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**WATCH OUT FOR THE CHILDREN: ARMY POLICY
AND CHILD SOLDIERS**

by

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WATCH OUT FOR THE CHILDREN: ARMY POLICY AND CHILD SOLDIERS

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ABSTRACT

According to the United Nations, there are over 300,000 child soldiers operating throughout the world and the potential that U.S. soldiers will interact with child soldiers remains significant. Military doctrine, policy, and training have been updated to take the current operational environment into consideration. The same cannot be said for the interaction with child soldiers. This thesis will begin to identify and address gaps in the current Army policy and doctrine concerning child soldiers. Additionally, this thesis will begin to identify ways to bridge the gaps identified in order to address how U.S. soldiers can best be prepared when they confront child soldiers on the battlefield. This research identifies that there is a rising issue concerning child soldiers, but that the U.S. Army has failed to implement the necessary changes to support its soldiers in dealing with this when they deploy. The Army references international treaties that the United States is not a party to in order to provide guidance to soldiers concerning child soldiers. This guidance needs to be codified, implemented, and distributed to support soldiers that might be faced with the choice about whether to take the life of a child.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	After Action Review
ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
ADTP	Army Doctrine and Training Publication
AO	Area of Operation
AR	Army Regulation
ATP	Army Techniques Publication
CA	Civil Affairs
CALL	Center for Army Lessons Learned
COG	Center of Gravity
CRC	Convention of the Rights of the Child
CTC	Combined Training Center
EOF	Escalation of Force
FM	Field Manual
GAO	Government Accounting Office
HN	Host Nation
HVT	High-Value Target
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IO	Information Operations
IPB	Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JP	Joint Publication
JRTC	Joint Readiness Training Center
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
METT-TC	Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops, Time, Civil Considerations
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NLW	Nonlethal Weapon
NMCG	Nongovernmental Organization Military Contact Group
NTC	National Training Center

PA	Public Administration
PMESII-PT	Political, Military, Economic, Social, Informational, Infrastructure, Physical Environment, Time
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SFQC	Special Forces Qualification Course
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SROE	Standing Rules of Engagement
SSE	Sensitive Site Exploitation
TAP	Threat Assessment Process
TC	Training Circular
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
TTP	Tactic, Technique, and Procedure
UN	United Nations
UN-CMCoord	United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

I. INTRODUCTION

A. APPROACH

Around 1020 BC, a young boy used a slingshot to knock down an adult soldier, prior to cutting off his head. This is a story most people have heard and it has become familiar in popular culture, with references to underdog stories. Before David fought Goliath, King Saul said to David, “you are not able to go out against [Goliath] and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth.”¹ This is probably one of the earliest written accounts of a child soldier, but it has not been the last. During the American Civil War, writings about child soldiers “celebrated the nobility and sacrifice of young boys in battle.”² Even more recently, non-state actors have used print³ and video propaganda celebrating and depicting child soldiers conducting training in basic infantry tactics⁴ and executing captives.⁵ The Islamic State (ISIS) is also publicizing the training of child soldiers within schools, such as the “School of Jihad” and the “Al-Farouq Institute for Islamic State Cubs.”⁶

This topic has received a significant amount of attention, with numerous books and articles written on the employment and recruitment of child soldiers. Most recently, in the first quarter of 2016, the Center for Combating Terrorism and Quilliam, a counter-extremist think-tank based in London, has published reports concerning the impact of

¹ *Life Application Study Bible: New International Version* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers Inc. 1997), 1 Samuel 17:33.

² David M. Rosen, *Armies of the Young, Child Soldiers in the War on Terrorism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 6.

³ “Shari’ah Alone Will Rule Africa,” *Dabiq* 8, (March 2015): 20–21.
<https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/the-islamic-state-e2809cdc481biq-magazine-8e280b3.pdf>.

⁴ “ISIS Releases New Photos and Video Showing Training of Child Soldiers,” YouTube video, 2:13, from ISIS Propaganda, posted by “Joao Paulo,” April 9, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34YkQt9Y93M>.

⁵ “ISIS Child Executing Alleged Israeli Spy,” YouTube video, 1:20, from the Fox News Channel, posted by “Hamid Bayati,” March 10, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vy_9RoJH_go.

⁶ Adam Withnall, “Inside the ‘School of Jihad’: Isis Militants Release Shocking Videos Showing what ‘Education’ Means for Boys in the Lands it Occupies,” *The Independent*, October 23, 2015. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/inside-the-school-of-jihadisis-militants-release-shocking-videos-showing-what-education-means-for-boys-in-the-lands-it-occupies-9813525.html>.

child soldiers by examining the increase in the use of child soldiers in extremist propaganda.⁷ These publications, along with the numerous other books that have been published include: *Children at War*, *Armies of the Young*, and *Child Soldiers A Reference Handbook*. Although these works are very informative from an academic point of view, they are not geared toward the military *per se*.

The U.S. Army addresses the topic of child soldiers very briefly within its doctrine by simply identifying that “planning for Army operations accounts for the possibility of vulnerable children and child-soldiers among enemy forces.”⁸ Although this manual states that Army planning takes children into consideration, it fails to describe *how* planning accounts for child soldiers, or *what* specifically needs to be addressed. I will address this significant gap relating to the planning phase as well as identify gaps and contradictions in other phases. Additionally, this thesis will begin to identify ways to begin to bridge the gaps identified.

The United States Army needs to consider child soldiers through all phases of operations, not solely the planning phase. These phases are outlined in Joint Publication 5–0, beginning with what the military calls “phase 0” and ending at “phase V.” These phases are shape, deter, seize the initiative, dominate, stabilize, and enable civil authority.⁹ Within each of these phases are actions that should occur in order to accomplish the mission. During the first two phases, shape and deter, a unit should prepare and define the problem. During the following two phases, seize and dominate, a unit executes combat operations. The final two phases, stabilize and enable civil authorities, are meant for transition of responsibilities.¹⁰ I will simply follow the three

⁷ Mia Bloom, John Horgan, and Charlie Winter, “Depictions of Children and Youth in the Islamic State’s Martyrdom Propaganda, 2015–2016,” *CTC Sentinel* 9, no. 2 (2016): 29–32 and Noman Benotman and Nikita Malik, “The Children of Islamic State,” Quilliam, March 2016, <https://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/the-children-of-islamic-state.pdf>.

⁸ Department of the Army, *Protection of Civilians* (ADTP 3–07.6) (Washington, DC: US Army Publishing Directorate, October 2015), 2–5.

⁹ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning* (JP 5–0) (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, August 2011), xxiii–xxiv.

¹⁰ Janet A. St Laurent et al., *Military Operations. Actions Needed to Improve DoD’s Stability Operations Approach and Enhance Interagency Planning* (GAO-07–549) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2007), 15.

general phases of military operations, which coincide with the phase O-V listed above: *preparation* (shape and deter), *execution* (seize the initiative and dominate), and *stabilization* (stabilize and enable civil authorities). These phases coincide with planning, execution, and follow on operations, which are the key components to any and all situations whether in a training environment or during actual operations. For the purposes of this thesis, in the preparation and execution phases, I will explain tactical level analysis regarding child soldiers and suggest recommendations that can be made at this level. In the final section of this thesis, stabilization phase, I will focus more on operational and strategic level analysis and suggest recommendations for these as well.

As shortcomings are identified, within a specific phase, I recommend possible changes that can be made and/or incorporated to support U.S. soldiers that will encounter child soldiers. Properly addressing these gaps with substantive guidelines on the engagement of child soldiers will be a significant undertaking far beyond the scope of this thesis. In this research, I primarily identify these gaps and provide a basic outline to address the possibility to begin developing such a policy. If soldiers do not address the issues surrounding child soldiers there is a greater chance that conflicts will be prolonged.

The increase in the possibility of interacting with child soldiers has been outlined in public laws and congressional reports;¹¹ however, the U.S. military remains unprepared for encounters with them on the battlefield, as I will show through this study. If the U.S. Army continues to be unprepared for this continuing trend, a unit's lack of preparedness, performance, mission success, and aftermath of operations, can affect soldiers both mentally and physically. If this is true, then there should be a concerted effort to increase emphasis on training and doctrine, as it relates to child soldiers. Military studies should include an operational context, which will provide knowledge and understanding as to what actions soldiers could take when confronted with these children

¹¹ *Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009*, Public Law No. 111-172, 124 Stat. 1209 (2009) and Alexis Arieff, Lauren P. Blanchard, and Thomas F. Husted, *The Lord's Resistance Army: The U.S. Response* (CRS Report No. R42094) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2015).

on the battlefield. Pete W. Singer makes a valid point when he states “to remain relevant, military studies must address all the new actors in warfare, even the littlest ones.”¹²

B. BACKGROUND

The use of child soldiers is not a new phenomenon. Throughout history, child soldiers have been used on both sides, and their use is not limited to terrorists or non-state actors. During the middle ages, a boy as young as 14 could become a squire and be assigned to a knight to begin his military training.¹³ During the 17th century, the British Royal Navy gave children the title of “powder monkey,” while they worked on Navy vessels and reloaded cannons.¹⁴ The American Civil War is sometimes referred to as “the boy’s war.”¹⁵ Some estimate that more than a million child soldiers, 18 or younger, served during the Civil War;¹⁶ other scholars have estimated the numbers to be significantly lower, between 250,000–420,000.¹⁷ However, whether 1 million or 250,000, this is a significant number, considering that the current estimate of child soldiers is approximately 300,000 worldwide although this number is growing.¹⁸

In order to identify the current policy and doctrine, or lack thereof, surrounding child soldiers, it is important to define what constitutes a child soldier. The first formal acknowledgement of the needs of children, under international law, was in 1924, by the League of Nations, in the “Declaration of the Rights of the Child.” However, it was not until another 65 years had passed, when the international community officially acknowledged the “very special status of children.”¹⁹ Even though it was identified in

¹² Pete W. Singer, “Caution: Children at War,” *Parameters* 31, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 41.

¹³ Christopher Gravett, *English Medieval Knight 1300–1400* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 16.

¹⁴ Terry Breverton, *The Pirate Dictionary* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 2004), 130.

¹⁵ Rosen, *Armies of the Young*, 5.

¹⁶ Burke Davis, *The Civil War, Strange & Fascinating Facts* (Ann Arbor, MI: Fairfax Press, 1960), 63.

¹⁷ Emmy E. Werner, *Reluctant Witnesses: Children’s Voices from the Civil War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 2.

¹⁸ Graça Machel, *International Conference on War-affected Children: Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* (Winnipeg, Canada: United Nations, 1996), 5.

¹⁹ Ilene Cohn and Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 55.

1924 that specific needs of children should be addressed, the four original Geneva Conventions failed to do so.²⁰

It was not until 1977 that *Additional Protocol I* was added to the Geneva Convention, which specifically defined the minimum age of child soldiers. This protocol codified that to enlist in the military a child had to be at least 15 years old. This definition lasted until 1998, when a report titled *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* was published. This report led to an event called the “Cape Town Symposium,” which brought experts together to develop strategies for dealing with child soldiers. The event resulted in the publication of *The Cape Town Principles and Best Practices*.²¹ This document stated, “a minimum age of 18 years should be established for any person participating in hostilities.”²² It is often referred to as the “Straight-18” definition, relating to child soldiers. Even though the Cape Town Symposium occurred in 1998, the findings did not become the international standard until 2002 with the establishment of an international treaty called the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*. These documents set forth the minimum age of 18 years old as a requirement for international armed conflicts and civil wars. However, they do not address the age requirements for wars of national liberation.²³ Then, in 2007, The United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) conducted a review of the *Cape Town Principles*, which resulted in the *Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups*. During this review, the definition of child soldiers only as combatants was abandoned and was expanded in favor of “any child associated with an armed group or armed force,” to include noncombatant roles such as cooks and messengers.²⁴

²⁰ Rosen, *Armies of the Young*, 139.

²¹ David M. Rosen, *Child Soldiers: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2012), 52.

²² United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund, “Cape Town Principles and Best Practices,” United Nations, April 30, 1997, 1, [http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles(1).pdf).

²³ Rosen, *Armies of the Young*, 143.

²⁴ Rosen, *Child Soldiers*, 52.

It is important to note that the United States is neither party to the *Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions*, nor were its representatives present during the conference that resulted in the Paris Principles.²⁵ However, the U.S. adopted a similar definition of child soldier in 2008. The United States outlines its definition of child soldier in the *Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008*, which is consistent with the *Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child*. The *Child Soldier Prevention Act* identifies a child soldier as any individual conscripted under the age of 18, or any individual under the age of 15 who volunteers and also includes children serving as cooks, messengers, medics, or sex slaves.

The age at which a child is considered to reach adulthood varies between cultures, and depends on factors that include, but are not limited to, social development, cognitive aptitude, and emotional maturity. On the other hand, legally, there needs to be a defined age in order to hold nations to a set standard. The age of 18 has become the most accepted age at which children become adults. This includes numerous reasons, both legally and traditionally. The first reason is that the age of recruitment, set at 18, marries up with the age most individuals can participate in the political process, which is true in 109 countries around the world.²⁶ It is accepted that involvement in the political process is a “reasonably accurate” indicator of intellectual maturity.²⁷ The other reason 18 is accepted as the age of adulthood could be based on the traditional and historical understanding of adulthood. The age of 18 has been used as a milestone throughout history. Dating back to the 14th century, an individual could become a knight at the age of 18.²⁸ For the purposes of this study, “child soldier” will follow the United States’ definition, as outlined in the *Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008*.

As it has been shown, child soldiers have been used throughout history. There are a variety of views as to why the specific issue of child soldiers has grown in importance

²⁵ Center for Law and Military Operations, *Legal Lessons Learned from Afghanistan and Iraq* 1 (Charlottesville, VA: The Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center and School, 2004), 75.

²⁶ Ann Sheppard, “Child Soldiers: Is the Optional Protocol Evidence of an Emerging ‘straight-18’ Consensus?” *The International Journal of Children’s Rights* 8, no. 1 (January 2000), 49.

²⁷ Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflict*, 7.

²⁸ Gravett, *English Medieval Knight 1300–1400*, 16.

around the world, as well as to why the use of child soldiers has been increasing. Many scholars believe that there are three common factors that have led to the increasing problems of child soldiers: changes in the nature of warfare, the small arms trade with the development of “lighter” weapons, and the emergence of the idea of the vulnerability of children.

The first factor, the changes in the nature of warfare, follows the account that “small scale civil wars and ethnic conflicts now occupy the center stage of armed conflict, as opposed to previous international wars and wars of national liberation.”²⁹ In particular, following the Cold War, conflicts have been characterized as “small wars,” “low-intensity conflicts,” “asymmetric conflicts,” or “new wars.”³⁰ This blurs the front line of the battlefield, putting civilians and children up close to the dangers of warfare, where “recruiters” can simply take children from their homes or schools.³¹ There are no well-defined beginnings or ends to these conflicts, often creating a lifetime of fighting, in which children have grown up only knowing conflict and war.

The second factor, which has led to the increase of child soldiers, is the small arms trade. Because of the abundance of small arms available around the world, it is easier for an organization to acquire and put that weapon into the child’s hand. The significant availability of these weapons leads to the increased recruitment and utilization of child soldiers. Instead of children participating as cooks, messengers, or powder monkeys, they can actively participate as armed combatants, engaging their opponents. In 2002, there were approximately 639 million small arms in circulation worldwide; that equates to about 1 weapon for every 10 people on the planet.³² This was perpetuated by the fact that an AK-47 could be purchased for as little as \$5 in different countries,

²⁹ Rosen, *Armies of the Young*, 10.

³⁰ Sabine Collmer, “Child Soldiers—An Integral Element in New, Irregular Wars?” *Connections* 3, no. 3 (September 2004), 2.

³¹ Amy Beth Abbott, “Child Soldiers—the use of Children as Instruments of War,” *Suffolk Transnational Law Review* 23 (Summer 2000), 509.

³² Small Arms Survey, *Small Arms Survey 2002: Counting the Human Cost* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2002), 63.

throughout the world.³³ In addition to the abundance of available weapons, weapon systems have been simplified in their use; therefore, with only limited training, children can be taught all they need to know in order to kill.³⁴

The third factor that has significantly led to the child soldier crisis is the emergence of the idea that children are vulnerable and innocent, and therefore easily recruited. This belief began to gain momentum during the industrial revolution and the emergence of formal and industrialized schooling, which shifted away from apprenticeships.³⁵ Additionally, Jean Piaget created a developmental model that gained widespread attention in the 1960s, and states that “children are basically immature, incompetent, and irrational.”³⁶ This model states that the transition through the stages of life from childhood to adulthood happen at fixed steps and are naturally determined. Children who have not progressed into a mature adult can often believe that war is a game; thus they are “easier to condition into fearless killing” and obedience toward their adult leaders.³⁷

Children on the battlefield are growing in numbers, because they provide a quick and easy way of replenishing the ranks in that they are viewed as cheap and expendable.³⁸ This problem is not going away. If people do not learn from history, they are destined to repeat the same mistakes over and over again. The problems of child soldiers, documented in the past, resemble those of today.³⁹ There are similarities, but also significant differences. One primary difference is the strategy that is being used that includes the use of children by terrorist organizations, primarily for psychological effects. These children are being used as a propaganda tool, killing prisoners on camera with knives and pistols, and not simply engaging the enemy on the battlefield. Whether

³³ Peter W. Singer, *Children at War* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 48.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁵ Rosen, *Armies of the Young*, 7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁷ Collmer, “Child Soldiers—An Integral Element in New, Irregular Wars,” 8.

³⁸ Singer, *Children at War*, 95.

³⁹ Werner, *Reluctant Witnesses*, 2.

children are being used as armed combatants on the battlefield, or for propaganda purposes, they must be considered during all phases of operations in order to better prepare U.S. soldiers who may encounter them.

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II. PREPARATION PHASE

A. CURRENT MILITARY DOCTRINE RELATING TO THE PREPARATION PHASE

Nearly 70 percent of all child soldiers operate within the ranks of non-state actors, but surprisingly this problem is not limited to these violent extremist organizations.⁴⁰ The United States has identified numerous countries, such as Libya, South Sudan, Yemen and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the official government is currently recruiting and employing child soldiers. As part of the *Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008*, discussed earlier, the United States is prevented from providing military support to these countries. In spite of this mandate, the president can, and has, issued waivers to continue to provide military support to numerous foreign governments that employ child soldiers.⁴¹ This poses significant challenges for soldiers and commanders who will be conducting operations within these countries.

Since numerous military units, both friendly and enemy, use child soldiers, U.S. soldiers must be prepared to interact with or use deadly force against child soldiers. It is important for soldiers to accomplish this preparation, prior to deployment. A unit's planning and training, prior to deployment, should incorporate and identify key factors that can lead to the recruitment and employment of child soldiers.

As discussed earlier, the Army manual, concerning the protection of civilians, identifies that all Army planning accounts for child soldiers, but there are still significant gaps that persist. These gaps include the Army manuals that cover the operations process and unified land operations do not even mention children.⁴² Within the context of intelligence and preparation for the battlefield, children are only mentioned twice. The

⁴⁰ Philippe Gazagne, "Engaging Armed Non-state Actors on the Issue of Child Recruitment and Use," in *Seen, but not Heard: Placing Children and Youth on the Security Governance Agenda*, ed. David Nosworthy (Rutgers University, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 248.

⁴¹ Barack Obama, "Presidential Memorandum - Determination with Respect to the Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2008," The Office of the Press Secretary, White House, September 30, 2014, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/09/28/presidential-memorandum-presidential-determination-respect-child-soldier>.

⁴² ADP 5-0 and ADRP 3-0.

first mention is in the section titled “understanding the population,” in which the question is posed, in an attempt to determine the population’s long-term economic concerns for themselves and their children.⁴³ Within the section titled “sensitive site exploitation,” it is stated that a unit needs to understand the enemy’s tactics for concealing information, and the possible use of children as couriers.⁴⁴ The only other mention of children, specifically related to intelligence collection or preparation on the battlefield, is in a subset manual for intelligence, which is specifically in regard to intelligence support to urban operations. It addresses the need to identify the social aspects of the role of children in the environment;⁴⁵ again, not *how*, or in what way to deal with them, but rather simply stating the *need* to deal with them.

As opposed to the planning and intelligence assessment of child soldiers, the Army has specifically identified the use of child soldiers as an enemy tactic, technique, and procedure (TTP) used within regular, irregular, and hybrid threats.⁴⁶ These TTPs have been published in Army training circulars that outline opposition force capabilities and tactics.⁴⁷ These publications are critical in describing how enemy threats use and exploit children, but these training circulars are not widely known throughout the Army, and their distribution is primarily limited to the Army’s combined training centers (CTC).

The analysis of enemy threats, in conjunction with the analysis of operational, tactical, and civil considerations, is vital to long-term stability and success on the modern

⁴³ Department of the Army, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield* (ATP 2–01.3) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, November 2014), 7–20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10–5.

⁴⁵ Department of the Army, *Intelligence Support to Urban Operations* (TC 2–91.3) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, December 2015), 1–20.

⁴⁶ Regular threat is defined as military forces that are part of nation-states employing recognized military capabilities (ATP 2–01.3). Irregular threats are defined as an opponent employing unconventional, asymmetric methods and means to counter U.S. advantages (ATP 2–01.3). Hybrid threats are defined as diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorist forces, and/or criminal elements unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects (ATP 2–01.3).

⁴⁷ Department of the Army, *Opposing Force Tactics* (TC 7–100.2) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, December 2011), 15–9, 15–23 and Department of the Army, *Irregular Opposing Forces* (TC 7–100.3) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, January 2014), 6–17.

battlefield.⁴⁸ For the safety and protection of their forces, unit commanders must understand their area of operations completely, and have the ability to identify all elements that will affect the outcome of their mission. This is extremely important, since the adversary, especially the child soldiers among enemy forces, often are able to blend in with the general population.

Another element that must be assessed during mission analysis, are the rules of engagement (ROE) for the area of operation where a unit will deploy. The specific ROE provide “circumstances under which soldiers may open fire.”⁴⁹ Depending on where a unit is deploying, they will fall under a theater-specific ROE, or the United States military’s standing rules of engagement (SROE). These SROE and theater-specific ROE must be evaluated and analyzed, prior to deployment, and can be adjusted depending on where the mission is located, who is participating in the mission, or if a unit is operating as part of a larger multinational coalition. The Army understands how dynamic the current operational environment is within the context of new and limited wars and identifies that ROE require continual reassessment, in order to ensure effectiveness.⁵⁰ This point is extremely important when there is a possibility that a unit will encounter child soldiers.

It is also possible, under specific ROE, that the U.S. has declared any civilian, paramilitary, military, or terrorist as hostile, and U.S. forces can engage these individuals, for simply being part of this specific group.⁵¹ When taken at face value this might seem unjust because there are numerous aspects that can be assessed prior to using deadly force against an enemy. If an individual does not pose an immediate threat, they should not be engaged with deadly force, and other means should be used to detain them. This may be applied to children, as well as adults, who are a part of a group, which has been deemed hostile. There are numerous ROE’s that a unit can fall under, depending on the enemy,

⁴⁸ Department of the Army, *Tactics in Counterinsurgency* (Field Manual 3–24.2) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, April 2009), 1–8.

⁴⁹ Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency* (FM3–24) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, December 2006), D-2.

⁵⁰ Department of the Army, *FM 3–24*, D-2.

⁵¹ Center for Law and Military Operations, *Legal Lessons Learned from Afghanistan and Iraq*, 183.

mission, or location. However, currently, the ROE, concerning the engagement of “child soldiers [with deadly force], are either weak or non-existent.”⁵²

Following the mission analysis, the unit commander must consider what training needs to be conducted, prior to deployment, to ensure that the unit is prepared for the mission. This should include specific information gathered about the projected operational environment (e.g., the presence of children), and the ROE that will be applicable in that regard.

This pre-deployment training can range from classroom instruction to training exercises at one of the Army’s CTCs: the Joint Readiness Training Center, in Fort Polk, LA; the Yakima Training Center in WA; and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA. The classroom portion of the pre-deployment training includes topics ranging from area familiarization to ROE briefings. More importantly, there are classes covering law of land warfare, which are required to be conducted annually, according to Army regulation.⁵³ Surprisingly, as of this research, the issues surrounding child soldiers are not included in the current law of land warfare training, even though it has been identified that this should be incorporated.⁵⁴

Following classroom instruction, units conduct training exercises at any of the pre-deployment CTCs, in order to reinforce what they have already learned at their home stations. These CTCs have the ability to adjust training, as needed, in order to meet the specific needs of the current rotational unit. A good example to show how the CTCs were able to adjust training for a unit, can be seen following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Shortly after units had begun deploying in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM, soldiers found themselves interacting with civilians more regularly on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. Due to this increase in

⁵² Shelly Whitman, Tanya Zayed and Carl Conradi, “Child Soldiers: A Handbook for Security Sector Actors,” The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, October 2013, 44. http://watchlist.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Romeo-Dallaire-Updated-Handbook_English.pdf.

⁵³ Department of the Army, *Army Training and Leader Development* (AR 350–1) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, August 1982), 110, G-1.

⁵⁴ Center for Law and Military Operations, *Legal Lessons Learned from Afghanistan and Iraq*, 75.

interaction with civilians, the military began to develop doctrine and training on how to better interact and handle civilians on the battlefield and incorporated this training at the CTCs. The implementation of civilian role-players, during training exercises, was added as units began to rotate through the CTCs prior to deployment.⁵⁵ This training has become very strategic, in order to ensure better preparation for, and understanding of, various situations on the modern battlefield.

The need to further replicate the battlefield is imperative.⁵⁶ This is highlighted in a current military training circular (TC) that covers exercise design. This TC is intended to significantly enhance a planner's ability to replicate a current operational environment for training purposes, and child soldiers are identified as a significant issue that should be incorporated.⁵⁷ This TC was written in 2010 and, unfortunately, there has been little or no incorporation of children into role-player based scenarios at the CTC's.

The Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), which is the proponent for all training that is conducted within the Army, complicates the use of children during training. According to the TRADOC *Contemporary Operational Environment Actors and Role Players Handbook* "children on the battlefield will either be inferred or portrayed as 'young adult' (age 18 and up)," but then contradicts itself by explaining a training unit could use a local scout group to replicate children on the battlefield.⁵⁸

The use of children during training is significant, in order to replicate the intensity of combat situations. The Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) understands this, and has incorporated children into training, on a limited basis. Since children cannot be on an official role-player payroll, they are used solely on a volunteer basis, with their

⁵⁵ Government Accounting Office, *Military Training: Funding Request for Joint Urban Operations Training and Facilities should be Based on Sound Strategy and Requirements* (GAO-06-193) (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2005), 4.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Department of the Army, *Exercise Design* (Training Circular 7-101) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, November 2010), 3-19.

⁵⁸ Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, *Contemporary Operational Environment Actors & Role Players Handbook*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2007), 52.

parents' permission. Children are then incorporated into training, after school hours and during holidays from schools.⁵⁹

In conclusion, the Army has identified the problems and numerous issues surrounding child soldiers, through the publication of training circulars. However, this information has failed to make it into relevant planning and intelligence doctrine. By identifying and analyzing the current Army manuals, numerous recommendations can be made in order to begin to fill this gap.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PREPARATION PHASE

According to a lessons learned report following the early stages of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. soldiers need to take child soldiers into consideration.⁶⁰ With the emergence of new and irregular wars, the front lines have become blurred. The need to assess more than the enemy has become a necessity. This being the case, at times, the military can get so focused on the enemy, that they neglect the need to assess the civilian aspect of the operational environment. The need to analyze all aspects of the battle space is imperative. Failure to identify significant factors, possibly leading to unstable conditions, can potentially cause an increase in enemy presence in an area. This analysis of the “civil considerations may have equal or greater importance” than a simple analysis of the enemy forces themselves.⁶¹

This is not to say that the current military planning, doctrine, or the systems that are in place to facilitate success on the battlefield are deficient. It simply means that the Army needs to adjust the current process to help identify key aspects concerning child soldiers on the battlefield. Again, it is imperative to clarify these factors during the planning process, when preparing for military operations.

⁵⁹ This is based on my experience as an instructor at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

⁶⁰ Center for Law and Military Operations, *Legal Lessons Learned from Afghanistan and Iraq*, 75.

⁶¹ Department of the Army, *ATP 2-01.3*, 7-6.

Army commanders currently use the acronym PMESII-PT to define and analyze different operational variables.⁶² When analyzing these operational variables, it is important to note that, depending on the information that is obtained, a commander and unit can better determine if child soldiers will be present on the battlefield. Conducting the analyses of PMESII-PT, and identifying some of the contributing factors, does not necessarily mean that child soldiers are present on the battlefield. However, numerous contributing factors may increase the *likelihood* that child soldiers are present. Analyses of certain conditions are sufficient indicators that a unit will encounter child soldiers on the battlefield and then a unit is able to take vulnerable children and the possibility of child soldiers into consideration, as outlined in *Army Doctrine and Training Publication 3–07.6, Protection of Civilians*.

The *political* aspect of the operational environment is described as “the distribution of responsibility and power at all levels of government.”⁶³ The political aspect must be assessed in order to determine whether or not the government is able to effectively control their borders and police its citizens. If not, there is often increased corruption, crime, and the expansion of violent organizations, within a state. These factors can lead to political instability and an increase in human rights violations, especially against children.⁶⁴ These human rights abuses, including the use of children as soldiers, most often go unpunished because the government simply does not have control over corruption, and organizations can act without the fear of being arrested or charged.⁶⁵ Within the context of political assessment, there is the need to determine whether the state itself employs child soldiers. Some factors include: political weakness, internal conflict, whether the need to continue fighting is present, and if there has been significant deaths of adult soldiers.⁶⁶

⁶² PMESII-PT stands for Political, Military, Economic, Social, Informational, Infrastructure, Physical Environment, and Time. Department of the Army, *The Operations Process* (ADP 5–0) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, May 2012), 5.

⁶³ Department of the Army, *FM 3–24.2*, 1–3.

⁶⁴ Mbungu Grace Kageni, “Good Intentions, Little Effect: International Norms and the use of Child Soldiers” (master’s thesis, Graduate College Bowling Green State University, 2009), 39.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Kageni, *Good Intentions, Little Effect*, 69.

Analysis of the *economy* in the area of operation includes general economic factors such as income, consumer issues, standard of living, and poverty within a country. When there are issues concerning the economic situation in a country, resentment toward the government and a platform for recruitment of insurgents evolves.⁶⁷ The issue of poverty is a significant contributing factor in the recruitment of child soldiers. Some would even argue that poverty is the leading factor that contributes to child soldiers.⁶⁸ The main argument for this is that children living within an impoverished country can become frustrated and easier to manipulate. Therefore, recruitment into the ranks of a military or paramilitary force, which can provide food and shelter, may be a welcoming change.⁶⁹

The *social* aspect of the operational environment is critical because, within an operational area, there can be numerous societies, which can include villages, towns, or tribal affiliations. This social structure can be shattered and left deeply divided by internal conflicts, where children are at a greater risk of becoming soldiers. This risk comes from adults who indoctrinate children into thinking that it is their duty to continue the fight, or children have lost a loved one in the conflict, and they want revenge against the people they believe are responsible.⁷⁰ These conflicts can lead to numerous orphans, internally displaced persons, and refugee camps, where recruitment and abduction of children to serve as child soldiers is rampant.⁷¹

The *informational* considerations of the operational environment, relates to the ability of an organization to collect, process, distribute, and act on information.⁷² Information is a key component in the world today, with the increase in the use of social

⁶⁷ Department of the Army, *FM 3-24.2*, 1-4.

⁶⁸ Graça Machel, Jennifer Klot, and Theo Sowa, eds. *The Impact of War on Children: A Review of Progress Since the 1996 United Nations Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* (London: Hurst and Company, 2001), 11.

⁶⁹ Kageni, *Good Intentions, Little Effect*, 52.

⁷⁰ Michael G. Wessells, *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 20-21.

⁷¹ Vera Achvarina and Simon F. Reich, "No Place to Hide: Refugees, Displaced Persons, and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 134.

⁷² Department of the Army, *FM 3-24.2*, 1-4.

media and other online sharing sites. In addition to how information is collected, units need to assess the use of propaganda and the effect it has on the recruitment of children. Children are very susceptible to “propaganda because they lack the broad life experiences needed to think issues through, critically.”⁷³ Recently, the use of propaganda to recruit and appeal to children has increased dramatically, especially within terrorist organizations. Print and video propaganda are being used to appeal to impressionable young recruits. The use of high tech video recording and multiple camera angles have a first-person-shooter-video-game appeal to them.⁷⁴

As outlined above, the current operational variables that are studied during mission analysis also pertain to the issues of child soldiers. This is a simple, yet potentially profound shift in thinking that can affect the planning process, in order to assist units in the identification of child soldiers, prior to a deployment. It simply needs to be stressed that children may be a part of the operational environment. The identification of the child soldiers, within an area of operation, is paramount to mission success.

The analysis of PMESII-PT factors is a way for commanders to evaluate an operational area and is continually refined throughout the course of the deployment.⁷⁵ It should be noted that even though these operational considerations are important, they do not in themselves, lead specifically to mission accomplishment. For further analysis, the Army uses the acronym METT-TC to determine what will impact a mission in a specific area of operation.⁷⁶ It must be identified, and understood at all levels, that children are a key component of both the “Enemy” and “Civilian” elements of mission variables, within the aspects of METT-TC. The need to assess the civil considerations as they relate to

⁷³ Wessells, *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection*, 53.

⁷⁴ Sam Prince, “Watch: New ISIS Video shows Child Soldiers Executing ‘Spies’,” Heavy, December 5, 2015, <http://heavy.com/news/2015/12/new-isis-islamic-state-news-videos-pictures-to-sons-of-jews-wilayat-al-khayr-child-boy-soldiers-executing-shooting-spies-jewish-ancient-ruins-obstacle-course-full-uncensored-youtube/>.

⁷⁵ Department of the Army, *Unified Land Operations* (ADRP 3–0) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, May 2012), 1–2.

⁷⁶ METT-TC stands for Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops, Time, and Civilian Considerations. Department of the Army, *FM 3–24.2*, 1–6.

child soldiers helps to identify specific mission requirements within a specific area of operation.

The analysis of civilian considerations and the operational factors of PMESII-PT can help commanders identify specific aspects that can lead to the recruitment and use of child soldiers. It is through the further analysis of the specific area of operation that a commander can map out popular locations where the recruitment and abduction of child soldiers is prominent. This can occur anywhere on the battlefield to including where children live. However, this would require a significant armed force to abduct children.⁷⁷ In these villages, children are more susceptible to be recruited or abducted from centralized water sources, schools, internally displaced persons or refugee camps, orphanages, police stations, and prisons where children tend to be separated from family members or adults.⁷⁸ It is important for a commander to know where these “hotspots” are located, in addition to understanding the enemy threat.

These assessments are critical, because they help commanders identify the possibility of child soldiers within their area of operation. However, it is even more important, because it helps them understand the situation and context, surrounding child soldiers. During mission analysis and intelligence preparation of the battlefield, there is a “strong need to evaluate the situation of child combatants in context, giving due weight to history and circumstances.”⁷⁹ It is through an in-depth mission analysis, with additional focus on the variables listed above, that helps determine whether a child is a victim of forced recruitment, or has joined voluntarily. In the U.S. some children are tried and convicted as adults in the criminal justice system because of their voluntary actions. The same rationale can be used to say that not all child soldiers have been forced to participate in battle; it is a voluntary action.⁸⁰ There are numerous aspects that go into

⁷⁷ This is a technique that is used extensively by the Lord’s Resistance Army.

⁷⁸ Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, *Child Soldiers: A Handbook for Security Sector Actors*, 36–39.

⁷⁹ Rosen, *Armies of the Young*, 18.

⁸⁰ *Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children: Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, United Nations, General Assembly A/51/150 (1996), § 32.

deciphering whether or not a child has been forced to participate in battle or they are participating of their own free will. This determination it is not made lightly.

The analysis of an area of operation also helps a commander identify the enemy's center of gravity (COG), which can be described as a military's source of power, which provides its strength or will to fight.⁸¹ When dealing with child soldiers, the COG is considered the leadership's control over children.⁸² Areas that are identified as a significant hotspot that lead to the abduction of children can also be identified as COG. This understanding provides the ability to target the leadership or protect the area depending on the specific COG. Having this knowledge of the enemy organization, a unit can nominate targets to be placed on the target list, to be engaged using lethal or non-lethal means.

Following the identification of the possibility of child soldiers within a unit's area of operation, a commander must review and update the ROE as necessary. As a result of mission analysis of a significant identified threat and the presence of child soldiers, a commander, at any level, can request supplemental ROE or change the current ROE, to take child soldiers into consideration.⁸³ This update to the ROE should incorporate steps that are to be taken in order to reduce the possibility of lethally engaging child soldiers.⁸⁴ If the ROE covers child soldiers, it can reduce the self-doubt in a soldier's actions. Consequently, they will have the confidence, prior to and during deployment, to make the choice of whether or not it is appropriate to pull the trigger.

Following mission analysis and appropriately updating the ROE, child soldiers should be incorporated into training. The need to consider child soldiers during training events is critical in order to ensure that U.S. Army personnel understand how to react,

⁸¹ Department of the Army, *Terms and Military Symbols* (ADRP 1-02) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, December 2015), 1-28.

⁸² Singer, *Children at War*, 178.

⁸³ International and Operational Law Department, *Operational Law Handbook*, (Charlottesville, VA: The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School, 2015), 86. https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/operational-law-handbook_2015.pdf.

⁸⁴ The specific aspect of engagement of child soldier will be discussed further in the execution phase section of this thesis.

when and if they encounter child soldiers. The very simple fact of educating soldiers that humanitarian law applies to both adults as well as children is imperative. This informs and reminds Army units that international humanitarian law and the rules of proportionality apply to both children and traditional combatants.⁸⁵

Following these basic classes and lectures, which cover the subject of child soldiers, simple scenario-based examples and vignettes should be incorporated into training in order to discuss the moral and ethical dilemmas of interacting with child soldiers. If there is no one at the unit level comfortable with conducting this training, the United Nations has begun to develop training for units to receive, prior to deployment. This training includes modules for a train-the-trainer approach, online classes, and scenario-based vignettes.⁸⁶ This training is available through the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, which can be conducted at the unit or individual level.

Children can also be incorporated into training exercises at the CTC's in the same manner as they are incorporated into the SFQC. The children can participate with adult family members that are already role players when they are on holidays from school. This training is imperative and should be replicated throughout the force, in order to prepare members of the military for upcoming combat operations. In addition, it would support deploying soldiers if TRADOC issued clarified and refined guidance, concerning child role players, to better support units, in conducting such training.

If the use of child role players is not available through the CTC's, units must understand the need to replicate the operational environment, as realistically as they can during training, or attempt to find suitable training elsewhere. Currently, numerous companies are attempting to replicate the stress of the environment that combat brings. They do this by using a reflective bulletproof material that projects the image of a live role-player, in front of the soldiers. The individual soldier has live rounds during the

⁸⁵ Jenny Kuper, *Military Training and Children in Armed Conflict: Law, Policy and Practice* (Leiden, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2005), 23.

⁸⁶ Tanya Zayed and Svenja Vollmer, *E-Learning Child Soldiers and the Security Sector*, (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative and United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2014), http://www.childsoldiers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/E-Learning_Booklet_Web.pdf.

training scenario, and is able to feel the stress of firing live rounds at a “human target.”⁸⁷ This type of training can include reflections of children, enabling the soldier to understand and learn how to best handle that scenario, prior to deployment.

If these scenario-based training exercises, with role players, are unavailable, then at the very least, the military should provide training material or handbooks to soldiers that discuss facts and issues, in regard to child soldiers. These handbooks have been developed, published, and are available through UNITAR, but surprisingly the Army has not obtained or distributed this handbook to deploying soldiers.⁸⁸

Deploying units who fail to understand their operational environment, and are unable to implement in the field what they have learned in training, will most likely fail during their deployment. The simple need to identify and inform U.S. soldiers that there is a possibility that they will encounter child soldiers is imperative, because the first time soldiers encounter this scenario, should not be when they are on the battlefield about to take a child soldier’s life. If soldiers are put in this position without the proper training studies have shown that they will act purely on their emotions.⁸⁹ Acting on emotions can impair a soldier’s decision making, especially when executing combat operations.⁹⁰ These impaired decisions can lead to failure that can simply amount to the unsuccessful completion of a units specific mission, or worse, it can lead to U.S. soldiers losing their lives in combat.

⁸⁷ Matthew L. Schehl, “Marines Face Role Players’ Reflection during New Live-Fire Training,” Defense News, September 24, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/show-daily/modern-day-marine/2015/09/24/marines-live-fire-training/72738652/>.

⁸⁸ Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, *Child Soldiers: A Handbook for Security Sector Actors*.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁹⁰ Jim Blascovich and Christine R. Hartel, eds., *Human Behavior in Military Contexts* (Washington, DC: The National Academies, 2008), 55.

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III. EXECUTION PHASE

A. CURRENT MILITARY DOCTRINE RELATING TO THE EXECUTION PHASE

Army unit personnel need to understand how to deal with child soldiers, once they have deployed and are conducting operations. When confronted with the possibility of having to kill children, be it for the greater good, in order to protect themselves, or to protect others, the act itself still creates moral and ethical challenges for soldiers. This is the pressing moral dilemma: on the one hand, the child is a combatant, who presents a lethal threat; while on the other hand, he or she is merely a child. This dilemma counters American social and cultural norms regarding children.⁹¹ The dilemma is not limited to engaging children with lethal force, but in all aspects of interaction. The enemy has picked up on this, and it has been identified in Army doctrine, that women and children are being used to collect intelligence for the enemy. This is because the enemy knows that “Soldiers’ cultural bias can create the incorrect perception” that women and children do not pose a threat.⁹² The contradiction arises when a child soldier does pose a real physical threat on the battlefield.

Even though child soldiers can pose a lethal threat, some consider child soldiers as “non-responsible threats” or “excusable threats.”⁹³ Regardless of how one labels them, child soldiers present a danger to soldiers when they are engaged in conflict. While there may be a moral obligation for soldiers to place themselves at increased risk in order to ensure the safety of noncombatants, there is neither the necessity nor the moral obligation to do so if a child soldier poses a significant or immediate threat.. Deploying soldiers must be made to understand how to react and conduct themselves, in order to ensure that they return home. It is never an easy choice to kill another human being. However, in combat, it is even more problematic for a soldier to be faced with the need to kill a child,

⁹¹ Center for Law and Military Operations, *Legal Lessons Learned from Afghanistan and Iraq*, 76.

⁹² Department of the Army, *Urban Operations* (FM 3-06) (Washington DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, October 2006), 3-8.

⁹³ Jeff McMahan, *Killing in War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 200.

even in self-defense. While at times, and in certain circumstances, it might be appropriate to de-escalate the situation in an attempt to save a life, it is not required.⁹⁴ Soldiers always have an inherent right to self-defense, but conditions must be set. Perhaps different actions could be taken, in hopes that the situation does not progress to a level where there is the need to kill child soldiers.

Soldiers must understand how to balance between action and inaction when it comes to using deadly force against child soldiers. The military must use all available means to successfully complete a mission, neutralize the enemy, and reduce the possibility of collateral damage. The use of all available means has been identified on a limited basis within military doctrine. According to the U.S. Army manual for protecting civilians, certain “provisions,” as well as the “incorporation of nonlethal means” may be required, due to the possibility that child soldiers might be present on the battlefield.⁹⁵ This is the extent of explanation that is given about the consideration of engaging child soldiers. Conversely, the U.S. Army counterinsurgency manual speaks about children in general, identifying that soldiers should be cautious around children. This manual goes as far as to say that *all* children should be kept at arm’s length.⁹⁶ This illustrates the contradiction between specific United States Army manuals. One states certain provisions should be taken, because not all children are threats, while the other states that all children should remain at an arm’s distance. The contradiction identified above shows how the U.S. Army has conflicting points of view when it comes to interacting with children on the battlefield.

While conducting combat operations, the U.S. Army has developed TTPs to reduce collateral damage and non-combatant casualties. These include specific non-kinetic operations, kinetic operations, or a combination of the two. One of the primary non-kinetic operations conducted by the U.S. Army is the use of psychological operations (PSYOP). Army PSYOP has the “primary purpose of saving enemy, as well as friendly

⁹⁴ International and Operational Law Department, *Operational Law Handbook*, 84

⁹⁵ Department of the Army, *ADRP 3-07.6*, 3-8.

⁹⁶ Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, A-6.

lives,” through the use of radio, print or other forms of media.⁹⁷ Psychological Operations has been used extensively during the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and incorporates numerous themes. Through the history of these conflicts there have been nine major themes that have been used.⁹⁸ None of these themes addresses the issues of child soldiers, even though child soldiers have been identified as a significant problem. For example, a child soldier killed the first U.S. casualty in Afghanistan.⁹⁹ Even more recently, in early 2016, Taliban forces killed a celebrated child soldier who was supporting coalition forces.¹⁰⁰ The use of PSYOP should be used in conjunction with other operations, in order to ensure that all military operations are nested with a specific end state. When the need arises to analyze a specific target audience, this can be effectively utilized to target child soldiers.

In addition to the use of PSYOP, military units conducting ground operations developed specific TTPs to reduce collateral damage through the use of “tactical callouts.” A tactical callout is a form of military operations, where a unit cordons off a local target, and “calls out” the enemy to give up and surrender. The purpose of a tactical callout is to get the individuals within the target area to surrender, with minimal risk to friendly forces, as well as noncombatants. Tactical callouts have been used during current operations, conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan, and have been very successful in reducing friendly as well as enemy casualties.

The commander must identify that the target area is secure and isolated in order to ensure that the enemy forces do not have the ability to flee the objective. Some individuals believe that the U.S. military should leave an avenue of escape for units that

⁹⁷ Carnes Lord, “The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy,” in *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations, Rethinking the U.S. Approach*, ed. Carnes Lord and Frank Barnett (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1989), 23.

⁹⁸ Arturo Munoz, “U.S. Military Information Operations in Afghanistan: Effectiveness of Psychological Operations 2001–2010” RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2012, 32, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2012/RAND_MG1060.pdf.

⁹⁹ Singer, *Children at War*, 25.

¹⁰⁰ Mujib Mashal and Taimoor Shah, “Taliban Gun Down 10-Year-Old Militia Hero in Afghanistan,” *The New York Times*, February 2, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/03/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-child-soldiers.html?_r=0.

employ child soldiers, but this simply allows the enemy to engage U.S. forces at a later date; such a tactic only perpetuates the child soldier crisis.¹⁰¹

In conjunction with a callout, most units use escalation of force (EOF) measures, which are the “sequential actions that begin with nonlethal force measures, and may graduate to lethal measures to include warning, disabling, or deadly shots to defeat a threat and protect the force.”¹⁰² The use of EOF helps with the application of proportionality, and “refers to using lesser means of force, when such use is likely to achieve the desired effect.”¹⁰³ Even though EOF might be necessary to attempt to de-escalate the situation, EOF does not limit the right of self-defense, or the use of deadly force if necessary, in order to defend oneself from an imminent threat, hostile act, or hostile intent. As with a callout, EOF measures that encourage the enemy to disperse and/or retreat can be counter-productive, because it only delays the encounter with the enemy.¹⁰⁴

According to operational law, “when time and circumstances permit, soldiers should attempt to use lesser means of force to respond to a threat.”¹⁰⁵ One means of using a lesser means of force, is through the use of nonlethal weapons (NLW), which is defined specifically as a potential response to child soldiers.¹⁰⁶ The use of NLW should not be confused with the nonlethal means of targeting, such as PSYOP, as mentioned above.¹⁰⁷

The use of NLW can include the use of stun grenades, flash bang, 9-bangers, 12 gauge or 40mm point and area rounds, chemical irritants, or impact weapons. The use of chemical irritants or riot control agents, have been used within the United States by law enforcement personnel to disperse riots and could be used with the same effectiveness by

¹⁰¹ Singer, *Children at War*, 178.

¹⁰² Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Escalation of Force Handbook* (CALL 07-21) (Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2007), 1.

¹⁰³ Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 1-25.

¹⁰⁴ Randall Bagwell, “The Threat Assessment Process (TAP): The Evolution of Escalation of Force,” *The Army Lawyer*, *Department of the Army Pamphlet 27-50-419* (2008), 7.

¹⁰⁵ International and Operational Law Department, *Operational Law Handbook*, 89.

¹⁰⁶ Department of the Army, *ADTP 3-07.6*, 3-8.

¹⁰⁷ When using NLW, they are not a substitute for lethal force; they simply provide an additional element that can be used when applying EOF measures.

the U.S. Army when a unit encounters child soldiers.¹⁰⁸ It can be said that all necessary means should be available, including the use of NLW, in order to accomplish a mission. Primarily protecting U.S. service members and, if appropriate, the lives of enemy soldiers, to include child soldiers, is essential.

Through the use of PSYOP and NLW, U.S. soldiers may find themselves in control of detained child soldiers. There are significant numbers of child soldiers who are simply waiting for conflict to break out, so they can run away from the organization that has kidnapped them or is using them against their will.¹⁰⁹ When conducting combat operations, soldiers need to understand what to do if they capture or detain child soldiers. The issues surrounding the detainment of child soldiers are significant, and the U.S. Army has limited guidance surrounding these issues. According to military doctrine, child soldiers should be segregated from adult soldiers if they are detained.¹¹⁰ Army Judge Advocate Generals have provided guidance to units that have detained children by informing soldiers to use the *Convention on the Rights of a Child* (CRC) and *Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Convention* as a guide even though the United States is not a party to these documents. These lawyers recommended that the standards of treatment outlined in these documents can and should be “used as a guide for the treatment of children in U.S. custody.”¹¹¹

There are limited references within military doctrine concerning child soldiers when it comes to interacting with them on the battlefield during the conduct of operations—here referred to as the “Execution Phase.” One sentence, in a single manual, does not provide support to the U.S. soldiers who will deploy and face child soldiers. There are numerous recommendations that can be made in an attempt to combine the kinetic and non-kinetic operations, in order to reduce the possibility of killing child soldiers.

¹⁰⁸ The use of chemical irritants is outlined in Executive Order 11850, which prohibits the first use of riot control agents in war, except to save lives in a defensive capacity. The debate on whether or not they should be used for offensive measures is outside the scope of this research.

¹⁰⁹ Singer, *Children at War*, 172.

¹¹⁰ Department of the Army, *Stability* (FM 3-07) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, June 2014), 1-20.

¹¹¹ Center for Law and Military Operations, *Legal Lessons Learned from Afghanistan and Iraq*, 78.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EXECUTION PHASE

When conducting combat operations, different steps can and should be taken in an attempt to set conditions such that a unit will only have to engage child soldiers with deadly force as a last resort. If it is possible to save a child soldier's life, then it is necessary to attempt all available means to do so. The use of deadly force is appropriate after all other options have been exhausted.

The use of PSYOP can be very effective and it has been noted that former child soldiers "are widely considered by other child soldiers to be particularly trustworthy sources of information."¹¹² Since the Army currently does not have any policies, themes, or messages that consider child soldiers, I will next outline some potential messaging that can be used to effectively target all the aspects surrounding child soldiers. One of the most important aspects of PSYOP is the need to conduct a target audience analysis. There are three target audiences that should be addressed for PSYOP conducted in support of operations dealing with child soldiers.

The first audience is the enemy leadership that employs child soldiers. The message that should be used to target the leadership is one that informs them that they are breaking national and international laws, by violating International Humanitarian Law (IHL). They will be held accountable and will face legal ramifications, with the possibility of being tried for war crimes, in their use and abuse of children as child soldiers.

The second audience that should be targeted is the local population. The messaging should include refusal of support to a group's use of child soldiers, and reporting of groups, within the area, that are using child soldiers. Additionally, PSYOP can appeal to a society's local customs and norms, by identifying the lack of honor in using child soldiers to fight "adult wars."¹¹³ There is also the need to inform the local

¹¹² Whitman, Zayed and Conradi, *Child Soldiers: A Handbook for Security Sector Actors*, 56.

¹¹³ Peter W. Singer, "Western Militaries Confront Child Soldiers Threat," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 17, no. 1 (2005).

villages that they should accept former child soldiers back into their villages, for reintegration purposes.

The third and final audience that can be targeted through the use of PSYOP are the child soldiers themselves. The messaging themes should encourage them to stop fighting. This should include information about how they can demobilize, turn themselves in without fear of punishment, and be reintegrated into society.

In addition to PSYOP, lethal targeting of the leadership should be used. During the mission analysis, targets and centers of gravity can be identified as the leadership's control over the children.¹¹⁴ The targeting of the leadership personnel "enables coalition forces to pressure, leverage and desynchronize an enemy."¹¹⁵ This is even more true for units that employ child soldiers. If the leaders are taken out of the equation, the units employing child soldiers fall apart. As for specific leadership targeting, the U.S. has become extremely proficient at kill-capture missions within Iraq and Afghanistan. It has been identified that in approximately 80 percent of the raids targeting a specific individual, a single shot has never even been fired, and these operations are successful "a little over half the time."¹¹⁶ Even if these raids were not deemed successful because they failed to kill or capture their intended target, these operations still disrupt the enemy organization. These operations should be used to target the leadership of child soldiers, in an attempt to desynchronize the enemy forces. If an Army unit can effectively target the leaders, then the members of the unit will be less likely to engage child soldiers on the battlefield. The effective targeting of the leadership over child soldiers also shapes the battlefield for future operations.

If specific raids that target leaders are not effective, other conditions can be set to reduce the likelihood of taking the life of a child. During combat operations, when a unit is facing child soldiers, they need to understand and effectively use EOF measures, with

¹¹⁴ Singer, *Children at War*, 178.

¹¹⁵ John Hardy and Paul Lushenko, "The High Value of Targeting: A Conceptual Model for using HVT Against a Networked Enemy," *Defence Studies* 12, no. 3 (September 2012), 428.

¹¹⁶ Andrew Feickert, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress* (CRS Report No. RS21048) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service 2010), 8.

additional caveats. Traditional EOF has turned into something it is not: a threat assessment tool, and there is a significant difference between the two. Soldiers must be trained on a threat assessment process, in order to determine a potential threat, with the ability to use judgment-based use of force.

With traditional EOF procedures, a soldier has to start off at the bottom, with the least amount of force, and work his way up, only after the previous step has failed. Conversely, with judgment-based-force, soldiers can immediately “use a degree of force appropriate to defeat the degree of threat presented.”¹¹⁷ If soldiers are required to follow traditional EOF, it takes time the soldiers may not have when dealing with a potential threat. When facing a determined enemy, the price of failure or wasting precious time following EOF, can be severe. With judgment-based-force, soldiers can select the “appropriate level of force to counter the threat,” without having to follow certain steps, as with traditional EOF techniques.¹¹⁸

The threat assessment process and judgment-based-force application are valuable tools. They can be used to assess threats, protect friendly forces, reduce collateral damage and save noncombatants, including child soldiers that do not pose an immediate threat. If Army units encounter child soldiers, it is imperative that they understand the need to assess the level of threat the child soldier poses, and to use the appropriate amount of force, in order to attempt to de-escalate the situation, if possible.

In an attempt to de-escalate the situation, more consideration should be given to child soldiers, based on the threat that they pose. The amount of force used can differ from soldier to soldier, and at times be very objective depending on the situation.¹¹⁹ That is why the threat assessment process is so imperative. Soldiers must incorporate effectiveness of the threat, when considering hostile act or hostile intent, as it relates to a child soldier. The threat posed by a child soldier might be considerably different from the threat posed by an adult. Even though more consideration should be taken when dealing

¹¹⁷ Bagwell, *The Threat Assessment Process (TAP)*, 13.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Manual for Court Martials, United States Military, Rules for Court Martial 916 (2012).

with child soldiers, U.S. soldiers should not place themselves in undue danger, in order to make the determination to use deadly force.

If a unit is unable to de-escalate the situation, and a firefight breaks out, the use of snipers or designated marksmen should be used to effectively target the leadership during engagements. If the leader is effectively targeted during an operation, the entire unit has a greater potential of falling apart, which can happen within seconds of the leader being killed.¹²⁰ This can lead to numerous child soldiers being detained by U.S. Army units. The U.S. military should provide additional guidance in regard to the detention of child soldiers. This updated guidance should not simply refer to international law, which the United States is not party to, or which deploying soldiers have not been trained in. There are numerous manuals and training aspects that military units already know and can utilize, when it comes to dealing with child soldiers. The need to reference already known doctrine is imperative. It would give soldiers a base line of knowledge, prior to the development of new policy.

During initial entry and pre-deployment training, soldiers are taught about the five S's, as they relate to handling detainees or individuals under their control. These five S's are: segregate, search, silence, speed to the rear, and safeguard the entire time.¹²¹ U.S. soldiers should be trained to understand that special considerations, and even more care, must be applied, when implementing the five S's to children.

As discussed above, Army doctrine identifies there is a need to segregate the children from the adults, if they are detained. One of the primary reasons for this is that a child may be too scared or intimidated to answer questions, if he or she is in close proximity to an adult. Also, the adult soldiers may attempt to get the child soldiers to lie on their behalf and provide false answers to questions.¹²² After the child soldiers are segregated, they should be questioned so as to attempt to determine age. This can also

¹²⁰ Singer, *Children at War*, 172.

¹²¹ Department of the Army, *Human Intelligence Collector Operations* (FM 2-22.3) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, September 2006), D-2 - D-4.

¹²² Jean-Claude Legrand, "Lessons Learned from UNICEF Field Programmes for the Prevention of Recruitment, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Child Soldiers," (*New York: UNICEF*, 1999), 22.

present problems because not all societies keep track of birthdays. One of the best ways to determine age, if birthdays are unknown, is to ask indirect questions that can include: do you remember certain historical events? This documents another reason why pre-deployment mission analysis is important so that soldiers have a working knowledge of a country's history. Following questions about age, commanders and units should limit their questions, in order to obtain relevant information of tactical value. Questions about past operations that a child soldier may have been forced to conduct could only intimidate or alienate them.

There have been cases where children have not been searched solely because they were children.¹²³ This should not be the case; it is an issue that needs to be addressed by a unit's commander and understood by the soldiers within a unit. This simple act of understanding can potentially save the lives of U.S. soldiers as well as a life of a child acting against his or her will to carry out violence on behalf of a violent group.

The entire time child soldiers are under the control of an Army unit they must be safeguarded. Part of safeguarding is the need to provide medical care. Unit medics need to be trained in and have a basic understanding of pediatric medicine. The knowledge of pediatric medicine can pay off in numerous areas, not limited to caring for child soldiers, once detained. This knowledge can also pay off when conducting operations where there is a need to "win the hearts and minds" of a local population. The need for an understanding of pediatric medicine is only compounded when conducting operations, where child soldiers are present. Unit medics need to be prepared to provide support and treatment for the primary injuries that affect child soldiers. These may include: loss of a limb, loss of eyesight, loss of hearing, and malnutrition.¹²⁴

Finally, child soldiers need to be evacuated, "speed to the rear," and handed over to the appropriate agency. The timeline for evacuation can depend on the country, region, or operational environment. Situation permitting, there should be no more than 48 hours

¹²³ Singer, *Children at War*, 167.

¹²⁴ Legrand, *Lessons Learned from UNICEF Field Programmes for the Prevention of Recruitment, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Child Soldiers*, 22.

from capture until a child soldier is turned over to the proper authorities.¹²⁵ In some cases or countries, such as in the Philippines, children captured are to be turned over in less than 24 hours.¹²⁶ The proper authorities differ, depending on the region, country, or the status of forces agreement that a unit falls under. These authorities can range from host nation government, to nongovernment organizations (NGOs), to even the U.S. Army if they pose a significant threat. This needs to be identified prior to Army units detaining child soldiers.

Throughout the execution phase, commanders and U.S. soldiers must understand how to deal with child soldiers. Whether it an Army unit needs to engage child soldiers with lethal force or detain them if necessary, soldiers must be prepared. Child soldiers who are fighting against their will are likely to flee once the fighting begins. This is important to note because soldiers should not impulsively attack and kill children. Conversely, U.S. soldiers should be prepared to take a child soldier's life, when absolutely necessary. As a result, the Army unit may have low morale and "undermine a unit's cohesion and combat effectiveness."¹²⁷ If soldiers are effectively trained in this area, and are confident that they exhausted all other options, but had to use lethal force as a last resort, then these effects on the unit could be lessened. Soldiers need to possess sound judgment when making decisions in combat, which is based on "personal values [reinforced] in training, and guided by commander's intent."¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Legrand, *Lessons Learned from UNICEF Field Programmes for the Prevention of Recruitment, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Child Soldiers*, 23.

¹²⁶ Singer, *Children at War*, 179.

¹²⁷ Singer, *Western Militaries Confront Child Soldiers Threat*, 18–24.

¹²⁸ Bagwell, *The Threat Assessment Process*, 14.

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IV. STABILIZATION PHASE

A. CURRENT MILITARY DOCTRINE RELATING TO THE STABILIZATION PHASE

Following combat operations, units move into the stabilization phase, which is most important because it provides the ability for a unit to transition and withdraw from an area of operation. The previous two phases discussed primarily dealt with tactical level considerations that commanders can consider when they are confronted with the issues of child soldiers. The stabilization phase is more focused on the operational and strategic levels because it is not the responsibility of a single commander to transition or withdraw his or her unit from an area of operation. This phase is also extremely complex, with the addition of host nations forces and numerous civilian agencies, to include NGOs, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and organizations from the United Nations. U.S. soldiers need to understand how to manage all these assets in order to ensure that an area is effectively transitioned to host nation forces. An example of the complexity and the number of agencies that can potentially be involved was shown during the 2001 United Nations Special Session on children to which over 3,000 different NGO's were invited.¹²⁹

This significant number of NGO's clarifies the importance of the numerous issues surrounding child soldiers. One of the most significant challenges concerning child soldiers post conflict is their reintegration back into society. The process of reintegration is important because child soldiers potentially have nowhere to go. The reason for this is that numerous child soldiers are forced to kill family members when they are abducted from their villages, in an attempt to alienate them from being able to return home.¹³⁰ The reintegration process is outlined in Article 39 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* but is not limited to child soldiers. This article also identifies that the reintegration

¹²⁹ Mark Ensalaco and Linda C. Majka, eds., *Children's Human Rights: Progress and Challenges for Children Worldwide* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 115.

¹³⁰ Will Storr, "Kony's Child Soldiers: 'When You Kill for the First Time, You Change'," *The Telegraph*, February 12 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/uganda/10621792/Konys-child-soldiers-When-you-kill-for-the-first-time-you-change.html>.

process is the same for all children who are affected by armed conflict, exploitation, or abuse. The reintegration process for child soldiers is extremely important. Although it takes considerable time and resources, it helps to “ensure that the cycles of violence are not perpetuated.”¹³¹

Since there are numerous NGOs that are attempting to improve the lives of child soldiers, they will inevitably cross paths with U.S. Army units on the ground. When these paths cross, coordination is key. Virtually all NGO’s interact with the Army in some way, but the extent of cooperation varies considerably.¹³² This cooperation is necessary to support mission accomplishment, as outlined in the Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, “integrated civilian and military efforts are essential to the conduct of successful stability operations.”¹³³ The difficulty lies in the fact that each NGO is unique. “No two have exactly the same objectives, missions, operating procedures, or capacities.”¹³⁴

One way to simplify this friction is for unit headquarters to operate with a Civil Affairs (CA) team. “CA elements can liaise, coordinate, and synchronize efforts with appropriate U.S. Government, HN [Host Nation], intergovernmental [IGO], nongovernmental [NGO], and international organizations, in order to leverage all available resources and ensure unity of effort.”¹³⁵ This can be very effective and necessary when dealing with numerous agencies. In addition to NGOs, CA teams also coordinate extensively with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID has worked previously on providing support to child soldiers and, in

¹³¹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Child and Armed Conflict, “Release and Reintegration,” United Nations, Accessed on January 20, 2016, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/our-work/release-and-reintegration/>.

¹³² U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Interorganizational Coordination during Joint Operations* (JP 3–08) (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, June 2011), IV-12.

¹³³ Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, *Stability Operations*, DoD Directive 3000.5 (Washington, DC: Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, 2009).

¹³⁴ Lynn Lawry and Grey Frandsen, *Guide to Nongovernmental Organizations for the Military: A Primer for the Military about Private, Voluntary, and Nongovernmental Organizations Operating in Humanitarian Emergencies Globally*, (International Health Division, Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine, Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences and U.S. Department of Defense, 2009) 7, <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/ngo-guide.pdf>.

¹³⁵ Department of the Army, *Special Operations* (ADRP 3–05) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, August 2012), 3–14.

some instances, USAID has been one of the largest providers of support.¹³⁶ In addition to specifically providing support to child soldiers, USAID can act as a “broker” between the U.S. Army and all the different NGOs, if there is a specific need.¹³⁷

Following combat operations, when a unit is getting ready to withdraw and transition they compile an extensive list of lessons learned. These lessons learned can be provided to other units that are preparing to deploy. The Army has now identified this as “knowledge management,” which can be defined as connecting people with certain information to people who need that information. The Army developed knowledge management as a discipline in 2003, and it has been expanded since then. There are now knowledge management sections at the Brigade level, all the way through theater headquarters.¹³⁸ The Army knowledge management provides ways to efficiently share knowledge, thus enabling learning and understanding throughout various organizations. However, there is nothing specific in knowledge management and sharing, as it relates to child soldiers.

There is a significant lack of doctrine as it relates to child soldiers post conflict. Army units are responsible for the transition and withdrawal from an area of operation, and it is imperative for these units to work closely with other agencies to hand over child soldiers that need to be reintegrated into society. There are many potential recommendations that can be made to support soldiers, as well as the Army as a whole, as it relates to child soldiers post conflict.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STABILIZATION PHASE

The complexity of the stabilization phase has numerous considerations that must be taken into account, when it comes to child soldiers. The need for unity of effort with all agencies communicating is paramount. The use of a CA team to coordinate with

¹³⁶ Jane A. Morse, “Programs Help Child Soldiers Return Home: With Help, Young Victims of War can Reintegrate into Society,” U.S. State Department, February 11, 2008, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2008/02/20080201170846ajesrom0.9215052.html#axzz47pKP0zzC>.

¹³⁷ Lawry and Frandsen, *Guide to Nongovernmental Organizations for the Military*, 198.

¹³⁸ Department of the Army, *Techniques for Effective Knowledge Management* (ADTP 6–01.1) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Publishing Directorate, March 2015), 9.

NGO's throughout a country is essential. If a team is not attached to a deploying headquarters, a CA team should be requested.

If a CA team or USAID is unavailable to provide assistance, the command level headquarters needs to identify what, if any, UN bodies are operating within the operational area. Two different United Nations bodies provide assistance with the deconfliction between the military and other agencies. The first one is the United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord), which was established to support "essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies."¹³⁹ The second UN body provides support for children affected by war and has provided significant support to child soldiers. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) "takes the lead in promoting and implementing programs aimed at the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers."¹⁴⁰ UNICEF has, on numerous occasions, overseen NGOs and IGOs, within an affected area that have supported child soldiers.¹⁴¹

Another possibility which can facilitate coordination, at the strategic level, is for the United States to establish a NGO military contact group (NMCG). A NMWG was established in the United Kingdom (UK) and is chaired by the British Red Cross. The British NMCG brings together representatives from the UK's Ministry of Defense, UK's Department for International Development, and various British NGOs, in order to deconflict operations and gain awareness and recognition of other agencies' positions and concerns.¹⁴² This is a perfect model for the United States to emulate in order to support ground forces that interact with NGO's. The development of a NMCG by the U.S. would

¹³⁹ United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination, "Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination," January 1, 2006, [https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/v.2.%20website%20overview%20tab%20link%201%20United%20Nations%20Humanitarian%20Civil-Military%20coordination%20\(UN-CMCoord\).pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/v.2.%20website%20overview%20tab%20link%201%20United%20Nations%20Humanitarian%20Civil-Military%20coordination%20(UN-CMCoord).pdf).

¹⁴⁰ Legrand, *Lessons Learned from UNICEF Field Programmes for the Prevention of Recruitment, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Child Soldiers*, 9.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Candace Karp, "Leading by Example: Australia's Reconstruction Task Force and the NGO Civil-Military Relationship in Afghanistan," *Security Challenges* 2, no. 3 (2006), 4.

be profound for future operations that incorporate numerous agencies, all working together for the same end state.

One very significant factor that Army doctrine does not mention is the need for the U.S. Army to consider the effects of negative messaging, from enemy forces on the battlefield. Following an engagement with child soldiers in which children were killed, negative messaging “could possibly undermine the strategic object” of the operation.¹⁴³ Following combat operations where child soldiers were engaged, the information operation (IO) themes and messages should include: deadly force was used as a last resort; the unit attempted to do everything in its power to prevent child soldier casualties; if children are taken into custody, they are being treated in accordance with international law; and the blame for the child soldier casualties should be placed on the groups that recruited them.¹⁴⁴

Just as there is a significant need for specific messaging following engagements with child soldiers, so too there needs to be specialized reporting across the Army. This reporting needs to be provided as soon as possible to the chain of command, in order for them to react accordingly. The chain of command needs to be prepared for negative blowback from any number of different agencies, and they can also begin to prepare for the transfer of child soldiers away from the unit if needed.

This specialized reporting can also provide important information during the compiling of lessons learned conducted following combat operations. The information, obtained as lessons learned, needs to be annotated in a standardized format and disseminated to other units, whether in the operational area or not. This helps soldiers, as well as organizations, and the Army as a whole, learn and adapt to the current operational

¹⁴³ Tor Arne Bernsten and Bard Maeland, “The Agency of Child Soldiers, Rethinking the Principles of Discrimination,” in *Routledge Handbook of Ethics and War: Just War Theory in the 21st Century*, eds. Fritz Allhoff, Nicholas G. Evans and Adam Henschke (New York: Routledge, 2013), 281.

¹⁴⁴ Research and Technology Organization, *Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force* (AC/323 (HFM-159)TP/222), (Netherlands: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2011), 6–3. <https://www.cso.nato.int/pubs/rdp.asp?RDP=RTO-TM-HFM-159>.

environment. It also helps commanders gain situational awareness, in order to improve their ability to make decisions.¹⁴⁵

These are just a few recommendations of what can be implemented, following combat operations. In dealing with child soldiers post-conflict, unity of efforts between NGOs, IGOs, the Army, as well as anyone else operating within the AO, is paramount. The large number of NGOs that support children throughout the world, in one form or another, shows how important it is to have a plan for communication and deconfliction. Effective communication is imperative to ensure that child soldiers are handed over to the proper agencies and to facilitate their reintegration into society. Additionally, if individuals as well as units conduct an operation, and they do not learn from their mistakes, and/or do not inform other units of possible complications, then the desired outcomes may be forfeited. “Capturing lessons learned is important, but learning the right lessons is paramount.”¹⁴⁶ The relationships built, communication established, and information gained, must be recorded and disseminated, in order to facilitate future planning, training and execution of operations, in support of child soldiers.

¹⁴⁵ Department of the Army, *ADTP 6-01.1*, 110.

¹⁴⁶ Hardy and Lushenko, *The High Value of Targeting*, 429.

V. CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented numerous issues and shortcomings surrounding the U.S. military's doctrine and policy as it regards child soldiers. The military has identified the problem through lessons learned and has even noted the problem in doctrine, but has failed to implement changes that are necessary in order to support U.S. soldiers when they deploy. It has been defined on numerous occasions that the U.S. Army currently uses documents and international treaties that the U.S. is not party to, in order to provide guidance to Army units about how to conduct themselves when facing child soldiers.¹⁴⁷ These need to be codified, implemented, and distributed to the entire force. This will ensure that before a deployment, soldiers fully understand the operational environment and the need to take child soldiers into consideration. The need for this refined guidance is imperative to facilitate the success of future operations.

The definitive action of educating and training soldiers for when they may possibly have to use deadly force against child soldiers on the battlefield, will surely make a significant difference. U.S. soldiers must be prepared, before they are faced with an imperative to pull the trigger and kill a child who poses a threat. Even though it might be morally and legally justified for a soldier to take the life of a child, it does not make the decision any easier.

The issues surrounding child soldiers are vast and I have simply touched on and identified gaps in current Army policy that should be reviewed and possibly updated with some of the recommendations presented. This study was not able to solve all problems and there are numerous other areas that could be further explored as it relates to the Army's interaction with child soldiers. For example, further research could be conducted on the Army's role to prevent child soldiers while conducting operations, the Army's role during the reintegration process of child soldiers, and the implications for U.S. units that work with partner forces that employ child soldiers. Furthermore, the possible indirect

¹⁴⁷ The United States is not a party to the CRC or Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Convention, but has used these documents to govern the treatment of child soldiers. See the Execution Phase Section of this thesis.

recruitment of children on the battlefield should be examined in order to identify if child soldiers are considered liable targets if they are simply providing atmospheric support to Army units on the ground.

The issues that surround the use of child soldiers are not new, and they will continue to be relevant into the foreseeable future. U.S. service members are conducting current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, which are targeting insurgent commanders, many of whom were once child soldiers.¹⁴⁸ The imperative to fully examine this issue, and implement concrete direction, fuels the hope for deterring future children from becoming combatants. Above all else, children are our future, and their protection should be a top priority.

¹⁴⁸ Achvarina and Reich, *No Place to Hide*, 127.

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