



# The Military's Role in Addressing the Underlying Conditions of Terrorism

*By Dr. Kent Hughes Butts, Professor Terry Klapakis and Colonel (Retired) Art Bradshaw*

## BACKGROUND

The Department of Defense's (DOD) review of the United States (U.S.) capability and capacity for combating terrorism (CT) has identified significant gaps and areas for improvement. One of these critical areas is the need to effectively Counter Ideological Support to Terrorism (CIST) and address the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit. In an effort to bring interagency focus to this important CT element, the U.S. Army War College (USAWC), in collaboration with the National Intelligence Council (NIC), the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) conducted a conference at the Army War College in June 2005 that examined its critical elements. This first of a series of CIST conferences led to the Army War College book, *The Struggle Against Extremist Ideology: Addressing the Conditions That Foster Terrorism*. The second conference in the series, *The Military's Role in Addressing the Underlying Conditions of Terrorism*, was a Joint Staff conference co-sponsored by the USPACOM, the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), and the Center for Strategic Leadership (CSL) of the U.S. Army War College.

The agencies and organizations that attended were: Office of the Secretary of Defense; U.S. Department of State (DOS) (S/CT); USAID; National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC); Joint Staff J5; U.S. Special Operations Command; USPACOM (SOCPAC, JIATF-West J5 and JIACG-CT); U.S. European Command; U.S. Central Command; U.S. Southern Command; U.S. Northern Command; U.S. Strategic Command; USAWC; U.S. Military Academy Counterterrorism Center; U.S. Embassy Manila (USAID Mission Director); and APCSS.

When state governments cannot meet the demands placed on the political system by its people it loses legitimacy, support and control, and the appeal of competing ideas, often extreme ideas, may grow. CIST refers to winning this war of ideas and countering extremist ideology. That ideology thrives in an environment of lost legitimacy. As the 9/11 Commission report points out, "when people lose hope, when societies break down, when countries fragment, the breeding grounds for terrorism are created." Terrorists exploit these underlying conditions, which often reflect the lack of good governance. Thus, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (NSCT) seeks to delegitimize the enemy's ideology by building the capacity of partner nations to mitigate the problems that extremists exploit to gain support for their causes. Because weak states often have thinly staffed bureaucracies, the host nation military may play an important role in supporting nascent or struggling democratic governments by supporting civil authority in addressing these underlying conditions. As DOD Directive (DODD) 3000.5, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*, suggests, the U.S. military can enhance their capacity to perform this mission and support critical interagency development and sustainment efforts.

*Dr. Butts is the Director of the National Security Issues Group at the U.S. Army War College Center for Strategic Leadership.*

*Professor Klapakis is an Associate Professor for Counterterrorism at USPACOM's Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies.*

*Colonel (Ret.) Bradshaw is a Regional Security Cooperation Advisor at the U.S. Army War College.*

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## WHY IMPORTANT

Many things occurred in the last year that affect the way the U.S. conducts the Global War on Terror (GWOT). A new NSCT has been released that identifies three ways for defeating terrorism: Protect the Homeland, Attack Terrorist Networks, and Counter Ideological Support for Terrorism. A National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) for combating terrorism has been signed that delineates policies implementing the NSCT. As a result of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, the NCTC began operations, with its Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning having responsibility for working with the interagency to draft implementing plans for elements of the NSCT. At the DOS, the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism has addressed one of the most vexing problems of the GWOT, how to work within the state-centric organizational construct of U.S. foreign policy to address the often regional threats. The resulting Regional Security Initiative (RSI) is bringing regional ambassadors and the interagency together to plan the use of soft and hard power resources to shape an environment that is inhospitable to terrorism. These developments create new opportunities to counter ideological support to terrorism.

The conference sought to take advantage of these opportunities by bringing together key interagency players in the U.S. effort to combat terrorism with representatives from all of the Combatant Commands (COCOMs). COCOM representatives were able to learn the latest interagency programs to address CIST and the challenges to their implementation. The interagency representatives learned lessons from how the military element of power has been successfully used to support interagency efforts that address local conditions that terrorists seek to exploit. This synergy resulted in valuable workshop recommendations for improving the process by which the U.S. directs its efforts to counter ideological support for terrorism.

The conference objectives were to:

- Identify how the COCOMs can most effectively address the underlying conditions of terrorism, unilaterally, working cross-seam with other commands, and with the U.S. interagency.
- Identify barriers to successfully using the military element of power to address the underlying conditions and what must be done to overcome them.
- Explore COCOM efforts to measure the effectiveness of underlying conditions activities and develop recommendations to successfully quantify future activities.

The effort to counter terrorist ideology has not received the priority of the other two NSCT elements. However, as many speakers noted, the war on terrorism will be a long struggle and must address the societal conditions that terrorists seek to exploit if it is to be successful. A center of gravity for the war on terror is the population that can provide sanctuaries, safe havens, or recruitment of terrorists.

## KEY FINDINGS

- GWOT's CIST element and COCOM Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCPs) need to be better linked to fully support the GWOT. The COCOMs should ensure that the NSCT strategy is fully integrated into the COCOM's TSCPs. For decades the COCOMs have excelled at encouraging regional militaries to support the often inadequately staffed civil authority in nation-building types of activities to develop good governance. The CIST element of the NSCT and DODD 3000.5 encourage building partner capacity, good governance, and governmental legitimacy. Tying the COCOM's TSCPs, which are guided by the Embassy Mission Performance Plans (MPPs), to these goals will add a vital element to the DOS/CT arsenal as it executes the RSI.
- CIST requires proper funding. While DOD and intelligence funding has grown significantly since 9/11, development and other CT support programs have not. Support for the non-attack elements of the NSCT have lagged far behind. State CT has no significant funding stream to support potentially valuable programs like the RSI.
- The National Implementation Plan will be a key driver and needs to be implemented as quickly as possible. In executing this plan, serious prioritization needs to be given to regional and cross regional synchronization. It may be best to develop the organizational structure for this at the NCTC. Once execution is underway a complete Net Assessment must be completed ensuring that a follow-on implementation structure and plan is developed that is priority-country driven.

- Support the “Long War” concept with appropriate resources and build the “Grand Strategy” into an effective “Global Strategy.” Since the Muslim Diaspora is also a strategic center of gravity, ensure that the support to mainstream Muslims and the CIST pillar are resourced and supported correctly. Phase 0 must be better planned and resourced with a markedly improved partnership between the military and agencies responsible for international development.
- A process is required that ensures Best Practices, Lessons Learned and Measures of Effectiveness are available, especially for plan implementers and strategic communication practitioners. There needs to be a clear linkage between the U.S. Strategic Communication approach and efforts to support mainstream Muslim regimes and counter extremist ideology on the ground. Credentialing activities that are unsupported by Strategic Communication are much less effective. Similarly, Strategic Communication without the weight of successful development and nation-building activities is **much** less effective.
- Elements of National Power: Military, Information, Diplomatic, Law enforcement, Informational, Financial and Economic (MIDLIFE) are the yardstick for measuring counterterrorism efforts. These yardsticks should be effects-based and prioritized based upon the potential contribution of the agencies involved in a particular element of the NSCT. Agencies that focus on international development (such as USAID) should be the lead agencies in addressing CIST and the underlying conditions for terrorism, yet they are underrepresented in those interagency fora that are determining plans to address these missions. For its part, USAID must dramatically increase the quantity of its CT professionals with high level security clearances if it is to play this leadership role.
- For CIST the “M” (Military) in MIDLIFE should be a small “m” with the DOD and the U.S. military primarily supporting other U.S. agencies in the execution of regional and country CT and stabilization initiatives.
- Incompatibility between classified information sharing systems, such as the secure communication between DOD and DOS (sgov versus smil), must be resolved quickly.
- Assessing, planning, and executing the Theater war on terrorism should be an effects-based approach that may need a national-level metric system of management to effectively address success, failure, and accountability.

## MILITARY LESSONS LEARNED

- The U.S. military has achieved good results in attacking terrorists and their networks; however, its success in addressing CIST issues has been less successful. While there have been noteworthy achievements, they have been isolated and not the result of COCOM-wide synchronized efforts or one driven by military leadership. To a large degree the military regards CIST as a DOS responsibility in which the military has a limited role. Thus, military documents and plans give limited emphasis to CIST, and meetings to synchronize the military role in the GWOT give little priority to the CIST mission. Nevertheless, the military has noteworthy successes that speak to its potential for contributions in this area. These contributions to the Nation’s GWOT could be greatly magnified with DOD emphasis on this element and the understanding by other government agencies that, as a supporting element, the military may be a valuable resource with which to develop partner nation CT capacity in the CIST area.
- The concept of using the military to support CIST is largely one of the military supporting another U.S. Government (USG) agency in the execution of elements of the Embassy MPP, or a regional USG effort, and doing so by building the capacity of the host nation military and government to execute the CT mission. Sometimes the military contribution is simply providing security to civil organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGO) stabilizing, reconstructing, or attempting to improve governance. At other times, they work side by side with other agencies to undertake civil affairs, civil-military operation types of missions, or build the capacity of host nation militaries to address critical environmental security missions that demonstrate the capacity of the government to take care of its people. These missions are aimed at building governmental legitimacy and were an essential counterinsurgency mission of the U.S. military during the Cold War. On Basilan Island in the Philippines, in the Horn of Africa, in the Maghreb region of Africa, and in South and Central America the U.S. military is undertaking these types of civil-military operation missions under the COCOM TSCPs and in close cooperation with Embassy Country Teams. These missions may, on occasion, be best undertaken in conjunction with regional organizations such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Council (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), or NGOs as is the case in the critical and essential disaster preparedness area.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

To enhance the value of the military element of power to the interagency in the CIST/underlying conditions/Soft Power area:

- Their role should be given emphasis at the highest levels of DOD and the U.S. Special Operations Command.
- The interagency and Embassy Country Teams need to be educated on the military's capacity and capabilities in this support role.
- The COCOMs should direct those drafting the TSCPs to seek ways to support the CIST element of the NSCT at every turn and ensure all elements of the COCOM are aware of the NSCT.
- Partner country military and civilian leaders should be made aware of this non-attack role for the military and educated on its availability through U.S. Embassy programs.
- Regional Centers, like the APCSS, can play an important role in the education mission. In addition, the U.S. military needs to expand its skill set in CIST areas; civil affairs and psyop resources reside mostly in the Reserve Component and their availability is limited.

Other opportunities are coming on line, such as the State CT RSI, the USSTRATCOM Global Innovation and Strategy Center, and Partnership to Defeat Terrorism (PTDT). To take advantage of these opportunities military CT planners need to move beyond the attack-mission focus and recognize the CIST mission as vital. The other agencies need to overcome interagency mistrust and concerns of the military taking over the CIST mission. A great deal of new capacity in the CIST arena could be recognized by focusing the existing resources of the COCOM TSCPs to push resources to the Embassies and the RSI, and by pulling existing military resources through informed U.S. Embassy Country Team requests.

## SUMMARY

The success of the U.S. GWOT will ultimately turn on a sound, well-planned and adequately funded program to Counter Ideological Support to Terrorism. The center of gravity of this war is the people who provide the necessary safe havens, support and foot soldiers to terrorists. While some of these people are physically coerced, many do so because they do not respect or trust their governments. As the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections demonstrated, providing for the basic needs of the people wins their support and gains legitimacy and allegiance for the provider. The ungoverned spaces, failing states, or criminal transport routes through borderlands that are essential to terrorist programs cannot be mitigated by attacking terrorist leadership. Removing these key components of the terrorist network will require well coordinated state and regional Development efforts that address the basic needs of the people. The military element of power will rarely lead these efforts, but it can provide substantial and, in certain situations, invaluable support.

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U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE  
Center for Strategic Leadership  
650 Wright Avenue  
Carlisle, PA 17103-5049