the M5 anti-lift switches to 1ATF without suitable command authority. It also means that Graham’s decision was (again) not unilateral.

Contemporary sources such as Robert O’Neill’s *Vietnam Task* show that the purpose of the fence and minefield was to safeguard the rice harvest in the province and to disrupt contact between main forces and the local population. The patrol workload without the obstacle was too high to accept. Lockhart expands this limited purpose into a much wider barrier philosophy, which is a clear case of argument by extension, meaning to project the argument beyond the proposer’s intention in order to criticise it.
A supreme irony was that two major population control measures undertaken in 1967, the fence and minefield and the village relocation into Suoi Nghe, were examples of a proper attempt to emulate successful principles from the Malayan Emergency. Deficiencies in their execution cause both to be regarded as unsuccessful, but Brigadier Graham actually deserves credit for the attempt. The disruption objective was even pursued again in 1970. Differences between the campaigns are often used to show that the experience of Malaya was inapplicable in Vietnam. However, when principles do not work, they are not necessarily wrong. Further, the ability to apply counterinsurgency principles had much to do with Australia’s involvement in Vietnam in the first place, and also for the selection of Phuoc Tuy province as a separately Australian area of operation. The full circumstances again need to be considered carefully.

**TACTICAL MATTERS**

The most damning and perplexing aspect of the minefield was the failure to protect it and respond to interference. People recovering mines from the field were remarkably exposed, yet they were not challenged. Planners clearly recognised the need for security at the outset, and there was apparently an agreement to monitor the minefield, with patrols from Australian forces on the eastern side, and Vietnamese forces on the western side. Loss of intent and any lack of capability to respond deserve closer examination than Lockhart gives. Examples would be to explain the effects of replacing the province chief and the local battalion of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in the months after the minefield was laid. One cogent evaluation of Vietnamese capability is included in Ian McNeill’s ‘The Team’, but the drawbacks he identifies would probably not have been evident to 1ATF in early 1967. Why 1ATF did not continue to fulfil its part of the agreement needs to be explained.

The book includes a good description of the minefield clearance, and this work illustrates the contrast between the two sides of the conflict. The Australian effort clearly recognised that the state of an armed mine/grenade combination could have been anywhere from rusted solid and useless to a hair trigger condition. Hand clearing would probably find every mine, but it was not worth the risk of casualties or the time required. Conversely the NLF was prepared to take that risk, and they were given the time. The experiments to find a practical mechanical clearance method were fine examples of the characteristic ingenuity of military and mechanical engineers, although the buried mines are a doubtful legacy.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

While a worthwhile book, various aspects underline that it needed stronger editing and production assistance. Some diagrams and maps are not sufficiently clear, especially those showing the location of mine incidents. There was much discussion about an allegedly misleading PR photo about mine clearance that is not in the book. Indexing is limited—for example there is no reference to HQ 2FFV or to US connections. The choice of language in sections is questionable, with the use of far too many coloured and emotive words when better alternatives were available—comments such as ‘We thought the hierarchy were Dickheads and still think it’ (from a former officer), ‘Who was the dummy?’ (about unmined areas inside the fence), and ‘Was this a case of the blind leading the blind?’ (about Brigadier Graham’s retirement work) would be considered unacceptable and unnecessary by many readers.

Looking to the future, this story shows that to abandon old principles is perilous. Mines, especially when used in the nuisance role, pose a threat that is little different in principle from the improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that infect today’s combat zones. Many principles and techniques of counterinsurgency that were so clearly established in the 1950s are highly pertinent to the efforts to deal with unconventional and terrorist threats in the twenty-first century.

Greg Lockhart’s book gives the reader a great deal to think about. Its harrowing descriptions of the actions and the experiences of the soldiers make clear what mine warfare is and what it does to bodies and minds. His evaluation of commanders’ intentions and other surrounding factors is severe but questionable; other sources discuss these matters in more conventional ways.

Lockhart’s ideas need to be seen in perspective, and this review has deliberately not covered all of them. They will satisfy the predilections of some; they will be anathema to others. So much depends on the attitudes of the time, especially when the southern zone of Vietnam was arguably entitled to self-determination without military or terrorist coercion. This is the premise on which any military intervention depended. Nevertheless, there is no need to see the whole effort as futile. During the writing of this review, a former Vietnamese refugee commented on a national radio programme: ‘It was not about communism; it was about freedom.’ Or, to quote John Keegan again: ‘Battle is a historical subject, whose nature and trend of development can only be understood down a long historical perspective.’ Maybe it is still too soon.

ENDNOTE

Professor Brian McAllister Linn, in *The Echo of Battle: The Army’s Way of War*, has done the US Army a great service. In a book of modest length he provides the institution with an outline of the origins and evolution of its intellectual tradition. This in itself would have been a major and important accomplishment but Linn’s book goes further to achieve operational relevance. This book will help current US Army soldiers understand the context of the way they fight, provide the means of deeper understanding, and highlight the opportunities for change.

Linn believes that the US Army possesses three intellectual traditions, which he identifies as ‘Guardians’, ‘Heroes’, and ‘Managers’. He uses these traditions as analytical tools to explain the US Army’s peacetime preparation for fighting future wars, and in the process demonstrates how their interaction underpins more than 200 years of US defence thought. While perhaps a simplification, Linn’s approach works, and it allows the reader to grasp a sweeping story of peacetime military innovation and adaptation.

From the perspective of contemporary operations *The Echo of Battle*’s examination of irregular warfare forms its most useful chapter. Linn shows that the force’s existing dichotomy of thought between conventional and unconventional warfare is long-standing and dates to the nineteenth century. He also demonstrates that the Army as a whole has never resolved this schism, although by default it tends to favour major war.

Although it is a breakthrough work, *The Echo of Battle* is not without its problems and Linn’s methodology will no doubt be questioned. In his loyalty to his interpretive mechanism Linn does not address a rather obvious question—why these three? Moreover, are they really unique to the US experience? At times his approach feels too pat, and other interpreters will certainly advance other constructs with regard to the US Army’s military thought.
If, as Linn maintains, the US Army uses peacetime to think about the future of war, he fails to give an adequate explanation for why its leaders then proceed to get it wrong so often, nor why there is an institutional tendency towards dishonesty of interpretation. Linn observes the repeated inability of officers to convert peacetime thinking into wartime anticipation, but leaves the reader puzzled as to why this occurs.

Linn’s research is impressive and he demonstrates a mastery of the literature and personalities of US thinkers. But the consequence of mentioning so many names, in such tantalisingly brief passages, is that he gives the impression that US Army’s intellectual traditions contain many disciples but no prophets. It is not clear if this was Linn’s intention, but his approach drives home the superficial nature of the force’s intellectualism. This reviewer would have preferred a depth of analysis similar to that found in the works of Azar Gat on European military thought.

For the average reader, The Echo of Battle will be a difficult work to appreciate. Linn bombards his audience with excerpts from a vast array of writings in order to constantly reinforce his theme. Its density and a certain leadenness of style will also limit its accessibility. For the Australian reader, Linn’s effort highlights an important point—the need for a work on the ADF’s intellectual tradition. Perhaps on a local level, The Echo of Battle’s most significant result will be to inspire a similar work for Australia.

Reviewed by Colonel Bob Breen

With this book Reuben Bowd continues a fine tradition of serving army officers finding the time to write about contemporary Australian military history in order to educate, commemorate and inspire. A veteran of a peace support operation in Bougainville, with this book he has told the story of two regional peace support operations—Operation BIG TALK and Operation LAGOON—both conducted in the North Solomons Province of Papua New Guinea (PNG) (now called the Autonomous Region of Bougainville). BIG TALK was conducted on New Zealand naval vessels in the waters off Bougainville Island in early August 1990. LAGOON was an Australian-led multinational operation that was conducted in support of a peace conference held in Arawa, an abandoned mining town located on the central Bougainvillean coast, in October 1994.

Bowd begins his story with an introductory chapter that covers the geography, demographics, prehistory and history of discovery of the Pacific islands in general, and Solomon Islands in particular. He briefly describes the colonial history of the territories of Papua and New Guinea, concluding that the colonial era resulted in ‘an artificial political and geographical division of the Solomons archipelago into two new nations—PNG and the Solomon Islands.’ The next chapter also covers quite a lot of history in a few pages to explain the origins of the Bougainville crisis. It sets the scene for the two main peacekeeping stories that follow in the remaining four chapters. Bowd’s observation that the Panguna mine was not the root cause of the Bougainville crisis and that the Bougainvillean people should take much of the blame is sure to be debated among scholars who specialise in PNG political and economic history.
The author is an impressive historian as well as a lucid writer. His use of primary sources and inclusion of the complete text of several key documents are features of this book. For Operation BIG TALK, he managed to obtain a record of interviews with the senior New Zealand naval commander and the Reports of Proceedings from participant New Zealand naval vessels. Sometimes these sources draw him into detail like the depth of water, cruising speeds and each vessel’s maritime housekeeping and routine tasks, but they form a solid factual foundation for his story. For Operation LAGOON, he accessed the Combined Force Commander’s diary, a unit history, post-operation reports and Department of Defence files, including some confidential material. Once again these primary sources constitute a solid platform for a detailed account. He concludes the book with a brief postscript of key milestones of Operation BEL ISI, an unarmed regional peace support operation in Bougainville that began in 1997 and concluded successfully in 2003 after six years of patient negotiation and Bougainvillean reconciliation.

The author is to be commended for assembling the elements of a fine historical publication. The narrative is a factual and detailed record. Each photograph speaks a thousand words. Each map clarifies geography helpfully. The eleven appendices are replete with useful information. The publisher, Australian Military History Publications, in a joint venture with the Australian Army History Unit, has done a magnificent job in presenting Reuben Bowd’s work. Those who participated in Operation BIG TALK, Operation LAGOON and Operation BEL ISI will greatly appreciate the author’s inclusion of nominal rolls at the end of the book.
As a former British Royal Marine, diplomat and politician Paddy Ashdown has a broad range of experiences to call upon in his latest role, that of international statesman. It is his period as the European Union’s Special Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, from 2002 to 2006, that he draws upon to write *Swords and Ploughshares* while also reflecting upon other contemporary international interventions.

Ashdown employs a temporal framework of ‘prevention, conflict and post-conflict reconstruction’ as the vehicle for consideration of contemporary interventions. He further uses ‘stabilisation’ and ‘state building’ as two separate but concurrent phases within post-conflict reconstruction—a reflection of the complexity of these activities. He advocates that the international community can gain the best returns by investing in the prevention phase by assisting failing states to avoid descending into anarchy and civil war. Ashdown believes that contemporary conflicts within states and between ethnicities are precursors to larger inter-state conflict and must be arrested. He also believes that the international community has an obligation to intervene in ‘rogue’ states.

Writing about the situation at the international level, Ashdown wrestles with the complexities of existing national and international institutions and the existing processes used to manage global conflicts. Despite several specific recommendations for the UN, NATO and the EU, he doesn’t offer much in the way of substantial practical measures to forge a multilateral way ahead. Given the recent debate over his appointment as UN Special Representative in Afghanistan, the potential answer certainly seems to include appointing a strong personality and granting them considerable powers to coordinate and direct across the multitude of stakeholders.
Ashdown laments the lack of effort to capture lessons from contemporary interventions and to ‘codify’ those lessons, or as we would say in the military, to produce some form of doctrine to help guide future interventions. This book certainly provides a good basis from which some national or international ‘doctrine’ could be developed.

I have no doubt that General Petraeus has also read or is reading this book; although he would be annoyed to find himself being wrongly called the Chief of Staff of the US Army—a disappointing but thankfully isolated editorial error. One can only hope that the politicians involved in reconstructing Iraq and Afghanistan are equally drawn to the advice contained in this book, as it is the political level—rather than the military—that Ashdown believes interventions are ultimately won or lost. While the military continues to ‘hold the ring’, as Ashdown describes it, he fears that in Iraq and Afghanistan ‘we are now in grave danger of snatching a peacemaking defeat from the jaws of military victory’.

Towards the end of the book, Ashdown also offers some sage observations on how the ‘war on terror’ is being waged. ‘Our problem is that we have chosen the wrong mindset, the wrong battlefield, the wrong weapons and the wrong strategies to win this campaign’. It is somewhat tangential to the main topic of this book, but thankfully he also offers a few pages of thoughts on what the right approaches might be.

Swords and Ploughshares is short, insightful and useful. For members of the ADF and other Australian government agencies who have served in Timor Leste, Afghanistan or Iraq this book provides a good perspective on the context and challenges of international interventions and state-building ventures.

Reviewed by Jean Bou

The mechanisation of ground forces was one of the most important developments in twentieth century military affairs. George F Hofmann, a former Armored Branch officer in the US Army and now a Professor of History at the University of Cincinnati, has sought to explain how the US Cavalry underwent mechanisation, a process which was fraught with difficulties for many armies. Hoffman's focus is on the 'lessons' of the First World War (or at least of the Western Front), the experiences and views of key officers, the demands and limitations of technology, budgetary restraint and, whether the United States made suitable preparations for the next World War.

Hoffman begins his analysis with the US Cavalry in the First World War. While few officers saw battle in their pre-war mounted role, some began to conceive that formations built around armoured units might be the way of the future. Such men, who generally advocated some form of 'deep' manoeuvre battle at the operational level, soon found themselves in an inter-war army which, by Hofmann's telling, was dominated by General John Pershing's belief in infantry-based 'open warfare' over broad fronts, maintained by a tight-fisted and isolationist Congress, and dominated by infantry and cavalry chiefs determined to control their respective armoured fiefdoms. Hofmann follows the inter-war arguments and military politics through to the raising of a dedicated Armored Force just before the US entry to the Second World War, and then examines the performance and experiences of mechanised cavalry in Europe and in occupied Germany afterwards.

*Through Mobility We Conquer* is obviously well researched, yet Hoffman's often valuable observations are frequently difficult to follow in what is an unnecessarily long book. Its 471 pages of narrative could have been much less. Hoffman's chapter on the US occupation of Germany seems to have little bearing on the central matter.
of mechanisation. The two Second World War chapters usefully highlight the mechanised cavalryman’s dilemma of having anticipated a ‘sneak and peak’ reconnaissance role, and then being required to shoot it out with the enemy on the battlefield, but they could have done so more pithily. The chapters dealing with the period 1917–41 are the most important and the most interesting, but even here it can be heavy going. Hoffman’s efforts to inject colour with anecdotes on, for example, a junior officer’s son burning down the commanding officer’s dog house or the dubious qualities of General Adna Chaffee’s personal pilots, all too often only serve to obscure the main themes. Many chapters amble rather than purposefully get to the point.

Throughout the book is a traditionalist versus reformers theme. Unfortunately here Hoffman seems to have fallen into a trap that has captured many examiners of institutional change—that the would-be reformers were so obviously right, even at the time. This leads Hoffman to sometimes simplistic characterisations; those supporting the horse are unimaginative, blimpish types, while those in favour of mechanisation are clear-eyed visionaries. This is too black and white. The path ahead may seem obvious now, but was unlikely to have been so self-evident in 1918, 1925 or even 1935, and one suspects that apart from a few die-hards on either end of the spectrum most thinking officers held considered in-between views. A fuller appreciation of this would have helped the book and reflected the difficulties of a complex problem.

*Through Mobility We Conquer* has been well received in the United States, and received a prize from that country’s Army Historical Foundation. Hoffman provides an often fascinating insight into how the US Cavalry grappled with the problems of mechanisation in the inter-war years. Frustratingly, it is also a book in which the salient matters are often obscured by unfocused, often overlong chapters. Good history should also be good reading and by that standard this book does not hit the mark, but for those with a particular interest in mechanisation, army organisational change, and who have the time to wade through it, there are useful and well-considered arguments to be found.

Reviewed by James Cameron

3 Para is an absorbing account of the British 3rd Parachute Battalion’s six month deployment in Afghanistan’s Helmand Province in 2006. This book should be essential reading for Australian Army personnel who are preparing to deploy to Afghanistan, or for those who have served there and wish to compare their experiences with those of the British forces. The narrative is sourced almost entirely from interviews with the soldiers themselves, and reflects the intensity of their day-to-day experiences on the ground. Although different from the Australian area of operations in Oruzgan province, many similarities exist, and numerous instructive insights can be garnered from Patrick Bishop’s account.

3 Para provides a vivid and thorough assessment of Taliban tactics, psychology, and weaponry which they employed sometimes to devastating effect. The Taliban proved themselves to be a ‘maniacaally determined’, tough, cunning, aggressive, competent, organised, patient and resilient opponent who used their familiarity with the terrain to initiate well planned and coordinated ambushes. Furthermore, the attacks continued regardless of whether the Taliban suffered appalling losses. The insurgents were motivated by fanatical religious zeal reinforced by a sense of national liberation and a wish to defeat the British as Afghans had done in the nineteenth century. After reading 3 Para, one is under no illusion about what a formidable adversary the Taliban are. Their collapse in late 2001 under a combined assault of US bombing and the Northern Alliance is widely known but one must also accept that the fighting skills of the Taliban deserve more credit.
BOOK REVIEW  JAMES CAMERON

The book is valuable for other reasons. It shows how the men of the 3rd Parachute Battalion coped with the loss of popular comrades, and how officers acted to bolster morale at these times, which was usually very high. The ethos of 'cracking on' amongst the Paras must be admired, to simply continue with the job, despite setbacks. The perplexing and challenging nature of Afghan politics and society in Helmand is explained, as well as British frustrations at the multiple and often conflicting layers of command and control within the Coalition structure.

Unfortunately Bishop's style lacks direction and he comes to few strong conclusions on British and Coalition operations in Afghanistan. Often the book feels like an ad hoc series of tense and violent incidents. Overall 3 Para is too action-focused and lacks the big picture perspective. Confusingly several chapters deal almost exclusively with the Royal Irish Regiment and the Gurkhas, despite the book's title. Yet even with these drawbacks, 3 Para contains a plethora of useful and fascinating insights for Australian military personnel into the nature of the enemy they face in Afghanistan, and how the struggle against such a determined adversary may be won, both militarily and in terms of 'hearts and minds.'

Reviewed by Natalia Forrest

*O God of battles! steel my soldiers’ hearts;*
*Possess them not with fear; take from them now*
*The sense of reckoning, if the opposed numbers*
*Pluck their hearts from them.*

Henry V, William Shakespeare

The debate about education versus training in military establishments is a familiar one. The Australian Defence Force continually grapples with its ramifications, and will do so into the foreseeable future. A new book by an English professor teaching at the United States Military Academy at West Point makes an insightful contribution to the discussion about what it is soldiers need to learn if they are to do their job to the best of their ability.

Elizabeth Samet has been at West Point for ten years, and during that time has come to reassess not only her ideas about literature, but also military culture. While this book is ostensibly a memoir, it goes much further. By sharing with the reader her experiences at West Point, Samet explores issues such as the role of women in the Army, patriotism, romanticism of military service, sacrifice and honour. *Soldier’s Heart* may recount the officer training experience in the United States, but the issues it explores will resonate with military professionals on this side of the Pacific as well.

At the heart of this book is the importance of literature. While Samet does not explicitly say that reading literature is a requirement for understanding life, she does see it as an exploration of how literature is an important tool for soldiers who wish
to examine both their current situation, and the experiences they may be forced to confront in the future. While many authors write of how literature is a tool for understanding because it can give answers as to ‘what one should do’, Samet sees its value as offering an ambiguous moral state, contained in an ‘indeterminate, open-ended mode of communication [that was] potentially unsettling’.

Samet explains in her book the benefits of West Point cadets exploring such diverse genres as lyric poetry, feminist literature and the Russian classics. That said, there is also an understanding that reading both fiction and non-fiction that deals with military matters is also an important component of the education of soldiers. Literary models are important to the military for various reasons. An obvious one is that military culture is based on many ideas, and so many of those come from literature—from Thucydides to Richard Hooker. While not all of those ideas fit neatly in the mould of what ‘makes a soldier’, they need to be understood if they are to be debated and perhaps refuted. These literary models can also continue to refresh and revive the culture, and revisiting them through literature can help the reader to keep in touch with the ideas that shape their understanding of who they are. More importantly, literature, as part of a liberal education, demands of us to move beyond the technical and the memorisation of facts that training involves—reading literature means we have to think. As the poet Walt Whitman said ‘The reader will always have his or her part to do, just as much as I have mine’.

Despite being written by a literature professor, this is not a didactic guide on what to read to become a good soldier, though she does include a list of recommended books and films. Samet’s book should be read more as an example of how reading, and especially reading literature, can help understand the big issues in life. In a market saturated with ‘how-to’ guides, including numerous books listing what you must read if you are to be considered educated, it is refreshing to come across an author who credits her audience with enough intelligence to make their own decisions.
Listed below is a selection from the review copies that have arrived at the *Australian Army Journal*. Some of these books will feature as book reviews in future editions.

Are you interested in writing a book review for the *Australian Army Journal*? Please contact the AAJ at army.journal@defence.gov.au, stating your areas of interest, and we can provide you of a list of the books available (you will be provided with a free copy that is yours to keep).


TITLES TO NOTE


Australian Army Journal

**CHAUVEL ESSAY PRIZE**

*for contribution to the understanding of land warfare*

**Competition Winner 2007**

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MAJGEN M.P.J. (Mike) O’Brien, CSC (Retd)
BRIG J. (John) Essex-Clark, DSM (Retd)

‘The quill as a force multiplier in urban environments’
TO THE EDITORS

It’s a pity that Brigadier John Essex-Clark did not read Paul Ham’s Vietnam—The Australian War with a more critical eye (Australian Army Journal, Summer 2007). The book holds too many errors that range from the silly to the serious for it to be classified as a ‘history student’s textbook’. There is no doubt that Paul Ham can write well and what he has written is easy to read. One expects, however, that the narrative and its references be reliable. This is where Vietnam fails the test. The book is sprinkled with silly statements like the Australian Army Training Team’s existence was top secret; it was not. Colonel Serong’s travel and the selection of where the initial AATTV was to be deployed are also incorrect. The seriously false explanation of the ARVN regiments’ action and the behaviour of the Black Panther Company during Tet 1968 at Hue is scurrilous nonsense. There are many statements made in the book that are without corroboration.

Sadly there is almost a sinister sub-text to the explanation of the return of the body of the first national serviceman to be killed—Private Noack—to Australia. The policy of the return of remains changed in January 1966 and, if the next of kin requested it, the body would be returned to Australia at public expense. As a side-note to this change, the Commonwealth reimbursed all who had previously paid for the return of remains. Ham writes that the Task Force borrowed a lead coffin from the Americans and that the Americans had thoughtfully injected embalming fluid into the corpse. International protocol required that bodies be embalmed and sealed in hermetically sealed coffins prior to transhipment. One gets the distinct impression from Paul Ham’s explanation that the borrowed lead coffin would need to be returned to the Americans, and that the Australian Force Vietnam did not care for the body of one of its dead. Such basic errors that are easily proven to be wrong raise a question against the total book, and this book—owing to its subject—should be subjected to strong critical analysis. Unfortunately, Paul Ham may have skimmed through too much to the point that
LETTERS AND COMMENTARY

it overwhelmed him and he found half-truths and created a few more myths about Vietnam. Vietnam—The Australian War adds weight to the adage 'do not judge a book by its cover'.

Yours sincerely

Bruce Davies
Point Lonsdale
25 January 2008
NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The editors of the Australian Army Journal welcome submissions from any source. Two prime criteria for publication are an article's standard of written English expression and its relevance to the Australian profession of arms. The journal will accept letters, feature articles, review essays, e-mails and contributions to the Point Blank and Insights sections. As a general guide on length, letters should not exceed 500 words; articles and review essays should be between 3000 and 6000 words; and contributions to the Insights section should be no more than 1500 words. The Insights section provides authors with the opportunity to write brief, specific essays relating to their own experiences of service. Readers should note that articles written in service essay format are discouraged, since they are not generally suitable for publication.

Each manuscript should be sent by e-mail to <army.journal@defence.gov.au>, or sent printed in duplicate together with a disk to the editors. Articles should be written in Microsoft Word, be one-and-a-half spaced, use 12-point font in Times New Roman and have a 2.5 cm margin on all sides. Submissions should include the author’s full name and title; current posting, position or institutional affiliation; full address and contact information (preferably including an e-mail address); and a brief, one-paragraph biographical description.

The Australian Army Journal reserves the right to edit contributions in order to meet space limitations and to conform to the journal’s style and format.

GENERAL STYLE

All sources cited as evidence should be fully and accurately referenced in endnotes (not footnotes). Books cited should contain the author's name, the title, the publisher, the place of publication, the year and the page reference. This issue of the journal contains examples of the appropriate style for referencing.

When using quotations, the punctuation, capitalisation and spelling of the source document should be followed. Single quotation marks should be used, with double quotation marks only for quotations within quotations. Quotations of thirty words or more should be indented as a separate block of text without quotation marks. Quotations should be cited in support of an argument, not as authoritative statements.
NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Numbers should be spelt out up to ninety-nine, except in the case of percentages, where arabic numerals should be used (and per cent should always be spelt out). All manuscripts should be paginated, and the use of abbreviations, acronyms and jargon kept to a minimum.

BIOGRAPHIES

Authors submitting articles for inclusion in the journal should also attach a current biography. This should be a brief, concise paragraph, whose length should not exceed eight lines. The biography is to include the contributor’s full name and title, a brief summary of current or previous service history (if applicable) and details of educational qualifications. Contributors outside the services should identify the institution they represent. Any other information considered relevant—for example, source documentation for those articles reprinted from another publication—should also be included.