

1LT Brandon Baila
MIBOLC 09-001
16 March 2009

Consequence Management in COIN

“The contemporary operating environment often throws soldiers into situations where they must quickly establish working relationships with complete strangers: soldiers from other tactical units, law enforcement personnel from federal agencies, and relief coordinators from nongovernmental organizations.”¹

Although the quote above by Colonel Christopher R. Paparone, U.S. Army, Retired, may seem obvious, it highlights the coordination and interaction between soldiers and different organizations that is necessary in the contemporary operating environment in order to be successful. More than ever, Army leaders are being challenged to fulfill a variety of duties as the United States conducts counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in the global war on terrorism and prepares for future conflict. One of these obligations, the role of a mediator and peacemaker, is of utmost importance in winning the hearts and minds of the local populace and completing the mission in a COIN operational setting. Success in a COIN environment is especially true as the U.S. military looks forward into the future and sees no other military force capable of defeating them in conventional combat, as demonstrated in Operation Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, and the conventional phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This idea of the U.S. as the only “hyper power”, called fourth generation warfare (4GW), was first defined in 1989 by a team of American analysts who used it to describe warfare’s return to a decentralized form.² This concept further concludes that an insurgent movement can overcome a superpower by defeating its political leadership and dominating the information environment where popular support and national will are the

center of gravity.³ In such instances, the enemy is often immune to our technological advantages as they blend into the local population and leverage the nature of the information age against us in an attempt to gain legitimacy and win popular support from the mass base.

While COIN operations may differ regionally because of distinct environments, ideologies, objectives, and cultural variations, maintaining legitimacy, governance, and popular support continue to be a resounding objective of Coalition Forces (CF) in a COIN.⁴ However, even when all of these conditions are met by the U.S. and CF, unavoidable events that result in collateral damage to civilians and sacred buildings take place while combating the enemy in a complex and obscure environment. It is the role of the Army leader to take these circumstances into consideration, and plan for them ahead of time through exercises and training in consequence management (CM). However, when these unexpected events are not anticipated in a COIN environment, they often result in an insurgent-led Information Operations (IO) effort where the enemy attempts to exploit these unintended consequences, gain support from the local populace and create a negative perception of U.S. and CF. David Galula explained this concept explicitly in his 1964 book *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* when he wrote: "The first basic need for an insurgent who aims at more than simply making trouble is an attractive cause, particularly in view of the risks involved and in view of the fact that the early supporters and the active supporters-not necessarily the same persons-have to be recruited by persuasion."⁵ In a 4GW conflict where both sides' primary objective is to sway popular support, the need for CM is absolutely necessary to maintain legitimacy and stability with the host nation.

Identifying the Problem

In 1995, the term “consequence management” was first introduced into the national security lexicon in an attempt to establish how the United States would respond to terrorists employing weapons of mass destruction and how these consequences would be managed.⁶ Defined in Field Manual 3-11.21, *Multiservice Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Consequence Management Operations*, CM are the actions taken to maintain or restore essential services and manage and mitigate problems resulting from disasters and catastrophes, including natural, manmade, or terrorist incidents.⁷ While the United States government and military has addressed CM domestically through coordination among local, regional, national and international assets when unintended consequences take place, they have failed to provide guidance regarding the actions that should be followed after such an event outside the United States. Whereas CM operates on a large-scale in response to catastrophic events domestically, it also has the potential to help manage smaller-scale incidents in a COIN environment abroad where the short and long-term physical, socio-economic, and psychological effects can have detrimental second and third order effects to the U.S. and CF initiative. If the U.S. Army were to implement a pre-determined set of actions, or battle drill, into Doctrine and Training Publications in response to unintended consequences in a COIN environment, they will have a much better chance of winning over the mass base in a 4GW where IO are vital to overall mission success.

Learning the Hard Way

Task Force 4-73 Cavalry, 4th Brigade Combat Team of the 82nd Airborne Division experienced unintended consequences during their last deployment in the

Afghanistan area of operations. Several events, such as the death of an Afghan National Security Forces local who unsuccessfully attempted to disarm unexploded ordnance and the accidental wounding of an Afghan civilian by a ricocheted warning shot, highlighted the need for CM within the COIN fight.⁸ Subsequently, Task Force 4-73 Cavalry, 4th Brigade Combat Team of the 82nd Airborne Division developed tactics, techniques and procedures to “maintain local stability, legitimize local governance, and isolate the insurgents from their cause and support.”⁹ The lessons learned and developed by TF 4-73 CAV from after-action reviews were disseminated throughout Combined Joint Task Force-82 as tools for CM.¹⁰

Using hindsight, it is obvious to see that CM is more than just a positive IO message to the local populace; it is a process that must be integrated holistically into all operations in a foreign environment. In particular, CM must be used to integrate and synchronize internal, external, local security and local governance actions to help prevent coordination problems when unplanned events do take place. Internally, all sections of the staff must synchronize their efforts within the battalion. Externally, the battalion must communicate at all times with higher headquarters, provincial reconstruction teams, military transition teams and sister units. Additionally, CM seeks to incorporate local security of the host nation and local governance (governors and tribal leaders) into the process.

Developing a Solution

The mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available and civil considerations (METT-TC) should always dictate the necessary course of action to be taken in an organization's operational environment. The battle drill below

(of a wounded noncombatant) created by Major Ernest Litynski for a Cavalry Squadron, is a template for CM that can be used as a reference in future COIN operations.¹¹ This schematic provides a visual description of the information flows and action that Major Litynski described in more detail in his accompanying paper.



