Techniques Used by Military Units to Gain Actionable Intelligence

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Abstract

Since the American Revolution, the Army has conducted stability operations, which include counterinsurgency operations. Intelligence gathering methods do not work for every counterinsurgency campaign; methods vary from conflict to conflict. Intelligence gathering methods in the Siberian counterinsurgency included a more formalized school to train in intelligence gathering methods while the Cuban conflict of 1906-1909 counterinsurgency operations were conducted using an extensive intelligence network made up of spies, informants, and intelligence officers. In a guide written by CPT Furlong, he emphasized the heart of intelligence operations for a counterinsurgency was at the local level. Intelligence gathering methods are changing and adapting along with the insurgent tactics. Current Army operations push the Every Soldier is a Sensor (ES2) method. Soldiers need to have a keen sense of human disposition when talking with locals and gathering information. Intelligence gathered by interrogators is most often reliable, but not timely. The intelligence gathered is still useful and aids commanders in confirming or denying information already on hand. The more effective an intelligence gathering technique becomes, the more it is widely used. The intelligence collector must diligently document all information and techniques used to gather intelligence. Using intelligence specific Soldiers remains a current and future use for the Army. History has proved that intelligence gathering techniques need to be documented for future campaigns. Using published intelligence gathering techniques will keep Soldiers out of trouble with the legal side of intelligence gathering while providing a tested framework to commanders on how to conduct intelligence operations in a counterinsurgency.
Introduction

The western way of war includes mass, power, and the use of sophisticated smart weapons. However, large force on force battles, like in World War II, Korea, and Operation Desert Storm, has become the exception. Since the American Revolution, the Army has conducted stability operations, which included counterinsurgency operations. The engagement in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) using counterinsurgency tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) is a reality. Intelligence gathering methods, just like any other military methodology, has developed over time due to history, lessons learned, technological contributions, and the uniqueness associated with each individual campaign or conflict. The same intelligence gathering methods do not work for every counterinsurgency campaign; actionable intelligence methods vary from conflict to conflict. Intelligence gathering methods in the Siberian counterinsurgency included a more formalized school to train in intelligence gathering methods while during the Cuban conflict of 1906-1909 counterinsurgency operations were conducted using an extensive intelligence network made up of spies, informants, and intelligence officers.

Methods to Gaining Actionable Intelligence

In order for intelligence to be actionable it must be timely, accurate, and relevant. It means having the necessary information immediately available in order to deal with the situation at hand. Intelligence gathering methods are changing and adapting along with the insurgent tactics. In Operations Iraqi/Enduring Freedom, overhead intelligence
gathering assets such as Joint Surveillance Targeting and Attack Radar System (JSTARS), unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), and other national assets, aid the maneuver commanders in their mission to knock down the right door or track the right vehicle leaving the scene of an IED event. Current Army operations push the Every Soldier is a Sensor (ES2) method. This means that every Soldier out interacting with the local populace can look, listen, learn, take down information and bring it back to their unit to have put together with other information; aiding the commander in painting a clearer picture of what is happening in the area of operations. Understanding the operating environment and the Host Nation’s social, economic, and political order are essential to conducting counterinsurgency operations (FMI 3-07.22, 2004). Army Human Intelligence (HUMINT) operators are governed by a very precise field manual and legal boundaries defining their methods of gaining information from people and their associated documents and media sources in order to identify elements, intentions, composition, strength, dispositions, tactics, equipment, personnel, and capabilities (FM 2-22.3, 2006).

**Obstacles to Obtaining Actionable Intelligence**

The most prominent obstacle in obtaining actionable intelligence is the trust of the local populace along with cultural, social, and language barriers. In a counterinsurgency, the insurgents use all available means and methods to keep locals either terrified of US and coalition presence or use retribution if locals interact and aid US and coalition Soldiers. Intelligence Soldiers need to have a keen sense of human disposition when talking with locals and gathering information from them. The locals may be fed
misinformation by the insurgents in hopes that the US and coalition Soldiers accept it as truth instead of misinformation. Intelligence gathered by interrogators is most often reliable, but not timely. It may take a day or more to extract actionable intelligence from a detainee, thus rendering it not very timely. The intelligence gathered is still useful and aids commanders in confirming or denying information already on hand.

Favorable Techniques

ES2 is a technique used currently to gather information on insurgent activities in an area. This is proving to be a combat multiplier in OIF. One minor disadvantage to this technique is that the information gathered is from an individual Soldiers’ point of view and may not necessarily take into account the bigger picture (CALL 05-27, 2008).

Another technique used to gather intelligence during a counterinsurgency is to establish intelligence gathering offices at the local level, all linked to a central office or higher command. These offices are manned with intelligence trained Soldiers and NCOs who specialize in different approaches in information gathering, interrogations, and interpreting local information. These offices are usually seen by the local populace as non-threatening. This method is effective because it wins the hearts and minds of the locals and the actionable intelligence gained can be used almost immediately and in a timely manner.

Effectiveness of Techniques

Counterinsurgency techniques have to be developed and addressed from the top levels of command down to the Soldiers on the ground. There must be a written doctrine
in use that reflects current and past methods and practices for gathering intelligence in a counterinsurgency. The more effective an intelligence gathering technique becomes, the more it is widely used. The intelligence collector must diligently document all information and techniques used to gather intelligence. Passing on lessons learned for use by follow on units or for use in future counterinsurgencies are a must.

*Cuban Conflict*

There were three primary missions for American forces in Cuba in 1906-1909 – identifying, isolating, and destroying the enemy. The Army applied lessons recently learned from the Philippines by establishing an extensive intelligence network of spies, informants, and local intelligence officers all reporting to one central intelligence office in Havana (Birtle, 1998). This network gathered information on the social, political, and economic data of all politically active Cubans. The Army assigned an intelligence captain, CPT John Furlong, to prepare a counterinsurgency guide for use by the commanders in Cuba. In his guide he encouraged the national intelligence system, but emphasized that the heart of intelligence operations for a counterinsurgency was at the local level. Cuba was divided into multiple military districts, each with its own intelligence office and interrogators. Furlong encouraged “police methods” in interrogations (Birtle, 1998). Captured insurgents were not allowed to sleep until they confessed all, and then put on a diet of hard labor with bread and water until all insurgents in the local area surrendered. While the Army was prepared for a counterinsurgency during this time in Cuba, it never really took off. Due to the frank nature of Furlong’s guide, it was never published. Instead the guide was released as a
“field service note”, distributed internally within the Army. The political and economical changes required to transform Cuba were too daunting to undertake by the United States. Cuba itself did not want the changes, so when the Army left in 1909, it left the door wide open for the corrupt and dictatorial regimes that followed.

Siberian Counterinsurgency

From 1918-1920, in northern Russia, American General Graves had orders to use his 10,000 man coalition force to guard military stockpiles, secure communications with the Czech Legion, and assist in bringing stabilization to Russia without getting involved in political struggles (Birtle, 1998). Graves did this well except for the last part. He had his guidance from President Wilson to remain neutral which was in direct conflict with the Allied commander, Japanese General Otani Kikuzo. Graves’ refused to order his Soldiers to confiscate weapons or fire upon suspected Communists. The non-communist government in Siberia was led by Russian Admiral Kolchak and he ruled with brute force and intimidation. Kolchak disliked Graves and he set about stirring up anti-American resentment in Graves’ area. Graves was directed by General Kikuzo to sweep through his area and rid it of Communist supporters. Graves knew from his own experience in previous counterinsurgencies that intelligence gathering was the key to squashing the counterinsurgency, especially since Communists could blend in easily with non-communist local populations. He directed intelligence sections in every battalion and established an intelligence school that gave NCOs intense courses in interrogation and investigatory techniques, scouting and reconnaissance, small unit tactics, and introduction to the Russian language. These NCOs were “intelligence scouts” and helped Graves’ unit clear his area in two months of all guerrilla forces, only killing 500 in the process (Birtle,
Graves’ emphasis on intelligence being the key to counterinsurgency was a success but the intelligence school doctrine was not adopted by institutions stateside and became lost in written history.

Current and Future Use

Using intelligence specific Soldiers will remain a current and future use for the Army. History has already proved that intelligence gathering techniques need to be documented for use in future campaigns. In the current conflict, TTPs are constantly being challenged, changed, and updated to keep coalition forces ahead of the insurgents in the counterinsurgency fight. The doctrine currently being used by Soldiers “is not policy (in and of itself), but is a body of thought on how Army forces operate…. [It] provides an authoritative guide for leaders and Soldiers, while allowing freedom to adapt to circumstances (FM 2-22.3, 2006)”. Using published intelligence gathering techniques will keep HUMINT Soldiers out of the a sticky jaunt into the legal side of intelligence gathering while providing a tested framework to commanders on how to conduct intelligence operations in a counterinsurgency.

Conclusion

Intelligence gathering techniques had their birth in the beginnings of armed conflict and continue on today with current conflicts around the world. Counterinsurgencies are stifled and thrown off track because of successful intelligence gathering techniques. In OIF and OEF, overhead intelligence gathering assets such as Joint Surveillance Targeting and Attack Radar System (JSTARS), unmanned aerial
vehicles (UAV), and other national assets all aid the maneuver units in their mission to
knock down the right door or track the right vehicle leaving the scene of an IED. Formal
schooling for Soldiers, documentation available for commanders and Soldiers to use,
along with an extensive intelligence network made up of spies, informants, and
intelligence officers is the current cocktail for successful intelligence gathering
techniques in a counterinsurgency.

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*Company-Level Stability Operations and Support Operations, Volume III: Patrolling, Intelligence, and Information Operations,*


Field Manual-Interim 3-07.22 (1 October 2004 Expires 1 October 2006).

*Counterinsurgency Operations,* Department of the Army: Washington, D.C.