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**TITLE:**

“STRATEGIC CORPORAL,” 2025:  
OPERATIONALIZING SMALL-UNIT LEADERS FOR THEATER-LEVEL OPERATIONS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
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## Executive Summary

**Title:** “Strategic Corporal,” 2025: Operationalizing Small-Unit Leaders for Theater-level Operations

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**Thesis:** The Marine Corps must initiate a holistic program to train, equip, and resource its small-unit leaders for theater-level operations, leveraging future technology, training, and subject matter expertise, in order to develop the strategic capability to deploy worldwide large numbers of forces to conduct theater security cooperation, constabulary, and foreign internal defense (FID) missions.

**Discussion:** In the future, the Marine Corps will retain its core competencies delineated under Title X, U.S. Code, which provide America with an expeditionary force in readiness. It must remain the force that is “the most ready when the nation is the least ready.” That being said, the 2006 National Security Strategy and Quadrennial Defense Review emphasize the conduct of activities that foster relationships among U.S. friends and partners, and create conditions inhospitable to terrorism and rogue regimes. Despite the establishment of the Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and its Marine Special Operations Advisory Group in 2006, the Marine Corps can and must do more to strengthen its capability to reinforce the U.S. Special Operations Command’s (USSOCOM) ability to build partner capacity through security cooperation (SC), security assistance (SA), and FID missions. The Corps must develop a comprehensive plan to train, equip, and resource its small-unit leaders’ abilities to actively participate in specific SC/SA/FID missions in the future. By selecting qualified company grade and noncommissioned officers, equipping them with advanced technologies, cultural awareness training, adequate operational authority, and real-time subject-matter expertise reach back, the Marine Corps has the ability to significantly enhance the Nation’s ability to conduct SC/SA/FID missions.

**Conclusion:** This paper argues that, based on the growing demand for the United States to provide SA and FID support to friendly nations as part of Phase Zero and Phase One operations, the Marine Corps must develop a comprehensive plan to prepare its small-unit leaders to successfully operate in this role. Given the proper training, equipment, and resources, Marine small-unit leaders would provide the means of expanding the Nation’s capacity to conduct security cooperation and foreign internal defense missions in support of friendly nations’ internal defense and development programs.

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*Irregular warfare may well be the dominant mode in belligerency for some years to come, but interstate war, including great power conflict, will enjoy a healthy future.*

Colin Gray  
*Another Bloody Century*, 2005

## Preface

Although it is nearly impossible to predict the future, it is probably safe to say that “war and warfare will always be with us: war is a permanent feature of the human condition.”<sup>1</sup>

America cannot know when, where, between whom, or over what issues the next conflict will develop, but the realist knows it is not a matter of if, but when. Historically, conflict has lurked ever-present in the shadows of geopolitics. Describing this human condition 2,500 years ago, Plato declared: “only the dead have seen the end of war.”<sup>2</sup>

By the year 2025, the United States will face an increasingly crowded world in which the universal competition for limited resources aggravates historical competitions, creates new conflicts, and disrupts governmental stability. The forces of extremism will thrive throughout the undeveloped world, as population growth explodes and governmental capacity stagnates.<sup>3</sup> Aspiring regional powers will develop their military capabilities, expand their influence, and wage “hybrid” wars through proxy forces and economic coercion.<sup>4</sup> In the likely absence of a holistic strategy to combat Islamic totalitarianism, the United States and its allies will continue to engage the violent disciples of a global insurgency.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the current universal military and economic dominance of the U.S., which by historical precedent is both unique and unsustainable over the long-term, it must focus on dealing both with near-term asymmetrical challenges and its next peer-competitor. Challenges to the U.S. and its way of life will require an enormous investment in the future. As the 2006 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) states: “the goal of [American] statecraft is to help create a world of

democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system.”<sup>6</sup> The NSS goes on to describe the essential tasks that are required to lay the foundation for America’s future success, four of which deal with allies and partners: 1) strengthening alliances to defeat global terrorism; 2) working with others to defuse regional conflicts; 3) building the infrastructure of democracy; and 4) transforming America’s national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> Despite the requirement to defeat its adversaries at the time and place of American choosing, and maintaining the manpower and technology to do so, the NSS places a heavy emphasis on working with our allies and partners to dissuade potential adversaries and deter aggression.<sup>8</sup>

While U.S. policymakers were initially willing to conduct near unilateral coercive operations in the aftermath of 9/11, they have of late realized that the U.S. cannot sustain its efforts alone. In the decades ahead, the U.S. will need strong, stable friends who are willing to help shoulder the burden of maintaining the peace and, if necessary, defeating common enemies. It is likely that the U.S. will look increasingly to the experience and resources of its allies to dissuade potential adversaries, and deter aggression. Though rich and powerful, the U.S. cannot hope to secure or transform the world by itself. Tired of the expensive commitments and wary of large-scale, open-ended military operations, the U.S. will increasingly look towards the non-military elements of national power to achieve its strategic objectives. With its large defense establishment, the U.S. will also look for ways to employ its military instruments in non-traditional and “non-kinetic” ways. The Marine Corps must be prepared to reinforce these efforts.

This paper will not argue that the Corps' core competencies are outdated or need to be changed. These core competencies remain as relevant today as they did 60 years ago, when they were codified in Title X, U.S. Code. Nor does this paper argue that the Corps should shift its focus entirely towards irregular threats, counterinsurgency, and nation-building –that would be both foolish and immoral, as it is not what the Congress and the American people want from their Corps. This paper will argue that the Corps can do more than it is currently doing to best serve the American people. This can be accomplished by implementing a holistic plan of action that will operationalize a cadre of small-unit leaders to operate with near independence at the theater-level. It is not a paper that will discuss the use of current task organizations and developing concepts such as the Security Cooperation Marine Air Ground Task Force (SC MAGTF) or Marine Corps Training and Advisor Group (MCTAG). These organizations will no doubt play an important role in the expansion of the Marine Corps' experience base and partner-building capacity.<sup>9</sup> This paper is focused primarily on recommending how, as an institution, the Marine Corps can train, equip, and employ selected Marine leaders to operate with near independence at the theater-level, without the large overhead or footprint currently required.

The next two decades will be critical in determining whether the U.S. succeeds or fails. No doubt the United States Marine Corps will play a key role in the future of America's security. How it plays that role has yet to be determined.





## Introduction

For the U.S. in 2025, Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM will appear very much like American commitments to Okinawa and Korea following the Second World War and the Korean War respectively. As well-established security and stability operations, Afghanistan and Iraq will be but the first two chapters of an unfinished book known colloquially as the “Global War on Terrorism”(GWOT). For the foreseeable future, the United States will maintain its unique role as the world’s policeman. American foreign policy, however, will likely abide again by the adage that “an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.” Implementing a more comprehensive security cooperation strategy, the U.S. will seek to assure allies and friends, and demonstrate American resolve.<sup>10</sup> The U.S. Government will attempt to shift its focus to relatively low-cost “phase zero and phase one” activities in global regions of concern.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, American institutional capacity will continue to lag in this strategic requirement. The Executive Branch will continue to rely on the Department of Defense (DOD), its largest and best-resourced department, to turn this proactive national security policy into reality. There is very little reason to believe that this will change in the continued absence of Congressional action to overhaul governmental structure through the expansion of its foreign policy apparatus and codification of true interagency cooperation

So, what must be done? How can the U.S. continue to lead the free world and ensure the security of its allies, all while defeating its enemies and not bankrupting itself or ruining its universal image? Simply put, the U.S. should expand its diplomatic, economic, and informational efforts throughout the world, and employ a military economy of force strategy. For although it must maintain its core war fighting capabilities to deter potential adversaries, the

U.S. military must significantly expand its capability to conduct theater security cooperation, build partner capacity, and counter irregular threats. The U.S. military must lead the way, supporting the efforts, under the direction of the Department of State, until expanded civilian capacity is fully operational.

The fact is that the DOD has played a role in non-kinetic security cooperation missions for decades. Today's U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), the combatant command responsible for and best prepared to conduct security assistance (SA) and foreign internal defense (FID) missions, continues that tradition. Unfortunately, after years of focusing much of their efforts on direct action and covert operations, USSOCOM's capacity to conduct Security Assistance/Foreign Internal Defense (SA/FID) missions has failed to keep up with today's requirements.<sup>12</sup> In October 2005, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld directed the Marine Corps to stand up a Marine Corps component of USSOCOM, consisting of 2,600 Marines, to start addressing this shortfall.<sup>13</sup> Despite this reinforcement to USSOCOM, today's greatly expanded strategic requirement for SA/FID requires the Marine Corps to do what it can to expand DOD's capacity. So, while the Marine Corps must never lose its core competencies, especially its ability to conduct Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)-level expeditionary forcible entry operations, it also cannot sit on the "GWOT sidelines" and wait for the next forcible entry contingency of the future.

With USSOCOM in the lead, the Marine Corps should pioneer a plan to develop a substantial SA/FID capability that can augment the relatively small cadres of Special Operations Forces (SOF) currently executing those missions.<sup>14</sup> While retaining the forces and equipment necessary to conduct expeditionary forcible entry operations, the Marine Corps should develop a

comprehensive institutional strategy to develop its own capability to contribute to America's expanded theater security cooperation efforts.

Ten years ago, General Charles C. Krulak coined the term "Three Block War," describing the near simultaneous experience across the spectrum of conflict by young Marines in a three-block urban area.<sup>15</sup> Two years later he described the "Strategic Corporal," the small unit leader who would have to navigate this morass of missions and uncertainty. In 1997, these two phrases were both prophetic and catchy, describing many of the missions U.S. servicemen and women have executed since the early 1990s and conceptualized by Marines operating within a conventional Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU(SOC)) command structure in support of a coalition task force (CTF).<sup>16</sup> Ten years later, it is even clearer that the Marine Corps will be executing almost any operation in an urban environment, with a significant civilian population present, across the spectrum of warfare. Yet, the Corps still does not have a plan to train and educate its small unit leaders to operate effectively in this "three-block war."

To that end, the Marine Corps must initiate a holistic plan to train, equip, and resource its small-unit leaders for theater-level operations, leveraging future technology, training, and subject matter expertise in order to develop the strategic capability to deploy worldwide large numbers of forces to conduct theater security cooperation, constabulary, and FID missions. No longer should the Corps' "strategic corporals" be thrust into situations for which they are ill equipped and barely trained. With a sound plan and focused investment, in the next 20 years the Corps could provide the Nation with a pool of small unit leaders who are capable of making a positive impact at the strategic level.

*After a quarter century of unwavering commitment to the maneuver warfare philosophy, we are harvesting a generation of junior officers and noncommissioned officers who are fully prepared to assume much greater authority and responsibility than is traditionally expected at the small-unit level. They have proven their critical thinking skills and tactical competence in combat, achieving results that exceed our highest expectations, and demonstrating a capacity for small-unit leadership that will enable us to realize the full promise of maneuver warfare philosophy.*

A Concept for Distributed Operations  
*Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a  
Changing Security Environment, March 2006*

### A Solution

In 2008, the Marine Corps, with its tens of thousands of combat veterans, has proven its battlefield prowess both in Iraq and Afghanistan. Undoubtedly, the Marine Corps will continue to be the nation's expeditionary force-in readiness, as the Commandant recently reaffirmed the Service's commitment to its naval expeditionary character and roots.<sup>17</sup> Despite its reputation for fierceness in combat, however, the Corps has also demonstrated flexibility and savvy in dealing with unconventional threats.

Although it is a General Purpose Force (GPF), today's Corps routinely operates "in close collaboration with special operations and paramilitary forces."<sup>18</sup> While not SOF, the Marine Corps has the latent potential to expand its support to USSOCOM, as that combatant command leads U.S. GWOT efforts and in particular SA/FID missions.

For the Corps to realize this latent potential, however, small-unit leaders must be better trained, resourced, and equipped to be operate effectively in SA/FID missions. The fact is that, on the unconventional battlefields of the GWOT, Marine Corps performance has been a reflection of its leadership and manpower quality, expeditionary ethos and training, and institutional adaptability. In the Phase Zero and One activities of the future, the Corps will not have the time or the luxury of spending four years "working out the kinks." Security assistance

missions require maturity, experience, and cultural awareness at the beginning of mission execution. Fortunately, the Marine Corps can tap into its latent capacity by executing a comprehensive plan to address its resource and skill set shortfalls as a GPF.

A solution to “operationalize” the Strategic Corporal and other small-unit leaders requires a comprehensive approach. The planner must ask himself what type of characteristics, skills sets, education, equipment, and authority do “strategic small-unit leaders” require to operate in small, near-independent teams while executing theater-level SA/FID missions? Those SOF that conduct these types of missions take years to grow, require specialized language and cultural training, and spend many years developing relationships with their overseas partners. Not surprisingly, they are in high demand. Unfortunately, they are often focused on “kinetic” operations in the GWOT. The newly established MCTAG units restore an organizational capacity to the Marine Corps, but with only a few hundred Marines, it is insufficient to support the expanded SA/FID requirements of the post-9/11 era.

So, how can the Marine Corps take an institutional approach to expanding its capacity to support USSOCOM’s SA/FID efforts by the year 2025? In short, the Marine Corps can do this by investing in its Marines, in technological advances in automated translation systems, information sharing and reach-back systems, enhanced interagency relationships and execution authority. These investments would be combat-multipliers when tied to the transforming concepts outlined in the 2006 *Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment* (MCOCCSE).<sup>19</sup> To that end, this paper will briefly touch upon the recruiting and manpower issues that are so important to ensuring that the right people get the right training and the proper career progression and propose a plan to develop the Marine Corps’ capacity by the year 2025.

## Career Progression

The heart and soul of the Marine Corps is its people—always have been, always will be. The last five years of battlefield and counterinsurgency success have validated the Corps’ commitment to recruiting high quality people and maintaining the highest standards of military performance, character, aggressiveness, and adaptability.<sup>20</sup> Now, with tens of thousands of combat veterans, the Corps is in a position to leverage its maturity and the experience within the ranks. Today’s lieutenants and corporals, many with multiple combat deployments, are the lieutenant colonels and sergeants major of 2025. The Corps must remain committed to high recruiting standards despite the inherent pressure to relax its high standards. It is not an exaggeration to say that any increase in Corps’ capacity to conduct complex SA/FID missions will be tied closely to the overall quality of Marines in its ranks.

Marine small-unit leaders generally rise to the top based on demonstrated leadership and superior performance. Those individual leaders, enlisted and officer alike, who will make tactical Distributed Operations (DO) a reality will need extended combat arms battalion experience, extensive training in and capacity for ethical decision-making, and will have completed an intensive small-unit leaders’ “qualification course that includes advanced instruction in weapons, patrolling, offensive and defensive operations, supporting arms...command and control systems, combat trauma aid, language, culture, leadership, [and] foreign internal defense training skills.”<sup>21</sup> The MCOCCSE notes ambitiously in its opening intent that the Marine Corps will:

place renewed emphasis on [its] greatest asset—the individual Marine—through improved training and education in foreign languages, cultural awareness, tactical intelligence and urban operations...we will train, educate, orient and equip all Marines to operate skillfully across the wide spectrum of operations, blending the need for combat skills and counterinsurgency skills with those required for civil affairs.<sup>22</sup>

When Marines conduct SA/FID missions in support of the USSOCOM, they will be expanding the tactical DO concept to the strategic level. The SA/FID missions that Marines can conduct will essentially be multi-theater level Distributed Operations. Only supremely competent and mature small-unit leaders will be able to perform regularly at the operational and strategic level; they will require maturity, robust character, training, adaptability, self-confidence, and a bias for action. Today, those soldiers currently conducting SA/FID missions are specially selected and trained, usually special forces soldiers or suitably trained air commanders. The Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) assessment and screening (A/S) standards acknowledge this requirement and should be used as the screening tool of choice.<sup>23</sup>

In order to operationalize the Corps' small-unit leaders, however, high-quality, well-trained warriors are not enough; they still lack the cultural awareness, language fluency, FID training, established relationships, and execution authority that special forces (SF) soldiers obtain over the course of their careers.<sup>24</sup> So how can the Corps overcome these skill set and experience shortfalls in the next twenty years without losing its ability to execute its core competencies? By leveraging cultural subject matter experts, current SF training courses, advanced technology, established relationships, and legal authority that already exists and will mature by 2025, the Corps can overcome these shortfalls. The first capability shortfall to be overcome by Marines deals with cultural awareness.

### Cultural Awareness

The first hurdle that must be overcome is the Marine's relative lack of cultural awareness regarding an assigned country or region. Understanding culture is in many ways more important



than understanding a foreign language. Why? Well, more often than not, “vetted” English translators can be hired who speak the local dialect. However, cultural misunderstanding can quickly spoil the trust and relationship that SA/FID missions require to succeed. Unfortunately for Americans, their Nation’s size, isolationist roots, and present-day economic and military hegemony have all contributed to a general dearth of cultural awareness. The creation of the Office of Strategic Services, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the U.S. Army Special Forces are a few notable American institutional exceptions.<sup>25</sup> Fortunately, perhaps, after five years in Iraq, cultural anthropology and knowledge have been “rediscovered.”<sup>26</sup> The DOD has recognized that “knowledge of one’s enemy and his culture and society may be more important than knowledge of his order of battle.”<sup>27</sup> The DOD has started to hire willing anthropologists who are making positive contributions to our success in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the high-demand for anthropologists has outstripped the desire of most “ethically inclined anthropologists” to contribute to military operations.<sup>28</sup>

For the SF soldier, cultural awareness often means the difference between success and failure. He normally spends years learning the “human terrain” of his regional area of expertise. But while the Army invests heavily in its SF soldiers’ regional expertise and cultural awareness, the rest of the DOD has generally neglected this. Hundreds of thousands of service members have deployed overseas with little more than a pre-deployment culture brief and a “pointy-talkie” card. This neglect, mainly due to American infatuation with kinetic operations, is unnecessary and preventable. The Marine Corps can do a number of things to increase Marines’ cultural understanding and support when they deploy overseas. There are a number of both internal and external actions that will contribute to the cultural education of the Marine small-unit leader.

First, Marines operating overseas, either alone or in a small team, need a basic foundation of cultural awareness before they deploy. This is easily provided in a well-conceived pre-deployment training plan. Once deployed, however, Marines generally require much more detailed information on the people, social groups, and institutions with whom they are dealing. The Marine Corps initiative to give every career sergeant and company grade officer a regional focus, and the establishment of the Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Learning (CAOCL), provide the framework and expertise required to build cultural awareness. The CAOCL is designed to be the Marine Corps Training and Education Command's (TECOM) one-stop cultural and language training resource, and will ensure that cultural training is embedded in all formal schooling.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, CAOCL is neither currently designed nor resourced to support the real-time requirements of deployed Marines, although it is a major step forward for pre-deployment training and continuing cultural education. Fortunately, another concept exists in the U.S. Army.

The U.S. Army Foreign Military Studies Office's (FMSO) human terrain system (HTS) offers a more robust example of how cultural information can be gathered, analyzed, and provided to operators at the micro-cultural level required to optimize their actions.<sup>30</sup> Currently based upon seven "pillars," the HTS consists of "human terrain teams (HTTs), reachback research cells (RRCs), subject-matter expert networks, a "cultural" tool kit, techniques, human terrain information, and specialized training."<sup>31</sup>

The first pillar of the HTS is the human terrain team, or HTT, which will be embedded in a brigade combat team (BCT) headquarters. Composed of fluent cultural experts who have lived, taught, and studied in the region, as well as military intelligence personnel, the HTT will gather, analyze, and interpret the ethnographic, economic, and cultural data of the area of

operations. The HTT will start building, or build upon, the area of operations' (AO) "ethnographic and sociocultural database" using Mapping Human terrain (map-Ht) software, which can be saved for follow-on unit use or more detailed analysis back in the United States.<sup>32</sup> The second pillar of the HTS is an organization established at the FMSO at Fort Leavenworth called the HTS "reachback research center (RRC)."<sup>33</sup> This RRC will provide forward-deployed HTTs with the ability to "reach back" to a larger group of cultural research experts. Those research contacts can either conduct additional analysis themselves or tap into a larger network of researchers. This third pillar of the HTS, the network of subject-matter experts from across the government and academia, will leverage the wide diversity of the American research community to answer specific questions that are beyond the capability of the attached HTT or RRC. Beyond the near-real time capabilities that the HTS offers to deployed commanders conducting real-world operations, the vast cultural data compiled through the HTS can be used to make pre-deployment training and education even more realistic than is possible today. Models and simulations could be tailored to the neighborhood to which a particular platoon is assigned, with rehearsals containing the detail and accuracy required for irregular operations.

While the HTS concept remains in its formative stage, its potential for expeditionary operations and SA/FID is enormous. With an eye towards the future, the DOD must support the HTS concept and expand its capabilities for use in preventative engagements as the U.S. shapes the new security environment. The HTS should be expanded, so that HTTs are not just embedded into BCT-sized units, but Marine Regimental Combat Teams as well, and tasked with gathering ethnographic and sociocultural data throughout all of the likely countries in which U.S. efforts will be made. Considering that most cultural information is commercially available and unclassified, it is possible to begin gathering this information and building regional country and

local databases using a commonly accepted software program such as map-Ht.<sup>34</sup> These databases should be readily accessible to units and Marines during their pre-deployment training and accessible to deployed Marines using secure voice or internet communications during their deployments.

At its most developed and useful stage, the HTS concept would grow into a National “Cultural” Agency (NCA) that would serve as the human terrain counterpart of the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA). The NCA would provide relevant and accurate cultural intelligence in support of national security requirements. Providing supporting detachments to the Combatant Commands down to the Joint Task Force level, these NCA detachments would be the first level of cultural expertise accessible to a Marine leader on the ground. Available 24 hours a day, these NCA detachments would expand on the services currently provided by the HTS RRCs by providing real-time access to the agency’s database, cultural advisors, and network of subject-matter experts. A website database would offer detailed economic, social, ethnic, and cultural data from hundreds of categories at the local level that could be manipulated, analyzed, and exploited in any number of ways by commanders, unit intelligence officers, or FID team-leaders alike. More detailed and nuanced analysis would be provided by one of the NCA detachment researchers who would provide a real-time expert assessment of the situation and answer questions of immediate importance. With this capability, the Marine small-unit leader—or any U.S. Government employee for that matter— would be culturally empowered. No longer would it take years to learn the human terrain of a certain area of operations. With the NCA concept, assistance would just be a phone call or web search away.

Complementing the NCA concept of “operational culture reachback capability,” the Marine Corps initiative to require regional expertise for all officers and NCOs would increase the

overall expertise of its leaders in their assigned area of responsibility. Thus, in order to expose Marine leaders to the non-military aspects of nation building over the course of their careers, the Corps should implement two initiatives: first, expand the number of Marines assigned to the Marine Embassy Security Guard Command and second, revive the “Segundo” assignment of Marines to foreign militaries.<sup>35</sup>

The first initiative deals with the Marine Corps Embassy Security Command (MCESEC). Currently, this command trains and assigns Marine security guards to provide internal security at designated U.S. Diplomatic and Consular facilities. Its principal mission is to prevent the compromise of classified information and equipment vital to the national security of the United States at over 130 posts worldwide.<sup>36</sup> Only the most mature and capable Marine noncommissioned officers are selected. Those same Marines are directly exposed to different cultures over their three-year tour of duty. Unfortunately, their experience is often a training opportunity wasted.

A solution lies in the Marine Corps signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of State to allow MCESEC Marines the opportunity to be exposed to other USG activities within the Embassy’s Country Team, thus broadening the knowledge of MCESEC career enlisted Marines. While the period of this assignment would be for less than one year, it would allow for a seasoned Marine Security Guard to complete his required security assignment and then be assigned to another USG agency, e.g., the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Justice or Agriculture. The MCEGC S/NCO could be assigned to work with the host nation’s armed forces in a liaison capacity. This assignment would be like the field-grade officer intermediate-level school (ILS) equivalent “Year Out” program concept and would be focused on specific regions of the world that the Marine Corps

Intelligence Agency (MCIA) deems critical. Junior officers would likewise be assigned to work with the Defense Attaché on a temporary basis in order to broaden their exposure to their assigned region of expertise. Marine small-unit leaders would benefit greatly from this expanded exposure to a foreign country's culture and the other aspects of U.S. government activity. In that regard, the Marine Corps must capitalize on its current relationship with the State Department and use it to expand its officers' and NCOs' cultural awareness.

The second program that would pay large dividends in exposing Marine small-unit leaders to foreign cultures and contribute to security cooperation efforts would be to initiate a foreign constabulary support program. This program would augment the efforts of the Security Cooperation Special MAGTFs (SC SPMAGTF) proposed in the Marine Corps Plans, Policy, and Operations (PP&O) Concept Brief, "Send in the Marines: Implementing the Naval Operating Concept (NOC)," to build partner capacity.<sup>37</sup> By imbedding selected Marines into newly established military and constabulary units, the Corps can grow partner capacity without the large overhead required by permanently committing a SC SPMAGTF in support. These Marines, possibly organized and trained under the supervision of an expanded MCTAG, would serve in a capacity similar to that performed by Marines between the world wars and not unlike the Military Training Team cadres in Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, in the late 1920s, President Adolfo Diaz of Nicaragua requested that his Guardia Nacional be assisted to assume responsibility for maintaining law and order. Major Robert L. Denig, USMC, was commissioned as a Colonel in the *Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua* and commanded the Northern Area of the *Guardia*.<sup>38</sup> Nicaraguan forces in Major Denig's area consisted of 535 men and 25 officers, the latter of which were mostly Marine NCOs. These constabulary forces operated with their own advisory chain of command but operated independently from the Marine Brigade. A

decade earlier, in 1915, under Article X of the Haitian-American Treaty, a constabulary was established composed of native Haitians yet organized and officered by American Marines.<sup>39</sup> In 1915, Major Smedley D. Butler, USMC, was commissioned a Major General in the *Gendarmerie d'Haiti* and with a force of 120 Marines led a force of 2,600 Haitians. While the legal and budgetary authority issues would have to be worked out by Congress in concert with the host nation, a constabulary program would be an outstanding way to build partner capacity while concurrently expanding the Marine Corps' cultural awareness and experience base.

### Language Skill Shortfall

The second major hurdle for the strategic small-unit leader of the future is a shortfall in relevant language skills. Joint Publication (JP) 3-07.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (FID)*, describes the importance for “all personnel conducting FID to be able to communicate with host nation personnel in their native language.”<sup>40</sup> To any Marine traveling to the Middle East or Asia, this is both obvious and a major obstacle. So, how does the Marine Corps bridge this language gap without sending all of our selected junior officers and noncommissioned officers to the Defense Language Institute (DLI) for 18-months of immersion language training?

A large part of expanding the Marine Corps' general knowledge base in languages is to make a serious investment in language training. In response to the DOD *Language Transformation Roadmap* published in 2005, the Marine Corps has displayed greater interest in developing language skills.<sup>41</sup> But while the self-identification of foreign language speakers and recruiting native speakers are good intermediate goals, the universal access to Rosetta-Stone type software via individual Marine On-line (MOL) accounts would provide Marines with a powerful

language training tool. The Army is already doing this at their Army Knowledge Online e-learning website, as is the Air Force and selected members of the Department of Homeland Security.<sup>42</sup> This software can be accessed anywhere, at anytime, and would enable Marines to learn and sustain their language skills. With this software investment and a short pre-deployment immersion course offered by DLI, a small-unit leader of the future would acquire the basics of his assigned country's language. To execute SA/FID missions, however, that Marine would need more than the basics required to survive. In that regard, future technology may provide a solution to overcome the language barrier.

Currently, most solutions appear to be in the realm of science fiction, such as the "universal translator" of Star Trek fame. Fortunately, current advances in Speech-to-Speech (S2S) translation, which combines automatic speech recognition (ASR), machine translation (MT), and text-to-speech synthesis (TTS) technology, point to the probable development of a lightweight, hands-free, two-way language translation device in the next two decades."<sup>43</sup> Recent testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) by a senior DOD official reinforced the requirement for service members to be able to "communicate with indigenous peoples from diverse cultures...and be able to understand their written and media communications."<sup>44</sup> With that in mind, the Defense Advanced Research and Technology Agency (DARPA) is funding two promising efforts, the Spoken Language Communication and Translation System for Tactical Use (TRANSTAC) and Global Autonomous Language Exploitation (GALE) programs (see appendix A). The TRANSTAC program is developing a lightweight two-way S2S automatic translation system that can be handheld or integrated into future communications equipment. In the future, TRANSTAC technology will be able to develop an "automatic translator system in a new language within 90 days of receiving a request for that language."<sup>45</sup> The GALE Program is



designing a system for the mass translation of all-source media into English for use at operational-level headquarters, and will “transcribe, translate and distill pertinent information.”<sup>46</sup> Both programs are challenging commercial and academic research and development sectors to develop S2S and text/media-to text translation capabilities, respectively.<sup>47</sup> The Air Force, Army, and Naval Research Laboratories also have ongoing programs to expand the capability of portable translation systems and language databases.<sup>48</sup>

Today, the biggest challenge standing in front of automated translation developers appears to be computing power and the lack of breadth and depth of digitized, tactically relevant language databases. With continued research and development, technological advances, and the continuation of Moore’s Law for computing capacity, it is safe to say that by 2025 some of the language barriers that have divided peoples for millennia may be breached by technology and human ingenuity.<sup>49</sup>

### FID Training

Marines who will support theater SA/FID missions will require the specialized training currently available to SF soldiers who conduct these types of operations. This training includes: 1) overall U.S. and Theater goals for FID; 2) area and cultural orientation; 3) language training; 4) standards of conduct; 5) relationship of FID programs to intelligence collection; 6) coordinating relationships with other USG agencies; 6) legal guidelines; 7) rules of engagement; and 8) tactical force protection training.<sup>50</sup> Addressing these FID skills set shortfalls will likely require selected Marines to attend the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and school, the United States Army Security Assistance Training Management Organization (USASATMO), or the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM). While this training would

be conducted for the individuals selected to reinforce the USSOCOM, JP 3-07.1 also allows for collective training at the unit-level in final preparation for FID mission execution. By 2025, it is safe to say that the MCTAG or MARSOC's Marine Special Operations Advisor Group (MSOAG) will have the capacity to conduct their own training in support of Marine requirements. Another option is for those selected Marines to fall in on Special Forces FID teams for final unit collective training.

### Legal Authority

Perhaps the biggest argument against this type of operational distributed operations in FID type missions with Marines is their lack of legal authority to do so. Truly, this is a potential showstopper. Currently, missions conducted under the auspices of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961 and the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) of 1976 are under the “supervision and general direction” of the State Department. As JP 3-07.1 states, USSOCOM “provides SOF in support of the geographic combatant commanders,” but adds that “other designated DOD conventional forces may contain and employ organic capabilities to conduct limited FID indirect support, direct support, and combat operations,” when permitted by legislative action.

Understanding the reluctance to commit U.S. forces into FID combat operations—avoiding combat operations is the focus of security cooperation and engagement—the Marine Corps contribution would continue to fall into the indirect and direct support (not involving combat operations) categories of FID. Since USSOCOM is the only combatant command with congressional authorization to conduct FID, unless Congress rewrites the law, Marines would have to provide a reinforcing capability to the SOF teams who are actively conducting the FID mission.<sup>51</sup>

Fortunately, DOD Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*, elevates stability operations to a core competency level.<sup>52</sup> It also tasks the Joint Chiefs and the CDRUSSOCOM with ensuring that their services' "Foreign Area Officer [and] Enlisted Regional Specialist programs develop the quantity and quality" of personnel required to conduct these types of operations.<sup>53</sup> The Marine Corps can and should do more to develop its internal SSTR capacity. Operationalizing its small-unit leaders and reinforcing the USSOCOM would be one way to do so. As evidenced above, conducting SA/FID missions will be well within the capability of selected Marine Corps small-unit leaders by the year 2025.

### Conclusion

Looking to the future, one may ask how the Marine Corps can further grow its own capability to send small groups of Marines in support of theater-level operations designed to grow partner security capacity? What institutional shortfalls exist today that must be overcome with 15-20 years of organizational investment to make this capability a reality? And, in the end, does the Marine Corps gain anything as an organization by adapting to the "changing security environment" beyond providing tailored SC MAGTFs to the combatant commanders?

Answers to the first two questions are directly related. By overcoming some critical institutional shortfalls, the Marine Corps can expand its capability and capacity to provide forward presence, security cooperation, and FID.<sup>54</sup> The answer to the third question is simply that by adapting its ways and means, the Corps will be much closer to its desired end-state of providing the U.S. with its most responsive and capable combat force.

The obstacles presented to this plan are considerable. Perhaps the U.S. Army Special Forces community will stake out its ground and in the spirit of “rice bowl” politics say that FID is their mission and theirs alone. Perhaps, the Marine Corps will determine that it cannot be both the Nation’s expeditionary force-in-readiness and a force-provider to USSOCOM’s expanded SA/FID efforts because it cannot afford to have even more of its small-unit leaders out of its operational units. There is no doubt that inter-Service rivalry and “rice bowl” politics will raise their ugly heads. The question remains, however: what is the Corps doing to win the GWOT and its associated war of ideas? By tasking the Corps with providing a MARSOC component to USSOCOM in 2005, the debate was decided—America needs its Marines to reinforce USSOCOM’s efforts because its capacity to perform all of its traditional missions is deficient. It is time for the Corps to take the initiative as an institution and address this strategic deficiency. The Corps needs to invest in its small-unit leaders—to make up for its institutional deficiencies in cultural awareness, language fluency, FID training, established relationships, and execution authority— and prepare them to operate effectively at the theater-level.

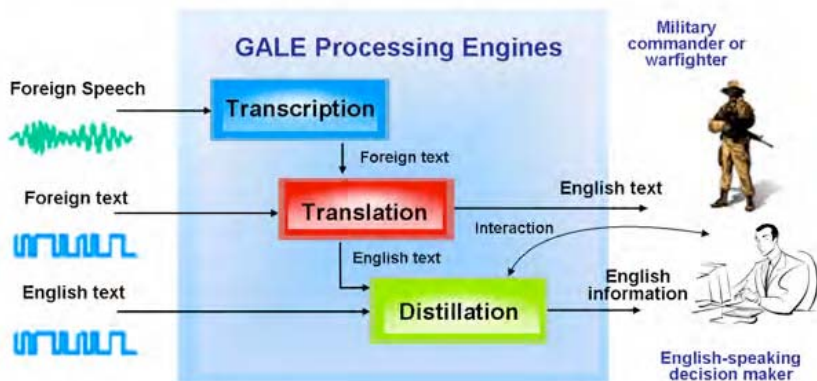


Appendix A:  
Promising Initiatives

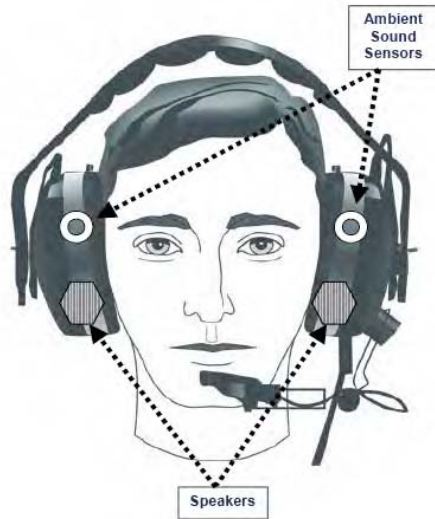
1. DARPA TRANSTAC. The goal of the DARPA Translation System for Tactical Use (TRANSTAC) program is to rapidly develop and field free-form two-way translation systems that enable speakers of different languages to communicate tactical situations. Two examples of DARPA's current Speech to Speech (S2S) Translation technology are: the Panasonic Toughbook and the Voxtec Phraselator P2, both of which operate with IBM handheld MASTOR Software. Both systems are designed to enable free-form, two-way, and speaker independent speech translation technology to users.<sup>55</sup>



2. DARPA GALE. The goal of this program is to develop and apply computer software technologies to translate, analyze, and interpret huge volumes of media-released speech and text in several languages, thus “eliminating” the need for linguists and analysts. GALE is designed to automatically provide relevant, concise, actionable information to military commanders and personnel in a timely manner. While this technology will not be man-portable, due to the size of the hardware required, and has not yet reached its 95% accuracy program goal, a field operator with reachback capability will be able to receive timely, relevant information and analysis from his HTS Reachback Research Center (HTS RRC).<sup>56</sup>



3. Hands-free, Eyes-free Integrated Headsets. The objective of the Integrated Wave Technologies, Inc., MilTrans™ Headset Integrated Translator effort is to develop, test and deploy a miniature, eyes-free/hands-free speech-driven system capable of supporting one-way and limited two-way communication for military personnel in combat environments.<sup>57</sup> When one projects this type of integrated technology almost two decades into the future, it is not unreasonable to predict a S2S translation system that is completely and unobtrusively integrated into the operator's communications system. The S2S translation technology would either sense or be manually activated to begin its translation. The IWT- VRT Headset with Phased Array System and Speakers is shown below.



ARM 9 Processor, heart of new integrated translator circuitry, mounted in headset form factor.

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## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2005), 29.
- <sup>2</sup> Plato, *The Quotations Page*, <<http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/39891.html>> (8 April 2008).
- <sup>3</sup> Lael Brainard, *Security by Other Means: Foreign Assistance, Global Poverty, and American Leadership*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 2.
- <sup>4</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, March 1, 2005), 2-4. The term “hybrid war” describes the hybrid, or crossbreed, nature of many of the conflicts America finds itself confronting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most conflicts cannot be neatly categorized into traditional, irregular, or disruptive forms of warfare, but are an amalgam of more than one. The National Defense Strategy will hereafter be referred to as the NDS.
- <sup>5</sup> Kilcullen, David, "Countering Global Insurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (London: Routledge, August 2005), pp. 597-617.
- <sup>6</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: The White House, March 2006), 1. Hereafter referred to as the NSS.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid, 1.
- <sup>8</sup> NDS, 5.
- <sup>9</sup> Pre-Decisional Draft Working Papers, “Long War Concept: The Marine Corps Vision for Strategic Force Employment in Support of the Steady State Security Posture,” Plans, Policy, and Operations (PP&O), Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 3 October 2007.
- <sup>10</sup> NDS, 9.
- <sup>11</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment*, (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2006), 6-7. Phase Zero and Phase One refer to the Secretary of Defense’s November 2004 joint campaign planning construct that established Phase 0 (Zero) and 1 (One) as Shape the Environment and Deter the Enemy, respectively. Both phases are designed to assure friends and allies, deter adversaries prior to the commencement of hostilities. Hereafter referred to as the MCOCCSE.
- <sup>12</sup> JP 1-02 defines Security Assistance and Foreign Internal Defense programs as follows: 1) *Security Assistance*, also called SA, is the group of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, as amended, or other related statutes by which the United States provides defense articles, military training, and other defense related services, by grant, loan, credit, or cash sales in furtherance of national policies and objectives; 2) *Foreign Internal Defense*, also called FID, is 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.
- <sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “Marine Corps to Join Special Operations Command” <[www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=18412](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=18412)> (1 November 2005)
- <sup>14</sup> Joint Publication 3-07.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (FID)* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2004), V-4.
- <sup>15</sup> Charles C. Krulak, "The Three Block War: Fighting In Urban Areas," speech presented at the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., 10 October 1997.
- <sup>16</sup> General Charles C. Krulak, “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War,” *Marines Magazine*, January 1999.
- <sup>17</sup> James T. Conway, Gary Roughead, and Thad W. Allen, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, 17 October 2007, accessed on-line at <<http://www.navy.mil/maritime/ MaritimeStrategy.pdf>> (11 December 2007); General Conway’s intent to get back to the Corps’ amphibious roots is also outlined in his Commandant’s Planning Guidance, accessed online at: <<http://www.usmc.mil/marinelink/mcn2000.nsf/34CMCGuidance.pdf>>.
- <sup>18</sup> MCOCCSE, 13.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, iv-v. The MCOCCSE lists its five “transforming concepts” as: Marines, Distributed Operations, International Presence, Adapting and Shaping, and Sea-basing.
- <sup>20</sup> Speech given by General James T. Conway to the October 2007 Commanders Course, at MCB Quantico, discussing the current challenges of recruiting and his desire to maintain quality standards for the short and long-term health of the Corps.
- <sup>21</sup> Christian F. Wortman, “Operationalize Distributed Operations,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 91, no. 11 (November 2007), 82-4.
- <sup>22</sup> MCOCCSE, iv.

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- <sup>23</sup> U.S. Marine Corps Special Operations Command, "Recruiting, Screening, Assessment, and Selection MOS Requirements," <[http://www.marsoc.usmc.mil/recruiting/mos\\_requirements.asp](http://www.marsoc.usmc.mil/recruiting/mos_requirements.asp)> (25 November 2007).
- <sup>24</sup> JP 3-07.1, IV-2.
- <sup>25</sup> Montgomery McFate, "Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship," *Military Review* (March-April 2005): 29-34.
- <sup>26</sup> The Marines of the 1920s and 1930s, who operated in the Caribbean and Central America, were very much aware of the need for cultural and anthropological awareness. And while many lessons learned were captured in the 1940 *Small Wars Manual*, the American involvement in World War II, starting in 1941, caused the neglect of this institutional experience for 50 years.
- <sup>27</sup> Arthur Cebrowski, quoted in McFate's article "Anthropology and Counterinsurgency," 24.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 36-7. There is a great debate amongst anthropologists today about the role of their discipline in support of military operations. Once known as the "handmaiden of colonialism," anthropology has been used unethically according to some of its students to manipulate and exploit those cultures which it has studied. The debate continues today.
- <sup>29</sup> J. Agg, "Cultural learning center to open in May," *Marine Corps News*, 27 April 2005.
- <sup>30</sup> Jacob Kipp et al, "The Human Terrain System: A CORDS for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," *Military Review*, Sept-Oct 2006.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 4.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 4.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 5.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 5.
- <sup>35</sup> The "Segundo" concept was a 1920s and 1930s program in which Marine junior officers and non-commissioned officers were commissioned in the ranks of the foreign military or paramilitary organizations for the purposes of advising and leading those respective units during the execution of their security operations.
- <sup>36</sup> Formerly known as the Marine Security Guard Battalion, the Marine Embassy Security Guard Command is responsible for the training, assignments, administration, logistical support, and discipline of Marine Embassy Security Guards. Accessed online at <<https://www.msghn.usmc.mil/?pg=company/pub/about/abtMission.htm>>, 7 December 2007.
- <sup>37</sup> This unclassified brief recommends an implementation strategy for the 2006 Naval Operating Concept (NOC) consisting of an institutional focus on preventative engagement by regionally focused Security Cooperation Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Forces (SPMAGTFs).
- <sup>38</sup> Robert L. Denig, "Diary of a Guardia Officer," USMC History and Museum Division (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937), Introduction.
- <sup>39</sup> James H. McCrocklin, *Guarde D'Haiti* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 1956), 55.
- <sup>40</sup> JP 3-07.1, IV-2.
- <sup>41</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, *DOD Language Transformation Roadmap* (Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, January 2005), 1-2, accessed online at <[www.defense.gov/news/Mar2005/d20050330roadmap.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/Mar2005/d20050330roadmap.pdf)>.
- <sup>42</sup> From the Rosetta Stone, Inc., website and based on the author's experience at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College watching his Army counterparts access their Army Knowledge On-line (AKO) accounts for language training.
- <sup>43</sup> The specific software technologies discussed here are quoted from the SRI International website, "IraqComm: Speech to Speech Translation System," as an example of the type of systems currently under development, on-line at <<http://www.iraqcomm.com/home.htm>>, 5 December 2007.
- <sup>44</sup> Dr. Andre Van Tilborg, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Science and Technology). Testimony before the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities of the Senate Armed Services Committee, April 25, 2007, 2.
- <sup>45</sup> Science Blog, "Evaluations aim to advance translation technology," 23 July 2007. <<http://www.scienceblog.com/cms/node/13759/print>> (13 October 2007).
- <sup>46</sup> Cheryl Gerber, "Found in Translation," *Military Information Technology Online Edition*, 13 March 2006, <<http://www.military-information-technology.com/article.cfm?DocID=1350>> (11 December 2007).
- <sup>47</sup> Information gathered by the author in discussions with Dr. Mari Maeda, Program Manager (PM) for the Defense Advanced Research Program Agency (DARPA) TRANSTAC program, and Marine Corps Major Samuel K. Lee, C4 Project Officer, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL), on 15 November 2007, and summarized in Major Lee's MCWL Presentation "Machine Translation: Technology Overview," dated 16 November 2007.
- <sup>48</sup> Tilborg, 4.

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<sup>49</sup> The highlights of the author's discussion with several attending university Ph.Ds after DARPA's TRANSTAC Primary Investor (PI) Meeting, held at Dulles, Virginia, on 15 November 2007.

<sup>50</sup> JP 3-07.1, IV-3.

<sup>51</sup> JP 3-07.1, A-6. The SOF Exception is the exception granted to SOF that gives them the authority to use Operations and Maintenance (O&M) funds to "train and train with" host nation forces. The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is the only combatant command with a legislatively-mandated FID core task. The Commander, United States Special Operations Command (CDRUSSOCOM) is charged by legislation with training assigned forces to meet mission taskings (including FID) and to ensure their interoperability with conventional forces as well as other SOF. Continuing individual education and/or professional training peculiar to special operations are the responsibility of CDRUSSOCOM.

<sup>52</sup> Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 28 November 2005), 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>54</sup> MCOCCSE, 13-14.

<sup>55</sup> This information was gathered from MWCL's C4 Project Officer Major Samuel K. Lee in his electronic presentation "Machine Translation: Technology Overview" dated 16 November 2007, and provided to the author by Major Lee on that date, 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 13.