

# **“Using Host Nation Advisors to defeat Modern Insurgency”**

By 2LT Neal Nisargand August 2008

As the US military today wages counter-insurgency against enemies within Iraq and Afghanistan, some political commentators believe that the US lacks experience in fighting an insurgency. Due to the Cold War against the Soviet Union, the US shifted much of its military strategy and tactics to fighting conventional wars. These commentators are right to argue that the US has to make a tough transition from conventional warfare between large armies to guerilla warfare against insurgents. Insurgents create unique difficulties by avoiding head-to-head conflict. Instead, they customize their tactics to exploiting US military strengths such as size and technology. However, most Americans forget that the US experienced insurgencies throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and managed to defeat them. The US Army waged wars against Native American tribes including an important war against the Apache Indians. The Apache Wars demonstrate the importance of understanding the insurgents’ cultural mindset and how it manifests itself in their tactics. US forces at the time used Apache scouts to better understand the enemy Apache, and US forces today should again use cultural advisors to help defeat current insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Prior to American arrival in Apache lands, the Apaches first fought with the Spanish and then with the Mexicans. Apache raids against the states of Sonora and Chihuahua were so successful that northern Mexico came to be known as the “unpopulated land”.<sup>1</sup> The US interactions with the Apache Indians occurred as a result of the Mexican American War. The War concluded with the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 that

Clearly, the US Army needs to continue to study past counter-insurgencies such as the Apache Wars to glean lessons learned from the past. While the Apache Wars occurred more than 100 years ago, they remain applicable. They show that highly technological means such as howitzers or air support are not always useful in defeating an insurgency. Instead, the military should understand how the enemy fights and reinvent tactics to fight him asymmetrically. The best way to accomplish this is to understand the interests of the local population and the insurgent forces. General Crook used Apache scouts to gain cultural understanding about the Apaches. To win against insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, US forces must help the local government win the support of the general population. They must convince the local population to separate itself from the insurgent forces. By utilizing host nation cultural advisors, the US Army can educate commanders and staffs to plan operations that take into account how the local population will react and how US forces can win their support. The more US forces understand the local population, the better success they will achieve in defeating insurgencies.

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1. Worcester, Donald E. *The Apaches: Eagles of the Southwest*. (Norman, OK: University

of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 41.

2. Worcester, 50.

3. Stewart, Jacque J. US Government and Apache Indians, 1871-1876: A Case Study in Counter-Insurgency. (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: US Army and General Staff College, 1993), 33.

4. Stewart, 46.

5. Stewart, 113.

6. Siegrist, Jeremy T. "Apache Wars: A Constabulary Perspective." Combined Army Research Library. 26 May 2005. 16 July 2008. <[http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p4013coll3&CISOPTR=372](http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p4013coll3&CISOPTR=372)> 59.

7. Sixbey, Mark. "Training the Iraqi Army." Marine Corps News Service. 26 March 2006. 16 July 2008. <<http://usmilitary.about.com/od/terrorism/a/iraqtraining.htm>>

Once Crook realized that he could recruit friendly Apaches as scouts, he used these scouts to better understand how the enemy Apaches would react to US maneuvers. He then attached Apache scouts to each of his elements. The Apache scouts knew the enemy tactics and their weaknesses. Crook conducted a winter campaign against the Apaches which exploited the fact that the Apaches had to live off of the land.<sup>5</sup> The Apaches could not re-supply themselves during the season when food was least available. With his Apache scouts and more mobile troops, Crook could then pursue the enemy Apache at night and attack them in their previously secure hiding places. Crook's campaign caused the Apaches to settle in the US designated reservations.

During the Apache Wars, General Crook skillfully used Apache scouts that held intimate knowledge of the enemy Apache tactics.<sup>6</sup> Crook did not have large numbers of Apaches favorable to the US cause so he had to use employ the Apaches he had to provide intelligence. In the current Iraq conflict, the US has an Iraqi Army counterpart and a civilian population both capable of gathering intelligence as well as taking action. The US Army must remember to rely on local forces to fight insurgents rather than attempting to fight with only the US's military might. When the Iraqi military takes the lead, an important outcome will occur. Just as the Apache scouts knew their enemy, the Iraqis will know "the traits and characteristics of the population" which allows them to anticipate insurgent actions.<sup>7</sup> The Army has already begun to create Military Transition

Teams (MTTs) to train and supplement Iraqi Army units. MTTs enable the Iraqi Army to