U.S. GOVERNMENT
COUNTERINSURGENCY GUIDE

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INTERAGENCY COUNTERINSURGENCY INITIATIVE

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PREFACE

In recent years the United States has engaged in prolonged counterinsurgency campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. It has supported many other friendly governments facing internal subversion around the globe. In so doing it has both relearned old lessons, and forged new methods and concepts for the stabilization of moderate, freedom-oriented governments. This Guide, the first of its kind in almost half a century, distills the best of contemporary thought, historical knowledge, and hard-won practice. It is the best kind of doctrinal work: intellectually rigorous, yet practical.

Irregular warfare is far more varied than conventional conflict: hence the importance of an intellectual framework that is coherent enough to provide guidance, and flexible enough to adapt to circumstances. Counterinsurgency places great demands on the ability of bureaucracies to work together, with allies, and increasingly, with non-governmental organizations. That it is co-signed by the leaders of the Departments of State and Defense and the U.S. Agency for International Development says a great deal about the partnership between these and other departments that has been, and will be, required if we are to succeed in the future. Although much of our ability to knit together lines of effort arises from the field, there is an important role for policy-relevant thought about first order questions. This Guide provides that.

American counterinsurgency practice rests on a number of assumptions: that the decisive effort is rarely military (although security is the essential prerequisite for success); that our efforts must be directed to the creation of local and national governmental structures that will serve their populations, and, over time, replace the efforts of foreign partners; that superior knowledge, and in particular, understanding of the 'human terrain' is essential; and that we must have the patience to persevere in what will necessarily prove long struggles.

In the field, the United States has innovated in remarkable ways. Perhaps the most important of new initiatives has been the creation of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) which bring together civilian and military personnel to undertake the insurgency-relevant developmental work that has been essential to success in both Iraq and Afghanistan. As those conflicts have evolved, so too have the PRTs: their composition has changed, and so too, in some cases, has their mission. This guide captures the kind of thinking and accumulated knowledge that has led to this successful innovation, and its adaptation over the years.

Insurgency will be a large and growing element of the security challenges faced by the United States in the 21st century. While the possibility of conventional conflict remains, the fact is that, at the moment, the main powers of the international system are deeply reluctant to engage in it. Insurgency, however, can and will flourish in the

modern environment. The strains created by globalization, by the collapse of weak state structures, by demographic, environmental, and economic pressures, by the ease of cooperation among insurgent groups and criminals, and by the appearance of destructive radical ideologies, all augur a period in which free and moderate governance is at risk. And in today's world, state failure can quickly become not merely a misfortune for local communities, but a threat to global security.

Whether the United States should engage in any particular counterinsurgency is a matter of political choice, but that it will engage in such conflicts during the decades to come is a near certainty. This Guide will help prepare decision-makers of many kinds for the tasks that will result from this fact. Like all such works, it will serve best if treated not as a rigidly defined set of recipes, but rather, as a stimulus to disciplined, but creative thought.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Insurgency is the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify or challenge political control of a region. As such, it is primarily a political struggle, in which both sides use armed force to create space for their political, economic and influence activities to be effective. Insurgency is not always conducted by a single group with a centralized, military-style command structure, but may involve a complex matrix of different actors with various aims, loosely connected in dynamic and non-hierarchical networks. To be successful, insurgencies require charismatic leadership, supporters, recruits, supplies, safe havens and funding (often from illicit activities). They only need the active support of a few enabling individuals, but the passive acquiescence of a large proportion of the contested population will give a higher probability of success. This is best achieved when the political cause of the insurgency has strong appeal, manipulating religious, tribal or local identity to exploit common societal grievances or needs. Insurgents seek to gain control of populations through a combination of persuasion, subversion and coercion while using guerrilla tactics to offset the strengths of government security forces. Their intent is usually to protract the struggle, exhaust the government and win sufficient popular support to force capitulation or political accommodation. Consequently, insurgencies evolve through a series of stages, though the progression and outcome will be different in almost every case.

Counterinsurgency (COIN) is the blend of comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously contain insurgency and address its root causes. Unlike conventional warfare, non-military means are often the most effective elements, with military forces playing an enabling role. COIN is an extremely complex undertaking, which demands of policy makers a detailed understanding of their own specialist field, but also a broad knowledge of a wide variety of related disciplines. COIN approaches must be adaptable and agile. Strategies will usually be focused primarily on the population rather than the enemy and will seek to reinforce the legitimacy of the affected government while reducing insurgent influence. This can often only be achieved in concert with political reform to improve the quality of governance and address underlying grievances, many of which may be legitimate. Since U.S. COIN campaigns will normally involve engagement in support of a foreign government (either independently or as part of a coalition), success will often depend on the willingness of that government to undertake the necessary political changes. However great its know-how and enthusiasm, an outside actor can never fully compensate for lack of will, incapacity or counter-productive behavior on the part of the supported government.

This guide employs a COIN model that comprises five main functional components:

The **political function** is the key function, providing a framework of political reconciliation, and reform of governance around which all other COIN activities are organized. In general, a COIN strategy is only as good as the political plan at its heart.

The **economic function** seeks to provide essential services and stimulate long term economic growth, thereby generating confidence in the government while at the same time reducing the pool of frustrated, unemployed young men and women from which insurgents can readily recruit.

The **security function** is an enabler for the other functions and involves development not just of the affected nation's military force, but its whole security sector, including the related legal framework, civilian oversight mechanisms and judicial system. Establishing security is not a precursor to economic and governance activity: rather security, economic and governance activity must be developed in parallel.

The **information function** comprises intelligence (required to gain understanding), and influence (to promote the affected government's cause). It is essential that the influence campaign is in tune with the strategic narrative, resonates with the relevant audiences, is based on genuine resolve by the affected government and that physical actions match. What makes COIN different from other stabilization and humanitarian tasks is that both elements of the information function will be conducted in stark competition with the insurgents' own information functions.

These four functions contribute to the overall objective of enabling the affected government to establish **control,** consolidating and then transitioning it from intervening forces to national forces and from military to civil institutions.

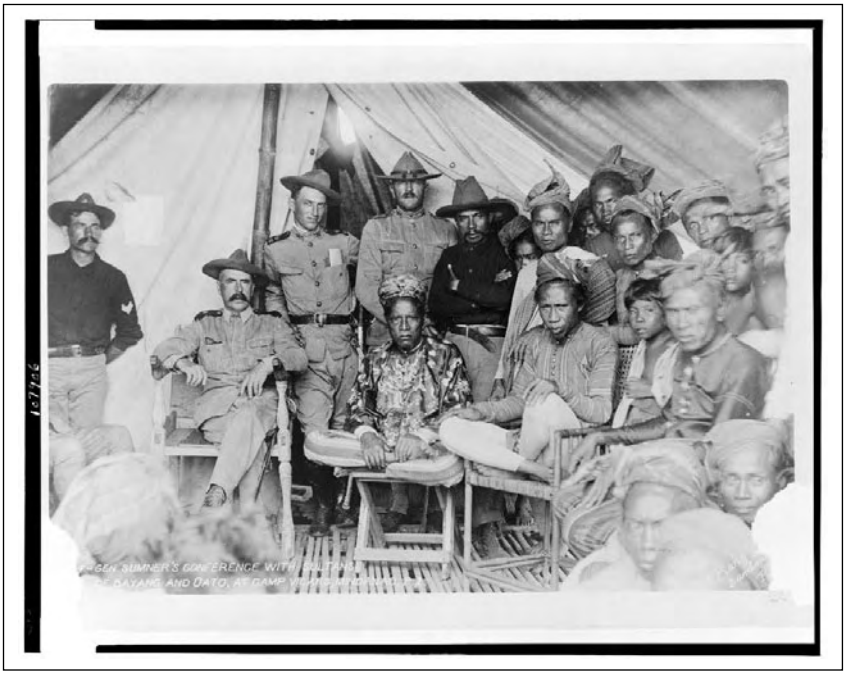
The imperative to achieve synergy among political, security, economic and information activities demands unity of effort between all participants (the affected government, USG agencies and coalition partners). This is best achieved through an integrated approach to assessment and planning. A common interagency **assessment** of the insurgency establishes a deep and shared understanding of the cultural, ideological, religious, demographic and geographical factors that affect the insurgency. Such understanding provides the foundation for policy **formulation** when the risks and costs of intervention are weighed against U.S. interests in determining whether to become involved and what form that involvement should take. This decision should not be taken lightly; historically COIN campaigns have almost always been more costly, more protracted and more difficult than first anticipated. Much will hinge on the degree to which policy makers consider the affected government to be receptive to assistance, advice and reform; it is folly to intervene unless there is a reasonable

likelihood of cooperation. If the USG does decide to become involved, then policy makers should seek a careful balance which employs the most appropriate, most indirect and least intrusive form of intervention yet still gives a high probability of achieving the necessary effect. The sovereignty of the affected government must be maintained and too high a U.S. profile may be counter-productive (historically, some of the most successful U.S. engagements have been indirect and low key). Once U.S. assistance is committed, a COIN **strategy** must be devised, ideally in collaboration with the affected government and other coalition partners, since their early inclusion can help mitigate the effects of operational level differences in goals, capabilities and culture. Detailed, **integrated planning** then follows and a process of **continuous monitoring, evaluation** and **assessment** is used to measure progress and identify where changes in approach are necessary to achieve success.

Success in COIN can be difficult to define, but improved governance will usually bring about marginalization of the insurgents to the point at which they are destroyed, co-opted or reduced to irrelevance in numbers and capability. U.S. intervention may cease when success is assured but before it is actually achieved. Ultimately, the desired end state is a government that is seen as legitimate, controlling social, political, economic and security institutions that meet the population's needs, including adequate mechanisms to address the grievances that may have fueled support of the insurgency.

CHAPTER ONE: THEORY AND PRINCIPLES

PART A: INSURGENCY



U.S. Army General Samuel Sumner meets with the Sultans of Bayang and Oato, Philippines, 1902

(PHOTO: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

Definition

Insurgency can be defined as 'the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region.'

Insurgents seek to subvert or displace the government and completely or partially control the resources and population of a given territory. They do so through the use of force (including guerrilla warfare, terrorism and coercion/intimidation), propaganda, subversion and political mobilization. Insurgents fight government forces only to the extent needed to achieve their political aims: their main effort is not to kill counterinsurgents, but rather to establish a competitive system of control over the population, making it impossible for the government to administer its territory and people. Insurgent activity is therefore designed to weaken government control and legitimacy while increasing insurgent control and influence.

Characteristics

Many of the more renowned insurgencies of the 20th Century followed the Maoist 'Protracted Warfare' model; being monolithic organizations with a centralized, hierarchical command structure, clearly defined aims and a sequenced approach to achieve them. However, modern insurgencies are increasingly being recognized as complex matrices of irregular actors with widely differing goals. They often lack a centralized command structure but typically are linked by dynamic, flat networks (often significantly enabled by modern communications systems). Motivations within this eclectic mix may vary from religious extremism to pure criminality and many groups may not themselves intend to become the governing authority. Often, the only common factor will be a desire to achieve local freedom from control by the government and its international supporters.

Ideology

During the Twentieth Century, insurgents were often motivated by Marxism, religion or nationalism (or a combination of these). Insurgencies were often led by university educated 'intellectual elites' whose personal circumstances were sometimes far removed from those of the rank-and-file insurgents that they inspired.

Modern insurgencies are often more complex matrices of irregular actors with widely differing goals. At least some of the principal actors will be motivated by a form of ideology (or at least will claim to be), but that ideology will not necessarily extend across the whole insurgent network. Modern insurgencies are typified by the points below.

- The charisma of insurgent leaders can sometimes be more important than ideology in convincing others to join their movement;

- Some insurgent actors will be more interested in financial reward than ideology. This applies from the unemployed youth getting paid to fight to the criminal gang leader exploiting a state of lawlessness;

- The basic wants, needs and grievances of the population may have little to do with the intellectual ideology of insurgent leaders, but may still be exploited to generate support;

- Even those fighters, sympathizers, and supporters who justify their actions with the rhetoric and symbols provided by insurgent propagandists may not be fully conversant with the ideology;

- Hatred that emerges during armed conflict, through atrocities and dispossession, often overshadows the initial motivators that drove individuals and community groups to join the insurgency or support the government;

- Players in pre-existing local conflict may draw on the insurgents (or the government) as an external ally to help them;

- In tribal societies (as found in parts of South and Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa) the support of one tribe or faction for the government may often predispose tribal rivals to support the insurgents, and vice versa.

Building Networks

Insurgents require supporters, recruits, safe havens, money, supplies, weapons and intelligence on government actions. A robust insurgency can be waged with the support of just a small percentage of a given population. From the remaining majority, insurgents require only compliance (acquiescence or inaction). The position of an active individual within an insurgent network will be determined by the combination of a number of factors including:

- The level of respect and trust they hold within a community;
- Their reputation established through previous insurgent actions;
- Their degree of motivation, ideological or otherwise;
- Their perceived loyalty to other network members;
- Their level of expertise in a particular field;
- Their access to resources, human or otherwise;
- The degree of risk they are prepared to accept.

Insurgent networks provide life support for the movements they support, but they also entail vulnerability. Command and support networks establish lines between isolated cells whose operational security may otherwise be impeccable. Some key functions may be deliverable only by individuals with dubious loyalty, for example

criminal smugglers enabling logistics supply or personnel movement. Modern information infrastructure including mobile phones and the internet provide means of rapid communications and networking between insurgents, but are also open to exploitation.

The most secure insurgent networks involve small numbers of active personnel who are trustworthy and employ tight operational security. However, the insurgent dilemma is that in order to promote the insurgency and exploit success, these small networks have to expand, exposing themselves to action by government security forces. Effective interdiction can lead to a cycle of expansion and contraction of insurgent networks as security and trust is repeatedly built up and then lost.

Funding

To fund their activities, insurgents may foster an illicit economy, sometimes of international scope, eluding government monitoring, taxation and interdiction. Such illicit financial activities diminish government revenues, increase corruption among local officials, and weaken the control and legitimacy of the government. Criminal activities may include theft, extortion, trafficking (of narcotics, arms and people), money laundering, piracy, document fraud, bribery, kidnapping and black market activity. These funding streams will often drive insurgents into alliances of convenience with organized crime. In some cases, long-standing insurgencies morph into gangs or organized criminal networks that are motivated by profit and economic self-interest, rather than ideology.

Funding may also be obtained through donations from sympathetic foreign governments, diaspora groups and individuals. Such funding streams may be simple and direct or complex and masked dependent on the efforts being taken internationally to interdict them. In extreme cases, funding may be channeled through a third party organization purportedly conducting charitable work.

Trans-National Dynamics

Most insurgencies need a physical safe haven, and may find it in neighboring countries. Moreover, contemporary insurgencies are often supported or driven by transnational networks with access to satellite communications, the Internet, global media and transnational banking systems. International support may be leveraged from diaspora or émigré communities, international institutions, friendly foreign governments and populations, or the international media. If other countries give support to the affected government, the insurgents may directly target public opinion there, pressuring them to cease their assistance. Such pressure may be exerted from the affected territory through the kidnap, torture and murder of intervening civilian nationals, often broadcast internationally to reach the population of origin. Alternatively, more direct effect may be achieved through terrorist attacks launched within the intervening country itself (perhaps facilitated by immigrant or other

sympathetic community groups). Policy makers must therefore take into account regional and global dynamics as well as the internal situation of the nation most directly affected.

Insurgent Political Strategy

To gain the support (or at least the acquiescence) of the people, insurgents may apply a combination of persuasion, subversion and coercion.

- **Persuasion** will often involve the promotion of insurgent ideology, but it can also include the provision of money, basic social services, control of land, or positions of authority. Insurgents may appeal to the self-interest of constituencies through alliances with political parties, tribal leaders, ethnic or religious groups, warlords, organized crime networks, and local bandits. To do so, they will exploit societal trends and popular grievances or needs, manipulating elements of religious, tribal, ethnic or local identity that resonate with some subset of the target population. These trends do not necessarily have to be linked directly to the ideology of insurgent leaders to be exploited by them in the mobilization of support. Such partnerships may exacerbate localized conflict, perpetuate instability and help mobilize support for the insurgency.

  Propaganda is a key element of persuasion and is used at the local, national and often international levels to influence perceptions of potential supporters, opinion leaders, and opponents in the favor of the insurgents; promoting the insurgent cause and diminishing the government's resolve. More specifically, propaganda may be designed to control community action, discredit government action, provoke overreaction by security forces, or exacerbate sectarian tension.

- **Subversion** is the action used by insurgents to penetrate, manipulate, undermine or disrupt government institutions and organizations. At the same time, insurgents may exploit competing power structures, such as tribal hierarchies, clerical authorities or criminal networks that challenge the authority and reach of control of the central government. In doing so, the insurgents seek to 'out administer' the local authorities. Clearly, these techniques will be particularly effective in areas where government services are weak or absent.

- **Coercion** can either augment or replace persuasion as a means to mobilize support, depending on the ability of government forces to protect the population. Insurgents seek to intimidate government supporters or collaborators, and force community leaders to take sides in the conflict. This often entails the use of violence as follows:

  – Insurgents can use violence to intimidate or eliminate those who oppose their aims. In particular, insurgent attacks against government

infrastructure and personnel will undermine the government's morale, confidence and capability, weakening its authority and control over affected areas;

– This effect is magnified by the depiction of such violence in propaganda, portraying the government as weak and the insurgents as strong, and exacerbating local grievances. Propaganda is sometimes the primary aim of insurgent violence;

– Targeting members of different ethnic or sectarian groups may engender a sense of social identity, solidarity and alienation from the government;

– By creating violent instability, insurgents may be able to encourage people to turn to them in preference to the government to 'restore' public order;

– If insurgents can provoke excessive government action against a population, then death, injury, mistreatment, or dishonor can become a powerful motivator for retributive action against the government.

Challenging Government Security

Insurgents usually have less conventional military capacity than the government (at least in the early stages of insurgency) and so tend to use guerrilla tactics to inflict damage without allowing their fighters to be engaged by equal or larger government forces. Tactics such as raids, ambushes, assassinations, sabotage, booby traps, and improvised explosive devices take advantage of mobility, stealth, deception and surprise to weaken, discredit, or paralyze the less agile government security forces. Insurgents try to manage the tempo and intensity of their activities to permit a level of effort they can sustain indefinitely. By prolonging the conflict, they hope to exhaust the opposition, seeking to impose unsustainable costs on the government to force capitulation. Although the permutations of insurgent activity are context-driven, historical analysis shows that insurgents typically apply four basic tactics, or variations of them, to defeat stronger security forces:

- **Provocation:** Insurgents often commit acts (such as atrocities) that are intended to prompt opponents to react irrationally, in ways that harm their interests. For example, government forces, frustrated by their inability to distinguish fighters from non-combatants, may be provoked into indiscriminate reprisals or harsh security measures that alienate parts of the population. Alternatively, one tribal, religious, ethnic or community group may be provoked into attacking another in order to create and exploit instability.

- **Intimidation:** Insurgents intimidate individual members of the government (especially police and local government officials) to dissuade them from taking active measures against the insurgents. They will also publicly kill civilians

who collaborate with government or coalition forces, thereby deterring others who might seek to work with the government.

- **Protraction:** Insurgents seek to prolong the conflict in order to exhaust opponents, erode their political will, and avoid losses. Typically insurgents react to government countermeasures by going quiet (reducing activity and hiding in inaccessible terrain or within sympathetic or intimidated population groups) when pressure becomes too severe. They then emerge later to fight on.

- **Exhaustion:** Insurgents conduct activities such as ambushes, bombings, attacks on government facilities, economic assets and transport infrastructure that are designed to compel security forces to undertake numerous onerous, high-cost defensive activities that expend scarce resources without significantly advancing the counterinsurgents' strategy.

Stages of Insurgency

Every insurgency develops differently, but some general patterns can be observed. Insurgencies may evolve through some or all the stages of subversion and radicalization, popular unrest, civil disobedience, localized guerrilla activity, and widespread guerrilla warfare to open, semi-conventional armed conflict. Alternatively, they may wither away to dormancy if they are effectively countered or if they fail to capture sufficient popular support. One or more different stages may appear simultaneously in a country or region affected by insurgency. An insurgency may actually succeed in overthrowing the government (historically a rare event), may force the government into political accommodation (a more common outcome), may be co-opted by the government and cease fighting (also common), or may be crushed. Insurgencies may be co-opted by domestic or trans-national terrorist groups, morph into criminal networks, or wither into irrelevance. Measures that succeed against incipient insurgencies often differ greatly from those that are effective against mature or declining insurgencies. Thus, planners and decision-makers must clearly understand the stage the insurgency has reached, to develop appropriate responses.

PART B: COUNTERINSURGENCY

Definition

Counterinsurgency may be defined as 'comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes'.

Best practice COIN integrates and synchronizes political, security, economic, and informational components that reinforce governmental legitimacy and effectiveness while reducing insurgent influence over the population. COIN strategies should be designed to simultaneously protect the population from insurgent violence; strengthen the legitimacy and capacity of government institutions to govern responsibly and marginalize insurgents politically, socially, and economically.

Characteristics

COIN is a **complex** effort that integrates the full range of civilian and military agencies. It is often more **population-centric** (focused on securing and controlling a given population or populations) than enemy-centric (focused on defeating a particular enemy group). Note that this does not mean that COIN is less **violent** than any other conflict: on the contrary, like any other form of warfare it always involves loss of life. It is an extremely **difficult** undertaking, is often highly **controversial** politically, involves a series of **ambiguous** events that are extremely difficult to interpret, and often requires vastly more resources and time than initially anticipated. In particular, governments that embark upon COIN campaigns often severely underestimate the requirement for a very **long-duration,** relatively **high-cost** commitment (in terms of financial cost, political capital, military resources and human life). The capabilities required for COIN may be very similar to those required for peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance, stabilization operations, and development assistance missions. However, the intent of a COIN campaign is to build popular support for a government while marginalizing the insurgents: it is therefore fundamentally an *armed political competition* with the insurgents. Consequently, control (over the environment, the population, the level of security, the pace of events, and the enemy) is the fundamental goal of COIN, a goal that distinguishes it from peace operations or humanitarian intervention. Within these broad characteristics, the specific nature of any particular COIN campaign arises from the complex interaction of three key factors: the **characteristics of the environment** (physical, economic, political and human) in which it takes place; the **nature of the insurgent** group (or groups); and the **nature of the counterinsurgent** government and its security forces.

Different Forms of COIN

- **Domestic COIN versus Overseas COIN:** A nation faces very significant conceptual and practical differences between conducting COIN within its own national boundaries and intervening in a foreign country in support of another government. Intervention to conduct COIN in a foreign country is often a discretionary activity whereas internal/domestic COIN is usually not a matter of choice. Forces operating in another government's territory are vulnerable to the insurgents' "home ground" advantage: the insurgents live in the country and never plan to leave, whereas the intervening force must eventually plan on transition and departure. The population knows this and is therefore less likely to support it. A government conducting COIN in its own territory will generally have greater strategic patience to stay the course of a protracted struggle. Another "home ground" advantage is the detailed understanding of the geography, culture, history, sociology and politics of the affected country which insurgents will already possess but the intervening country will usually have to learn.

  Since the United States presently faces no credible internal insurgency, all U.S. COIN campaigns are likely to be external interventions in support of a foreign government (or in failed/collapsed states). Intervention to support COIN merits careful consideration of a range of factors that are addressed in detail in Chapter 4 (Assessment and Planning).

- **Bilateral Versus Multilateral COIN:** The United States may not be the only foreign country prepared to assist the affected nation in countering insurgency. There are significant differences between campaigns supported by a single intervening power and those involving an intervening coalition or United Nations force. Coalition COIN will often be seen as a more legitimate endeavor than a U.S. only intervention, but it requires significant alliance management and coordination and is inherently less efficient than unilateral COIN. This is covered in more detail in Chapter 4.

- **Different Levels of Consent:** Not all COIN interventions will have the full consent of the affected government. There will be major differences between campaigns conducted with full consent, partial consent, or where there is no effective government. A final variation (recognized as especially difficult) is where an insurgency follows a conventional war in which an invading power or coalition overthrows the existing government, then builds a new government from scratch (or radically reforms an existing structure) while increasingly being opposed by insurgents. In this scenario, the challenges of conducting COIN may not have been fully anticipated or considered during the original decision to invade. However, by the time the insurgent threat is manifested, intervening governments may have little choice but to remain committed to a protracted and costly COIN campaign. It is important to recognize that the

decisions to intervene in Afghanistan and Iraq were not taken as decisions to undertake COIN campaigns. The strategic drivers and the factors considered were very different. Use of these examples in the study of COIN intervention could therefore be misleading and policy makers should exercise caution in drawing parallels.

Purpose

COIN differs from other civil-military operations both in the methods employed and in the purpose of the undertaking. The purpose of COIN is to build popular support for a government while suppressing or co-opting insurgent movements.

Approaches

COIN is a response to a specific set of insurgent threats and requires in-depth assessment of that threat matrix, based on solid understanding of the relevant social, cultural, economic, political and security conditions, along with detailed knowledge of insurgent motivations, goals, organization, and methods. Central to gaining the confidence and support of the population is to improve the quality of governance through political reform, strengthening the rule of law and conducting economic development as appropriate. Simultaneously, a mix of diplomacy and negotiation, police methods, intelligence work, military combat and non-combat activities should be used to destroy, contain, marginalize or co-opt the insurgents. Effective COIN therefore involves a careful balance between constructive dimensions (building effective and legitimate government) and destructive dimensions (destroying the insurgent movements). As noted, there are two basic approaches to COIN strategy:

- **The enemy-centric approach** conceptualizes COIN as a contest with an organized enemy, and focuses COIN activity on the insurgent organizations. This approach emphasizes defeat of the enemy as its primary task and other activities as supporting efforts. There are many variants within this approach, including "soft" vs. "hard," direct vs. indirect, violent vs. non-violent, and decapitation vs. marginalization strategies. This approach can be summarized as "first defeat the enemy, and all else will follow."

- **The population-centric approach** shifts the focus of COIN from defeating the insurgent organization to maintaining or recovering the support of the population. While direct military action against the insurgent organization will definitely be required, it is not the main effort; this approach assumes that the center of gravity is the government's relationship with and support among the population. It can be summarized as "first protect and support the population, and all else will follow."

A purely enemy-centric approach might work against incipient insurgencies that are led or centrally controlled by a particularly charismatic or powerful individual. However, historical experience has shown that against mature insurgencies and complex, non-hierarchical insurgencies, population-centric approaches have a higher likelihood of success.

In reality, COIN campaigns will rarely be purely enemy-centric or population-centric, but will generally include elements of both, with the relative balance changing over time. Winning the support of the population for the legitimate government will often entail a breaking of the ideological, financial or intimidation linkages between insurgent leaders and their supporters, perhaps one family grouping or village at a time. Counterinsurgents should always be looking for potential fracture lines where the coincidence of interests between the ideological leadership and a particular part of the insurgent network is weakest. A wedge may then be created through the use of carrot (political, economic & development benefits) and stick (detention & disruption) operations. Key 'bridging' individuals (insurgents, who by personal connections link whole tribes or other groupings to the insurgent leadership) should be a priority for reconciliation or detention, but to achieve this, a deep understanding of regional sociology and relative motivations is critical. This could be viewed as an enemy centric approach, since it focuses on the insurgent network, but its ultimate objective is to win over whole sectors of population to the government cause.

Primacy of Non-Military Means

While the provision of security is a necessary activity in COIN, it will not defeat an insurgency on its own. When possible, civilian and military measures should be applied simultaneously to achieve success in an integrated strategy that delegitimizes and undermines the insurgency, builds government control and strengthens popular support. In counterinsurgency, military forces are, in a sense, an enabling system for civil administration; their role is to afford sufficient protection and stability to allow the government to work safely with its population, for economic revival, political reconciliation and external non-government assistance to be effective.

Unity of Effort

COIN usually involves the efforts of multiple stakeholders. Unity of effort is highly desirable at the national level (among the various agencies of the affected government) and at the international level (between the affected nation and all supporting nations). This is not easily achieved, especially in the context of a coalition intervention operation. Hence, robust command-and-control (C2) mechanisms, as well as diplomatic efforts to maintain coalition cohesion and support, are fundamentally important. They must be considered in detail at the outset of a campaign, and given adequate resources and attention during it. In more complex coalition scenarios, the

appointment of a single overall strategic advisor to an affected government (ideally with the mandate and responsibility to coordinate all international civil and military assistance) may be the only means to ensure unity of effort.

COIN as a Special Environment

For military forces, COIN often involves a wider range of tasks and capabilities than are required in conventional conflict. Armed forces that are optimized for major combat operations will usually require specific training (and perhaps even structural reorganization) to meet the unique requirements of COIN. For civilian agencies engaged in diplomatic, development and information activities, COIN is less about performing a different set of tasks than about operating in a different kind of environment; often conducting their activities in chaotic, unstable, or actively hostile environments. Tasks will often need to be carried out in dramatically different ways, generally requiring specialist training and sometimes requiring development of new capabilities. However it is achieved, the targeted application of diplomatic, development and information effects in a conflict situation is fraught with the risk of unintended consequences and requires a sophisticated understanding of the local context.

Success in COIN

A COIN effort may be deemed successful when the following conditions are met:

- The affected government is seen as legitimate, controlling social, political, economic and security institutions that meet the population's needs, including adequate mechanisms to address the grievances that may have fueled support of the insurgency;
- The insurgent movements and their leaders are co-opted, marginalized, or separated from the population;
- Armed insurgent forces have dissolved or been demobilized, and/or reintegrated into the political, economic, and social structures of the country.

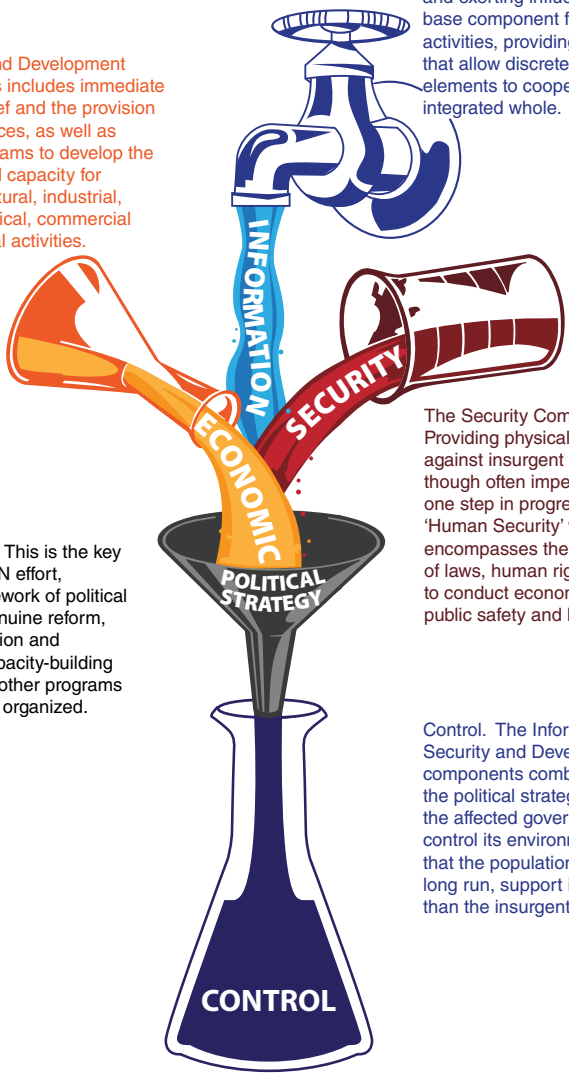
It should be noted that it is usually far harder to totally eliminate insurgent activity than it is to reduce it as a significant threat to the affected government. Insurgents can become extremely difficult to identify, track and interdict once their manpower and activity drop below a critical mass. Consequently, low level insurgencies may persist for many years after the main threat has been broken. International support in COIN will usually be consensually withdrawn once insurgency can be comfortably contained by the affected government. The combination of these factors means that a COIN intervention in an affected country may end several years before the insurgency there ceases.

CHAPTER TWO: COMPONENTS OF COIN STRATEGY

Comprehensive Approach to Counterinsurgency

The Information Component. Information (acquiring knowledge and exerting influence) is the base component for all other activities, providing the linkages that allow discrete functional elements to cooperate as an integrated whole.

The Economic and Development Component. This includes immediate humanitarian relief and the provision of essential services, as well as longer-term programs to develop the infrastructure and capacity for legitimate agricultural, industrial, educational, medical, commercial and governmental activities.



The Security Component. Providing physical security against insurgent violence, though often imperative, is only one step in progressing towards 'Human Security' which also encompasses the maintenance of laws, human rights, freedom to conduct economic activity, public safety and health.

Political strategy. This is the key function in a COIN effort, providing a framework of political reconciliation, genuine reform, popular mobilization and governmental capacity-building around which all other programs and activities are organized.

Control. The Information, Security and Development components combine within the political strategy to enable the affected government to control its environment, such that the population will, in the long run, support it rather than the insurgents.

To be effective, officials involved in COIN campaigns must address two imperatives —political action and security operations—with equal urgency, recognizing that insurgency is fundamentally an armed political competition and that effective security operations, though unlikely to deliver success by themselves, will almost always be a prerequisite to political resolution. Security operations, conducted in support of a political strategy, coordinated with economic development activity and integrated with an information campaign, will provide human security to the population and improve the political and economic situation at the local level. This should increase society's acceptance of the government and, in turn, popular support for the COIN campaign. COIN functions therefore include informational, security, political and economic components, all of which are designed to support the overall objective of establishing and consolidating control over the environment, then transferring it to effective and legitimate local authorities.

The diagram on the preceding page is designed to help policy makers visualize the interaction of COIN components by illustrating the key functions of a comprehensive COIN framework. This approach builds on classic COIN theory but also incorporates best practices that have emerged through experience in numerous complex operations over recent decades.

The diagram is a visualization tool, not a template for action. It is intended to demonstrate to policy makers and program implementers where their efforts fit into a COIN strategy or campaign, rather than telling them what to do in a given situation (it is an aid to collaboration, not an operational plan). The functions are linked to one another primarily through the information function, which underpins and integrates the whole effort, and through the common campaign intent embodied in the control function.

Information

Information is the foundation for all other activities, and provides the linkages that allow discrete functional elements to cooperate as an integrated whole. The collection, formulation, storage and dissemination of information are crucial in shaping perceptions of the conflict by all stakeholders.

In COIN, the information flow can be roughly divided into that information which we wish to assimilate in order to inform our approach; i.e. **knowledge** and that information which we wish to disseminate in order to **influence** populations. At the same time, as counterinsurgents we are also interested in impeding the information flow of insurgent groups; both their intelligence collection and their ability to influence.

- **Knowledge:** In COIN, decisions at all levels must be based on a detailed understanding and awareness of the environment. No COIN strategy can be better than the degree of understanding on which it is based. The information

required to engender this understanding encompasses a far broader range of subjects than would normally fall under the auspices of military intelligence. In conventional warfare, decision makers mostly require intelligence about the enemy, but in COIN they primarily need intelligence about the population. COIN intelligence must therefore incorporate the spectrum of characteristics of a nation's system of systems, including political, military, economic, socio-cultural, infrastructural, informational and environmental knowledge.

At the strategic level, understanding is required of the population factors behind the insurgency, its stage of progression, the reforms required to address its causes, and the willingness and ability of the affected government to make those reforms and the implications of foreign intervention.

At the operational level, understanding is required of the strengths and vulnerabilities of the insurgent strategy, the strengths and weaknesses of the affected government and the requirements of the population. Continuous feedback on the degree of success of ongoing COIN efforts is also critical.

At the tactical level, understanding is required of the identity of active insurgents, their networks, logistics, capabilities and intent. It is also very useful to understand the views, concerns and sympathies of non-combatant civilians in order to influence them, gain additional intelligence and further isolate the insurgents. Almost all forms of intelligence collection have a role in COIN, but historically, intelligence gathered from human sources (including civilians, agents and captured/reconciled insurgents) has made the greatest contribution to success.

One of the most critical yet pervasive shortcomings that interagency operations face is the failure to manage and share knowledge. This is especially true during COIN, when a common base of understanding is key to effective collaboration.

- **Influence:** Effective COIN requires the shaping of opinions among several different population groups through messages and actions:

  – **Affected Nation:** The fundamental influence aim in COIN is to build confidence in the government while diminishing the credibility and influence of the insurgents. All actions and messages should support this aim.

  – **U.S. Population:** Where the United States is conducting a direct intervention in support of an affected nation, the costs involved (financial and human) will often be high and prolonged. Understanding and support in the U.S. will be key if the nation is to remain engaged long enough to achieve decisive effect.

- **Neighboring Countries:** Many insurgencies depend on safe havens in countries adjacent to the affected nation. Sanctuary may be giving willingly or may be beyond control of the government there. Even in non-democratic nations and ungoverned spaces, there may be merit in efforts to influence populations in these areas.

- **Coalition Nations:** Political resolve will rarely be consistently robust across a coalition. U.S. policy makers should be cognizant of the difficulties some coalition members will face in maintaining popular support for their participation.

- **Diaspora Communities:** As previously discussed, diaspora communities can play a significant role in supporting or opposing insurgencies. Positive influence here can pay dividends.

Clean separation of messages to these various populations is rarely possible and a high degree of coordination is required to allow messages to be tailored to different audiences without contradiction.

The influence strategy must cascade down from a set of strategic narratives from which all messages and actions should be derived. The narratives of the affected government and supporting nations will be different but complimentary. Messages and actions must address ideological, social, cultural, political, and religious motivations that influence or engender a sense of common interest and identity among the affected population and international stakeholders. They should also counter insurgents' ideology in order to undermine their motivation and deny them popular support and sanctuary (both physical and virtual). In doing so, counterinsurgents should seek to expose the tensions in motivation (between different ideologies or between ideology and self-interest) that exist across insurgent networks.

To enhance the legitimacy of the affected government, messages aimed at their population should be closely coordinated with and ideally delivered by their own officials. Themes and messages should be simple and memorable, and must resonate with the population. This requires detailed understanding of the COIN environment which must be continually updated. Detailed **target audience analysis** is required for each separate population group and reliable **measures of effectiveness** must be sought to assess the success of messages and if necessary recalibrate them.

Messages are delivered partly through media operations, but more prolifically and often more credibly through the thousands of daily interactions between the population, the government and the security forces. Every action in COIN sends a message, which means that words and deeds *must* be synchronized. Messages cannot simply be spin, they must be grounded in truth and reflect a

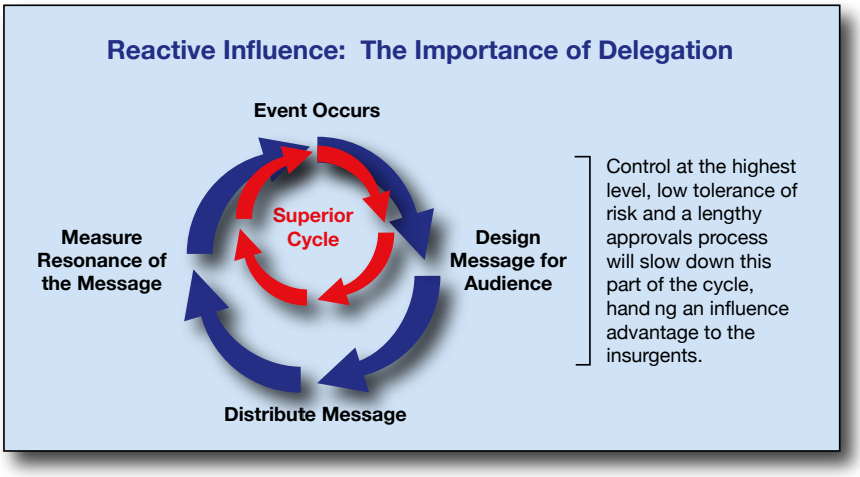
genuine willingness on the part of the affected government to undertake real reforms that address its people's needs. Failure to honor promises is usually extremely counter-productive, so officials should be cautious in making promises, and should track any that are made, with the aim of meeting or exceeding the expectations of the population.

- **The Information Contest:** The flow of information (intelligence and influence) is as important to insurgents as it is to counterinsurgents. A COIN campaign should seek to limit the intelligence available to the insurgents through use of counterintelligence, deception and where possible their physical separation from the populace. Similarly, the ability of the insurgents to exert influence should be restricted by physical separation and by the pre-emption and timely countering of their messages.

  Influence activities (actions and messages) can be proactive or reactive. Being proactive gives a significant influence advantage, since the first impression or report of an event that reaches a population will often receive the widest exposure and will subsequently be most resistant to alternative accounts. The insurgents that are most effective in this field design whole operations to support their influence themes. Successful COIN requires an approach to influence which is similarly proactive, entrepreneurial and prolific in 'selling' messages.

  That said, the imperative to counter insurgent messages demands a reactive element to our influence activities. Speed is of the essence. The longer it takes for a rebuttal, denial or counter-message to be released, the less relevant and effective it will be. Cumulatively, whichever protagonist (insurgent or counterinsurgent) is fastest at processing the cycle of messaging will have a significant advantage in gaining influence. Some of the counterinsurgents' delay in response will be derived from the need to investigate events and establish facts (a constraint from which insurgents are often exempt), though a holding response is generally preferable to silence. Less justifiable is the delay inherent in lengthy approvals processes.

  The time sensitivity of reactive influence requires counterinsurgents to employ delegation of authority, universal understanding of the narrative and a degree of risk-tolerance throughout the command chain. This has strong parallels to the military concept of the OODA loop (Observe – Orient – Decide – Act) and the theory of the mission oriented approach.



Security

In COIN scenarios, the term security is frequently used to refer to the degree to which the government can suppress insurgent activity in an area. However, the concept of 'Human Security' is a more complex metric which can only be measured through the collation of individual perceptions across a community. The paramount concern is the absence of physical violence, but other relevant factors include maintenance of laws, the protection of human rights, freedom to conduct economic activity, public safety (fire, ambulance, etc.) and public health (safe drinking water, sanitation, etc.). COIN emphasis on physical security is not necessarily an indicator that the wider concept of human security is not important, but more a case of imperative and sequencing. The end state of providing human security should be implicit in the wider efforts to improve the standard of governance down to the local level.

Physical security efforts must not focus too greatly on strengthening the military and police forces of the affected nation. Such capacity building should only be part of a broader process of Security Sector Reform (SSR) in which the whole system is developed, including the civil institutions that oversee the security forces and intelligence services, the legal framework and the justice institutions (prosecution services, judiciary and prisons) that implement it. It is particularly important that a sense of civil ownership and accountability should extend to the local level and that all elements of the security apparatus should be trusted by the population. Taking this broader view of security is very useful to countries engaged in counterinsurgency, since it links the reduction of violence to the improvement of many of the issues that are most important to a population. Indeed, effective SSR (especially reform of the justice sector) may address many of the grievances that initially fueled the insurgency.

SSR should be conducted in a balanced and carefully sequenced way, or it may have negative unintended consequences. For example dramatic improvement in police capability will only cause demoralization if the judicial system remains inherently corrupt and fails to prosecute those arrested. There may then be a tendency for the police to take justice into their own hands in the form of 'extra-judicial killings'. Similarly, increasing military capacity and competence may risk a coup if the civil control mechanisms are not in place and the government is seen by the military to be corrupt or ineffective. Once again, a sound understanding of context is critical.

In many stable democracies, the military forces are primarily responsible for defense against external threats while the police are responsible for maintaining internal law and order. However, COIN situations often arise because the police are incapable of maintaining order (whether through lack of capacity, lack of capability, corruption or active bias) and so military intervention is often necessary. Maintenance or prompt restoration of police primacy is highly desirable as it reinforces the perception of insurgents as 'criminals' rather than 'freedom fighters' and highlights the government's commitment to uphold its peacetime legal framework. It is also undesirable for the military to take on too great a role in delivery of local civil services as this may unbalance the distribution of power within government and increase the risk of a military coup.

The U.S. Government has significant capacity, through the Department of Defense, to develop the military forces of an affected nation. However, U.S. ability to assist in other areas of SSR is currently limited by a shortfall of deployable capacity to assist in law-making, judiciary and policing. Other countries within a coalition may be able to make a significant contribution in this area.

Unsecured areas provide particular challenges to many of the actors who are best able to remedy political and developmental deficiencies, but this does not mean that establishing security must be seen as a necessary precursor to economic and governance activity: rather, security, economic and political efforts should ideally be developed simultaneously. The common terminology "clear-hold-build" is very useful, but is probably interpreted as more of a set sequence than is always necessary or advantageous.

The Political Strategy

Political strategy is the key function in a COIN effort, because it provides a framework (of political reconciliation, reform, popular mobilization and governmental capacity-building) around which all other programs and activities are organized. In general terms, the progress of a COIN campaign is only as good as the political strategy it supports. Where the political strategy is vague, unrealistic, or lacking in support from domestic or international stakeholders, the campaign is unlikely to succeed, whatever the efficiency of individual programs. An effective political strategy focuses on strengthening the government's capability and capacity to respond—

and be seen to be responding—to the needs of its people. Almost by definition, a government facing insurgency will require a degree of political "behavior modification" (substantive political reform, anti-corruption and governance improvement) in order to successfully address the grievances that gave rise to insurgency in the first place. Supporting nations may be able to assist in these reforms.

Where the security environment prevents U.S. civilian agencies from operating freely, the U.S. military may be required to provide extensive support to political, economic and governance efforts in their stead. This will be the case during the "establishment of control" phase in every COIN campaign and, in many cases, throughout the campaign. Given the difference in risk acceptance and the large and enduring resource imbalance between civilian and military agencies this is simply a fact of life: *officials and policy makers must plan for it accordingly.*

The Economic and Development Function

The economic and development function in COIN includes immediate humanitarian relief and the provision of essential services such as safe water, sanitation, basic heath care, livelihood assistance, and primary education, as well as longer-term programs for development of infrastructure to support agricultural, industrial, educational, medical and commercial activities. It also includes efforts to build the absorptive capacity of local economies and generate government and societal revenues from economic activity (much of which may previously have been illicit or informal). Assistance in effective resource and infrastructure management, including construction of key infrastructure, may be critically important to COIN efforts. It must be tailored to the affected government's willingness to undertake key reforms, capacity to absorb support, and ability to manage its outcomes.

The first principle for most development agencies is to ensure that their activities 'do no harm' and cultivate sustainable benefits in the regions concerned. They seek to ensure this through an in depth assessment of the background situation followed by the application of program management tools to give continuous evaluation and adjustment.

A COIN scenario presents particular challenges for the conduct of economic and development activity. For example:

- **Security:** There is often a geographical correlation between areas of highest threat from insurgents and areas most in need of development. Development agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs) may be specifically targeted by insurgents, restricting their ability to operate independently and generating more reliance on military forces to undertake this role.

- **Time-scale:** Counterinsurgents often seek to generate a rapid and obvious improvement in quality of life and economic opportunity in areas where security operations are suppressing insurgent activity. The aim is for the population to see clear benefit in government control. However, quick impact projects will usually lack the depth of assessment that precedes more deliberate programs and may therefore have a higher risk of unintended consequences. They also give less sense of long term economic optimism and commitment from both the affected government and its international supporters.

- **Parity:** U.S. assistance can sometimes influence a particular local leader or population element. Giving assistance to any one part of a population however, may be seen as preferential and discriminatory by other groups and may actually exacerbate underlying sectarian, regional or tribal tensions. This is especially so when development has actually been targeted for political effect. Using development to buy allegiance may be immediately effective in reducing violence, but in the long term it may foster corruption and reduce the credibility of the affected government and its international supporters. Development resources should be allocated in a balanced way and must not be seen to be given 'as a reward for bad behavior'.

- **Corruption:** The requirement in COIN to build the credibility and effectiveness of the affected government can imply that development resources should be channeled through its ministries. Governments facing insurgency will often have endemic corruption and may therefore be deemed unfit to handle U.S. financial assistance, yet bypassing those ministries might only further enfeeble them. Corruption prevention measures should be implemented within a wider program of human capacity development, but will often take a lengthy time period to become effective. Sensitivity may be necessary in defining "corruption" in the context of other cultures or established norms. Similarly, the decision over when or whether to attempt change should be taken carefully, weighing the impact in terms of potential for success and desired outcome.

- **Oversight:** NGOs will often undertake a significant proportion of development activity in COIN scenarios, yet they will not always heed any form of direction from the affected nation or intervening U.S. officials. This reduces the ability of the counterinsurgents to anticipate and prevent the unintended consequences of development activity.

Control

The four functions (information, political, security and economic) contribute to the overall objective of enabling the affected government to control its environment. This implies the ability to contain insurgent activity (the tempo of operations, level and intensity of violence, and degree of instability that it engenders) such that the population will, in the long run, support the government against the insurgents — noting that this "balance" can differ from one society to the next. The progress of control in a successful COIN campaign often develops in three overlapping phases: establishment, consolidation and transfer (or transition):

- **Establishment of control:** During the initial phases, a government conducting COIN seeks to establish control over the environment. This requires controlling terrain, key infrastructure, economic production assets, population movement, resources and information flow. In the initial stages there will almost always be a need to catch up with insurgents who have gained the initiative, made inroads into popular support and undermined the government. Because the population is often fearful of the insurgents, the use of force ("kinetic" or lethal security operations to kill or capture insurgents) is almost always a significant feature of this phase of a campaign. Typically, only when the population sees insurgents losing engagements against the government, and sees the death or capture of insurgent leaders who previously intimidated the population, will its support begin to swing behind the government. However, establishing control requires not only the military defeat of insurgents, but also their political marginalization and the provision of economic and governance benefits to the population in order to reduce the insurgents' appeal.

- **Consolidation:** Once control has been established in one area, the government seeks to extend and consolidate it (in geographic, demographic and functional terms). This phase is typically the longest in duration, lasting years or even decades. In COIN, establishing control over population groups and population centers is more important than the control of territory. Consolidation involves replacing insurgent networks with pro-government ones, rooting out insurgent underground cells and infrastructure, eliminating illicit governance structures and cleaning up illegal economic activity that supports insurgents.

  The key indicator of success is the degree of government control in each district and not the level of insurgent violence, since the latter tends to be low in areas that are fully controlled by either side but high in contested areas. This phase involves substantially less kinetic force than the initial phase, with the military "holding the ring" while police, intelligence, governance, information and economic programs assume the lead, and political leaders work to resolve key grievances and mobilize popular support for ending the insurgency. During this phase there are often outbreaks of insurgent violence, large-scale provocations or insurgent atrocities that seek to derail the process of consolidation.

Consequently the entire theater (or parts of it that have already been cleared) may slip back under insurgent control.

The process of consolidation must be carefully managed to ensure that it does not progress too slowly (leading to popular frustration and regression to insurgent control in key areas) nor too quickly (leading to premature fielding of inadequate local security forces, or premature transition before control is fully consolidated). In a U.S. intervention, the tendency of officials to seek an early handover to elected local leaders needs to be balanced against the requirement to consolidate control, so that those leaders can assume responsibility for a stable functioning system.

- **Transition:** 'Transition' is used to describe not just the transfer of authority from an intervening nation to the host nation but also the handover from indigenous military forces to local civilian authority (an essential step in normalizing the environment and ending insurgency). Although described last in this theoretical sequence, transition occurs throughout a campaign, as indigenous civil structures become sufficiently legitimate, effective and credible to take the reins. In an intervention, the external force's "exit strategy" timeline will depend almost entirely on the rate at which indigenous capacity can be built and rendered effective and legitimate. This requires considerable time and resources and must be carefully planned for from the outset. The process, pace and sequence of the process requires considerable judgment and is one of the most difficult decisions that officials directing a counterinsurgency campaign must undertake. Examples abound of COIN campaigns where ill-judged or hasty transition created opportunities for insurgent comebacks. Conversely, too slow a transition risks the loss of domestic political support for the campaign, as tangible signs of progress may be hard to perceive. It also risks creating a dependency culture in which any appetite for autonomy dwindles.

Relationship Between Functions

Maintaining an agile and flexible balance among the key counterinsurgency functions is difficult but extremely important. For example, economic assistance programs with inadequate security presence could simply create an array of soft targets for the insurgents. Security assistance in the absence of capable political leadership and oversight could create more—and more capable—armed groups outside the control of the government. Moreover, while an action may fall within one function, it often has immediate effects in the other functions. Efforts must be integrated because effects are impossible to segregate and are often complementary. Maintaining a balance between functions requires an integrated conflict management system (which may be based on a joint committee system, an integrated command model, a consultative alliance process or a combination of measures) that enacts the overall COIN strategy and coordinates the activities of key agencies (civil, military, affected nation and external/coalition).

CHAPTER THREE: ACTORS

James Kunder (on right), Deputy Administrator of USAID, and Members of a Provincial Reconstruction Team discuss development issues with an Iraqi Sheikh

(PHOTO: STAFF SGT. CHRISTIAN FOSTER, DEFENSE DEPARTMENT)

The Affected Government

The government threatened by a nascent or active insurgency is the most important actor in COIN. However great its know-how and enthusiasm, an outside actor can never fully compensate for lack of will, incapacity or counter-productive behavior on the part of the supported government: any COIN campaign is only as good as the political strategy which the affected nation adopts. The U.S. Government perception of the role of each actor in a COIN struggle (including its own role) may not coincide with the perception of other actors or the population. Additionally, the insurgents may portray the U.S. role as one of foreign aggressor, which may well resonate with the affected population. That population may or may not support and appreciate the security provided by an external force, but they will certainly see it as foreign and temporary; their long-term allegiance will tend to swing toward whichever local actor (government or insurgent) best aligns with their needs and political identity, or best provides security. Effective COIN therefore requires that the major effort is (and is seen by the local population to be) led by the indigenous government. Under ideal conditions, foreign forces do not operate independently of the affected government, nor are political, economic or other development assistance activities undertaken except at the request of the affected government.

But real world conditions are never ideal. Effective, legitimate governments that meet the needs of their people and are capable of managing internal security threats are, almost by definition, unlikely to require external COIN assistance. Governments that do require such assistance almost always need encouragement and assistance to address governance shortfalls, corruption, and the real or perceived issues which insurgents use to mobilize the population. Similarly, in cases where an insurgency develops after forcible regime change, the affected government will be undergoing significant reform or even institution building from scratch. An intervening nation or coalition will almost always need to co-opt, persuade or occasionally pressure the local government to give up counter-productive behaviors, take genuine steps to reform its actions, win the support of its people and demonstrate effectiveness and legitimacy. Four traits that can be used to gauge the legitimacy of a state are:

- The degree to which it honors and upholds human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- The degree to which it responds to the opinions of its citizens;
- Whether it exercises effective sovereignty;
- The degree to which it provides reasonable limits on the power of government over individual rights.

The affected government may have the desire to do only the minimum necessary to defeat an insurgency before returning to business as usual. This would bring about tension between the affected government's desire and an intervening government's

aspiration for wholesale reform and institution building to prevent a recurrence of unrest. Because leaders in an affected nation almost always emerge through the same institutional processes that gave rise to the insurgency, they may be unable or unwilling to undertake reforms; conversely, intervening forces may lack the local knowledge and situational awareness to judge what reforms are possible and understand how to undertake them effectively. Cooperation between affected nation and intervening force, however difficult, is absolutely essential for effective COIN.

Relations between the U.S. Government and the affected nation will be dynamic, especially when elections or other changes affect the composition of its government. Any sovereign government may exercise its autonomy in ways that are in opposition to U.S. interests. A quandary may arise between the U.S.'s desire to reach the end-state (a fully functional, independent and legitimate nation state) and its protection of the very U.S. interests which prompted engagement in the first place.

It is important to recognize the distinction between national level government and local or provincial government. Provincial governments are usually responsible for managing resources on behalf of the national government, but some countries that have fairly competent central governments are still unable to extend their authority and legitimacy into outlying provinces, especially where those provinces cross a social, ethnic, religious or economic fault line. In many regions of the world, the local delivery of administrative services is traditionally far more important than central government in a distant capital. Local government entities which are perceived as illegitimate, corrupt, oppressive, or non-inclusive will provide fertile ground for an insurgency to develop and operate, but are the lowest level through which the national government can deliver security and other public services. The perceived capacity of local government to provide for the population is critical to national government legitimacy.

The U.S. Country Team

All United States Government COIN strategies, plans, programs, and activities are undertaken in support of the affected government and managed through the U.S. Mission's Country Team, led by the Chief of Mission (COM) in coordination with the Department of State. As the U.S. Ambassador, the Chief of Mission is the President's personal representative to the host nation and is responsible for recommending and implementing U.S. policy regarding that country, as well as overseeing all executive branch employees there and the activities of such employees with limited exceptions. Appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, the Ambassador has extraordinary decision-making authority as the senior U.S. official present during periods of instability and crises. Where a confirmed ambassador is not present, the Charge d'Affaires represents the Secretary of State as the senior diplomat accredited to the foreign government.

The Country Team is the central element of interagency coordination and execution in the foreign country. When an insurgency can be identified in its early stages, the Chief of Mission and his or her senior staff may encourage the affected government to take preventive action through the use of informational, security, political and economic measures. The Chief of Mission will also bring the matter to the early attention of decision makers in Washington D.C., his or her local knowledge and situational awareness often providing the most incisive and realistic source of advice. In coordination with policy makers in Washington, the Chief of Mission may also request foreign assistance for the affected nation, help to mobilize international support, and engage non-governmental organizations. In the future, the Chief of Mission may be able to call upon elements of the Civilian Response Corps, which is currently being developed within the Department of State and which aims to provide a pool of civilian specialists and experts in reconstruction and stabilization able to respond rapidly to countries in crisis. These actions may help to address the causes of unrest before the crisis escalates and limits political alternatives to the use of force.

The applicable U.S. geographic Combatant Commander, a four star general or admiral, will be in contact with the Chief of Mission and will be able to assist in pre-empting nascent insurgencies by providing military advice and supporting security enhancement programs. If the United States decides to deploy U.S. combat forces to assist an affected government, the Combatant Commander will be tasked to plan and execute the military aspects of that support.

U.S. efforts must be designed and executed in such manner to increase both the legitimacy and effectiveness of the threatened government in the eyes of its population. COIN strategy requires a tailored approach that captures and integrates the range of U.S. Government agency and department capabilities. The U.S. Government may also elect to provide operational assistance to indigenous forces; such assistance will be the product of deliberate foreign policy decisions taken in Washington D.C., and will be subject to the oversight of the Chief of Mission. Representative capabilities of U.S. Government agencies relevant to COIN are listed in Appendix A.

The International Community

Considerable attention should be paid to the role of the international community in the development of a COIN strategy. The formation of a sanctioned multinational mission offers four principal areas of advantage to a COIN campaign:

- **Legitimacy:** When actions taken in support of a COIN campaign are consistent with applicable international law and are supported by international entities (which simultaneously condemn the insurgents) it will bolster support for intervention in the affected nation, the U.S. and the wider international community.

- **Capacity:** A multinational coalition will be able to call on a larger number of troops and more financial resources than the U.S. can muster on its own. This may have a positive effect on U.S. popular support for the campaign when U.S. taxpayers see other countries participating in and funding part of the counterinsurgency effort. The troops of other nations may be limited in capability or by political restrictions, but by undertaking suitable tasking they will still free up U.S. troops for missions in which they have a comparative advantage.

- **Specialist Capabilities:** Many U.S. allies and coalition partners have a comparative advantage in deployable capabilities relevant to COIN, such as developing national police forces, promoting economic growth or developing the administrative capacity of local officials in high threat or remote environments.

- **Regional Effects:** Regional partners can help prevent the establishment of external sanctuaries, prevent or slow the spread of the conflict to other areas, and provide local expertise, basing, and possibly even security assistance.

As well as these advantages, coalition operations bring many additional challenges such as differences in goals, training, capabilities, equipment, logistics, culture, doctrine, intelligence and language. They require early and close coordination of effort to best integrate their capabilities and expertise in the achievement of common political, economic, security and informational objectives. However, the importance of international solidarity and legitimacy means that coalition operations will remain the preferred path for U.S. COIN engagements in the foreseeable future.

Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGO)

Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs), formed when two or more national governments sign a multilateral treaty to form such a body and finance its operations, possess legal personality in international law and their staffs enjoy diplomatic status. Most IGOs are regionally focused, and as such when IGO member states could be adversely affected by an insurgency in their region, the organization may act collectively to deny legitimacy, sanctuary, and support to insurgents. IGOs can also play an important role in humanitarian assistance and development.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)

NGOs are private, self-governing, non-profit organizations. Their activities (a direct function of the interests of their donors) are very diverse, but include interests such as education, health care, environmental protection, human rights, conflict resolution and similar issues. Some NGOs are implementing partners for U.S. foreign assistance, but these are a special case and will be discussed separately. Since their aims are often complimentary to the COIN effort in meeting the needs of a local

population, they should, as far as possible, be consulted to minimize duplication or gaps in assistance. However, in order to secure freedom of movement, including access to semi-permissive environments, NGOs generally strive to be independent, politically neutral, needs-driven organizations. Consequently, they often try to minimize contact with uniformed military personnel or other governmental actors, seeking 'humanitarian space' in which to operate. In an attempt to address this difficult dynamic, the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) has created a set of guidelines (referenced in Appendix C) for relations between U.S. armed forces and non-governmental humanitarian organizations. This requirement for separation is not absolute: despite their best efforts, NGOs will not be seen as neutral by some insurgents and where security is problematic, NGOs may rely on government resources – military and otherwise—for transportation and protection. COIN planning should take NGO activities into account, although it is unwise to rely on NGOs to provide key elements of any plan due to their independent status.

Some NGOs may actually promote aims which conflict with or are counter to the COIN strategy and COIN planners should take care to establish their motivations and activities before engagement. NGOs that oppose the affected government or actively forge links with insurgents will create security problems and risks, but they may also provide opportunities to open channels for negotiation or mediation with insurgents. Criticism by NGOs can be useful in drawing attention to those issues where reform actions are necessary. Finally, as an independent and often credible source of 'ground truth' about the areas in which they work, they will be an important source of information to many interested parties.

Diaspora Groups

Exile or diaspora groups from the affected nation, whether relocated in the U.S. or elsewhere, will sometimes attempt to influence insurgency situations. They may sympathize with the insurgents and therefore oppose any intervention on behalf of the affected nation, or they may offer assistance to the intervention; looking to play a role in the planning or implementation of a COIN strategy. If they succeed in having any influence over the situation then it is important for COIN practitioners to have an accurate picture of their motives, capabilities and relationship with the affected government, since these are often misunderstood or misrepresented.

Media

Media is a key actor in a successful information strategy in any COIN campaign. The U.S. Government is accustomed to interaction with western media groups, but there is often a weakness in the relationship with regional media in overseas insurgency situations. This can result in missed opportunities to influence key stakeholders.

MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS

Multinational Corporations usually become involved in counterinsurgency when their corporate interests (financial interests, foreign based personnel, or infrastructure, etc.) are threatened, or when a financial advantage is perceived. COIN planners will not always have the ability to influence the activities of multi-national corporations in an affected country, but may find that their interests complement the COIN effort. In particular, firms in extractive sectors (oil, mining, etc.) have large initial investment and long production cycles, which mean that withdrawal from a country could result in significant financial cost. For such companies, investment in local stabilization activities (from micro-loans to security sector reform activities) makes economic sense.

CONTRACTORS

Contractors are frequently used by the affected nation and supporting countries to provide a wide range of functions of which security is only one. Policy makers should be aware that the dynamics of contracting arrangements often lead to "contractor mission creep" over time, resulting in expanded costs and responsibilities for contractor personnel. Policy makers should also be cognizant of the fact that U.S. hired contractors, especially security contractors, are often viewed by the local population as U.S. Government representatives and any negative behavior or interaction with the local population can have an adverse impact on COIN efforts. They should therefore ensure that armed contractors (including security personnel, facility guards, trainers and advisers) are subject to robust, well-designed rules for the use of force, and that their relationship with the affected government is ethical and transparent. Despite these concerns, contractors (across all functions) are now so essential to U.S. Government overseas operations that large scale COIN intervention is probably inconceivable without them.

GRANTEES

The U.S. Government generally delivers development assistance through grants to non-governmental organizations and private individuals or through contracts. U.S. Government grant managers oversee the activities of grantees to ensure that funds are used for the intended purpose. Generally, they can only change the nature of the grant once it has been authorized if the grant is written to provide for termination or modification in the event of changed circumstances. Grantees are often subject to the same 'humanitarian space' considerations as NGOs and frequently prefer to be separated from military activity. COIN planners must therefore maintain awareness of U.S. Government-funded grantee activities in order to protect U.S. investment, avoid duplication of effort, and prevent military compromise of their status. Grantees may require armed security personnel who would be subject to the same concerns as armed security contractors.

CHAPTER FOUR: ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

A USAID officer works with her Afghan counterparts

(PHOTO: MICHELLE PARKER, USAID)

Involvement in countering an insurgency overseas is not an endeavor that the U.S. Government should embark on lightly. As this guide has illustrated thus far; insurgencies often arise from a deep rooted social grievance which the affected government may be reluctant or unable to address. Moreover, COIN campaigns are generally protracted affairs entailing significant costs in lives and resources. U.S. decision making on whether and how to assist a country affected by insurgency should follow the sequence below:

- Assessment of the situation
- Formulation of policy
- Development of strategy
- Integrated planning
- Implementation
- Continuous monitoring, evaluation and assessment

This Guide is aimed at U.S. Government policy makers and will therefore give greatest emphasis to their role in the 'formulation of policy' stage, in particular determining *whether* the U.S. should become engaged in a COIN campaign overseas and if so how.

Assessing The Situation

A whole-of-government approach to a COIN engagement begins with a strategic-level interagency analysis of the conflict. This should be conducted by an interagency team comprised of all relevant agencies with core competencies needed to counter the insurgency. As much as possible within release constraints, the relevant knowledge and understanding of the affected state and strategic environment should be shared across all participating agencies. The effort may be conducted at the direction of the National Security Council (though it may be recommended by the Chief of Mission or the State Department regional Assistant Secretary) and will usually be led by the U.S. Agency for International Development or by the Department of State. It may involve extensive field evaluation activities conducted through the U.S. Embassy in the affected country, or it may be conducted entirely through remote assessment methods.

Insurgencies are frequently described in terms of sources and root causes, parties and actors, and drivers and triggers. The sources and root causes of insurgency can be described in terms of the stakeholders' frustrated needs and grievances. The drivers of insurgency can be expressed in terms of the dynamics among the stakeholders; in particular the way in which dissatisfaction is harnessed, channeled and directed by opinion leaders. To fully understand these factors may require detailed analysis of regional history, ethnicity, culture, politics and religion.

The interagency assessment process should yield a comprehensive picture of the environment and a common understanding of the nature of the problem. It will provide the first step towards developing a whole-of-government COIN strategy and supporting plans.

At the strategic level, analytical tools such as the Interagency Methodology for Analyzing Instability and Conflict, the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF), and the Global Forecasting Model of Political Instability (the last from the Political Instability Task Force, a U.S. Government-sponsored grouping of researchers and scholars from a number of American universities) may be useful aids to the development of situation-specific information for policy-level strategic planning. The ICAF, the Tactical Conflict Assessment Framework, and similar modeling tools can be used to inform programmatic, operational and tactical level plans. Use of these frameworks, must incorporate (or at least consider) any pre-existing analysis and data, especially that which has been used in support of previous country plans. A deliberate analysis undertaken carefully will be of enduring utility in providing deep understanding. See Appendix B for web links to these and other assessment and modeling tools.

Forming U.S. Government Policy

The assessment phase described above lays the foundation for the formulation of U.S. Government policy; most critically whether the U.S. should engage with the affected government, and if so, what form that engagement should take. Only with a full understanding of the causes, nature and maturity of the insurgency, along with knowledge of the applicable international and domestic legal frameworks, can policy makers balance U.S. interests against likely costs and risks of becoming involved in what could prove to be a prolonged and expensive conflict.

DECIDING WHETHER TO ENGAGE

It is folly to become engaged with counterinsurgency in a foreign country unless there is a reasonable likelihood that the affected government will introduce necessary reforms and will demonstrate adequate willpower and capacity to defeat insurgents (or at least be willing to accept advice as well as assistance). Before deciding to provide overseas COIN assistance, U.S. officials must determine how likely it is that the local government will cooperate and how willing it is to undertake necessary reforms. For this reason, the following key characteristics of the affected nation must be examined in depth during the assessment phase:

- **Character of the affected government:** Supporting an oppressive, authoritarian or abusive government against an insurgency is highly problematic, not only from an ethical standpoint but also in terms of the practical likelihood of success. Such a government is unlikely to develop the necessary legitimacy to succeed in COIN. At the same time, the credibility and moral authority of the United States may be tarnished or compromised by too close a relationship

with such a regime. In deciding whether or not to become engaged in a given circumstance, policy makers must consider the degree to which the insurgency derives from feckless administration on the part of the affected government, and therefore the degree to which the insurgents represent legitimate grievances. A government that lacks capacity and capabilities for COIN but is open to international community assistance and has a fundamentally democratic and responsible character is more likely to benefit from assistance than a government whose political or moral character is fundamentally unsound. The latter type of government is rarely a good candidate for engagement, regardless of its perceived geo-strategic importance.

- **Government bias:** Insurgencies that occur along ethnic or sectarian lines frequently derive from genuine sectarian or ethnic bias in the government's administration of its population (though this is often manipulated by extremist groups from outside the affected society). Such biased governments may require wholesale reform, including changes in the demographic recruiting base for soldiers, police and civil service, and changes in the political orientation of key leaders. This is a costly, time-consuming and often politically controversial process. Planners must assess the likelihood that the government can be sufficiently reformed to meet the needs and address the legal and human rights of its entire population. They should conduct a detailed assessment of requirements for reform, and seek a firm commitment to specific reforms from the affected government. Continued leverage may be necessary to maintain that commitment, so policy makers may decide to tie continued assistance to measured progress in meeting reform benchmarks. Without effective reform, intervention may stabilize the government in the short term, but may simply enable continued behavior by officials that renders long-term success unlikely.

- **Rule of law:** Most countries affected by insurgency do not have robust, transparent and effective rule of law systems. Indeed, read or perceived inequalities in the administration of the law and injustices are often triggers for insurgency. Consequently, building the government's legitimacy and effectiveness often requires the wholesale reform of rule of law systems. Planners must make a judgment about how eroded or ineffective those systems are, including judiciary and legislative processes, court and prison systems, police, prosecutors, defense attorneys and legal record-keeping systems. This will indicate the amount of effort required to assist and the likely degree of success.

- **Level of Corruption:** Many countries affected by insurgency exhibit pervasive problem of government and security force corruption. This creates grievances which insurgents exploit, and places great friction and cost on international assistance. In some cases this may simply be a factor for planners to take into account, but in others policy makers may decide to seek a commitment to specific anti-corruption programs as a prerequisite for assistance. In judging the importance of corruption, planners should note that the forms of corrup-

tion that are most relevant in an insurgency scenario are those that alienate the people from the government or that lead to waste and inefficiency in government programs.

- **Civil-military relations:** Many insurgency affected governments have weak institutions, including military and police forces and civil administration. In deciding to become involved, U.S. planners must consider whether assistance to the military and police is likely to alter the balance between military and civilian power in the country. Large-scale assistance to militaries in the absence of matching assistance to civil administration (or without military leaders making firm commitments to civilian control and democracy) may increase the risk of a coup d'état in the affected country, either during or after the phase of international assistance. Such an outcome would ultimately harm the affected country and would undermine the moral authority of the international community. Policy makers need to be encouraged to plan for civil-military relations as an integral part of security sector reform, establishing safeguards to mitigate the risk of coups.

- **Economic viability:** Many insurgent fighters at the local level, regardless of rhetoric, are motivated by economic factors: youth unemployment and lack of economic opportunity. Insurgents often pay local fighters (or allow them access to profits from illegal activities) to gain their support. Planners must therefore judge the likelihood that key economic infrastructure and systems can be put in place to generate alternative livelihoods and make the affected country economically viable over the long term.

- **Presence of terrorist or transnational criminal groups:** The presence of adversaries to the global interests of the United States, such as international terrorist or transnational organized crime groups, is a significant but complex consideration. Where terrorist groups are present, policy makers may be highly motivated to engage, in order to prevent the emergence of transnational threats from under-governed or insurgent-controlled areas. However, large-scale or clumsy intervention in such areas may actually lead to a backlash from local people who are alienated by increased government presence. International involvement in a conflict that does not currently include a transnational element may give a foothold to extremists from outside the affected country to exploit, internationalizing the conflict from both the government and insurgent sides. Policy makers should be very cautious about such escalation and should seek to assist in the lightest and least intrusive manner possible, working by, with and through the local government wherever possible. If this is not feasible due to the scale of the problem, policy makers should carefully weigh the risks of inaction against the costs and benefits of involvement.

- **Border security/ungoverned spaces:** An affected government that cannot control its borders, has large areas of ungoverned space near its frontiers, or faces an active insurgent sanctuary in a neighboring country will be particu-

larly challenged in conducting COIN. Policy makers must judge the likelihood that areas of ungoverned space can be brought under government control. They must also take a regional view, considering whether neighboring countries can be persuaded to play a constructive role (or at least be dissuaded from undermining the affected government). Assisting an affected country without an effective strategy for border security, reduction of ungoverned space and denial of cross-border insurgent sanctuaries is highly unlikely to succeed over the long term.

Clearly, a country that scores well on each of the factors listed above, and is therefore a good candidate for assistance, is by definition unlikely to need that assistance in the first place. Countries that are candidates for U.S. engagement in the real world therefore usually score badly on several of these considerations. Hence, for each factor listed here, planners and policy makers should not necessarily expect to find a good current situation, but rather should consider the potential long-term viability. An affected country with sound political, economic and social fundamentals but poor current conditions is much more likely to respond well to assistance than one where fundamentals are poor, even if current conditions are not so bad.

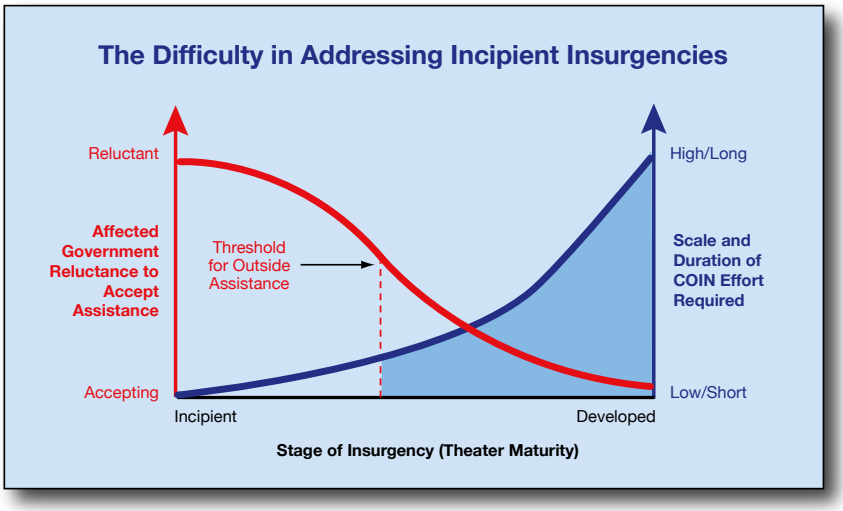
Unfortunately, there will inevitably be occasions when the assessment of the insurgency situation will weigh heavily against U.S. involvement, but specific U.S. national interests will drive policymakers towards engagement. However, this does not negate the value of thorough assessment. On the contrary; it means that the decision will have been made with a good understanding of the inherent risks and the challenges that will need to be overcome. It may also prompt caution over the *form* of engagement to be used, perhaps encouraging a more limited involvement from which a subsequent exit can be made with less political consequence.

DECIDING HOW TO ENGAGE

Depending upon the strength, legitimacy and effectiveness of tools available to the affected government, the U.S. Government may play a subtle role in countering an incipient insurgency or may intervene more forcefully. For reasons of cost, to minimize any backlash from the population against foreign presence, and to protect the sovereignty of the affected government, policy makers should select the most appropriate, most indirect and least intrusive form of intervention that will still have a high probability of achieving the necessary effect. Counter-intuitively for some planners, it is often the case that the less intrusive and more indirect the approach selected, the more likely it is to succeed, though this may be dependent on the maturity of the insurgency.

Insurgencies evolve in stages, and the nature of the U.S. response will often be dependent on the stage of development of the insurgency at the point when the U.S. decides to engage. There is a significant difference between responding to an incipi-

ent insurgency and responding to a full-blown insurrection where a well-developed (though not necessarily effective) counterinsurgency program is being implemented by the host nation government. An incipient insurgency can often be more easily addressed by a small scale U.S. response than a well developed one. However, most affected nations will only seek U.S. assistance when the insurgency has developed sufficient maturity to pose a real threat, by which time the smaller scale response options may no longer be effective.



From least to most intrusive, forms of intervention include:

- **Mission Augmentation:** The mission augmentation approach involves the deployment of a specialist team to augment the U.S. Embassy in the affected country and/or the U.S. Consulate in an affected region of the country. An example of this approach was the Joint Strategic Assessment Team (JSAT) deployed to reinforce U.S. Mission Iraq at the start of 2007. Further examples are the State Department's Foreign Emergency Response Team (FEST) that can deploy to support embassies experiencing an emergency situation and the intelligence community's Rapid Analytic Support and Expeditionary Response (RASER) teams. The augmentation team may operate on a temporary duty basis, or may be assigned directly to the embassy staff. It includes a team leader well versed in all civil and military aspects of COIN, and team members selected in consultation with the embassy for specialist skills relevant to the needs of the affected government. The team should be as small as possible and would have minimal direct interaction with the affected government or population. Instead, it performs its function by training, advising, supporting and assisting the U.S. Country Team in its role of providing advice and support to the Ambassador. Assistance to the affected government is then carried out by

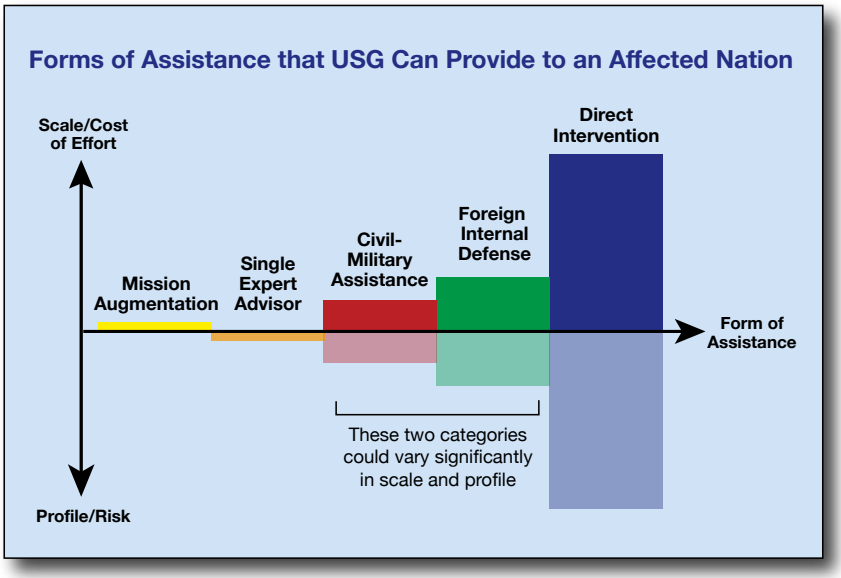
the Country Team in the normal manner. This is a low cost, low profile, small footprint approach which is appropriate early in the development of an insurgency, or as a short term surge at other stages in a campaign. It is sustainable over very long periods due to its low cost. It may also be the chosen approach in situations when U.S. intervention would be extremely politically sensitive.

- **Single Expert Advisor:** The single expert advisor approach involves the seconding of one advisor, who may be either a civilian or a military officer, directly onto the staff of the affected government. The advisor should be placed, in close consultation with the affected government, in a position to advise, train and assist its elected leaders and officials in dealing with the insurgency. He or she assesses the situation, develops plans and capabilities in support of the affected government, and advises on the placement and tasking of additional U.S. assets if deployed. They will usually maintain a close relationship with the U.S. Ambassador and Country Team and may be supported by an embassy augmentation team or by specialist capabilities that can be called forward as needed. In order to achieve the necessary influence, the advisor must have appropriate rank, status and freedom of action as well as a diplomatic approach to his or her work. The advisor should take a low key, backstage role and support the affected government as its leads the COIN effort, and avoid even the appearance of taking on the lead. This approach is relatively low profile, low cost and sustainable yet it has historically been extremely effective. It is most successful when the selected advisor possesses cultural and language skills appropriate to the affected nation, is paired with an effective indigenous leadership team, and deploys for a long duration.

- **Civil-Military Assistance:** The civil-military assistance approach involves the deployment of a specialist team, potentially operating as a Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF), to work with civilian and military agencies of the affected government. Team members or detachments may be embedded in key positions in the affected government to provide support, advice, technical assistance, education and training. Team members do not normally engage in direct activity against the insurgency. Through the civil-military assistance program they may help develop an Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) strategy in consultation with the affected government, and become a conduit for international community assistance. The team operates as a separate entity from the U.S. Mission, but normally works under Chief of Mission authority. If a military Joint Task Force is deployed, or if the security threat is especially high, the team may operate under military authority (as Provincial Reconstruction Teams do in Afghanistan). However, unlike Foreign Internal Defense, it remains civilian-led and military-supported. This approach is relatively low-cost and sustainable over the long term, but has a higher profile than the two previous methods discussed above. The size of the civil-military assistance team should be kept as small as possible, and the duration of deployment rotations as long as possible, to increase its cost-effectiveness.

- **Foreign Internal Defense (FID):** Foreign internal defense is defined as the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. The FID approach involves the deployment of military teams, often originating from the U.S. Special Operations Command, to support the affected government. It differs from civil-military assistance in that it is normally military-led, but still includes very substantial interagency input and support. FID is described in detail in U.S. Army Field Manual 31-20-3 and in Joint Publication 3-07.1. It varies in scope, cost and intrusiveness depending on the nature of the insurgency and the capabilities of the affected government, but is usually more intrusive than the models discussed above (though significantly less intrusive than direct COIN intervention).

- **Direct COIN Intervention:** Direct intervention in a COIN campaign may follow previous attempts to handle an insurgency using the approaches discussed above, or it may be the initial engagement. The current campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan are not standard examples of direct COIN intervention, since troops were initially deployed to bring about regime change. The military role in direct COIN intervention is described in detail in Army Field Manual 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 and in the Defense Department's forthcoming Joint Publication on Counterinsurgency 3-24, as well as being discussed elsewhere in this Guide.



When considering options, it must be remembered that every insurgency is different and will require a carefully tailored response. The approaches outlined above should therefore be seen as broad categories and not specific models.

It should be noted that there is a tendency for assistance to creep incrementally from small scale and less intrusive forms to ever larger and more obvious assistance. This is clearly illustrated by the history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The danger of this type of escalation is that the in-depth assessment and policy evaluation that occurred for the initial decision to assist may not necessarily be repeated for every increment and the government may find itself enmeshed in a scale of effort which was not reached by logical deliberation.

The risk of escalatory involvement should be considered during the formulation of policy. If the assessment of the situation is thorough enough and accurate, then the level of engagement chosen should be sufficient to address the problem. However, most countries significantly underestimate the scale of effort required to defeat an insurgency. If escalation of involvement does occur, then a full reappraisal of the situation and policy response should be conducted prior to each and every increment of involvement.

Developing a Strategy

Regardless of the model of engagement selected, the policy decision to engage requires the development of a detailed framework. The more detailed framework for the U.S. response, in which objectives are determined and resources matched to their achievement, is achieved through strategy development. The components of a COIN strategy have already been outlined in detail during Chapter 2. Ideally, the overall COIN strategy should be devised by the affected nation, as their understanding of it and their commitment to it will be key to success. If possible, the role of the U.S. should therefore be one of advising and assisting the affected nation to improve its strategy (if it already has one) or to help it write one from scratch (if it does not). If the latter is the case, the U.S. should also strive to build up the strategy development capacity of the affected government.

As previously discussed, the affected government may not be particularly eager to address some of the underlying causes of insurgency and so may find U.S. suggestions unpalatable. If so, the U.S. will need to work with the affected government to encourage it to take the necessary steps.

Once the affected nation has a viable COIN strategy, the U.S. should determine where its own resources and actions can best be applied to contribute to the affected nation's strategy.

Integrated Planning

The planning process to put a COIN strategy into effect will seldom be simple. To be effective, it must be integrated in two dimensions: internationally and between U.S. Government agencies.

- **International Integration:** By the very fact that the U.S. is assisting another nation to conduct COIN, the planning process must be at least bilateral. If the U.S. is involved as part of a coalition, then planning will require a multinational approach if the capabilities of other nations are to be integrated to best effect and the gains in legitimacy are to be preserved. In such a coalition, the degree of influence should be proportional to the degree of investment that each nation is willing to make in support of the affected nation.

  As with the strategy, the plan should ideally be devised and owned by the affected government whose legitimacy and credibility are central to the campaign. If its competency and capacity to conduct COIN is limited, then initial planning will require a greater proportion of outside assistance, but supporting nations should recognize (indeed welcome) the increasing autonomy of the affected government in planning and conducting COIN as it grows in competence, capacity and confidence. While such independence may create conflicts of interest with the supporting nations, it represents progress towards the desired end-state.

- **Interagency Integration:** COIN planning by the affected nation should integrate civilian and military capabilities across each of the four COIN strategy functions of security, politics, economics and information. This requires the affected nation to conduct 'whole-of-government' planning to synchronize and sequence each department's activities towards achieving the objectives of the COIN strategy. The synergies achieved will be key to exercising control over the environment through the strengthening of legitimate and effective government institutions.

  The U.S. Government also needs to take a 'whole-of-government' approach to its support of the affected nation. It must employ a tailored approach that captures and integrates the range of capabilities that U.S. Government departments and agencies offer, so as to best support the affected government.

  A whole-of-government plan should specify:

  - The over-arching goal to be achieved;
  - Critical facts and assumptions about the environment;
  - Critical facts and assumptions about cause and effect;
  - Major mission elements necessary and sufficient to achieve the goal;

- Essential task areas within each major mission element (tailored to the unique context and with possible consequences weighed against the desired end-state);

- Sequencing of essential tasks;

- Resources available to support the plan (skilled people, relationships, expert knowledge, money, materials, and time);

- Metrics to assess progress towards the overarching goal and major mission elements;

- The applicable international and domestic legal constraints;

- The structure and business rules for contributing, storing and sharing all relevant information.

The outputs of whole-of-government assessment and planning should include detailed descriptions of:

- Dynamics driving the conflict, including those that create and support the insurgency, and those that might mitigate the conflict and defuse the insurgency;

- Primary actors and factors, including opinion leaders and identity groups (legitimate government leaders and their constituencies, insurgent groups and their supporters,), identity issues around which the actors coalesce (ideologies or other organizing principles), the degree to which the insurgency has subverted or penetrated the legitimate government, indigenous and external support to the insurgency, and vulnerabilities of the insurgent movement;

- Purpose of engagement (the "what" or mission statement for the COIN campaign);

- Major mission elements and essential tasks (the "how" for COIN operations);

- Resources required; detailed description of how the programs will be funded and managed by each U.S. Government department and agency; and resource shortfalls;

- Measures of effectiveness and performance indicators for each component of the plan and for the overall strategy;

- Key legal requirements, constraints and redlines;

– Coordination and synchronization mechanisms—"business rules" for integration of activities across departments and agencies, including clear lines of authority, command, and communication;

– Incorporation, where appropriate and possible, of other national, IGO, and NGO capabilities into plans and operations.

In summary, the success of the USG in helping other nations to defeat insurgencies will often be dependent on its proficiency at coordinating all committed agencies and resources (including its own, those of the affected nation, and those of international partners) towards a common objective. The first requirement for the U.S. is that it must synchronize its own agencies in a 'whole-of-government' understanding and approach. The second requirement is that it exercise sufficient diplomatic skill to coax, guide and assist the affected nation through the necessary steps of planning and execution to regain legitimacy and control. In situations where other coalition partners are involved, that diplomatic acumen must extend to maintaining the coalition and ensuring that partner efforts are woven as effectively as possible into the overall COIN strategy.

The 'Principles of the U.S. Government Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization and Conflict Transformation' document can be a useful tool for strategy development and planning. See Appendix C for web links to this and other planning tools.

Implementation

The requirement for integration does not end with planning; but should carry over into the execution of the plan. Unity of command may seldom be achievable, but a common sense of purpose and teamwork (between U.S. agencies, with the affected government and with other coalition players) will greatly increase the probability of success.

Continuous Monitoring, Evaluation and Assessment

Counterinsurgency situations are typically dynamic; insurgencies evolve and mature, affected governments (especially democratic ones) will alter in composition, competency and stance and the opinions held by populations will change. Concurrently both insurgents and counterinsurgents will evolve and adapt their strategies and tactics in a Darwinian struggle to outmaneuver each other. Under such dynamic conditions, it is not sufficient for assessment and planning to occur once, when the decision to become involved is taken. Planning should be adaptive and flexible, though for unity of effort and continuity the main themes should be maintained wherever possible. The situation should be continuously reassessed and the relative success of insurgent and counterinsurgent should be evaluated. Humanitarian and development activities should be monitored and evaluated according to

international standards and best practices. Evaluations are often best achieved by an independent team of experts reporting directly to the senior U.S. official. The U.S. military frequently applies this concept, using retired military commanders and diplomats. The views of the local population and non-U.S. Government entities should always be sought. Where the situation has changed significantly, the counterinsurgents (the affected nation, the U.S. and partners) must be prepared to review the strategy to determine whether it is still valid.

CONCLUSION

Afghan women waiting in line to vote at their local polling place

(PHOTO: USAID)

Effective counterinsurgency requires multi-faceted and integrated operations that apply civilian and military capabilities across information, security, political and economic functional areas. The goal of intervention in a COIN campaign is to help an affected government achieve control over its sovereign territory by establishing, developing, and consolidating legitimate, effective government institutions.

The U.S. can assist an affected government with strategies that combine information, security, political and economic elements. Before committing to engagement, careful consideration must be given to the affected government's legitimacy, its willingness to reform and its general political and economic viability. Approaches ranging from augmentation teams, through advisory support, civil-military assistance, Foreign Internal Defense and direct COIN intervention are available and historically proven. Diplomatic efforts in COIN, which shape the international environment as well as helping the affected government to reform, mobilize support, marginalize insurgents and extend its control throughout its territory, are led by the Department of State. Development efforts help the affected government to meet essential needs, develop infrastructure and build economic capacity and are led by the U.S. Agency for International Development. Both diplomacy and development are enabled by and contribute to security activities, which are led by the Department of Defense. The complex nature of insurgency also requires the integration of capabilities extant in a number of other U.S. Government agencies and departments, as well as those of other partner nations, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

Insurgencies, and thus COIN strategies, can vary significantly from one situation to another. COIN efforts succeed if they result in a political resolution acceptable to the parties involved. Diplomacy, development and defense are interdependent at every level of a COIN effort, and civil-military integration is required at the strategic, theater/operational and local/tactical levels. Most successful COIN campaigns have achieved this unity of effort through unified authority.

This Guide serves to synthesize counterinsurgency theory with the recent experience of officials across U.S. Government departments and agencies working in this field. It deliberately focuses at the broad national level so as to develop civilian literature on counterinsurgency to complement existing military doctrine. As the first serious U.S. effort at creating a national counterinsurgency framework in over 40 years, this Guide is intended to provide the basis for continued discussion among and feedback from practitioners. The ultimate intent of this effort is to develop our national capability to support the counterinsurgency efforts of legitimate and responsible governments that respond to the needs of their people.

Contact information for the authors and contributors is listed in Appendix E by U.S. government department or agency.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: U.S. GOVERNMENT ROLES IN COIN

National Security Council

The National Security Council (NSC) is the President's principal forum for consultation with senior advisors and cabinet officials on national security and foreign policy matters. The NSC staff provides advice to the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies and manages the processes through which the President's polices are coordinated and implemented. Due to COIN's inherent requirement for a whole of government approach, the NSC is uniquely positioned to guide COIN policy development and implementation.

Intelligence Community

Intelligence is central to any COIN campaign; it is the basis upon which a precise and deep understanding of the nature of insurgency, its context, and its remedies are based. The U.S. and international intelligence communities are indispensable contributors, providing intelligence support to policy makers, including indications and warning; conflict assessment tools; deployable support, including Rapid Analytic Support and Expeditionary Response (RASER) teams; collaborative tools; and dedicated support to planning staffs.

Department of State

The Department of State, through its bureaus, offices, and missions overseas, leads and oversees U.S. Government support to COIN efforts. The relevant regional bureau will normally direct primary policy regarding U.S. engagement in or operations in support of other governments. Several functional bureaus and offices, including the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and the Legal Adviser's Office will have substantive roles in the development and execution of COIN strategy. The functional bureaus within State have the capability to design and execute full-spectrum assistance programs in the security sector to include counter-narcotics, anti-corruption, and police and non-military security forces. The Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization has been tasked to develop a Civilian Response Corps, to provide a pool of civilian expertise

in reconstruction and stabilization able to respond rapidly to countries in crisis. Chiefs of U.S. Missions will oversee official U.S. Government operations in the countries to which they are accredited.

Department of Defense

The Department of Defense and U.S. military forces provide a broad range of capabilities to support an integrated U.S. counterinsurgency effort. These may include advising and training foreign military, internal security, and police units; planning and conducting security operations in support of indigenous security forces; intelligence, communications, and logistical support; public affairs and military information operations; medical assistance; civil affairs support; and infrastructure repair and construction. *Army Field Manual 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, Counterinsurgency,* and U.S. military joint doctrine describe U.S. military COIN capabilities and operations in detail.

U.S. Agency for International Development

USAID can assist U.S. COIN efforts by fostering economic growth, promoting human health, providing emergency humanitarian assistance and enhancing democracy in developing countries. This is achieved through a spectrum of actions from policy reform to community level programs. USAID has extensive experience in developing and implementing programs with national governments and has field offices in 100 developing countries, working in close partnership with private voluntary organizations, indigenous groups, universities, American businesses, international organizations, other governments, trade and professional associations, faith-based organizations, and other U.S. government agencies. USAID programs are designed to enhance institutional capacity and ameliorate the root causes of conflict; community-level programs in particular have a good track record in addressing the grievances that fuel insurgency. The large numbers of foreign service nationals that make up the professional cadre of field staff provide a unique understanding of the local situation, while the range of sectors and levels of activity allow USAID great operational flexibility and agility to both implement and track the effectiveness of COIN operations.

Department of Justice

The Department of Justice, through its constituent agencies (the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Marshals Service, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, Tobacco and Explosives) and components, works with other nations to combat transnational crime and international terrorist activities, including financial and operational support that may buttress insurgency operations. Justice also has offices devoted exclusively to providing overseas technical assistance that are highly relevant to COIN: the International Criminal

Investigative Training Assistance Program, which develops police and corrections institutions; and the Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training, which develops prosecutorial and judicial institutions.

Department of the Treasury

The Department of Treasury's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (TFI) plays an important role within the U.S. Government with the twin aims of safeguarding the financial system against illicit use and combating rogue nations, terrorism facilitators, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferators, money launderers, drug kingpins, and other national security threats by disrupting and dismantling terrorist and insurgent financial networks as well as building partner nation capacity. Both of these aims are highly relevant to COIN. TFI's components include the Offices of Terrorist Financing and Financial Crime, Intelligence and Analysis, Foreign Assets Control, and the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. The Office of International Affairs, through its Office of Technical Assistance, works directly with foreign governments to support their efforts to improve their financial systems.

Department of Homeland Security

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was formed by merging 22 separate and distinct federal agencies. The Department's overarching purpose is to govern domestic security operations; however, several component agencies and offices operate overseas, interacting and cooperating with host nation government agencies. A significant by-product of that interaction and cooperation is improved U.S. and host government capabilities to provide security and safety for their populations. DHS component agencies and offices with capabilities most relevant to COIN are U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), the U.S. Secret Service, the Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the Office of International Affairs, and the Office of Operations Coordination.

Department of Agriculture

Many insurgencies occur in countries where the majority of the population is dependent upon agriculture, and where unemployed or underemployed rural youth are considered prime candidates for recruitment. Development of the agricultural sector and its institutions helps facilitate trade and increase incomes, reducing recruitment and support for insurgency. The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) executes the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) international programs, including market development, trade agreements and negotiations, and the collection and analysis of statistics and market information. The FAS delivers training and technical assis-

tance, and collaborates with developing and transitional countries to facilitate trade and promote food security. The goals of USDA's international work are to help ensure that countries critical to U.S. national security strengthen their institutions, policies, and market-based agricultural systems, thereby contributing to long-term economic and political stability; adopt regulations consistent with international standards to increase trade, resulting in economic growth and stability; and employ agricultural practices that will reduce instability, increase regional cooperation, and ensure an adequate resource base for future generations.

Department of Transportation

Transportation infrastructure (roads, rail, ports, air and pipeline) is a critical component of the economic health and development of countries, factors that mitigate conditions that encourage insurgency. All facets of commerce, trade, travel, and quality of life depend on mobility. Transportation facilitates a government's ability to provide its population with basic services and security, thereby reducing the appeal of insurgency within the most likely populations of potential recruits. Transportation can support COIN efforts by helping countries to strengthen their institutions, policies, and intermodal transportation systems, contributing to long-term economic and political stability; adopt regulations consistent with international standards to increase trade and safety, resulting in economic growth and stability; and adopt transportation practices that promote infrastructure development for local, regional and international movement of people and commerce.

APPENDIX B: WEBSITE LINKS TO ASSESSMENT & MODELING TOOLS

1. Global Forecasting Model of Political Instability
   http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/pitf/PITFglobal.pdf

2. USAID—Conducting a Conflict Assessment: A Framework for Strategy and Program Development
   http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_ConflAssessFrmwrk_May_05.pdf

3. USAID Conflict Mitigation and Management Policy
   http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/USAID_Conflict_MM_Policy.pdf

4. USAID Community-Based Development in Conflict-Affected Areas
   http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_CBD_Guide_May_2007.pdf

5. Principles of the USG Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization and Conflict Transformation
   http://www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=49Q9

6. Graphical Overview of Whole-of-Government Planning Framework and Process for Reconstruction and Stabilization
   http://www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=49QF

7. S/CRS Triggering Mechanisms for "Whole-of-Government" Planning for Reconstruction, Stabilization and Conflict Transformation
   www.crs.state.gov

8. S/CRS Interagency Management System for Reconstruction and S tabilization
   www.crs.state.gov

9. OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform (SSR)
   (includes a framework for SSR assessment)
   http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict/if-ssr

APPENDIX C: USEFUL REFERENCES

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APPENDIX D: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAF	Conflict Assessment Framework, USAID
CCDR	Combatant Commander, DOD
COCOM	Combatant Command
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COM	Chief of Mission, State
DOD	Department of Defense
Justice	Department of Justice
State	Department of State
FAS	Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA
FM	Field Manual, DOD
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organization
MCWP	Marine Corps Warfighting Publication, DOD
MNC	Multinational Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSC	National Security Council
U.S.	United States
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USG	United States Government

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www.state.gov

www.usaid.gov

www.defenselink.mil

www.usdoj.gov

www.ustreas.gov

www.usda.gov

www.dot.gov

www.dni.gov

www.dhs.gov

U.S. GOVERNMENT COUNTERINSURGENCY GUIDE

Electronic version can be found at:
www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/pmppt