IPB for Counterinsurgency

By 2LT Kimberly Groves January 2008

Throughout the course of military history, intelligence has had to adapt to changes in the methodology of warfare. The intelligence cycle, with all of its analytical tools, informs the friendly commander of the course of a battle and potentially, the outcome of a war. With changes in tactics and settings, intelligence tools should be updated and revised in order to produce maximum effects during different kinds of conflict. The Army adopted the Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) process in order to organize intelligence tools and ensure that all aspects of warfare are analyzed and contingencies examined. FM 34-130 provides tools to be used by analysts that prepare intelligence for aspects of the battlefield to include terrain, weather, enemy capabilities and order of battle. These are basic tools that are crucial to warfare of any type. However, with different kinds of warfare, there are other intelligence requirements that can change the outcome of battle that are not always included in traditional IPB. Jamison Medby and Russell Glenn produced Street *Smart: An Urban Approach to IPB*, outlining updates and improvements to the IPB process that compensate for the aspects of urban combat that complicate the battlefield beyond the reaches of traditional IPB[1]. This developed into FM 3-06, which now covers these changes, to include analysis of a city's layout, streets, building structures, and demographics. However, the warfare that the US is involved in today is more complicated than urban combat. It is urban combat with counterinsurgency (COIN). The characteristics of COIN are unique; IPB should again be revised in order to adapt to these elements.

COIN's Attributes

Counterinsurgency is arguably the most complicated form of warfare for a military like that of the US: one that dominates the conventional battlefield with its weapons and technology. Historically, large conventional militaries have had this problem; the French and Americans both in Vietnam, Israel with the Palestinians, and the British in Malaya all struggled through prolonged insurgencies. In Iraq, the US is facing a complicated insurgency comprised of multiple groups, each with very different characteristics. Counterinsurgency must be fought in a different way than conventional warfare because

it has different objectives and parameters. IPB for COIN must be different than traditional IPB or Urban IPB because COIN can be in either setting; it is the nature of insurgency, not the location, that dictates a need for different analytical tools. COIN is different because it is inherently political and intertwined with a population's attitudes and beliefs. These elements at the forefront of combat change the way that a military operates: "[a]t the foundation of counterinsurgency is the salience of the political dimension—in doctrine, planning, implementation, and, most importantly, operational coordination." In order to achieve success in counterinsurgency, a military must adapt its tactics to the insurgency it is fighting. Ignorance of the insurgency's goals, advantages, and the impact of the local population on the outcome of war will only contribute to the failures and stagnation of the COIN forces. While politics is always related to war, in counterinsurgency they are intertwined to such an extent that some of the most critical victories and failures in counterinsurgency are not military ones, they are political. David Galula, author of *Counterinsrugeny: Theory and Practice* expands on this element of counterinsurgency and goes far enough to say that unlike other kinds of warfare, counterinsurgency is 20% military and 80% political[2]. If the human dimension- the wants and needs, opinions, and perceptions of a population are so critical to operations in counterinsurgency, the intelligence community must adapt and integrate this dimension into the analytical process. IPB must be revised once again, this time to include the political and social elements of COIN.

REVISING IPB

IPB at a battalion level is the core of intelligence used on the battlefield. Intergrating intelligence and operations pushes a battalion forward and sets the momentum for the rest of the conflict. Looking at IPB at this level, how it works in a battalion setting, gives the best picture of how it should be revised. A Battalion sized Area of Operations (AO) in Iraq, for example, can be comprised of Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurd, all with different tribal backgrounds and political opinions that facilitate continued violence: "the primary factor for the persistence of tension and violence [is] the brittleness of Iraqi national identity." (Dawisha, 553). This complicated setting has been challenging the US military for years; it is necessary to take the lessons we have learned so far and integrate them into visible tools that will make it easier for our conventional military to fight a political war. No progress can be made against an insurgency if the

mass base that it lives in does not support the counterinsurgent. Therefore, there must be tools that give a BN Commander a deep understanding of the local population and how it factors into the fight. The questions that will contribute to this understanding are already being asked by the Psychological Operations (PSYOP) community, they just are not integrated into the intelligence understanding of an AO. PSYOP is conducted based on tools that lead to an understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of a population, as well as their vulnerabilities and perceptions, all gathered in order to exploit and manipulate a target audience to the benefit of the mission. If the same information was collected and used by a BN's S2 in order to understand the workings of an AO, recommend operations that could give the US a political advantage over the insurgency, and prevent the mistakes that push a population to support the insurgency, then the US would have gained significant ground in Iraq. FM 3-05.30, the field manual for psychological operations, outlines the important characteristics of a population that we now see are critical to intelligence in counterinsurgency. The ideal solution to the intelligence problem would be to integrate PSYOP into every S2 shop and have a trained asset who understands the population be part of the intelligence and operations planning. However, the PSYOP community is very small and does not have the resources or numbers to accomplish this. Instead, I have adapted the tools from PSYOP's format into analytical tools that could easily be added to IPB's toolset.. By asking the questions PSYOP developed, but with a goal of understanding and not exploiting, IPB can be more effective in COIN.

The Tools

The first and possibly the most critical aspect of understanding a population is gaining a knowledge of their history and the events that have shaped their lives. Therefore, it seems impossible that IPB could be effective if it has no tool that provides this knowledge. There must be a Context Assesment, a tool that outlines the events and themes that influenced a population in the last few generations. The example below shows a Context Assessment for Iraq, though it will be more effective when used at a more local level. For example, New Orlean's context assessment and its experiences with Hurricane Katrina is vastly different from Detroit and its loss of manufacturing jobs or California with its success in the information technology field. Understanding an AO's demographics is not sufficient unless the commander also has an understanding of what this local population has experienced.

The next tool that will enhance the effectiveness of IPB is an assessment of the value sets of a local population. Just as terrain and weather are critical to understanding the battlefield, it is necessary to be familiar with local values. For example, some cultures value family over status, others are the opposite; some cultures value possesions as a status symbol while others value the local community. For the purposes of an analyst using IPB tools, a matrix that facilitates this understanding will be most useful. The analyst will have the ability to list which values are apparent in an AO, explain how it factors in, provide examples of how this value manifests itself, and consider external influences that may effect how the target population responds to these values.

Another characteristic of an AO that is a key asset in COIN is knowledge of a population's vulnerabilities. PSYOP lists these vulnerabilities under three categories: motives, psychographics, and demographics. Motives include those things that will get people to act, like a need for water, electricity, or employment. Psychographics are more emotion-based, to include the things people fear, hate, love or are frustrated with in their community. Demographics are details about a population like average age, religion, literacy rate, etc. Although demographics are already part of IPB, including this more flexible and applicable category in a format that draws connections about themes in a population is more effective for an analyst than the traditional pie charts and overlays of Urban IPB.

Finally, it is critical that we include a tool in COIN IPB that addresses the perceptions of the target population. If COIN is a political fight, we can not win the "hearts and minds" without attempting to understand how the local population as well as the insurgents perceive us, our actions, and each other. A perceptions matrix will allow an analyst to conceptualize the important parts of what they might already know; as a BN

remains in an AO, over time they will become more familiar with these perceptions but it may never be clearly outlined so that they respond or act upon them. Adding this tool to IPB will facilitate this process.

Conclusions

King Faisal said of his country in its earliest days that in Iraq, despite his efforts, there were "no Iraqi people but unimaginable masses of human beings, devoid of any patriotic idea, imbued with religious traditions and absurdities, connected by no common tie, giving ear to evil, prone to anarchy, and perpetually ready to rise against any government whatever" [3]If the US is to overcome the insurgency in Iraq, we must be equipped with the tools that will help us to understand how, why and which characteristics of the population and the insurgency are a challenge or a benefit to us. As we fight a major counterinsurgency battle, our analytical tools must be updated in order to reconcile the aspects of the battlefield that are human or political in nature with the rest of the IPB process.

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[1] Medby, Jamison Jo and Rusell W. Glenn. 2002. Street Smart: Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield for Urban Operations. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation
[2] Galula, David. 1964. Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice. London: Pragaer Security International

[3] Dawisha, Adeed. Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair.

http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/2005/RAND_OP127.pdf