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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS:
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
&
CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE FOR
STABILITY OPERATIONS

(b)(6)

1 JUNE 2007

Scitor Corporation

Strategic Analysis & Assessments

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS:
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
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STABILITY OPERATIONS

FINAL REPORT

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ITS EFFECTS ON INNOVATION

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Strategic Analysis & Assessments

US Marine Corps Organizational Culture and

Its Effects on Innovation

<u>Introduction</u>

In recent years, the U.S. military has faced several new organizational challenges. It has assumed responsibility for conducting new missions, such as stability operations, and for performing new tasks, such as collecting, analyzing, and disseminating cultural intelligence. Simultaneously, the military services have been encouraged to equip themselves with a broad portfolio of capabilities responsive to a wide range of futures.

Responding effectively to these organizational challenges requires the services to be able to innovate. This in turn calls for good understanding of organizational culture, by which we mean the basic assumptions and beliefs shared by members of an organization that define the organization's view of itself and its environment. Organizational culture can influence the speed, direction, and ultimate success of military innovation.

To understand more clearly the impact of organizational culture on military innovation, the Director, Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, sponsored a series of projects on changing military culture.

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This paper is one component of that project. Its purpose is not to grade or judge the Marine Corps' organizational culture but simply to understand it and its effect on innovation more clearly and identify insights that may be useful for senior decision-makers within the Marine Corps and the Department of Defense. The next section of the paper defines organizational culture and innovation and discusses briefly how they interact. It is followed by analyses of the key elements and some important counter-narratives in the Marine Corps' organizational culture. The paper subsequently examines how those cultural attributes affect the current ability of the Marine Corps to innovate, both in a general sense as well as in response to the specific challenges of cultural intelligence and stability operations. It then highlights some issues for further exploration before offering some concluding observations.

Organizational Culture and Innovation

In order to understand how the organizational culture of the Marine Corps affects its ability to innovate in response to the challenges of improving cultural intelligence for stability operations, it is important to define clearly the concepts of organizational culture and military innovation. Organizational culture operates at three levels: basic assumptions; core values, and artifacts. At its most fundamental, it consists of the basic assumptions and beliefs shared by members of an organization that determine how members of that organization view themselves, the organization, and the outside environment. Those assumptions and beliefs shape the values the organization espouses. They also influence the organization's cultural artifacts – the symbols and rituals that it employs and the

institutions and procedures that it adopts – as it seeks to acculturate new members, accomplish its mission, and plan and equip for the future.[3]

This paper focuses on the assumptions that underlie Marine Corps culture and the values that the Corps espouses.[4] It seeks to identify those assumptions and values by drawing primarily on interviews, publications, and a workshop to examine what cultural anthropologists Paula Holmes-Eber and Barak Salmoni have called the "declarative self-understanding" of Marines, that is, how they perceive themselves.[5] At the same time, the beliefs and values that comprise that self-understanding may be contradictory. As (b)(6) (b)(6) notes in a paper prepared for the project, organizational culture is "unlikely to be self consistent."[6] Contradiction and inconsistency do not, however, mean that those beliefs and values are therefore less valid or less strongly held.

Organizations do not, except in extraordinary circumstances, deliberately construct their cultures. Instead, those cultures, according to Colin Gray, "emerge and change as a kind of natural phenomena."[7] One of the primary sources of an organization's culture is its history. The origins of an organization, its past experiences, its leaders and heroes, and, perhaps most importantly, the narratives that the members of an organization tell themselves about those events, experiences, and individuals, shape the organization's culture. The narratives may not be based completely on historical fact.[8] Moreover, significant counter-narratives may exist that reflect alternative interpretations of an organization's history and suggest different values and behavior from those prescribed by the dominant narratives.

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[3] Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership,* 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), pp. 17-26.

[4] The paper pays less attention to the artifacts of Marine Corps culture. This approach contrasts with the one employed for the CMC II project, which concentrated on the cultural artifacts, in the form of institutions and procedures, of the services.

[5] Paula Holmes-Eber and Barak A. Salmoni, "Marine Officers' Imagined Self-Identity: Ethnographic Insights for Cultural/Psychological Training," Paper presented at the IDF Military Psychology Conference, Netanya, Israel, November 27-30, 2006, p. 2.

[6] (b)(6) "Organizational Culture and Military Innovation in the U.S. Marine Corps," p. 1.

[7] Colin S. Gray, "Out of the Wilderness: Prime Time for Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* 26 (2007): p. 9.

[8] (b)(6) "Warriors and Innovators: Military Change and Organizational Culture in the US Marine Corps," *Defence Studies,* 6 (June 2006): p. 217.

A second important source of an organization's culture is the environment in which it operates. Every operational environment poses unique challenges. Beliefs, values, and behaviors that enable an organization to solve those challenges spread throughout the organization and, over time, become deeply rooted. Other, less useful norms and behaviors tend to wither and disappear.[9]

Military innovation can usefully be thought of as the process by which military organizations explore, develop, and implement new technologies, tactics, strategies, and structures. It is typically anticipatory; that is, it occurs in advance of future requirements. Most innovation also tends to be evolutionary and depends on organizational focus over a sustained period of time. Military adaptation, in contrast, is the process by which military organizations adjust existing technologies, tactics, strategies, and structures. It is reactionary; that is, it occurs in response to current requirements. It also tends to occur more rapidly than innovation.[10]

A growing body of literature argues that organizational culture can exert a powerful influence on military innovation. To date, much of that literature has focused on the elements of organizational culture that impede innovation. Elizabeth Kier's work, for example, explains how the interwar French military's belief that short-term conscripts were incapable of conducting offensive operations led it to adopt a defensive doctrine that left it vulnerable to German armored warfare.[11] Similarly, (b)(5) project examined three challenges that organizational culture posed for those hoping to encourage the development of more innovative military organizations.

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[9] (b)(6) Similarly, Colin Gray argues, "Particular strategic cultures are adopted, accepted, and digested...because they fit the characters and contexts of their relevant societies." Gray, "Prime Time for Strategic Culture," p. 11.

[10] This discussion of military innovation and adaptation is based on (b)(6) "The Sources of Military Change," in *The Sources of Military Change: Culture, Politics, Technology,* eds. (b)(6) (b)(6) Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner, 2002), p. 6; Robert G. Angevine, "Innovation and Experimentation in the US Navy: The UPTIDE Antisubmarine Warfare Experiments, 1969-72," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28 (Feb. 2005), pp. 78-9; and Williamson Murray, "Innovation: Past and Future," in *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period,* eds. Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 308-10.

[11] Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

Yet organizational culture can also facilitate innovation. Williamson Murray has described it as "an essential element in successful innovation." He points to Hans von Seeckt's efforts to cultivate a culture of innovation in the German officer corps after the First World War as an example of how organizational culture can assist change.[12] Elsewhere, Murray has highlighted the intellectual ethos and encouragement of open-ended inquiry nurtured in the war colleges and staff colleges during the interwar period as important factors in the U.S. military's transformation from a small, limited force in 1939 to a colossus with unrivaled capabilities by 1945.[13] Ian Roxborough concurs, arguing that "organizational culture is critically important in fostering the debates that are necessary for successful innovation."[14] After examining a series of both successful and unsuccessful innovation efforts by the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps, (b)(6) concludes, "The roots of innovation are cultural." A supportive organizational culture is necessary, although not sufficient, for successful innovation.[15]

Finally, organizational culture can shape the form that innovation takes. (b)(6) (b)(6) argue that successful innovation embraces the dominant culture of a military organization by using established normative traditions to present new solutions to old problems, to employ existing evidentiary standards to communicate new information, and to cite traditional managerial norms to legitimate novel ideas.[16] Timothy Moy has outlined how daylight strategic bombing conformed to the U.S. Army Air Corps's perception of itself as precise, technological, and professional.[17]

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[12] Murray, "Innovation: Past and Future," pp. 309-10.

[13] Williamson Murray, "Clausewitz Out, Computer In: Military Culture and Technological Hubris," *The National Interest* 48 (Summer 1997): 57-64.

[14] Ian Roxborough, "Organizational Innovation: Lessons from Military Organizations," *Sociological Forum,* 15, n. 2 (2000): p. 372.

[15] (b)(6) *Warfighting and Disruptive Technologies: Disguising Innovation* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p. 195.

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[17] Timothy Moy, *War Machines: Transforming Technologies in the U.S. Military, 1920-1940* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

<u>Elements of Marine Corps Organizational Culture</u>

The Marine Corps is often considered to have the most distinctive culture of the U.S. military services. In his examination of how the Marines transform raw recruits into warriors and inculcate them with the service's beliefs and values during boot camp, Thomas Ricks observes, "Theirs is a culture apart." Survey data seems to support this observation. In their survey of officer attitudes, Thomas Mahnken and James Fitzsimonds found that the responses of Marine officers differed significantly from the responses of the other services' officers.[18] Ricks adds that Marine Corps culture is "the richest" of the service cultures.[19] The Center for Strategic and International Studies' report on American military culture in the 21st century also argues that the Marine Corps has the strongest service culture.[20]

The Marine Corps' culture exerts such a sway over its members that it is sometimes compared to a tribe, clan, or religious order. Lieutenant General Victor Krulak, USMC (ret.) compares the Marine Corps to "a primitive tribe where each generation has its medicine men – keepers of the tribal mythology, protectors of the tribal customs, and guardians of the tribal standards. Without them, the tribe would wither, suffering from poverty of the soul."[21] During the American intervention in Somalia from 1992 to 1993, Somali-American interpreters trying to help Somalis understand the Marines presented the Marine Corps as a clan.[22] James Warren notes the similarities between the Marine Corps and a religious order. According to Warren, members of both organizations willingly accept their organization's core beliefs, demonstrate an enduring commitment to a greater cause, and use sacred stories to inspire and motivate.[23]

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[18] Thomas G. Mahnken and James R. Fitzsimonds, "Officer Attitudes toward Innovation," presentation to Marine Corps University (2 December 2004).

[19] Thomas E. Ricks, *Making the Corps* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), p. 19.

[20] Walter F. Ulmer, Joseph J. Collins, and T.O. Jacobs, *American Military Culture in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2000), p. 13.

[21] Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps* (Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 1984), p. xvi.

[22] Edwin Howard Simmons, *The United States Marines: A History*, 3rd ed. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1998), p. 320.

[23] James A. Warren, *American Spartans: The U.S. Marines – A Combat History from Iwo Jima to Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2005), p. 21.

Despite the distinctiveness of its culture, the Marine Corps is occasionally ignored in studies of the organizational cultures of the military services because of its small size and its bureaucratic subordination to the Navy. Perhaps the most well-known such study, Carl Builder's *The Masks of War*, omits an examination of Marine Corps organizational culture because the Corps does not participate in defense planning "as an independent institutional actor with a significant voice in the national approach to strategy or military force planning."[24] More recently, Thomas Mahnken leaves the Marine Corps out of his analysis of the challenges that the information revolution poses for each of the service cultures, presumably for similar reasons.[25]

One of the objectives of this paper is to develop a better understanding of the Marine Corps' organizational culture. To that end, we conducted a series of non-attribution interviews with active and former Marines and with outside observers familiar with the Corps. In those interviews, we asked the participants to describe the essential aspects of Marine Corps culture. To narrow down the extensive list of cultural attributes the interviews produced, we grouped together the ones that were logically related. We then examined how much importance respondents attached to each of the remaining attributes and how often they mentioned them. Based on that analysis, we identified the following seven elements of Marine Corps organizational culture: personal concern for the survival of the Corps, focus on mission accomplishment, emphasis on the human dimension of warfare, commitment to unity, devotion to history, belief in the importance of leadership, and warrior ethos. Our list is meant to be suggestive rather than definitive; analysts employing other methods might emphasize different traits. Nevertheless, we believe that the beliefs and values we highlight are broadly representative of Marine Corps organizational culture.

Personal Concern for the Survival of the Corps

One of the core values of the Marine Corps' organizational culture is a personal concern for the survival of the Corps. Victor Krulak describes this concern as a "sensitive paranoia."[26]

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[24] Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 9.

[25] Thomas G. Mahnken, "War and Culture in the Information Age," *Strategic Review* (Winter 2000): pp. 40-46.

[26] Krulak, *First to Fight*, p. 15.

Because the Marine Corps has always been smaller than the other services and, until the interwar period, lacked a clearly defined mission, outsiders have periodically suggested abolishing the Corps or folding it into one of the other services. Narratives emphasizing these historical threats to the Corps' existence continue to foster a fear among Marines of being eliminated as a force if they do not maintain their relevance.[27] One manifestation of this concern for the Corps' survival has been a resistance among Marines to significant changes in the traditional service roles and missions and to reductions in existing force structure in order to invest in new approaches to future warfare.[28] Another expression of the Marine Corps' anxiety regarding its continued existence has been an emphasis on frugality. Krulak lists parsimony as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Marine Corps. He argues that the Corps must be thrifty because extravagance would threaten its existence.[29] Marines recognize that they cannot afford to waste resources and think that they spend their money more wisely than the other services.[30] Survey data indicates that Marine officers are less likely than other services' officers to believe that their service protects sacred cow programs for political reasons.[31] Marines and some outside observers also believe that their parsimony encourages innovation because it forces them to do more with less. Several interviewees declared, "Necessity is the mother of invention."[32]

Focus on Mission Accomplishment

A second important attribute of Marine Corps organizational culture is a focus on mission accomplishment. Marines prefer to act rather than think. They are taught to respond immediately to orders and, in the absence of orders, to act immediately. As a result,

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[27] Interview with a retired Marine general officer, 20 October 2006; interview with Col. D, USMC (ret.), 14 September 2006.

[28] Mahnken and Fitzsimonds, "Officer Attitudes toward Innovation;" Thomas G. Mahnken and James R. Fitzsimonds, *The Limits of Transformation: Officer Attitudes toward the Revolution in Military Affairs*, Newport Paper 17 (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2003).

[29] Krulak, *First to Fight*, p. 141.

[30] Interview with Mr. R, former Marine intelligence officer, 23 August 2006; interview with Mr. H, former Marine Force Recon officer, 4 October 2006.

[31] Mahnken and Fitzsimonds, "Officer Attitudes toward Innovation."

[32] Interview with Mr. R, former Marine intelligence officer, 23 August 2006; interview with Mr. H, former Marine Force Recon officer, 4 October 2006; interview with Col. A, USA, 22 August 2006.

observed one former Marine, "Everything leans toward the tip of the spear."[33] One aspect of this focus on effectiveness is a preference for measurable outcomes. As Paula Holmes-Eber, an anthropologist at Marine Corps University and the Marine Corps' Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) notes, "training programs are tied to a list of desired observable skills." Similarly, Holmes-Eber observes, "Courses and curricula must list their learning objectives and measures of effectiveness in their syllabi."[34] Another product of the commitment to mission accomplishment is an emphasis on the expeditionary character of the Corps. Since the end of the Second World War, the Marine Corps' principal mission has been to serve as the nation's crisis response force. Marines see themselves as "expeditionary by nature" and take great pride in being the first to fight.[35] (b)(6) a retired Marine, argues in a paper commissioned for this project that the expeditionary ethos is the central animating principle of Marine Corps culture.[36]

Emphasis on the Human Dimension of Warfare

Another significant element of Marine Corps culture is an emphasis on the human dimension of warfare. "Throughout our history," an official Marine Corps publication observed in 2003, "the Marine Corps has always known that people, not weapons, technologies, or systems, ultimately determine operational success during wartime and other contingencies."[37] Young Marine officers are taught in The Basic School that "war is a human enterprise."[38] The stress that the Marine Corps places on the human dimension of warfare has several effects. First, it enhances Marines' confidence in their interpersonal skills and leads them to focus on interaction with the native populations of other countries.[39] Second, it convinces them that their service recognizes the power of individuals

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[33] Interview with Mr. R, former Marine intelligence officer, 23 August 2006; interview with Mr. H, former Marine Force Recon officer, 4 October 2006.

[34] Paula Holmes-Eber, "Designing a Language and Culture Curriculum that Fits the Marine Corps," 2006, unpublished paper provided to the authors.

[35] Interview with Col. B, USMC (ret.), 21 September 2006; interview with Col. G, USMC (ret.), 4 October 2006.

[36] F. G. (b)(6) "The Origins and Application of the Expeditionary Ethos," p. 1.

[37] *United States Marine Corps Concepts and Issues, 2003* (Washington: Requirements and Programs Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2003), p. 2, quoted in Warren, *American Spartans,* p. 14

[38] Nathaniel Fick, *One Bullet Away: The Making of a Marine Officer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), p. 37.

[39] Interview with Col. R, USMC (ret.), 25 August 2006; interview with Lt. Col. M, USMC (ret.), 5 October 2006; interview with a retired Marine general officer, 27 September 2006.

and tolerates mavericks. Marines often point with pride to the many unusual characters in Marine Corps history and its "long history of mavericks succeeding."[40] Third, it shapes Marines' views of technology. Marines tend to be dubious of the benefits of technology. They believe, in the words of their principal doctrinal manual, "No degree of technological development or scientific calculation will diminish the human dimension in war."[41] Survey data reveals that Marine officers are more skeptical than officers from the other services that emerging technology will substantially alter the conduct of war and that information age ways of war will provide the United States with a substantial edge in future conflicts.[42] They also tend to prefer low-tech solutions to problems. When the Marine Corps was selecting a design for an amphibious landing craft during the interwar era, it chose the wooden Higgins boat over a cheaper metal craft designed by the Navy's Bureau of Construction because, argues historian Timothy Moy, the simplicity and ruggedness of the wooden craft fit better with the Corps' cultural emphasis on simple ruggedness.[43]

Commitment to Unity

Also integral to Marine Corps culture is a desire for what Paula Holmes-Eber and Barak Salmoni of CAOCL call "a consistent set of beliefs, ideals, and practices that unite Marines across time and place." The Corps' efforts to inculcate its members with this homogenous self-perception, claim Holmes-Eber and Salmoni, are "unique among the military services."[44] Representative of the Corps' commitment to unity is the oft-repeated saying, "Every Marine a rifleman." Marines frequently cite this motto to underline the importance of teamwork. All those who are able to participate, Marines believe, should contribute to the group.[45] They should also sacrifice their individual identities to work as a team. One of the worst things a Marine can be, claims former Marine captain Nathaniel Fick, is an individual.[46] Outsiders are

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[40] Interview with Maj. C, USMC, 21 September 2006; interview with a retired Marine general officer, 27 September 2006.

[41] *Warfighting* (Washington: U.S. Marine Corps, 1997), pp. 13-14, quoted in Warren, *American Spartans*, p. 15.

[42] Mahnken and Fitzsimonds, *Limits of Transformation*, p. .

[43] Moy, *War Machines*, p. 157.

[44] Holmes-Eber and Salmoni, "Marine Officers' Imagined Self Identity," pp. 2-3, 5.

[45] Interview with Lt. Col. H, USMC (ret.), 17 August 2006.

[46] Fick, *One Bullet Away*, p. 19.

often impressed with how well Marines work together.[47] Marines also use the "Every Marine a rifleman" motto to stress the need for flexibility and versatility. They take pride in not being bound by doctrine but instead being willing and able to change as needed in order to do almost anything.[48] Marines also take pride in not being bound by occupational specialty or force structure. They are typically multi-talented and know how to do each other's jobs. They believe that becoming an absolute expert in any specialized field is not only unlikely but probably undesirable. Similarly, the basic element of the Marine Corps' force structure, the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), is a flexible organization with no predetermined size or composition. Pieces can be mixed and matched from existing units to suit the demands of a particular task.[49]

Devotion to History

Marines are also ardently devoted to history and intensely conscious of its power.[50] History may not always figure prominently in daily operations, but it pervades the background of almost everything Marines do. The Marine Corps uses history to motivate and indoctrinate Marines. It is the only service that actively teaches its organizational history to new recruits in boot camp. Aspiring officers also memorize important dates and heroes at Officer Candidate School (OCS). Consequently, every Marine knows when the Marine Corps birthday is and can name the most important figures in Marine Corps history. Accounts of the exploits of those famous Marines motivate current Marines to live up to the standards of their forebears.[51] The Marine Corps also employs history to learn useful lessons. Marines' candor and acceptance of self-criticism facilitates this use of history.[52] Survey data shows that

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[47] Interview with Col. A, USA, 22 August 2006.

[48] Interview with Col. M, USMC, 13 September 2006; interview with Col. B, USMC (ret.), 21 September 2006; interview with Col. G, USMC (ret.), 4 October 2006.

[49] Interview with Col. D, USMC (ret.), 14 September 2006; interview with Lt. Col. H, USMC (ret.), 17 August 2006; interview with a retired Marine general officer, 27 September 2006.

[50] Warren, *American Spartans,* p. 9; Holmes-Eber and Salmoni, "Marine Officers' Imagined Self Identity," p. 3; Ricks, *Making the Corps,*p. 19.

[51] Interview with Col. M, USMC, 13 September 2006; interview with Lt. Col. H, USMC (ret.), 17 August 2006; interview with a retired Marine general officer, 27 September 2006.

[52] Interview with Dr. B, historian of US Marine Corps, 27 September 2006; Warren, *American Spartans,* pp. 13, 20.

Marine officers are more open to self-criticism than officers of other services.[53] The Marine Corps' devotion to history also means that Marines value historical continuity and tend to resist what one Marine colonel interviewed by Holmes-Eber described as "huge rudder changes."[54]

Belief in the Importance of Leadership

Marines also believe firmly in the importance of leadership. This conviction is manifested in three ways. The first is a responsiveness to senior leadership. The status of the Commandant of the Marine Corps as the single source of authority in the service means that Marines listen closely to what he says. [55]Survey data also indicate that Marine officers have more confidence than officers of other services in their senior leadership. They are more convinced that their service is committed to exploring new ways of war and that the senior leadership is doing its best to keep them informed about its plans.[56] Provided there are no serious objections to the Commandant's plans, he can thus change the direction of the Corps rapidly. The second demonstration of the Marine Corps' belief in the importance of leadership is its emphasis on decentralized decision-making. The Marine Corps pushes decision-making down to the lowest level possible. It grants small-unit leadership responsibilities similar to those the Army gives to Sergeants First Class and Staff Sergeants (pay grades E-7 and E-6) to Marine Sergeants, Corporals, and even Lance Corporals (pay grades E-5, E-4, and E-3 respectively). It then allows them considerable autonomy.[57] The third expression of the Corps' commitment to leadership is its emphasis on leaders' responsibility for those under their command. Marine officers feel particularly devoted to ensuring the welfare of their troops. Even one Army colonel we interviewed spoke admiringly of what he described as the "father/son" or "teacher/student" relationship between officers and their Marines.[58]

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[53] Mahnken and Fitzsimonds, *The Limits of Transformation*.

[54] Holmes-Eber, "Designing a Language and Culture Curriculum," p. 1.

[55] Interview with Col. D, USMC (ret.), 14 September 2006; interview with Col. M, USMC, 13 September 2006.

[56] Mahnken and Fitzsimonds, *The Limits of Transformation*; Mahnken and Fitzsimonds, "Officer Attitudes toward Innovation."

[57] Interview with Col. M, USMC, 13 September 2006.

[58] Interview with Lt. Col. H, USMC (ret.), 17 August 2006; interview with Col. G, USMC (ret.), 4 October 2006; interview with Col. A, USA, 21 September 2006.

Warrior Ethos

The final attribute of Marine Corps culture is the warrior ethos. The Marine Corps perceives itself and presents itself to the public as a small, disciplined group of elite warriors that constitute the finest fighting force on earth. Those warriors adhere to a code of "honor, courage, and commitment." Recruits are promised that the Corps is "First to Fight." One Second World War recruiting poster told its readers, "If you want to fight, join the Marines." Another asked simply, "Want action?" while still others urged "Let's go!"[59] Consequently, the Corps tends to attract aggressive, competitive personalities who want to prove themselves as warriors.[60]

Although the warrior ethos has been an enduring element of Marine Corps culture, the definition of what constitutes a warrior has been more fluid. Before the introduction of maneuver warfare, being a warrior meant closing with and killing the enemy. Upon becoming Commandant in 1987, however, General Al Gray urged Marines to "fight smarter." The central idea of maneuver warfare was to avoid the traditional direct assault in favor of maneuver in order to psychologically dislocate and confuse one's adversaries until they are effectively defeated. Gray's martial appearance and reputation as a "real warrior" were invaluable assets as he successfully redefined the Marine Corps' warrior ethos.[61]

Contradictions and Counter-Narratives in Marine Corps Culture

Despite the strength of Marine Corps culture, contradictions and counter-narratives do exist. Some of the Marine Corps' values contradict each other. The Corps' recognition of the importance of the individual Marine, which is based on its stress of the human dimension of warfare, conflicts with its exaltation of teamwork, which stems from its commitment to unity. Similarly, Marine Corps' openness to self-criticism may interfere with its focus on mission

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[59] See, for example, the collection of Marine Corps recruiting posters at http://www.bluejacket.com/usmc_posters.html.

[60] Krulak, *First to Fight*, p. 175; Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), p. xvii; Ricks, *Making the Corps*, p. 19; Warren, *American Spartans*, p. 13; interview with Mr. R, former Marine intelligence officer, 23 August 2006; interview with Mr. H, former Marine Force Recon officer, 4 October 2006; Fick, *One Bullet Away*, p. 4.

[61] (b)(6) "Warriors and Innovators," pp. 220-24.

accomplishment.[62] More disturbingly, one Marine's comment that "there is no such thing as a thief in the Marine Corps" and his claim that acquisitiveness is culturally rewarded suggests that the desire to get the job done may clash with the values of honor and discipline inherent in the warrior ethos.[63] Perhaps most importantly for this paper, the Marine Corps' emphasis on flexibility would seem to conflict with its devotion to historical continuity. As Warren notes, Marine Corps culture is "paradoxically committed to *both* tradition and change."[64]

In addition to the largely theoretical contradictions between various Marine Corps values, there are also alternative narratives based on empirical evidence that counter key elements of Marine Corps culture. Many of these counter-narratives were identified during a one and one-half day workshop we conducted to examine the relationship between Marine Corps organizational culture and innovation. The Marine Corps' attachment to the human dimension of warfare, for example, may not be as strong as the dominant cultural narrative suggests. Some Marines we interviewed suggested that the Marine Corps is more tolerant of mavericks at the lower ranks, but once officers reach the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, they are expected to toe the line. One Marine observed that fewer risk takers and thinkers were rewarded after the mid-1990s. In concert with a second Marine, he believed that there was an increased emphasis on pleasing one's superiors in order to advance and a bias against dissent and intellectualism.[65] Moreover, Marines at the workshop pointed out that despite the official rhetoric, technology figures prominently in the Marine Corps. Several of the recent Commandants hailed as innovators, including General Al Gray and General Charles Krulak, came from technological backgrounds and invested significant funds in sensors and networks during their commandancies. The Marine Corps also has a significant portion of its current budget tied up in high-tech platforms such as the V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft and the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, an armored amphibious assault vehicle.

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[62] Holmes-Eber and Salmoni, "Marine Officers' Imagined Self-Identity," p. 12.

[63] Interview with Mr. R, former Marine intelligence officer, 23 August 2006.

[64] Warren, *American Spartans*, p. 9.

[65] Interview with a Marine general officer, 3 October 2006; interview with Col. H, USMC (ret.), date?; interview with Lt. Col. M, USMC (ret.), 5 October 2006.

The Marine Corps might also not be as flexible as its organizational culture suggests. In particular, workshop participants pointed to the tension between the Marine Corps' expeditionary mission and its small wars competency. During the interwar period, there were significant tensions between some Marines who believed the Corps should become the nation's colonial infantry and small wars experts and others who advocated concentrating the Corps' attention on the development of amphibious warfare. The tensions still exist today between those who see the Marine Corps' future dominated by asymmetric, irregular conflict and others who want the Corps to return to its expeditionary focus and resume training to serve as the nation's force in readiness.

Additionally, the Corps' devotion to history may not be as fervent as its culture suggests. Some events, particularly ones when the Marines proved less successful such as Vietnam and Somalia, receive very little attention in official Marine Corps history. Despite the brutally honest head-butting and very frank criticism in the Marine Corps' archives, Marine Corps history also tends to gloss over differences and disagreements in order to present a unified front to the public.

The counter-narrative most relevant to this paper's focus on organizational culture and innovation is the one that suggests that the Marine Corps may not be as unified as the dominant cultural narrative indicates. In particular, significant differences are perceived to exist between the attitudes of East Coast and West Coast Marines regarding innovation. East Coast Marines serving in the Second Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF) are seen as more strict and focused on following regulations. In contrast, West Coast Marines serving in the First Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) are seen as more relaxed, laid-back, and willing to operate "by the seat of their pants." I MEF is therefore perceived as more open to innovation; reportedly a phone call is all that is needed to send a new technology into the field. II MEF is perceived as less open to innovation; a very structured process must be followed to send a new technology into the field and II MEF typically wants guarantees that it will be accompanied by a full support and contractor tail. Of the last 17 experiments the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL) sent into the field before mid-January 2007, 16 of them went to I MEF. Representatives from MCWL also expected at the time that as II

MEF replaced I MEF in Iraq, many of the field experiments being conducted in Iraq would end.

There are several potential explanations for these different attitudes toward innovation. One reason for the divergent mindsets may be geography. Marines at Camp Pendleton are located much closer to centers of high technology, such as Silicon Valley, and academia, like the various California state universities, than are Marines at Camp Lejeune. They also have greater access to training facilities like those at 29 Palms and more room to experiment. East Coast Marines, in contrast, are much closer to the center of authority in Headquarters, Marine Corps, and the Pentagon. Another reason may be the mission historically assigned to Marines on each coast. I MEF has typically borne responsibility for the "big war" in Asia or the Middle East, while II MEF has been responsible for smaller contingencies in Latin America, the Mediterranean, and Scandinavia. Whatever the explanation, the differences in Marines' attitudes toward innovation appear real.

Marine Corps Culture and Innovation

Marine Corps culture is often portrayed as particularly conducive to innovation. Supporters of this image frequently hail the Corps' history of innovation. Krulak, for example, argues that the Marine Corps has contributed "its full share" of significant military innovations, including some of the "most exciting – and useful – developments in modern operational concepts, weaponry, and equipment." Among the innovations Krulak lists are precision naval gunfire support, close air support, amphibious warfare, and helicopter warfare.[66] Similarly, Warren notes the Marine Corps' "admirable record of anticipating changes in modern warfare and staying ahead of the curve. He points to amphibious warfare, close air support, small wars, vertical envelopment, and the 3-block-war concept as examples of Marine Corps innovation.[67] Pierce identifies three examples of successful Marine Corps disruptive innovations – amphibious warfare, helicopter warfare, and MAGTF warfare – and another Marine Corps disruptive innovation – maneuver warfare – the fate of which remains

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[66] Krulak, *First to Fight,* pp. 67-69.

[67] Warren, *American Spartans,* pp. 16-17.

unclear although the prognosis is good.[68] The exhibit on innovation at the National Museum of the Marine Corps features amphibious warfare, close air support, MAGTF operations, and the Combined Action Program in Vietnam.

Survey results and some of our interviews suggest that Marines also see the Corps as innovative. Marine officers are more convinced than the officers of other services that their service is open to innovation. They believe most strongly that their service rewards innovators and are the least likely to see career penalties for innovation.[69] One Marine colonel we interviewed pointed to the rewards the Marine Corps bestows on officers perceived to be effective agents of change as evidence of the Corps's devotion to innovation.[70]

Some of our other interviews, however, indicated that the Marine Corps may not be as innovative as it thinks it is.[71] The different interpretations of the Marine Corps' acceptance of innovation may be the products of the different ranks of the respondents. A Marine general officer observed that the Corps encourages and rewards innovation effectively at lower levels but finds it more difficult to do so at higher levels.[72] Since two-thirds of the survey respondents were O-4s or below, it makes sense that they believed the Corps rewarded innovation. Our interview participants, on the other hand, were typically O-5s and above and were therefore less convinced that the Corps supported innovation. The different views regarding the Marine Corps ability to innovate may also result from conflating reactionary change or adaptation with anticipatory change or innovation. A retired Marine general officer claimed that the Corps places more emphasis on adaptation than

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[68] Pierce, *Warfighting and Disruptive Technologies*, pp. 51-115.

[69] Mahnken and Fitzsimonds, *The Limits of Transformation*; Mahnken and Fitzsimonds, "Officer Attitudes toward Innovation."

[70] Interview with Col. M, USMC, 13 September 2006.

[71] Interview with Col. B, USMC, (ret.), .

[72] Interview with a Marine general officer, 3 October 2006.

innovation.[73] Similarly, a retired Reserve Lieutenant Colonel worried that the Corps had lost the knack for anticipatory change, although it could still do reactionary change.[74]

The preceding analysis of the Marine Corps' organizational culture supports the hypothesis that innovation is difficult for the Corps. The numerous contradictions and counter-narratives in Marine Corps culture make it hard to achieve the single minded, long-term focus vital for innovation. They also make it difficult to achieve the consensus necessary to institutionalize change. Indeed, several Marines at the workshop recognized the compromises required to achieve consensus and expressed their views that consensus documents were less than honest. A retired Marine general officer observed that the Marine Corps' biggest challenge was institutionalizing change.[75]

In contrast, the contradictions and counter-narratives of Marine Corps culture, as well as the focus on mission accomplishment and the emphasis on flexibility, foster a pragmatism that facilitates adaptation. According to Fick, one of the key principles at OCS is making "sound and timely decisions." Aspiring officers are taught that they cannot wait for perfect information and that a good plan now is better than a great plan later.[76] Marines prefer to implement an 80 percent solution rather than wait for the 100 percent solution. They expect that whatever measures are implemented initially will be revised and improved over time. As a result, the Marine Corps possesses the institutional agility to adapt quickly to changed circumstances.

Marine Corps Culture and Cultural Intelligence for Stability Operations

Just as the Marine Corps' culture affects its ability to innovate and adapt in a general sense, it also shapes the Corps' response to the specific challenge of improving cultural intelligence and conducting stability operations. Marines' personal concern for the survival of the Corps makes them wary of becoming too involved in cultural intelligence and stability operations. Both are resource intensive and Marines see a potential drain on the Corps' resources,

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[73] Interview with a retired Marine general officer, 21 October 2006.

[74] Interview with Lt. Col. H, USMCR (ret.), 21 September 2006.

[75] Interview with a retired Marine general officer, 21 October 2006.

[76] Fick, *One Bullet Away*, p. 22.

capabilities, and flexibility should they commit themselves to them. They also fear becoming too specialized, thereby lessening their relevance and possibly endangering their existence. As one Marine colonel said, "The time spent sitting around after the shooting stops is time when Marines are not performing their expeditionary mission."[77]

One of the key values affecting the Marine Corps' approach to cultural intelligence and stability operations is its commitment to unity. The cultural emphasis on consistency and uniformity has meant that the Corps has sought to equip all Marines with a basic analytical framework for understanding foreign cultures rather than creating specialized units or occupational specialties. It has also limited the effectiveness of the Marine Corps Foreign Affairs Officer (FAO) and Regional Affairs Officer (RAO) programs. In part because of the Corps' emphasis on unity, there is not a primary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) for FAOs and RAOs. Officers who have put in the time to develop strong language skills and deep area knowledge stand little chance of career advancement because they have not spent the necessary time in the Operating Forces in their primary MOS or had experience in billets such as recruiting or inspector-instructor staff. Meanwhile, those who are promoted often lack the necessary skills and knowledge to support their commanders effectively.[78]

The Marine Corps' commitment to unity means that it possesses only limited capabilities in some key areas. For example, stability operations require a number of fairly specialized niche capabilities, such as civil affairs and engineering. Yet, as a recent article in the *Marine Corps Gazette* notes, "engineer missions in Multinational Force-West [Al Anbar Province, Iraq] far outweigh the capacities of Marine Corps engineering formations and resources currently available in theater."[79] Similarly, all of the Marine Corps' civil affairs capabilities are in the reserves. One Marine colonel suggested that the Corps' awareness of those civil affairs capabilities was quite limited.[80]

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[77] Interview with Col. M, USMC, 13 September 2006.

[78] Maj. Edwin O. Rueda, USMCR "Fixing a Broken Strategic Tool: The Marine Corps International Affairs Officer Program," *Marine Corps Gazette*, 91 (June 2007), pp. 10-14; Maj. Alfred B. (b)(6) "FAO Revisited: Establish the Criteria and Provide the Capability," *Marine Corps Gazette* (February 2007): 17-18.

[79] Maj Craig P. Eck, "(Mis)Employment of Engineer Assets," *Marine Corps Gazette* 91 (June 2007): p. 45.

[80] Interview with Col. H, USMC, 5 February 2007.

In addition, the Marine Corps' devotion to historical continuity means that efforts to improve cultural awareness have to be sold as a minor shift that does not threaten the Corps' primary mission. The result has been slow but consistent progress that sometimes escapes the notice of the broader Marine Corps. Attempts to improve cultural knowledge and learning have drawn heavily on the Marine Corps' Small Wars tradition, much of it now more than 70 years old. There is, however, a danger of associating current efforts too closely with the Corps' Small Wars heritage. Several Marines we interviewed believed that the Small Wars of the interwar period had little relevance to today's Marine Corps.[81] As well, if Small Wars fall out of fashion, as they did in 1940 and after Vietnam, efforts to enhance cultural awareness in the Marine Corps might also falter. Plans to create a Center for Irregular Warfare along side CAOCL at Quantico may heighten this risk by linking cultural awareness even more closely with non-traditional and unconventional missions.

The greatest challenge the Marine Corps' organizational culture poses to efforts to improve the Corps' use of cultural intelligence stems from the combined effect of the warrior ethos, the belief in the Corps' expeditionary nature, and the emphasis on frugality. Marine battalions currently deploy overseas for approximately seven-month tours.[82] The short tour length is based, in part, on the standard peacetime deployment length that the Marine Corps has developed in order to perform its expeditionary mission. However, the tour length is also the result of the Marine Corps' desire to get as much deployment time out of each Marine as possible without enlarging the Corps. Marines attracted by the Corps' warrior ethos tend to be young and do not re-enlist at the same rate as the members of the other services. Consequently, it is important to maximize their deployed time during their first enlistment. The Marine can pack two 7-month deployments (for a total of 14 months) into the initial term of enlistment, but would be unable to include a second tour before the term expired if the tours were extended to 12 months. The disadvantage of the shorter tours with

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[81] Interview with Col. M, USMC, 13 September 2006; interview with Col. G, USMC (ret.), 4 October 2006; interview with Col. R, USMC (ret.), 25 August 2006 ; interview with Lt. Col. H, USMC (ret.) 17 August 2006.

[82] The battalion staffs typically deploy for year-long tours. As a point of comparison, Army brigades typically deploy for 12-month tours and have recently extended those tours to 15 months.

respect to cultural intelligence is that they limit the ability of Marines to become familiar with their local environment before they rotate out of theater.

The Marine Corps' focus on its expeditionary mission and its warrior ethos are also challenges to the Corps' efforts to improve its ability to conduct stability operations. As mentioned above, the Marine Corps has a very young force with low re-enlistment rates. The rationale behind what one workshop participant called the Marine Corps' "business model" is not clear. Some Marines we interviewed claimed that the youth of the force made it more deployable and less expensive. Others argued that the Corps' assault troop mission requires young, fearless Marines capable of high levels of physical activity. In either case, the model may not be best suited for stability operations. Stability operations place a premium on experienced leadership at the company level and below. Marines filling those leadership slots, however, may lack the requisite experience. At the workshop, one participant recounted that of the 81 slots that were supposed to be filled by a sergeant in a Marine infantry battalion slated to deploy to Iraq, none of the slots was actually occupied by a sergeant. Fourteen of the slots were occupied by corporals and the rest were filled by lance corporals.

The Marine Corps' warrior ethos also means that Marines want to be where the fighting is. They would seem to prefer counterinsurgency to stability operations. Although some might argue that the difference between the two is semantic, the terms do suggest contrasting operational approaches. A counterinsurgency operation tends to emphasize targeting and eliminating insurgents, whereas a stability operation prioritizes winning the confidence and loyalty of the local population. Even though the two approaches are not mutually exclusive, some Marines may not see it that way. One Marine we interviewed argued, "We can't be both killers and culturally sensitive."[83] It can be difficult to identify the appropriate level of aggressiveness in a stability operation, particularly for younger Marines. A Marine colonel we interviewed observed that younger officers tend to view stability operations as a zero-sum game while older officers are more pragmatic and willing to negotiate.[84]

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[83] Interview with Col. M, USMC, 13 September 2006.

[84] Interview with Col. H, USMC, 25 August 2006.

Another aspect of the Marine Corps' organizational culture, pragmatism, has also led it to reject ambitious foreign language training goals and instead to focus on equipping Marines with basic words and phrases sufficient for them to '"get by" in a tactical environment. Marines recognize that developing from scratch the language skills required to speak and interpret expertly a difficult language like Arabic is in theory useful, but in practice they had neither the time nor the resources to do so. Instead, they have chosen to provide operational language learning opportunities throughout Marines' careers as adjuncts to various educational and training programs.

Finally, one of the implications of the Marine Corps' cultural emphasis on the human dimension of warfare is that Marines see a need to understand not only the personal motivations and relationships of the enemy, but also those of the civilian population surrounding them. In their words, they view those personal aspects as "human terrain" and thus, as part of their tactical environment. As a result, Marines operating in Iraq and Afghanistan attach a great deal of significance to getting outside of their operating bases and interacting on a daily basis with the local population. As one retired Marine general observed, because Marines routinely move about within other nations during their peacetime missions, they have experience dealing with the complexities of different cultures, and this stands them in good stead during counterinsurgency and stability operations.[85]

Conclusion

Military organizations, like other complex systems, thrive or perish based on their ability to adapt and innovate in response to change. The culture of an organization is an important determinant of its capacity for adaptation and innovation. As the U.S. military faces a growing number of new missions and requirements, a detailed understanding of how the central elements of a particular service's organizational culture shape its ability to respond to specific challenges may prove beneficial.

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[85] Interview with a retired Marine general officer, 21 October 2006.

In this paper, we have sought to elucidate the beliefs and values that constitute Marine Corps culture by analyzing the declarative self understanding of Marines as expressed in interviews, publications, survey data, and workshop discussion. Based on that analysis, we identified seven core values of Marine Corps culture:

- personal concern for the survival of the Corps
- focus on mission accomplishment
- emphasis on the human dimension of warfare
- commitment to unity
- devotion to history
- belief in the importance of leadership
- warrior ethos.

We also noted several contradictions and counter-narratives in Marine Corps culture. The existence of those contradictions and counter-narratives make innovation more difficult than both Marines and outside observers believe should be the case, but at the same time, they do facilitate adaptation.

Although we began this report by noting the distinctiveness of Marine Corps culture, we believe that our analysis highlights several insights that senior decision-makers in the Department of Defense might find helpful as they seek to promote more adaptive and innovative military organizations. The first insight is the value of understanding the fine details of the services' organizational cultures. Our research discovered that identifying the elements that constituted an organization's dominant cultural narrative, although challenging, was not enough to understand the organization's behavior. It was also necessary to examine the contradictions and counter-narratives within the culture and how they interacted in order to comprehend fully the organization's behavior.

The second insight is the importance of working within the organizational culture in order to promote change effectively. This conclusion expands on our results from earlier projects in this series as well as more recent studies by others. (b)(5) project found that challenging the services' core assumptions and beliefs was not the most effective strategy for accelerating organizational change and recommended measures that took the services'

cultural priorities and norms into account and sought to exploit their more malleable aspects in order to effect change.[86] Michael and Michelle Salomone stressed the need to "embrace the evidentiary as well as the dominant strategic culture within each service."[87] Our discovery of significant contradictions and counter-narratives suggests that there are more cultural threads to pull than just the dominant or the most factually accurate ones in order to promote cultural change. The Marine Corps, for example, has thus far effectively emphasized its Small Wars history in order to improve its cultural intelligence for stability operations, even though a number of Marines we interviewed suggested that the Corps' experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean during the interwar period were not part of the dominant cultural narrative. Similarly, the Marine Corps may not be as innovative as the dominant narrative suggests, but the widespread belief among Marine that their service is innovative is an invaluable asset to the Corps as it seeks to improve cultural intelligence for stability operations.

Finally, the element of Marine Corps culture that might be most useful to the Department of Defense as a whole is pragmatism. The emphasis on pragmatism in Marine Corps culture is a product, in part, of the many contradictions and counter-narratives in the culture, which make it difficult to achieve unanimity. Instead, the Corps emphasizes the rapid implementation of the 80 percent solution, with the expectation that it will be revised and improved later. The conditions that have fostered the Marine Corps' pragmatism appear quite similar to the ones the Department faces on a regular basis – the services, defense agencies, and other organizations may all be focused on accomplishing the same mission yet still have strongly held, contradictory, and competing beliefs and values. Rather than working endlessly to achieve universal agreement on bold goals and grand policies, it may be more useful to implement more pragmatic measures more rapidly and improve them through frequent iteration.

The Marine Corps' culture has made it an extremely adaptable organization. The capacity to adjust rapidly to existing technologies, tactics, strategies, and structures in response to

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86 (b)(6)

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current requirements has thus far served it well. It has adopted an ambitious program to elevate Marines' operational culture and language skills and improve the Corps' ability to collect, analyze, and disseminate cultural intelligence.

Nonetheless, the Marine Corps does face a number of culturally rooted challenges to innovation, such as tour lengths that limit opportunities to acquire deep local familiarity; a "business model" that may not ensure the requisite experience in lower level leadership positions; and the difficulty in identifying the appropriate levels of aggressiveness required in different missions (combat, counterinsurgency, stability operations). If it can capitalize on its cultural advantages, like its emphasis on the human dimension of warfare and its long history of successful Small Wars, while addressing its internal cultural challenges, the Corps should be better prepared in the future to effectively employ cultural intelligence for stability operations.

B. The U.S. Marine Corps' Use of Cultural Intelligence for Stability Operations

THE U.S. MARINE CORPS' USE OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE FOR STABILITY OPERATIONS

(b)(5)

Scitor Corporation

Strategic Analysis & Assessments

Introduction

In late 2005, the U.S. Department of Defense issued Directive 3000.05 identifying stability operations as "a core U.S. military mission" that should "be given priority comparable to combat operations" and that the department should "be prepared to conduct and support." The directive defined stability operations as "military and civilian activities conducted across the spectrum from peace to conflict to establish or maintain order in states and regions." The immediate goals of stability operations, according to the directive, are "to provide the local populace with security, restore essential services, and meet humanitarian needs." The long-term goals are to foster indigenous capacity to secure essential services, a viable market economy, rule of law, democratic institutions, and a robust civil society."[1]

One of the key challenges of stability operations is for our forces to understand the culture of the country in which they are operating, that is, cultural intelligence. The sources of the insecurity and disorder that stability operations seek to counter are often rooted in the beliefs, values, organizations, institutions, and symbols of the indigenous culture. Addressing the roots of disorder and winning the loyalty of the population therefore requires a deep understanding of the indigenous culture.

The U.S. Marine Corps has been a leader in the development of cultural intelligence for stability operations.

(b)(5)

The handbooks serve as ready-reference publications that provide U.S. military personnel with essential information for conducting effective operations in various countries around the world. They typically include a large chapter on culture. By the late 1990s (b)(5) initiated a line of cultural intelligence products.

(b)(5)

That same year, the Marine Corps also established the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning to

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[1] Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, 28 Nov. 2005, p. 2.

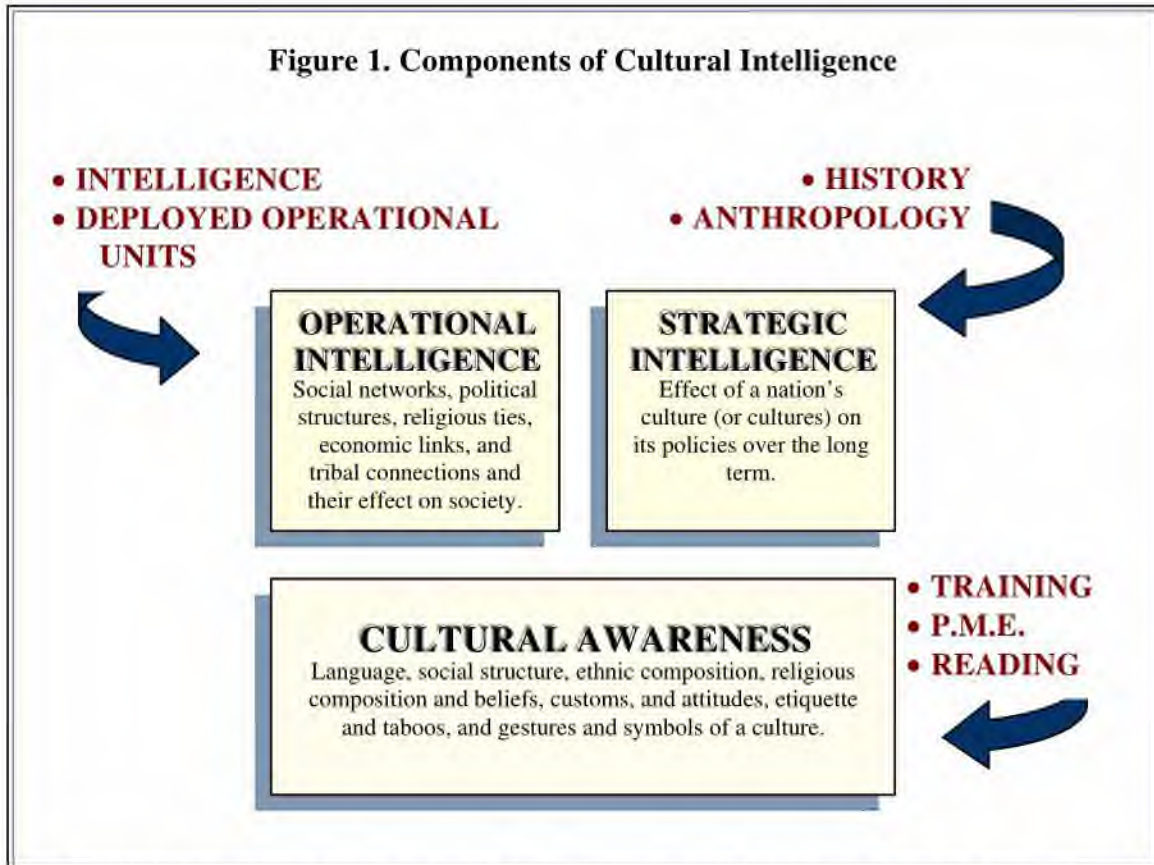serve as the central Marine Corps agency for operational culture training and language familiarization.

In order to gain greater insight into the military's ability generally and the Marine Corps' ability specifically to innovate and adapt to challenges such as those posed by stability operations, the Office of Net Assessment sponsored the Marine Corps Organizational Culture and Cultural Intelligence for Stability Operations project. The project, which is conducted by Strategic Analysis and Assessments, Scitor Corporation, tries to understand more clearly how organizational culture affects a military service's ability to adapt and innovate to new challenges by using the Marine Corps' experience with cultural intelligence for stability operations as a case study.

This paper is one component of that project. Its purpose is not to grade or judge the Marine Corps' use of cultural intelligence but simply to understand its experience more clearly and identify insights that may be useful for senior decision-makers within the Department of Defense. The next section of the paper defines the various types of cultural intelligence and discusses how they might be used in military operations. It is followed by a study of the Marine Corps' historical experience with cultural intelligence and a summary of current Marine Corps efforts in the field. The paper then examines some of the challenges the Marine Corps may face with respect to cultural intelligence before offering some concluding remarks.

Cultural Intelligence and Military Operations

Cultural intelligence, as used in this paper, is defined as information regarding the "shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another."[2] In stability operations, cultural intelligence includes information about the culture or cultures of the host nation populace and potential or real adversaries. It can be thought of encompassing three broad categories of information:

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[2] Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 (15 Dec. 2006), p. 3-6.

Figure 1. Components of Cultural Intelligence

- INTELLIGENCE
- DEPLOYED OPERATIONAL
  UNITS

- HISTORY
- ANTHROPOLOGY

OPERATIONAL INTELLIGENCE
Social networks, political structures, religious ties, economic links, and tribal connections and their effect on society.

STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE
Effect of a nation's culture (or cultures) on its policies over the long term.

- TRAINING
- P.M.E.
- READING

CULTURAL AWARENESS
Language, social structure, ethnic composition, religious composition and beliefs, customs, and attitudes, etiquette and taboos, and gestures and symbols of a culture.

cultural awareness, operational cultural intelligence, and strategic cultural intelligence (See Figure 1).

Cultural awareness includes an understanding of culture, both American and foreign, as well as a knowledge of basic information regarding the language, social structure, ethnic composition, religious composition and beliefs, customs and attitudes, etiquette and taboos, and gestures and symbols of a culture. Cultural awareness is particularly important at the tactical level. In Iraq, for example, Marines fired their weapons unnecessarily at Iraqi civilians because they interpreted the black flags Shia Muslims traditionally fly from their homes as symbols of hostility. Similarly, Marines had to learn through experience that Iraqis' demonstrative hand gestures and different understandings of personal space were not threatening.[3] Cultural awareness is typically acquired through cultural training, professional

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[3] Montgomery McFate, "The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture," *Joint Force Quarterly* 38 (2005): p. 44.

military education, and professional reading rather than the intelligence process, although MCIA's most well-known products, the Cultural Smart Cards, also focus on increasing the cultural awareness of troops on the ground.[4]

Operational cultural intelligence is information regarding the social networks, political structures (formal and informal), religious ties, economic links, and tribal connections of a society and how they affect the way the society operates. Possession of current, precise operational cultural intelligence enables commanders to tailor their operational plans to conditions on the ground and increase their effectiveness. As an example of how operational cultural intelligence might shape operations, a participant at a workshop in support of the project recounted anecdotally that historians conducting research in the former East German archives discovered Soviet war plans to invade Iran during the Cold War. Commanders along the various axes of attack were issued different orders based on the tribes they could expect to encounter along their routes. Similarly, a lieutenant stationed in Iraq with the 82nd Airborne Division recently recounted how his company used its knowledge of the Iraqi naming system and its understanding of the importance of sub-tribes to uncover a sizable arms cache. After finding one cache, they asked the local sub-sheik who owned the land where it was located. They used the names the sheik provided to search for other parcels of land owned by the same family and found a second cache.[5]

Operational cultural intelligence requires more detailed cultural knowledge than cultural awareness and an understanding of how that knowledge shapes the battlefield. Dedicated military intelligence organizations are therefore important sources of operational cultural intelligence, as are deployed operational units. As the above story of the discovery of the weapons cache suggests, effective operations can drive intelligence, which in turn produces more effective operations.[6]

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[4] LtCol James L. Higgins, Maj. Michelle L. Trusso, and Maj. Alfred B. (b)(6) "Marine Corps Intelligence," *Marine Corps Gazette* (Dec. 2005): p. 23.

[5] Lt. Brendan Hagan, 82nd Airborne Division, e-mail dated 24 Mar. 2007, in "Tom Ricks's Inbox," *Washington Post*, 29 April 2007, p. B3.

[6] Higgins, Trusso, and (b)(6) "Marine Corps Intelligence," p. 23; Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, pp. 3-1 – 3-2.

Strategic cultural intelligence is information that illuminates how a nation's culture (or cultures) shapes its policies over the long term. It provides senior civilian and military leaders with the broader cultural picture and context they need to identify their strategic objectives with respect to foreign nations and the means they will use to attain those objectives.[7] It tends to take a long-term view and depends more heavily on the work of anthropologists and historians who are able to devote significant time to the study of a particular culture, country, or region. One example of strategic cultural intelligence is the anthropologist Ruth Benedict's study of Japanese culture during World War II, later published as *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Benedict's work highlighted the importance of the emperor in Japanese popular culture and influenced significantly the American offer to allow the emperor to continue to reign as part of the surrender. Similarly, if American leaders in 2003 had more fully appreciated the tribal nature of Iraqi culture, they may have been more prepared for the rise of tribal centers of authority when the Ba'thist regime was deposed or might have developed plans for establishing a new central authority more expeditiously.[8]

The utility of cultural intelligence, broadly defined as cultural awareness, operational cultural intelligence, and strategic cultural intelligence, is not limited to stability operations. As instructional materials handed out to Marine lieutenants at the Basic School note, "all military operations are about people. Hostile, neutral, or friendly, people are the center of gravity in what militaries do." There are good reasons to believe, however, that cultural

intelligence is particularly important for stability operations. Meeting the needs of the local population usually figure prominently among the short-term goals of stability operations. Understanding the local culture and utilizing indigenous social systems can help forces conducting stability operations meet local needs effectively. In Iraq, for example, British

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[7] This paper focuses on culture at the level of the nation-state and smaller. Some analysts believe that trans-national movements and organizations pose the greatest challenges to the future security of the United States. To the extent that such movements and organizations possess cultures that are distinct from and independent of the cultures of the nation-states from which their adherents or members originated, those cultures are outside the scope of the paper.

[8] McFate, "Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture," p. 44.

soldiers in Basra understood the importance of tribes and the associated patronage system. They filled local councils with tribal leaders and gave them large sums of money to distribute as needed. The tribal leaders used the patronage system to distribute the resources to the community successfully. Cultural intelligence can also help forces conducting stability operations meet their long-term objectives of building indigenous capacity. A Marine captain assigned to build a judicial system refurbished the local courthouse, found the 1950 Iraqi constitution on the internet, and used it as the basis for his reconstruction efforts. Because the system was culturally familiar, the Iraqis perceived it as legitimate. Frustratingly, restrictions on the employment of Ba'athists forced the Marine to suspend his efforts.

The Marine Corps' Historical Experience with Cultural Intelligence

The Marine Corps' long history of stability and counterinsurgency operations has influenced its approach to cultural intelligence. Two experiences in particular, the small wars in Central America and the Caribbean during the interwar era and the Combined Action Program in Vietnam, have shaped the attitudes, approaches, and the methods of the Marine Corps with respect to cultural intelligence. From those experiences, the Marine Corps developed an appreciation of the importance of cultural intelligence. To gather cultural intelligence, the Marine Corps devised an approach that emphasized putting Marines in position to interact on a regular basis with the indigenous population; to organize and distribute the intelligence, it developed reporting systems and country handbooks. It also confronted the challenges of developing adequate language skills and disseminating intelligence in a timely fashion. The legacies of these experiences continue to shape the Marine Corps' use of cultural intelligence for stability operations.

Central America, the Caribbean, and the Small Wars Manual

During the first several decades of the 20th century, the U.S. Marine Corps redefined its role in the American military establishment. Marines came ashore not only to protect the lives and property of Americans abroad, but also, in the words of historian Allan Millett, "to alter the political behavior and even the institutions of another country."[9] Such operations, called

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[9] Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), p. 148.

small wars by the Marine Corps, combined military force with diplomatic pressure to intervene in the affairs of another state whose government was unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory in order to protect U.S. national interests.[10] From the end of the Spanish-American War until the mid-1930s, small war operations constituted the Marine Corps' primary mission. A generation of Marine officers spent virtually their entire careers in colonial service.[11]

When the period began, the Marine Corps lacked its own doctrine to guide the conduct of small war operations. Consequently, the Corps relied on the Army's experience combating insurgents in the Philippines to shape its initial approach. The Army's doctrine, however, contained no discussion of the unique intelligence requirements of small war operations.[12] The Marines therefore developed their own views on the types of intelligence needed in small wars and how best to obtain that information as they conducted a series of campaigns, most notably in Haiti from 1915 to 1934, the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1921, and Nicaragua from 1926 to 1933. Lessons learned from the Marines' experience in those campaigns, including insights regarding intelligence in small wars, were collected and presented in the *Small Wars Manual,* originally issued as a series of pamphlets in 1935 and updated and published as a cohesive whole in 1940.

The Marine Corps quickly realized that intelligence was critical to the successful conduct of small wars. In a 1921 *Marine Corps Gazette* article, Maj. Earl H. Ellis identified the building of intelligence services as one of the four key functions Marines would need to undertake to defeat insurgencies. The intelligence services, Ellis explained, would gather and disseminate all information pertinent to taking the correct political and military actions.[13] As the *Small*

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[10] U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Washington: GPO, 1940), p. I-1.

[11] Millett, *Semper Fidelis,* p. 150.

[12] Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps' Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 2001), p. 59.

[13] The other three functions Ellis identified were the establishment of provost services (essentially martial law), garrisoning, and combat. Bickel, *Mars Learning,* p. 132

Wars Manual later noted, the type of intelligence required "includes not only information of the military situation, but the political, economic, and social status of the occupied area, together with the attitude and activities of the civil population and political leaders insofar as those elements may affect the accomplishment of the mission."[14]

Cultural intelligence was viewed as particularly important in these small wars. Marines lived in close proximity with other cultures for extended periods as they conducted small unit operations to combat insurgents, supervised public works, oversaw local civil administration and elections, supervised the flow of food and supplies, and organized and trained indigenous constabularies.[15] The *Small Wars Manual* used the term "psychology" for what we now call cultural intelligence and often equated cultural traits with racial characteristics. Nevertheless, the manual argued that understanding the culture, including the customs, religion, morals, politics, and education, of the local population was vital to success in small wars. It called for "a serious study of the people, their racial, political, religious, and mental development." A sound understanding of the local culture would help Marines "understand the possible approaches [to the problem] and the repercussion to be expected from any actions which may be contemplated." Marines would thus perceive more accurately when they should be tactful and when they should be firm. They would also be in a better position to obtain additional intelligence from the loyal and neutral population.[16]

Cultural intelligence was an area of emphasis for the elaborate intelligence services the Marines built up in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. "At brigade and lower headquarters" in both countries, notes historian Graham Cosmas, "intelligence officers collaged, evaluated, and distributed information."[17] In Haiti, the intelligence effort was hampered by the lack of

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[14] USMC, *Small Wars Manual*, p. II-19.

[15] Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, p. 152

[16] USMC, *Small Wars Manual*, pp. I-18, I-19, I-26-7.

[17] Graham A. Cosmas, "*Cacos* and *Caudillos*: Marines and Counterinsurgency in Hispaniola, 1915-1924," in *New Interpretations in Naval History: Selected Papers from the Ninth Naval History Symposium Held at the United States Naval Academy, 18-20 October 1989,* eds. William R. Roberts and Jack Sweetman, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990), p. 300.

Marines who were able to master the Creole language or understand the culture.[18] In the Dominican Republic, the Marines demonstrated a greater familiarity with the language and the culture. Moreover, their work improving local markets, building roads, promoting agriculture, and providing charity brought the Marines closer to Dominicans and enabled them to develop personal ties. The Marines gained respect from the populace as a result and were able to develop better intelligence than they had in Haiti, where they remained more separate from the population.[19]

Placing Marines in positions where they could interact with the population regularly and gather information became one of the Marine Corps' primary approaches for collecting cultural intelligence. The *Small Wars Manual* directed that "local garrisons must become so familiar with their subdistricts that any changes or unusual conditions will be immediately apparent."[20] Company commanders were supposed to stay abreast of not only the cultural characteristics but also the status of irrigation, road, and bridge projects, the levels of telegraph and telephone service, and the performance of government functions such as the postal service and sanitation, within their command district.

To keep track of the cultural intelligence collected by stationing Marines amongst the local population, the Marine Corps established reporting and auditing systems that served a

purpose similar to modern databases. Communal books were established for each town or village to record the finances and public works of that community. Because district commanders were required to audit all the books of their subcommanders on their inspection trips each month, they became extremely knowledgeable regarding the state of affairs within their jurisdictions. The regular reports the district commanders submitted provided a clearer picture of the overall nature of the insurgency.[21]

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[18] Bickel, *Mars Learning,* pp. 84-85, 92; Millett, *Semper Fidelis,* p. 209.

[19] Bickel, *Mars Learning,* p. 115.

[20] USMC, *Small Wars Manual,* p. II-27.

[21] Bickel, *Mars Learning,* pp. 77, 175.

In addition to systems of regular reports and audits, the Marine Corps also used country handbooks to organize and present cultural intelligence. When the Marines came ashore in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic, they lacked adequate intelligence and maps. They therefore devoted significant effort to collecting local information and mapping the countryside. In the Dominican Republic, the collected intelligence was used to prepare a two-volume handbook of strategic information about the country. In future campaigns, the *Small Wars Manual* recommended that similar studies of the theater of operations should be compiled prior to arrival in theater for use by all officers, from the force commander to junior patrol leaders.[22]

The Marine Corps' cultural intelligence effort in Central American and the Caribbean during the interwar era, although pioneering, also faced several challenges. One of the principal challenges was a lack of language skills among Marine Corps officers. The *Small Wars Manual* recognized that "knowledge of the character of the people and a command of their language are great assets." In some cases, the Manual noted, it was virtually impossible to understand a culture without speaking the language. All officers were urged to study and acquire a working knowledge of the language.[23] Yet, as noted above, few Marines were able to master the Creole language in Haiti and the Marines' intelligence effort suffered as a result.

A second significant challenge was collecting and disseminating intelligence in a timely fashion. A regimental commander in the Dominican Republic declared: "Though a vast amount of information is secured, the greater part of it is of no value, either by reason of absolute inaccuracy...or by reason of delay in delivery."[24] As the campaigns on Hispaniola continued, the Marines turned to technology to accelerate the flow of information. In Haiti, they used the telephone to maintain contact between general headquarters and town garrisons and field wireless sets to link bases in the field with district headquarters. In the

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[22] Bickel, *Mars Learning*, pp. 122-23; USMC, *Small Wars Manual*, p. II-28

[23] USMC, *Small Wars Manual*, p. I-26.

[24] Col. C. Gamborg-Andresen, Third Provisional Regiment, Report to Brigade Commander, 27 Feb. 1919, quoted in Cosmas, "*Cacos* and *Caudillos*," p. 300.

Dominican Republic, they also began relying on telephone and radio to speed the collection and dissemination of time-sensitive information.[25]

Despite the gains made in Haiti and the Dominican Republic through the use of new technology, Marines continued to struggle with gathering and distributing adequate and timely intelligence in Nicaragua. Intelligence reports from field commanders were sent to headquarters once a month; they were out of date by the time they were received. As a result, the Marines in Nicaragua tended to rely on contact with the enemy in the field.[26] In the hope of avoiding such problems in the future, the *Small Wars Manual* stressed that "the rapid dissemination of military intelligence to all organizations concerned is fully as important as the collection of original information." [27]

Vietnam and the Combined Action Program

Soon after Marine combat forces entered South Vietnam in 1965, they launched counterinsurgency efforts that drew on the legacies of the small wars campaigns in Central America and the Caribbean during the interwar era. The most notable of these efforts was the Combined Action Program, which many Marines believed (and still believe today) was a direct descendant of the programs the Corps used to train native constabularies in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua.[28] The program integrated Marine rifle squads with a Vietnamese Popular Forces (militia) platoon to provide continuous security to Vietnamese villages and the surrounding population. Although intelligence collection was only one of a CAP platoon's missions, the implementation of the Combined Action Program and some of the challenges it faced highlight important continuities in the Marine Corps' historical experience with cultural intelligence.

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[25] Bickel, *Mars Learning*, pp. 85, 123; Cosmas, "*Cacos* and *Caudillos*," p. 300.

[26] Bickel, *Mars Learning* ,pp. 174-175

[27] USMC, *Small Wars Manual*, p. II-32.

[28] Lawrence A. Yates, "A Feather in their Cap? The Marines' Combined Action Program in Vietnam," ," in *New Interpretations in Naval History: Selected Papers from the Ninth Naval History Symposium Held at the United States Naval Academy, 18-20 October 1989*, eds. William R. Roberts and Jack Sweetman, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990), fn 11, p. 324; Capt. Keith F. Kopets, "The Combined Action Program: Vietnam," *Military Review* (July-August 2002): p. 78.

The primary mission of the Marines arriving in Vietnam was to occupy and defend three enclaves in the I Corps area: Phu Bai, Da Nang, and Chu Lai. To secure the 10 square miles of the Phu Bai enclave, Lieutenant Colonel William W. Taylor, the commander of the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, and his executive officer, Major Cullen C. Zimmerman, developed a plan to integrate Marine rifle squads with the local militia platoons. The plan was approved up the chain of command and the first CAP platoons began patrolling in the fall of 1965. The experiment quickly produced results – Viet Cong activities were disrupted and intelligence collection improved. Within months, CAP platoons began operating around Da Nang. By early 1966, they were operating in all three of the Marines' enclaves in the I Corps area.[29]

The CAP approach reflected the Marines' belief, based in part on their small wars' experience, that success in counterinsurgency required getting close to people in order to collect better intelligence and provide them with security. Each CAP platoon consisted of 14 Marines, a Navy corpsman, and 34 militia members, who lived, worked, fought, and slept in a single Vietnamese village. Their mission was to protect the people, train the militia, destroy the insurgent infrastructure, and collect local intelligence. Interacting on a regular basis with the militia and the villagers, Marine leaders believed, would foster mutual trust and respect and improve the Marines' understanding of the indigenous culture. Over time, the platoon would obtain more and better intelligence that would help it destroy the local guerilla infrastructure.[30]

Although the success of the CAP platoons varied depending on time, place, and personnel, they did register some significant successes. Unit effectiveness was monitored by a monthly reporting system similar to the ones established in Haiti and the Dominican Republic several decades earlier. The system sought to quantify indicators of pacification for the villages in which the CAP platoons were stationed. In a number of villages, the presence of CAP

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[29] Yates, "Feather in their Cap," pp. 309-10; Kopets, "Combined Action Program," pp. 78-79.

[30] Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 173; James A. Warren, *American Spartans: The U.S. Marines, A Combat History from Iwo Jima to Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2005), p. 221; Yates, "Feather in their Cap," p. 312.

platoons reduced violence and improved security, permitting greater freedom of movement and higher turnout at elections. According to the Marines' statistics, CAP platoons provided greater security at a faster rate than militia platoons that protected villages alone. Moreover, the CAP units achieved that security at lower casualty rates than units engaged in search and destroy missions.[31]

Just as the Combined Action Program's emphasis on encouraging interaction between Marines and the local population and its reporting system to monitor the pace of pacification mirrored approaches and tools employed during the small wars campaigns, so too did some of the cultural intelligence challenges that the Marines faced in Vietnam resemble ones they had confronted several decades earlier. Among the greatest hurdles the CAP Marines faced were the language and cultural barriers. Most of the Marines were junior enlisted men in their teens or early twenties. Learning a new language and developing more than a cursory understanding of a complex culture would have been a tall order even with extensive instructional time, much less with the few weeks of training provided.[32]

The Marine Corps' Current Experience with Cultural Intelligence

In response to recent operational demands, the Marine Corps has developed an ambitious effort to improve cultural training and intelligence. The two lead organizations in the Marine Corps' cultural intelligence effort are the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning and the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity. Collectively, their initiatives are improving current Marines' abilities to understand and interact with foreign cultures and laying a solid foundation for improved cultural intelligence in future stability operations.

The Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning

The Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) was established in 2005 in order to develop, in the words of then-Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Michael W. Hagee, an operationally focused "understanding of the people we are trying to help and the

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[31] Yates, "Feather in their Cap," p. 320; Krepinevich, *Army and Vietnam*, p. 174.

[32] Krepinevich, *Army and Vietnam*, p. 173; Yates, "Feather in their Cap," 315, 317-18; Kopets. "Combined Action Program," p. 80.

people we are fighting: their culture, what they think is unimportant, what they think is important," through focused training for the operating forces, individual training and professional military education, distance learning, and professional reading.[33] CAOCL's mission is to "ensure that Marines are equipped with operationally relevant regional, culture, and language knowledge to allow them to plan and operate successfully in the joint and combined expeditionary environment in any region of the world in current and potential operating conditions while targeting persistent and emerging threats and opportunities."[34] CAOCL pursues this mission along five main axes: the development of operational culture training modules and curricula for professional military education; the support of mobilizing and deploying units; the assignment of micro-regions for study by career Marines; the provision of operationally relevant language support; and the conduct of in-theater research to ensure that the curricula, training modules and products of the first four axes are timely, accurate, and relevant to the needs of the operating forces.

The CAOCL effort likely to have the greatest impact over the long run is its comprehensive program to integrate operational culture learning into every level of training and education that Marines encounter during their service (See Figure 2). Recruits receive a basic introduction to operational culture concepts from their drill instructor. The goal is simply to introduce culture learning concepts into their frames of reference and ensure that they appreciate the importance of cultural knowledge. As Marines advance in rank, they continue to receive appropriate cultural education in the schoolhouses. Once an appreciation of the value of cultural intelligence has been instilled, the next step is to improve Marines ability to understand, analyze, and interact with foreign cultures. For example, *Operational Culture 101 + Current Operation Environment* is the first in a series of classes that introduce junior leaders to the "how" and "why" of navigating the "human terrain." This course also includes information relevant to the current operating environments where sergeants and lieutenants might be deployed. At the Command and Staff College, Marine officers are required to take a course that provides a basic anthropological framework for thinking about culture and then

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[33] Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning brochure, available at http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/caocl/Includes/CAOCL_Brochure.pdf.

[34] Ibid.

applies that framework to potential operations in two regions of the world. Distance learning opportunities intended to provide greater in-depth knowledge of a particular region of the world are also available at various points in a Marine's career.

Figure 2 – USMC Operational Culture Learning Opportunities

Perhaps the most visible CAOCL effort has been its support of cultural training for mobilizing and deploying units.[35] The support consists of a combination of pre-deployment briefs, role playing, and distance learning, tailored to individual unit needs, and including familiarization materials for regional languages. The units then put what they have learned to the test in field exercises such as Mojave Viper at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) at Twentynine Palms, California. Mojave Viper is a 30-day exercise designed to prepare Marines for Operation Iraqi Freedom. It includes live fire as well as scripted free play, role-player facilitated, and force-on-force training. The culminating event is a 3-day, intelligence driven, scripted free play exercise. Marines must interact with religious and

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[35] One senior civilian employee of the Marine Corps whom we interviewed was unaware of any of CAOCL's activities other than its participation in pre-deployment training exercises such as Mojave Viper.

tribal leaders, deal with angry crowds, and work with Iraqi soldiers and policemen, among other tasks. CAOCL works closely with the Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group at MCAGCC to develop training events that reinforce appropriate interactions with the local population and take cultural considerations into account. The exercise reinforces the notion, first learned by the Marines during their small wars campaigns, that cultural knowledge and intelligence are essential to the success of the mission.[36]

The third function of CAOCL is to help make career Marines experts on a particular region of the world as part of the Career Marine Regional Studies (CMRS) program. Career Marines study and familiarize themselves with the language of one of seventeen "micro-regions" designated by CAOCL, in conjunction with other Marine organizations, based on forecasts of emerging threats and opportunities around the world. The program seeks to provide each career Marine with greater in-depth knowledge of a small region of the world so they are able to provide on-call expertise to their commanders at all levels. If operational cultural knowledge and language skills are seen as a pyramid, the regional experts are expected to fill a role in the middle of the pyramid between the foreign area officers at the top, who are the most well-educated and highly trained regional and language experts in the Marine Corps, and the tens of thousands of Marines who have received country- and mission-specific pre-deployment training at the bottom. At the moment, there are no plans to coordinate the assignment of regional experts with unit deployments. Because Marine units are so often redirected to locales very distant, both geographically and culturally, from their original destination, there is a concern that filling them only with experts on their original destination will make them inflexible and less able to adapt should their orders change. The Marine Corps appears willing to rely on chance and the law of averages to ensure that commanders will have experts on the relevant regions within their units. In a few years, however, the Marine Corps expects that solid knowledge of several countries, one region, and some minimal capability in two or more foreign languages will be the norm for mid-career Marines. It should be noted that the regional expertise system has not yet been fully implemented, so the details may change.

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[36] Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group, "Exercise Mojave Viper: Training for the Current Fight," *Marine Corps Gazette* 90 (Dec. 2006): 48-49.

Figure 3 – USMC Operational Language Learning Opportunities

Finally, CAOCL provides operationally relevant language support for Marines (see Figure 3). There is a strong emphasis on the operational relevance of the language support CAOCL offers. As noted earlier, a lack of language skills has historically been a challenge for the Marine Corps' use of cultural intelligence. However, language training can be time-consuming and expensive.[37] There are also specialized organizations within the Department of Defense that provide extended, intensive language training in a classroom setting. The Marine Corps and CAOCL have therefore chosen to rely heavily on web- and computer-based distance learning and to focus on four niche aspects of language education for Marines: pre-deployment familiarization to a level permitting Marines to convey meaning and understand the essentials of indigenous responses; elementary-level language learning for career Marines in support of their regional culture learning focus; mid-career sustainment of

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[37] Interviews with faculty at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College indicated that early efforts to teach language at the school consumed more than 75 percent of the school's budget and produced little measurable return.

language capability for heritage-speakers and school-taught Marine linguists; and provision of information about and evaluation of DOD, academic, and commercial resources for language study.

Marine Corps Intelligence Activity

The Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) provides tailored intelligence and services to the Marine Corps, other services, and the Intelligence Community based on expeditionary mission profiles in littoral areas. In 2005, MCIA was tasked with being the lead for cultural intelligence by the Department of Defense and setting the baseline for culture for the intelligence community. The three main objectives for the culture program within MCIA are to collect the relevant cultural data, to compile it in products to be used by different levels of the military, and to keep the data 'alive' by incorporating post-deployment feedback and lessons learned into a database.

The products that MCIA produces support the range of cultural intelligence from cultural awareness to operational cultural intelligence and strategic cultural intelligence.

Drawing on the Marine Corps' experience in its small wars campaigns and the lessons embodied in the *Small Wars Manual,* the first cultural intelligence product MCIA issues on a country is a detailed, in-depth country handbook that serves as a reference publication. This handbook typically numbers three hundred pages and provides basic reference information pertinent to military personnel. Geography, history, military, forces, and communications and transportation networks are some of the topics covered. Depending upon the country, the quantity and depth of the information varies. In the current handbooks for both Syria and Iraq, there are lengthy appendixes that have military equipment recognition charts, relevant Arabic words and phrases, international road-signs, and guides to health maintenance for deployed personnel. In the Iraq handbook, there is an additional appendix titled *Developing Effective Relationships* that focuses on topics such as building trust and venues of distinction. This new appendix appears to reflect the growing need among military personnel for the 'so what?' factor. The appendix outlines the relevance of some of the basic social

customs discussed earlier in the handbook to situations military personnel might encounter. For example, under *Venues of Distinction* it says,

> "Iraqis especially appreciate being publicly received in venues that combine a sense of power and personal favor (for example, at President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas; aboard Air Force One; at Camp David and in the Oval Office). They might lobby to be invited to these types of places. Iraqis with regular access to these venues may be asked by other regional leaders to deliver messages. In the case of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, Iraqis prefer to be received or invited to U.S. military controlled facilities like the CPA or CJTF-VII headquarters in Baghdad or the Polish Multinational Division Headquarters at Babylon."[38]

The preceding quotation suggests that some of the examples in the handbooks may not be appropriate for its most likely readership. The intent of the country handbook seems to be to provide basic background information to Marines, especially inexperienced ones, deploying to a country for the first time, but it is unclear how many of those reading the handbook will be in a position to hand out invitations to Camp David or the Oval Office. Moreover, while it is important to know that it is a sign of respect and showing of honor to invite an Iraqi to a venue such as Camp David, it is even more important to emphasize that if the military wants to increase the status of an Iraqi within the audience of other regional leaders, inviting him to places like Camp David might accomplish this.

Once MCIA has completed a country handbook they proceed to making a smaller, more operationally tailored *Cultural Field Guide*. The cultural field guide focuses more on ethnicity, physical appearance, cultural geography, cultural history, population, religion, ethnic groups, cultural attitudes, and customs, among other cultural topics. Depending upon the country, the field guide may pay greater attention to ethnic groups over cultural history or vice versa. The cultural field guides also focus more on the implications of certain cultural aspects on military operations, similar to the Appendix O in the country handbook mentioned above. In the Iran cultural field guide, there is a section on the *cultural influences on military*

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[38] Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, *Iraq Transitional Handbook*, Appendix O, Dec 2003 DOD-2630-IRQ-005-04.

effectiveness that examines the leadership, doctrine and strategy, operational planning, intelligence, small unit skills, logistics and maintenance, training, unit cohesion and morale, and technology and innovation of the Iranian military.[39]

There is also a deeper analytical component in the field guides that not only looks at the various individual aspects of a culture but also highlights how certain pieces may shape different cultural styles of warfare. The cultural field guide for Iran, for example, identifies two important components of the Iranian military: the Artesh, a conventional fighting force left over from the Shah's pre-1979 military; and the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps. an Islamic army with an unorthodox doctrine of jihad and people's war and close ties to the clerical regime. " It then examines how their historical legacies and self-conceptions shape their approaches to offensive and defensive conventional warfare and to irregular or unconventional warfare. According to the guide, "the Artesh considers itself a national army comparable to the best fighting forces of the world and does not readily accept non-conventional assignments...The IRGC, in contrast, traces its origins to the anti-Shah insurgents of the 1960's and 1970's. After the 1979 Revolution, the IRGC became a home guard and assumed a more Islamic outlook. However, segments of the IRGC retain the memory of their original success as a guerilla force. This makes them both adept at counterinsurgency operations to carry out their mission and competent at exporting guerilla training."[40]

One of the most familiar and widely used MCIA products is the *Culture Smart Card*. The culture smart card is typically the last cultural intelligence tool MCIA produces. As demand for basic cultural information increases from troops on the ground and the operational environment continues to change rapidly, MCIA has taken to developing culture smart cards and the more detailed country handbooks and cultural field guides in tandem. The culture smart card is much smaller and less detailed then the handbook or field guide and covers the Do's & Don'ts, cultural customs, cultural etiquette, cultural attitudes, ethnic groups,

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[3939] Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, *Iran Cultural Field Guide* Oct 2006 DOD-2630-IRN-003-07.

[40] Ibid.

population, military attitudes, religion, cultural history, centers of authority, social structures, clothing, diet and dwellings as well as key language phrases and greetings and gestures. While the cultural aspects included on the smart card are similar if not the same to those covered in the handbook and field guide, they are meant to be brief descriptions of the basic elements of culture and are often illustrated by graphs and charts that are clear and easy to read. The level of cultural knowledge available on a smart card is sufficient to aid the soldier in interacting with a foreign population in basic day-to-day circumstances and includes the relevant information a soldier needs to complete his mission.

The country handbook, cultural field guide, and culture smart card are the three main cultural intelligence tools that MCIA produces and makes available to not only the Marine Corps but also to the other services. However, MCIA is also working continuously to develop their understanding and range of materials to meet the demand for cultural intelligence. One of their latest products, for which they have created a partial prototype, is currently referred to as *cultural geography*. Cultural geography is MCIA's attempt to take cultural intelligence and superimpose relevant information on a geographical map of a country or region.[41] The current prototype is a map of the coastal regions of Kenya titled *Kenya's Cultural Geography: A Humanitarian Perspective of Coast Province* (See Figure 4). The large, center portion of the map is titled ethnic diversity and shows ethnic make-up, densely populated locations, livelihood(including tourism and merchants, areas dependant upon the wet season, and those areas that are agrarian, hunter/gatherer etc.), as well as areas of interest (such as land disputes and disaffected Swahili populations). Surrounding the borders of the main map are several graphs and digital images that depict other important cultural information. Two graphs focus on the age distribution of the population and another the distribution of malnourished children, while another set of graphs and digital images of the Coast Province of Kenya illustrate the media audience over the course of a day and the media outlets over population density. There is also a small section that has recommendations such as "pay close attention to the weather; this will affect the number of disease carrying insects". The map is detailed and magnified enough to be advantageous to the operational planner.

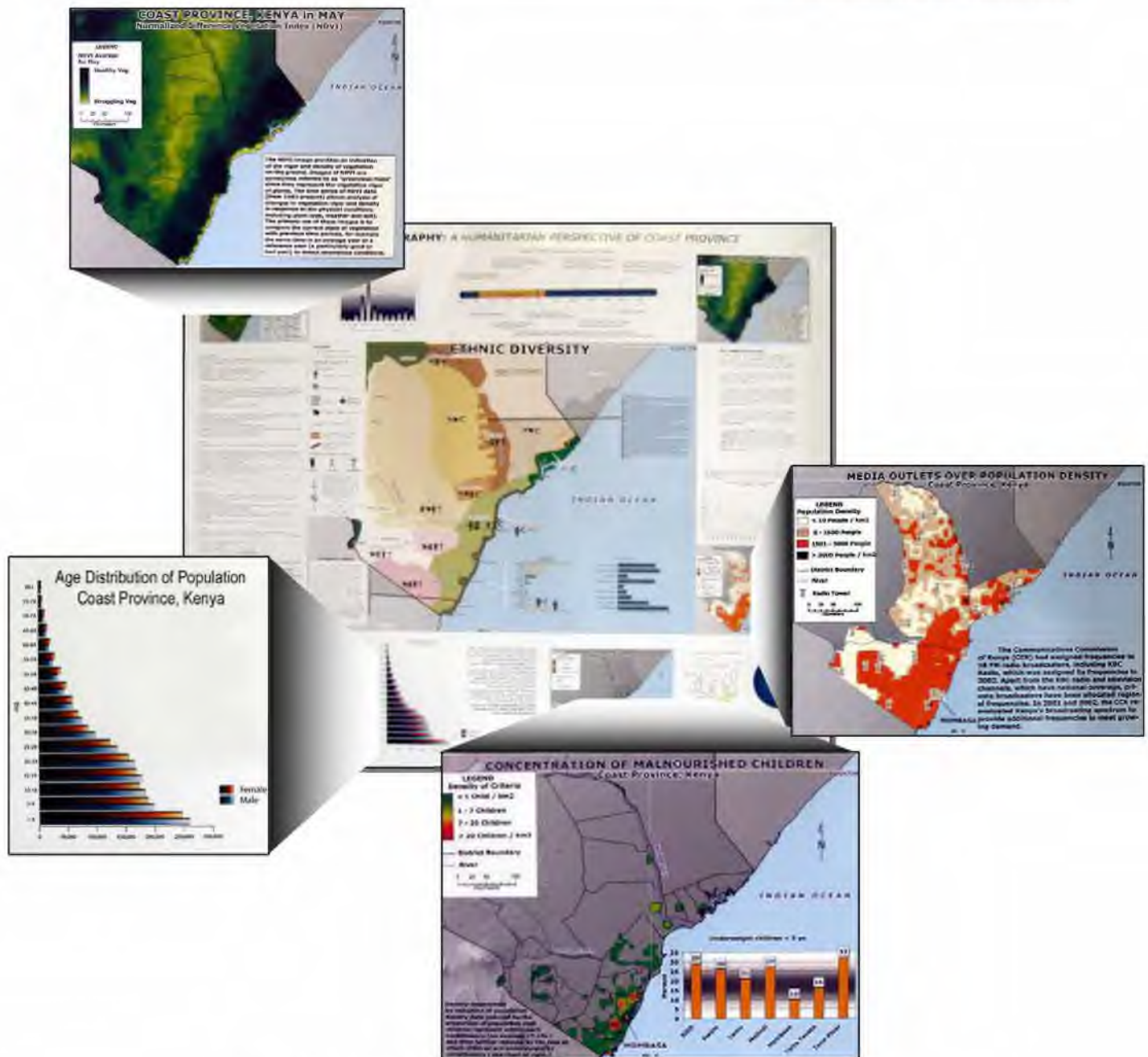
[41] Interview with Major (b)(6) USMC, April 2007.

Figure 4 – MCIA Prototype Map of Kenya's Cultural Geography

Cultural Intelligence Challenges for the Marine Corps

Despite its significant experience with cultural intelligence for stability operations and its extensive current programs in the area, the Marine Corps faces several challenges with respect to cultural intelligence.

One challenge is that the actual structure of the Marine Corps' operational culture knowledge and language skills effort may not match the theoretical model upon which it is based. As noted above, the Marine Corps envisions operational culture knowledge as a pyramid, with Foreign Area Officers and linguists trained by the Defense Language Institute at the top, CMRS experts in the middle, and Marines who have received country- and mission-specific training at the bottom. Discussions with Marines and a recent article in *Marine Corps Gazette*, however, suggest that the Marine Corps FAO program may not be producing FAOs with the language and cultural skills necessary to fill their intended position at the top of the pyramid. FAO is a secondary, not a primary Military Occupational Specialty, in the Marine Corps. As a result, Marine FAOs typically lack the time to gain true expertise in their area of focus or to maintain their perishable language skills. They are, in the words of one Marine major, "an inch deep and a mile wide in cultural capability and expertise" and their language capability is "all over the map."[42]

Figure 5 – Planned and Actual Structure of USMC Culture & Language Effort
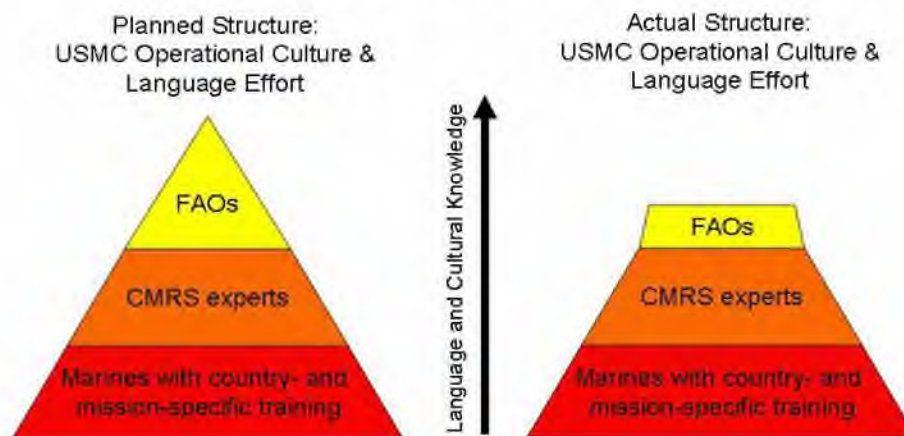
Languages have historically been one of the greatest challenges the Marine Corps' cultural intelligence efforts have faced. As the *Small Wars Manual* suggests, in some cases language

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[42] Maj. Alfred B. (b)(6) "FAO Revisited: Establish the Criteria and Provide the Capability," *Marine Corps Gazette* (Feb. 2007): 17-18.

skills are a prerequisite for cultural understanding. During the interwar era, the Marine Corps addressed the challenge by requiring all officers to study Spanish in the classrooms at Quantico. Today, however, the Corps has moved away from providing extended, intensive classroom language training for any Marines other than a very small cadre of FAOs and linguists. Instead, the Corps has sought to provide operational language learning opportunities throughout Marines' careers. Before a unit deploys, Marines receive tactical language training focused on the current operation. The emphasis is on acquiring basic survival language skills and learning a few key phrases. Language modules are also embedded in professional military education. In addition, survival level language training to support the CMRS program will be offered in 30-day courses at "home station" language centers. Finally, Marines can take advantage of distance learning programs to maintain or improve their language skills at various points in their careers.

The Marine Corps must also overcome the often tense relationship between the military and academic worlds. During World War II, anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict worked closely with the military to provide insight into foreign cultures. Unhappiness with the Vietnam War and concern that the work of anthropologists was being used to support unpopular but pro-American regimes in Latin America effectively ended such collaboration in the 1960s. The rift still has not healed. David Kilcullen, an Australian Army officer and anthropologist who has served as the State Department's chief counterterrorism strategist and is currently advising the U.S. military in Iraq, describes the relationship between government and the discipline of anthropology, as "broken."[43] Hugh Gusterson, a professor of cultural studies at George Mason University, has argued that anthropologists who work for the military "prostitute their craft."[44] Montgomery McFate, another anthropologist who has worked closely with the U.S. military, has observed that "academic anthropologists hate me for working with DoD."[45] Finding anthropologists who

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[43] George Packer, "Knowing the Enemy: Can Social Scientists Redefine the 'War on Terror?'," *The New Yorker* (18 Dec. 2006): p. 65.

[44] Gusterson quoted in Matthew B. Stannard, "Montgomery McFate's Mission: Can One Anthropologist Possibly Steer the Course in Iraq?," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 29 Apr. 2007.

[45] Packer, "Knowing the Enemy," p. 65.

have the necessary skills and are willing to work with the military may therefore prove difficult. MCIA's recent search for a cultural anthropologist, a field research methodologist, and a cultural geographer was reportedly challenging.

One of MCIA's biggest challenges is keeping cultural intelligence "alive." Units returning from deployments frequently comment that the cultural information they received in pre-deployment training was out of date or irrelevant for the area where they were stationed. While the Marine Corps has become better in the past few years at capturing lessons learned and incorporating them into doctrine, education, and training, MCIA is taking a lesson from Marine Corps history and trying to create a database of cultural intelligence. The database will work with and be integrated into the wikis of the intelligence community.

MCIA's cultural intelligence database is still in the early stages, but the experience of the Center for Army Analysis (CAA) with databases and models for instability-induced conflict may provide some useful insights. CAA launched an effort to predict instability-induced conflict in 1999. It has collected open source data on 14 key indicators at the national level, such as gross domestic product, literacy, infant mortality, and percentage of the population that belongs to the largest religious and ethnic groups, and uses algorithms to forecast and analyze complex threats. The methodology is extremely data intensive; large amounts of data and consistent definitions are critical. There have been experiments with the methodology at the provincial level, but data was difficult and costly to obtain.[46] The Marine Corps has traditionally established its databases for cultural intelligence after Marines have already come ashore in a particular country. CAA's experience suggests, however, that the Corps may want to identify countries where it may be deployed in the future and begin standardizing definitions and collecting data now.

Another possible solution to the challenge of keeping cultural intelligence current is the Human Terrain Team (HTT) developed by the Army. Each five-person HTT will be comprised of experienced cultural advisors, including a cultural analyst and a regional studies analyst.

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[46] Telephone conversation with LTC Robert Shearer, Center for Army Analysis, 7 May 2007.

HTTs will be embedded in each forward-deployed brigade or regimental staff and will gather ethnographic, economic, and cultural data relevant to the battlefield in order to support analysis and decision making. They will conduct focused studies on cultural or ethnographic issues and maintain a current ethnographic and socio-cultural database of the area of operations in support of the brigade or regimental commander. They will also be able to call on a network of subject-matter experts who are knowledgeable about the cultural and ethnographic areas they support.[47] The first HTT arrived in Afghanistan in March 2007 and another is scheduled to go to Iraq in July 2007.[48]

The Marine Corps's principal cultural intelligence and training organizations, MCIA and CAOCL, may also need to clarify their roles in the joint arena. MCIA was designated as the Defense Department lead for cultural intelligence in 2005. Yet the designation carried with it no authority over the other services to dictate norms and standards for cultural intelligence production and dissemination. As a result, there are often disparities and overlaps among the services' cultural intelligence efforts. CAOCL, although not officially designated as the lead organization for cultural training, has emerged as the de facto lead. The culture centers of the other services often look to CAOCL as an example of how to develop and implement cultural training. CAOCL's programs, however, are designed to meet the needs of the Marine Corps, not the other services. Although the other services' cultural centers may benefit from studying CAOCL's initiatives, copying them blindly may lead to duplication and misallocation of effort.

Another challenge for the Marine Corps as it develops its cultural intelligence program is gauging the pace of change. CAOCL's cultural training efforts have intentionally been introduced incrementally in order to minimize resistance. Although the desire to avoid

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[47] Jacob Kipp, Lester Grau, Karl Prinslow, and Capt. Don Smith, "The Human Terrain System: A CORDS for the 21st Century," Military Review (Sept.-Oct. 2006).

[48] The first five HTTs were originally scheduled to deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan in the fall of 2006. Part of the delay is attributable to difficulties finding qualified personnel who are willing to deploy. However, at least one person we interviewed suggested that the HTTs have met resistance because they were introduced without building an adequate foundation of support and have been pushed too hard. The HTT experience may underscore the wisdom of CAOCL's incremental approach. Interview with senior civilian working for the Marine Corps, 16 May 2007.

backlash is understandable and appears to have been effective thus far, it has limited awareness of the Marine Corps' cultural training efforts both inside and outside the Corps. Discussions at the March 2007 Culture Summit sponsored by the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) revealed that few attendees were familiar with CAOCL's activities. Similarly, an April 2007 article in the *Gazette* called for a mandatory cultural education program that would largely duplicate CAOCL's efforts. Although the article was clearly outdated and had been submitted some two years earlier, the fact that the most widely-read publication in the Marine Corps published it indicates a disturbing lack of awareness of the Marine Corps' cultural knowledge training.

Finally, there is the challenge of institutionalizing cultural intelligence and culture training within the Marine Corps. Although the Marine Corps has a long experience with cultural intelligence dating back to the interwar era, if not earlier, it has at times abandoned its cultural focus. For much of the Cold War, cultural training became synonymous with cultural sensitivity training and was viewed with scorn by Marines in the field.[49] A similar danger exists today. If cultural training and intelligence becomes too closely associated with irregular warfare, there is a danger that it will be discarded should the Marine Corps choose to re-emphasize traditional expeditionary operations. There are at least a few reasons to believe that the Marine Corps would like to move away from irregular warfare. The 2006 Commandant's Planning Guidance emphasizes a rededication to core values and the warrior ethos as well as conventional competencies.[50] The Marine Corps plans to use the bulk of the end strength increase announced in January 2007 to add a regimental combat team rather than units more suited to understanding foreign cultures and countering asymmetric adversaries.[51]

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[49] Higgins, Trusso, and (b)(6) "Marine Corps Intelligence," p. 23.

[50] Gen. James T. Conway, 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Commandant's Planning Guidance* (2006).

[51] "DoD News Briefing with Under Secretary of Defense David Chu, Lt. Gen. Stephen Speakes, and Lt. Gen. Emerson Gardner from the Pentagon, U.S. Department of Defense News Transcript (19 Jan. 2007) available at http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3871; (b)(6) "Troop Level Increases: Pyrrhic Victory?" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 133 (Apr. 2007): p. 10; Andrew F. Krepinevich, "The Future of U.S. Ground Forces: Challenges and Requirements," Testimony before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, 17 April 2007 (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2007). p. 5.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. military has conducted a significant number of stability operations. Such operations, because they require the military to interact regularly with the local populace in order to provide security, restore essential services, meet humanitarian needs, and build indigenous capacity, require a solid understanding of foreign cultures. Since the future may include more stability operations, the U.S. military could benefit from improving its capabilities to collect and employ cultural intelligence for stability operations.

This paper has proposed that cultural intelligence can be understood as comprising three categories of information: cultural awareness, operational cultural intelligence, and strategic cultural intelligence. Cultural awareness includes an understanding of culture as a concept and a knowledge of basic cultural information. Operational cultural intelligence includes an understanding of how various cultural elements interact and affect the way a society operates. It places a premium on current, precise information. Strategic cultural intelligence looks at how a nation's culture might influence its policies over the long term. It provides the broader cultural picture and context needed to formulate effective strategy.

The Marine Corps' historical and current experience with the use of cultural intelligence for stability operations highlights several insights senior decision-makers in the Department of Defense may find useful as they seek to increase the services' cultural awareness and their ability to collect and employ operational and strategic cultural intelligence. To improve *cultural awareness*, the most fundamental requirement appears to be simply an understanding of the importance of culture in military operations. The Marine Corps first learned this lesson during its small wars campaigns in the interwar era. Although the Corps' commitment to culture waxed and waned over the years that followed, it never completely disappeared. It provides the foundation for the Corps' ambitious current program to increase cultural awareness. Central to that program are efforts such as CAOCL's participation in pre-deployment training and MCIA's culture smart cards. The greatest challenge to improving cultural awareness, however, has always been and will likely continue to be language. At the

moment, the Marine Corps has chosen to focus on equipping Marines with only basic language survival skills. If the *Small Wars Manual* is correct that true cultural understanding requires an ability to speak the language, that choice may effectively cap the level of cultural awareness Marines are able to attain.

The Marine Corps' efforts to improve *operational cultural intelligence* have been supported by its belief in the importance of placing Marines in positions where they are able to interact with the local population regularly and gather information. Databases such as the one MCIA is currently developing have historically been an important method for collating and organizing operational cultural intelligence once it is collected. Typically, such databases are created once a stability operation begins, but the Marine Corps and the Department of Defense may want to consider developing such databases now for selected areas of the world in order to be prepared for future stability operations. The Marine Corps also appears to be laying a solid foundation for the improvement of operational cultural intelligence in the future by embedding operational culture learning at every level of training and education and by fostering the development of regional expertise through the CMRS program. Greater coordination of the assignments of regional experts with unit deployments, to the extent it is possible, may increase the gains from the program when it is fully implemented. The largest hurdle to improving operational cultural intelligence historically has been timeliness. New technology for collaboratively organizing information and updating it quickly, such as the wikis to which MCIA plans to link its cultural intelligence database, may help keep operational cultural intelligence alive. Dedicated, forward-deployed units that are able to access additional information resources as needed, such as the Army HTTs, may also improve the timeliness of operational cultural intelligence.

Improving strategic cultural intelligence is likely to be the greatest challenge, both for the Marine Corps and for the Department of Defense as a whole. Historically, the Marine Corps has tended to focus on tactics and operations and leave strategy to others. The Corps' cultural training and intelligence program appears to be following the same pattern. To date, those efforts have focused almost entirely on the tactical and operational levels, although embedding culture learning into training and education may eventually produce senior

leaders who value strategic cultural intelligence and are able to employ it effectively. In the short term, however, other organizations, such as the Joint Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, will likely bear primary responsibility for the improvement of strategic cultural intelligence.

The Marine Corps appears to have laid a solid foundation for the future. MCIA boasts an impressive range of cultural intelligence products, many of which provide useful cultural intelligence at the tactical and operational level, and is seeking to improve its data, methodologies, and products. CAOCL is striving to embed operational culture training and learning throughout the Marine Corps, but only time will tell if its efforts will be successful. It has consciously chosen a gradual approach, which has minimized resistance to its efforts but may also have limited awareness of them. It will also be years before Marines who have been able to take advantage of all the culture learning opportunities available become senior leaders. Nevertheless, provided the Marine Corps does not move away from irregular warfare as its involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan draws down, those future Marine leaders should be better prepared to use cultural intelligence effectively in stability operations.

C. Workshop Papers

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND

MILITARY INNOVATION

IN THE US MARINE CORPS

Scitor Corporation

Strategic Analysis & Assessments

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to delineate the main characteristics of the organizational culture of the US Marine Corps and identify the ways these cultural attributes may influence organizational innovation. Before turning to this task, two issues need to be addressed.

First, organizational culture can be broadly defined as the assumptions, ideas, and beliefs of an organization. Organizational culture is normally conceived as norms. There are two types of cultural norms: those that express actors' identities and those that define standards of appropriate behaviour. Cultural norms shape action by enabling actors to construct identities that give meaning to their actions and the actions of others and by furnishing actors with ways of defining problems and responding to them appropriately. Military culture, then, establishes expectations about who the actors will be in a particular environment and how these particular actors will or should behave.

A military organization's history, particularly its battlefield history, serves as the foundation for the development and sustaining of its culture. Put another way, the historical narratives an organization and individual members use to describe what the organization has accomplished, and how, constitute its culture. Thus Marine Corps culture and self-identity are bound up in the stories that the Marine Corps tells itself and that individual Marines tell each other. The narratives that form identity, however, are not always based solely on historical fact, and may include apocryphal, legendary, and mythical elements. For this reason organizational culture is unlikely to be self consistent; it may encompass traits that are only partially compatible or are incompatible. Moreover, some traits may only exist in the organization's image of itself, with no or little foundation in actual behaviour.

A second issue is to establish what is meant by innovation or change. There is no consistency across studies of the subject in terms of what they seek to explain.[1] This paper utilizes the definition set forth by (b)(6) in Sources of Military Change, which is "change in the goals, actual strategies, and/or structure of a military organization." In practice this means that the focus is on major military change, which can be treated as

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[1] Different studies examine change in terms of, for example, doctrinal change, organizational goals, or new combat arms.

synonymous with military innovation. Minor military change, or adaptation, has fewer resource implications and does not involve the adoption of new military goals, strategies, or structures.[2] According to the definition used here, it is the *outcome* of military change that determines whether it is major or minor in character.

The Military Culture of the US Marine Corps

National military organizations have cultures that are distinct from the broader society they serve, and each military service, while it may share cultural characteristics or attributes with its sister services, will have its own distinct culture or, to use Karl Builder's term, "personality." The US Marine Corps certainly has a storied history, and hence a complex tradition, which is reflected in its own symbols, rituals, and practices. As Gen. Tony Zinni, USMC (ret) has noted, its history and traditions are "part of the essence of the Marine Corps."[3] The Corps' devotion to its history furnishes a means for sustaining and reinforcing its culture by defining what the Marine Corps is and what it means to be a Marine.

An important starting point for the analysis of the culture of the Marine Corps is *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps*, by Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, USMC (ret.). Krulak's book, while broadly historical in its development, is divided into six main sections, each of which examines critical aspects of what it means to be a Marine. . In order, these sections are titled The Thinkers, The Innovators, The Improvisers, The Penny Pinchers, The Brothers, and The Fighters.

Organizational Paranoia (The Thinkers)

Krulak's section titled 'The Thinkers' focuses on the various political struggles of the Marine Corps to survive as a separate military organization within the greater US military establishment since the service's founding in 1775. The survival of the USMC, he argues, was never assured. Writing in the early 1980s, he notes that through its history the Marine Corps has been faced with five serious attempts, and a number of minor attempts, to

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2 Worth noting is constant adaptation, or minor change, may accumulate in time to become a major change.

3 The Marine Corps commitment to its history is reflected, for example, in its annual Birthday Day celebration each 10 November

disband it, emasculate it, or to fold it, in whole or in part, into one or another of the other US services. Well known within the Marine Corps is the story of General Randolph McC. Pate, then Commandant, asking Krulak in 1957, "Why does the U.S. need a Marine Corps?" Krulak's response was that he "would find it most difficult to prove, beyond question, that the United States does truly need a Marine Corps." Krulak further acknowledged that the Army and the Air Force could carry out the roles and missions of the USMC, including the amphibious landing operations for which the Marine Corps claimed a 'mystical competence,' equally well.

The Marine Corps thus understands that it arguably does not provide any particularly unique military function and competes with both the Army and Air Force for roles, missions, and resources. Moreover, the Marine Corps sees its status in the American military establishment as, in Krulak's words, "perennially the smallest kid on the block in a hostile neighborhood." As a consequence, he observes that, "[b]eneficial or not, the continuous struggle for a viable existence fixed clearly one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Corps – a sensitive paranoia, sometimes justified, sometimes not."

This 'organizational paranoia' manifests in several ways. First, the Corps is perennially wary of the implications for its organizational survival of external pressures for change. Second, it is vigilant to the ramifications of change in the strategic, military environment, lest a failure to adjust make it appear effectively irrelevant as a distinct organization. Third, it is constantly wary of the aspirations of the other services when it comes to its survival. Finally, the Marine Corps is perennially concerned that it not be seen as encroaching on the functions of the other US military services, or, worse, perceived as providing little more than a redundant military capability.[4]

An important corollary of this sense of paranoia is that the Marine Corps strives to ensure it has a role or character distinct from the other US military services. The success of the Marine Corps in the long and terrible Pacific island campaign during World War II

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[4] What distinguishes the organizational paranoia of the Marine Corps as a cultural trait, rather than simply a reasonable response to environmental conditions, is its pervasiveness and persistence, even when there is no one out to get the Corps, and the propensity it creates to perceive any and all challenges, real or imagined, significant or insignificant, as putative threats to the very survival of the Corps as a service and to react accordingly in a forceful manner.

consolidated the service's unique role as a sea borne, amphibious force, which was reinforced by its success in its early campaigns in Korea during 1950. Since World War II the Corps has also stressed its expeditionary character, variously represented as America's "first to fight," "911 force," "ready force" and so on. Although the Corps certainly has an expeditionary character, its amphibious nature and attendant roles and missions, which distinguish it from the US Army, are the true touchstones of its culture and identity. Amphibious warfare is effectively synonymous with the Marine Corps, in the perceptions of both Marines and the society they serve.[5]

The Marine Corps sense of paranoia and its self identification as an amphibious fighting force may influence innovation in complex ways. On the one hand, the Corps' sense of paranoia strongly suggests that it will be open to major innovations that enhance its unique status or sustain its battlefield effectiveness. Such receptivity to innovation is likely to be more pronounced in periods when resources are scarce or when the Corps feels its survival is at stake. On the other hand, the Corps is, and will remain, sensitive to innovations that may detract from or significantly alter its sea borne character or that make it appear to be little more than a second land army., For example, the development of the scalable, combined arms Marine Air Ground Task Force concept, which can be considered a major change in organizational structure, was consistent with the Marine Corps' expeditionary, amphibious character and its ability to handle a wide range of missions. In contrast, the Corps resisted adopting a substantial heavy armor capability when faced with the prospect of engaging more numerous heavy armored Soviet or Soviet-styled forces in the 1970s. Doing so would have significantly affected its ability to conduct amphibious operations and would have made it more like the Army.[6] Thus, while the Marine Corps 'sensitive paranoia' may make it more open to innovation, it also shapes which innovations are and are not acceptable. It may even prove to be an obstacle to innovations that are perceived as adversely impacting the Marine Corps' sea borne, expeditionary character.

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5 It is little wonder that the Marine Corps claims to have a "mystical competence" in amphibious operations.

6 In debates in the 1970s, some Marines boisterously argued that the Corps needed to adopt heavy tanks and heavy tracked APCs. The Corps solution, among other initiatives, was to buy lighter, wheeled APCs and eventually to adopt maneuver warfare as its warfighting approach (though this latter initiative was strongly contested internally).

Warriors (The Fighters)

One of the personalities of the Marine Corps examined by Victor Krulak is that of being "fighters" or, to use current parlance, "warriors." In the introduction to the final section in his book he contends that, "[o]f the various enduring faces that have come to distinguish the Corps, the first to emerge was the conviction that fighting was its business, conflict its way of life." Elsewhere he notes that, "[t]he Marines are an assemblage of warriors, nothing more." Zinni, in his comments on the qualities of Marines, makes similar observations; "[e]very Marine is a fighter...All of us are warriors."

The ethos of being a warrior permeates the Marine Corps. At its very core this ethos involves, as Krulak argues, the perception of Marines as tenacious fighters who endure and succeed even in the most desperate conditions and situations. This particular self image is reflected, for example, in the idealization of many past Marines such as Lewis "Chesty" Puller who have faced savage combat and adversity with courage and aplomb, and hence are role models for Marines; the tendency of the Corps to foster the image of Marines as mud-caked, dogged fighters; and a preference for the offensive over the defensive even in the face of overwhelming odds. Yet the warrior ethos encompasses other important traits of the Marine Corps as well: its propagation of values, such as honor, courage, integrity, and honesty, and its commitment to upholding high standards of conduct; a keenness for the quest for excellence in the art and practice of warfare (however this may be conceived); its dedication to the education of Marines of all ranks; its sense of camaraderie with and self sacrifice for other Marines;[7] and its pride in the toughness of its recruit training and the 'selectivity' of its membership.

The specific elements of the Marine Corps' warrior ethos reinforce each other and foster and support the Corps' self image of Marines as warriors and of itself as an elite fighting force. Each Marine is a "warrior," and through individual faithfulness to each other, collective esprit de corps and selfless teamwork, these Marines form an elite fighting force. Put differently, the Marine's self image is that they constitute a warrior class, or warrior caste, separate from the society they loyally serve, with the whole – the Marine Corps – being greater than the sum of its parts – individual Marines or warriors.

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7 Krulak identifies this attribute as a separate trait in the section of his book subtitle 'The Brothers'.

The distinction between the individual as a warrior and the Corps as an elite fighting force may be subtle but the bifurcated nature of the Marines' warrior ethos significantly shapes how this cultural attribute may influence innovation. The Marine Corps' perception of itself as an elite fighting force, for example, may encourage a belief that it has no need to innovate. Why innovate if you are already a highly effective, elite fighting force? The warrior ethos may also impede innovations, such as new organizational goals, roles, or missions, that require new education, training or even new units or organizational structures unrelated to warfighting. In other words, any innovation that undermines the self sense of what it means to be a warrior or detracts from the self image that the Marine Corps 'fights' is likely to be deemed incompatible with being a Marine. As an example, opponents of maneuver warfare in the 1980s and early 1990s objected that the concept implied that battle could be won without engaging and killing the enemy.[8] Their opposition was in part predicated on the belief that what Marines do as warriors is fight.

The elemental nature of the Marine Corps' warrior ethos also conditions its effect on innovation. Elemental facets of an organization's self image are difficult to alter; hence, they may pose obstacles to innovation. If an innovation changes or undermines the self conception that Marines are warriors, the warrior ethos, because it is an elemental cultural artifact, may very well slowly yet steadily reassert itself. As a result, the innovation may fail to win acceptance over time and languish unimplemented. Even more subtly, innovations that improve the battlefield effectiveness of the Marine Corps, and thus have no apparent adverse effects on its status as an elite fighting force, may nonetheless arouse organizational opposition because they impact negatively on the self conception of the individual Marine as a warrior. The 1996 Hunter Warrior experiment, for example, was criticized because the concept transformed Marines into little more than forward based sensors for long-range, indirect fires. Although it may be pushing the idea too far, the general wariness of the Marine Corps regarding the bruited benefits of the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs and the subsequent effort by SecDef Donald Rumsfeld to

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8 During the debate in the 1980s, being termed 'a "maneuverist" implied 'a giddy, carefree vision of flitting about the battlefield – moving for the sake of movement alone', while in 1990 manoeuvre warfare was equated with '[t]rying to confuse [the enemy] to death.' The view of those arguing against, or at least unconvinced by, maneuver warfare is aptly summed up in the reported comment that 'Marines do not tiptoe around the battlefield'.

transform the US military through the application of information and other technology could be interpreted as additional examples of such resistance.

Innovators (The Innovators)

Krulak, in the part of his book subtitled "The Innovators," lists a range of significant innovations produced by the Marine Corps that he boldly claims "have changed the character of a war." He contends that "Marines have...thought up or caused to come into being, some of the most exciting – and useful – developments in modern operational concepts, weaponry and equipment." The primary innovations he notes are the development of the techniques and equipment of amphibious warfare employed with great impact in the Pacific Theater in World War II; the first use of aircraft for dive bombing in the interwar years and the subsequent perfection of close air support techniques and weaponry in World War II; and the development of the concept for the use of helicopters for ship to shore envelopment after World War II. Zinni cites the same historical innovations to support his contention that "[we] have a reputation for innovation." The historical track record of creative and bold innovation by the Marine Corps thus feeds a perception that it has an innovative character that is a significant trait of its personality, or self-identity.

Marines certainly believe that their service is innovative, and that the Marine Corps is ostensibly more willing to undertake major innovations than are the other US services, or indeed other military organizations. Yet whether the Marine Corps is really as innovative as it perceives itself to be must be questioned. First, the innovations to which Marines point in order to sustain their claim occurred during a period from the 1920s to the 1950s. Since the 1960s the only major change, or innovation, undertaken by the Marine Corps has been the adoption of maneuver warfare as its approach to waging war.[9] Thus the Marine Corps' perception of itself as an innovative service is largely based on efforts that occurred 50 or more years ago, not on a sustained track record of constant innovation.[10] Second, the claim

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[9] That Victor Krulak writing in the early 1980s did not mention the adoption of maneuver warfare as an important innovation is understandable, whereas that Zinni, writing in the first years of the 21st Century, did not mention this innovation is surprising.

[10] Moreover, the claim that the Marine Corps was the first to utilize dive bombing is not supported by the historical record; this belief is organizational folklore.

of being innovative obscures the historical reality that past innovations were often met with considerable internal resistance. During the 1920s and 1930s, there was considerable debate and contention about whether the Marine Corps should focus on being an amphibious force or being a 'small wars' force, with those arguing for the latter ultimately losing the debate. Equally, the resistance to the adoption of maneuver warfare was so significant that not until 1993 was it claimed that the Corps had accepted this new way of warfare (some 13 years after the idea was introduced in 1979-80 and some three years after it was officially promulgated).

Major innovations such as the development of amphibious warfare and heliborne ship-to-shore movements were driven by concerns that without such changes the Marine Corps as a service might have been marginalized, putting its survival in jeopardy (organizational paranoia). An impetus behind the development of its signature amphibious capability was Plan Orange for the waging of a potential campaign against Japan. Without the development of a viable amphibious capability, the Marine Corps' role in such a conflict would likely have been at the margins (as would have happened if the Corps had opted to focus on small wars as some Marines advocated). Equally, the development of heliborne ship-to-shore movement was a response to serious questions about the impact of nuclear weapons on the practicality of amphibious attacks as practiced during the Pacific Campaign. The historical evidence indicates that the Marine Corps will innovate when its organizational survival may be at risk (or at least when it perceives that its survival may be at risk), but otherwise it is no more and no less innovative than any other US service or national military organizations.

In sum, as General Charles C. Krulak observed, somewhat ruefully, following his failure as Commandant to implement the changes he thought the Corps needed to adopt to prepare for 21st-century warfare, the Marine Corps "is not really as innovative as it likes to think it is." His explanation was that "[t]he Marine Corps is tremendously attached to tradition, and its hand… is always on touchstones of the Corps." To put it another way, other cultural attributes more powerfully influence how Marines perceive themselves and the Marine Corps, and hence what is deemed appropriate behaviour for Marines, than the Corps' self identification as an innovative organization.

Adaptive (The Improvisers and The Penny Pinchers)

One suspects that in no small part the cultural perception that the Marine Corps is an innovative service stems from a conflation of adaptation with innovation. For the Marine Corps is an adaptable service. Victor Krulak provides two central reasons for the adaptability of the Marines. The Corps has historically been forced to operate with limited resources, and thus it has developed a culture that fosters creative and effective solutions. A second reason, he argues, is that "[i]mprovisation has been a way of life for the Marines." The Marine Corps as an expeditionary organization must deploy quickly with what means it has to hand to conduct a wide range of possible missions. This has created a mindset of creative, adaptive thinking about how to achieve missions with the means and material they can bring or that are available in theater.

The adaptive quality of Marine culture is a function of historical and current necessity and will be a persistent trait of the Corps. The adaptive nature of Marines means that a mindset exists within the Corps that seemingly will support innovation when necessity, particularly operational necessity, demands. But adaptation is not the same as innovation, given the definition of military change employed here. Adaptation is about making minor changes, permanent or temporary, that improve the capability of the Corps to achieve its mission ends but do not result in any substantive change in its organizational goals, strategies, or structures. Hence while the adaptive character of Marines furnishes a positive base for possible innovation, it may not hold in periods when there are no immediate operational pressures for change.

Peering into the Future

The Marine Corps is currently exploring a range of both minor and major changes as it seeks to adjust to new operational realities. The final section of this paper examines the possible implications of the argument developed above regarding the potential impact of Marine Corps culture on innovation for some of these current efforts.

First, of immediate relevance here is the effort of the Marines to develop cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural intelligence. In the context of the argument

made above, this move to cultivate 'cultural capabilities' is a minor change, or adaptation. The present implementation of this change will not result in a substantive change in the goals, strategies, or structures of the organization. The pursuit of this 'cultural skill set' is consistent with the adaptive character of Marines and the Marine Corps, and does not have an evident adverse impact on those cultural traits that may serve as obstacles – indeed the adoption of 'cultural skill sets' arguably is compatible with the warrior ethos and amphibious/expeditionary character of the Corps. The caveat to this observation is whether this change will persist instead of being a temporary operational expedient. This question is pertinent since the Corps learned the importance of culture during the war in Vietnam, yet allowed its 'cultural capability' to fade in the decades after that conflict, only to rediscover the need for such a capability in the current operational environment. To rebuild its cultural capability, it is now offering university-level courses on culture for officers and is working to infuse the Marine Corps' educational programme with the significance of cultural awareness and knowledge as well as to incorporate relevant cultural factors in training exercises. As long as these efforts are sustained over the years, 'cultural skill sets' will increasingly be embedded into the Corps mindset and approach to missions.

Potentially more problematic may be the maintenance of cultural intelligence as a standard capability of the Corps. Culture is not fixed in its details or in the way it influences the behaviour and interactions of individuals and groups within a society. Tracking shifts in both the details of a society's culture and how those details influence behaviour and interaction is a core task of rigorous cultural intelligence that will be of real operational value to Marines and their commanders. This means that Marines working cultural intelligence must have the intellectual skills of a cultural anthropologist, a cultural sociologist, and indeed a cultural ethnographer, as well as being sufficiently fluent to recognize and understand the subtleties of the relevant language(s). These skills are not quickly developed, rather they are the products of lifelong study and practice. Thus, retaining a high degree of expertise in cultural intelligence will require the Marine Corps to furnish the appropriate inducements and promotional pathways for individual Marines to choose it as, in effect, their primary Military Occupational Specialty. At the same time, the Marine Corps

must ensure that specialization in cultural intelligence throughout a career will not result in a form of segregation from Marines who pursue a traditional career path.

Finally, the Marine Corps is currently contemplating focusing much more attention and resources on irregular warfare than on the more traditional forms of conflict it has emphasized in the past. Such a reorientation, if undertaken, will very likely have significant consequences for the goals, strategies, and structures of the organization, and hence can be considered a major change or innovation.

A case can be made that the Marine Corps will be receptive to adopting this change and be able to successfully implement it. At present, in line with the dictate of 'everyone step to the right', the US Army is attempting to increase its expeditionary capability. This step to the right by the Army impinges on the unique expeditionary (amphibious) nature of the Corps, to the point where the Marine Corps may not be able to argue compellingly that its expeditionary character and capability distinguish it from its sister service. The "sensitive paranoia" of the Marine Corps suggests that concern about its survival will make it receptive to innovations that create or re-establish unique qualities and capabilities that distinguish it from the other US military services. Developing a specialization in irregular warfare that the Army does not have would serve this end very well, for while the Army is seeking to become more expeditionary, the changes it has implemented, at least to date, have not substantially altered its organizational goals and strategies.[11]

Equally there are reasons to suggest that cultural impediments may make the implementation of such a change at least difficult and at worst unsuccessful. If one were, as some do, to simply equate irregular warfare with counterinsurgency (COIN), there would likely be few cultural impediments to the acceptance of this form of warfare.[12] It is at least broadly compatible with many of the cultural qualities of the Corps. Irregular warfare, however, encompasses much more than just COIN.[13] A holistic, practical approach to IW

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11 This author is somewhat sceptical of claims that the Army definitely will retain a strong counterinsurgency capability long after this service has moved past the current operational demands it faces in Iraq and Afghanistan. But only time will really tell.

12 As COIN operations involve long campaigns, mostly on land, there undoubtedly will be concern that an emphasis on COIN could make the Corps too much like a second army.

13 There have been indications that the Marine Corps sees COIN as a key part of its future. But developing a persistent COIN capability may not be sufficient to sustain the unique character of the Corps given the claims by

would include, beyond COIN/combat operations, training and advice for host nation forces, information operations, essential service provision, stability and reconstruction operations (including economic development), civil-military operations and governance, integrated intelligence operations, and joint/interagency coalition operations. Some of these elements of IW are reasonably compatible with Marine Corps culture. Yet other elements, such as essential service provision, stability and reconstruction operations (including economic development), and civil-military operations and governance, are less, potentially much less, compatible with core aspects of the organization's culture. Marines certainly are currently engaging in such operations as they have adapted to succeed in their missions, but to develop these as permanent, core specializations of the Corps is a different proposition.

Should the Corps seek to decisively reorient itself to provide a specialized, and unique, IW capability that no other US service does, it may require the development of high levels of expertise in all the components of IW. Such a shift might very well result in internal resistance stemming from concern that such specialization undermines the warrior ethos of Marines, particularly if implementation requires the generation of new MOS's for Marines in these areas. Further, there may be resistance from Marines who perceive the adoption of such 'non-fighting' missions as altering substantially the traditional character of the Corps. Furnishing the number of Marines needed to effect such missions could be seen as reducing the combat capacity of the Corps, possibly very substantially if the current situation of overstretch persists. The creation of new units and specializations oriented to these 'non-military' operations also could reasonably be perceived by many Marines as altering substantively the traditional character of the Corps. A demonstrative analogy is that the Marine Corps has already tapped an artillery brigade to develop a secondary specialization in civil-military skills; if one reverses this to conceive of a unit whose primary specialization is CMO with artillery skills being only a secondary specialization, the potential implications, real or perceived, for the character and nature of the Corps will likely prove more problematic for Marines to accept.

Army officials that, unlike post-Vietnam, they will retain this hard won capability. Whether in fact it will do so may not be especially relevant, for much more relevant will be the perception of the American people, Congress, and the presiding Presidential Administration (particularly the OSD) about whether there is a significant overlap in the capabilities the Marine Corps and Army each provide.

The Marine Corps can expect to encounter cultural impediments if it moves to reorient its mission focus to irregular warfare at the expense of downgrading or even marginalizing those it has traditionally stressed. It would be faced with the very real risk that the success of implementation efforts may, at least, be very uneven across the different necessary components of IW, with a consequent degradation of the desired capability, or, at worst, prove to be so uneven or just generally problematic due to the persistence of cultural obstacles that the implementation of a IW capability stalls or eventually fails. Hence, the Marine leadership, if it does decide to develop a core specialization in IW, will need to gauge very carefully and self critically the impact on the many facets of the character, or self identity, of Marines and the Corps. It will also need to develop initiatives to ease the impact, or perhaps even think through how to shift Marines' understanding of the particular cultural qualities that will be most resistant to change so that the organizational culture will be more compatible with irregular warfare.[14]

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14 For an analysis of a potential approach to reshaping specific cultural attributes, based on two cases drawn from the US Marine Corps, see (b)(6) , 'Warriors and Innovators: Military Change and Organizational Culture in the US Marine Corps', *Defence Studies*, Vol. 6, no. 2 (2006) pp. 1-33.

Marine Corps Culture:

"The Origins and Applicationof the Expeditionary Ethos"

(b)(6)

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the origins and impact of the organizational culture of the Marine Corps. The culture of any military institution is a collective set of beliefs, rituals, and norms that govern how individuals act and how the organization responds to events and stimuli. The Marine Corps is often thought of as a highly traditional military service; deeply devoted to its unique core competencies, historical icons, and traditions. But the Leathernecks are not a rigid institution, hidebound by history or a slavish devotion to the past. The Marines identify themselves as a highly adaptive organization, and can point to a long line of tactical and technological innovations they have brought forward. Some of these innovative approaches involve the lower end of the conflict spectrum in what the Marines call Small Wars. This is an umbrella term for conflicts including counter-insurgencies, stability and support operations (SASO), and irregular warfare.

This paper will focus on the Corps' operational history in this wide range of contingencies, and draw insights regarding how these conflicts have contributed to or been influenced by Marine organizational culture. The Corps' unique expeditionary ethos is a major element, if not the crucial institutional attribute, of its overall organizational culture. This effort will seek to comprehend how the unique culture of this armed force developed, and how it influences, positively or negatively, its performance in stability operations and counter-insurgencies.

The Marine expeditionary ethos includes attitudes and beliefs built into the planning assumptions made about the operating environment and external support. Expeditionary operations typically are conducted in austere environments–from sea, land, or forward bases–and will likely require US forces to operate without reliance on third party or host-nation support. This does not mean that an expeditionary force is necessarily small or lightly equipped, but that it is no larger or heavier than necessary to accomplish the mission. Supplies, equipment, and infrastructure are limited to operational necessities; "nice to

haves" are ruthlessly carved out. Operational considerations such as readiness, realistic and stressful training, force protection and intelligence consistently prevail over peacetime considerations. Being prepared to operate without host-nation support is relevant to SASO since most missions are conducted within states that have failed or at least are substantially weak in basic services and functions.

From the day recruits join the Corps they understand that they are going to deploy, and that they must be mentally and physically ready. This focus on a constant state of readiness to deploy underscores the expeditionary culture. The Corps is famous for its physical readiness, but the cognitive or intellectual aspects are more important to the ethos. The ethos accepts ambiguity and uncertainty, preparing planners and operators to adapt to the conditions found once they arrive in area of operations. Fixed schedules, perfect intelligence, guaranteed transportation and support arrangements, and sunny weather are not expected—quite the opposite is inculcated in the mindset of Marine planners and commanders.

Decentralized command and control is also central to the expeditionary ethos. Rather than expect to oversee all the details of a plan and its execution, Marines are taught to employ mission type orders, leaving the details of execution to the subordinate commanders, operating under a shared understanding of the commander's overall intent. This approach leaves the details to the people closest to the problem, with the most recent information and feel for the context of a decision. It also maximizes the initiative of junior commanders and reinforces responsibility and awareness of the larger context in Marine leaders.

Boldness, creativity, and risk taking are all revered as individual and organizational traits. Aggressiveness is expected, even in the face of large odds or uncertain conditions. While aggressive action is prized, it is coupled with a preference for indirect approaches rather than simply applying brute force. Maneuver warfare seeks to apply strength against weakness, and seeking out vulnerabilities and creative solutions is the epitome of the Marine way.

This expeditionary ethos has both an institutional and individual dimension. Marine doctrine explicitly underscores the importance of the individual Marine armed with an

expeditionary mindset. Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 3, *Expeditionary Operations,* states

> *The expeditionary mindset implies a Spartan attitude: an expectation and a willingness to endure—in fact, a certain pride in enduring—hardship and austere conditions. . . . [and the] versatility and adaptability to respond effectively without a great deal of preparation time to a broad variety of circumstances. Another part of this expeditionary mindset is a global perspective oriented to responding to a diverse range of threats around the globe rather than to a specific threat in a specific part of the world.'*

Because of this global perspective and the diverse range of threats, the Marines have not historically invested deeply in understanding of specific foreign cultures. They develop a broader sense of the importance of "operational culture" to teach Marines about local power or political systems, the role of culture in shaping how societies function, and the need to develop empathy with local populations.

This paper is organized into four parts. The first three sections concisely cover the case histories of Marine Corps participation in The Banana Wars, Vietnam, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The final section holistically analyzes the Corps history and these case studies to draw conclusions about the expeditionary ethos that makes the Corps relatively successful in these ambiguous and precarious conflicts. This attribute, or more accurately set of characteristics and attitudes, suggests that the Marines are institutionally well positioned to succeed in such missions.

The Banana Wars

The Marine Corps' experience and reputation at Small Wars is firmly grounded in Central America and the Caribbean, but their initial exposure to this form of warfare actually began in the Philippine War from 1899 to 1902. The Marines were ordered to organize and dispatch a regiment, which was the largest deployed formation up until that time. Under the command of Major Littleton Waller, the Marines helped tame the rebellion led by the Filipino

leader Emilio Aguinaldo. They executed this mission without popular support or much experience.

Working closely with the Army and Navy officers, the Marines helped dampen the rebellion by fighting principally in the jungle and fringes of population centers. The final campaign saw Waller leading a provisional brigade, another first for the "Leathernecks," against the most committed guerrillas on the island of Samar. During these campaigns the Marines honed counter-insurgency skills and jungle combat techniques, learning to maintain jungle base camps, train indigenous personnel, employ translators, and adapt to foreign cultures. From the Army, the Marines learned the non-kinetic aspects of a counterinsurgency, especially the building of public works, local governance, and the raising of native police forces.

This skill base was used a little more than a decade later when the Marines were ordered into Haiti in 1915. This was the beginning of the so-called Banana Wars, in which the Marines were often portrayed as serving corporate interests of American banks or investors. In this case, a revolution had toppled the elected government of President Vilbrun Sam in Haiti and a reluctant U. S. administration wanted order. It also wanted to preclude the need for Europeans intervention. The Marines were not strangers to Haiti or its capital of Port au Prince, having conducted 19 landings there between 1857 and 1913 to quell disorder and protect the lives and property of American citizens. This time the President ordered the Navy to take charge, and more than 2,000 Marines were sent in again under the command of the ubiquitous Colonel Waller.

The Marines had learned their previous lessons well. Upon landing they provided local security, as well as proving medical care, feeding the elderly and disabled, and disarming the population. This "indirect approach" was generally effective. Generous amnesty conditions and weapons buy back programs also proved to be valuable. Eventually, the U.S. government exerted pressure to install a favored official as the local face to American dominated government. But this produced a backlash among the local population. In September 1915, the local *cacos* rebelled and began ambushing the Marines and disturbing the railroad networks. This rising was quickly crushed by aggressive assaults by

the Marines on rebel strongholds, as well as courteous treatment for prisoners, surrendered *cacos*, and supporters.

Ultimately the Marines turned back to a more indirect approach by raising a cadre of local police, the *Gendarmerie d'Haiti,* led by the famous Marine Lieutenant Colonel Smedley Butler and officered by young Marine NCOs who simultaneously drew both their Marine and local government salaries. These aggressive NCOs developed effective small local units, and the *Gendarmerie* was sufficient to keep the peace for a few quiet years until a second *caco* war began in 1919. Possibly engendered by the poor quality of Marine leaders due to the pull on resources for the battlefield in France, the *Gendarmerie* was increasingly ineffective at maintaining local order or at dampening the growing power of the *cacos*. The populace resented the increasingly corrupt government and continued to support the rebel leader Charlmagne Peralte. Peralte was eventually killed by a Marine-led patrol that used a ruse to get access to his camp.

While improving local governance and public infrastructure was the principal thrust of the American campaign, credible military force and local security were also required. The Marines are credited with killing 2,250 *cacos* and took 11,000 prisoners over a five-year period, at the cost of 13 Marines. Force levels in Haiti were reduced to 800 Marines in the capital and major towns in Haiti during much of the 1920s

Nicaragua, 1926-1933

The Marine experience in Nicaragua followed much the same pattern. The Marines had been stationed there since 1912 when they had landed to put down a revolt. A legation guard remained until President Harding decided in 1924 that they would withdraw. The last detachment sailed away from Managua in August 1925. But election disputes and local disorder brought them back in 1926, ostensibly to protect U.S. lives and property but more accurately to bolster the pro-U.S. government of Adofo Diaz and its tenuous hold on power. Within two months, a total of 2,000 Marines had been dispatched and taken up posts in the two large port cities of Nicaragua. They bolstered the government and stiffened American diplomatic efforts to arrange a truce between competing factions. The Marines eventually

garrisoned more than a dozen cities and towns, and their complement grew to a full brigade of 3,300 Marines, including two squadrons of aircraft.

Most of the contesting factions were willing to negotiate but one holdout, Augusto Cesar Sandino, refused to participate. A strong leader, he would successfully hold out for five years – eluding every snare, avoiding raids by Marine aviation, and declining to engage in major combat unless the odds were in his favor. While the Marines and the local government successfully kept Sandino at some distance, they could not eradicate his insurgency despite a series of penetrating patrols sent to find and destroy the Sandinistas in their mountain camps. Benefiting from international support and external sanctuaries along the rugged Honduran border, Sandino continued to draw additional committed forces to his cause. As in Haiti, the Marines raised up a local Guardia as a constabulary force that augmented the Leathernecks' strength and afforded them better local intelligence and knowledge of native conditions. Again, using an indirect approach and developing a nascent local solution to the problem was stressed.

Due to the austere nature of the terrain, the Marines began to rely upon the rapidly growing capabilities presented by the airplane. A new chapter in Marine innovation and expeditionary adaptation was written. Marine aircraft learned how to support ground troops with machine guns and boxes of crude bombs to drive off guerrilla raids. Later in this conflict Marine aviators would further distinguish themselves with invaluable logistics and evacuation missions in support of their brother Marines. From this conflict the intense cooperation and mutual understanding between ground and aviation elements of the Marine Corps originated. This combined arms capability remains central to the Corps structure and organizational culture today.

The Marines continued to apply pressure against the insurgents, pressing deeper into rebel territory, using rivers to penetrate into guerrilla strongholds. The goal was to maintain constant pressure on the rebels and deny them sanctuary, which remain principles of effective counterinsurgency doctrine today. The Marine patrols used native guides, and lived off the land when possible, and exploited aviation support to bring in new clothes and medical supplies. As in all the Banana war campaigns, these patrols reflected lessons the Marines absorbed into their doctrine and culture.

The value of aggressive small unit leadership, decentralized operations over micromanagement, combined arms, disciplined and accurate marksmanship, rigorous training, relentless patrols and pressure, and intimate interaction with local units, were the principal characteristics learned by the Marines in this era. Many famous leaders of the Marine Corps amphibious campaigns of World War II including Generals Lew Walt, Chesty Puller and Red Mike Edson learned their jungle fighting techniques in the Banana Wars.

Figure 1: Key Lessons Learned From Banana Wars

Ambiguity. *"Small wars involve a wide range of activities including diplomacy, contacts with the civil population and warfare of the most difficult kind. The situation is often uncertain and the orders are sometimes indefinite."* The Manual goes on to characterize these activities as *"conceived in uncertainty, are conducted often with precarious responsibility, under indeterminate orders lacking specific instructions."*

Cultural Intelligence. The nature of Small Wars places a premium on an in depth knowledge of a nation's or people's strategic culture—but more importantly its societal culture. As stressed in the Small Wars Manual, a detailed understanding of human psychology, social customs, and the history of a people is crucial to preclude pitfalls and of primary importance in the development of plans. *"The campaign plan and strategy must be adapted to the character of the people encountered."* As the Small Wars Manual notes, the contacts between Marines and civilians is a dominating factor in Small Wars and that the characteristics and culture of a people are subjects for intensive study.

Intelligence and Planning. Small Wars generate from social and political deficiencies, and planning must identify the root causes of the conflict, not focus solely on military matters. This necessitates *"a knowledge of the mental soil in which the ideas that direct its course have to germinate."*

The Unique Character of Stability Operations. Each conflict is different and must be examined closely for its unique socio-economic and political factors, as well as the external conditions, as *"to a greater degree is each small war somewhat different from anything which has preceded it."* "A knowledge of the history of interventions and the displays of force and other measures short of war employed...in the past are essential to thorough comprehension of our relations with foreign states insofar as these matters are concerned."

Discriminate Force. *"In small wars caution must be exercised and instead of striving to generate the maximum power with forces available, the goal is to gain decisive results with the least application of force and the consequent minimum loss of life."*

The Marines published their lessons learned in their *Small Wars Manual (SWM)*, first printed in 1935. More than 60 years later, the *SWM* is still an excellent primer on low intensity conflict and required reading in Marine Corps education institutions. See Figure 1 for a listing of key lessons. The Marines gained an early appreciation of the political and socio-economic aspects of counterinsurgency or guerrilla warfare. Operations were characterized by a detailed understanding and empathy of the local population, small unit patrolling to maintain pressure and to isolate the insurgents, and the training of locally grown constabulary forces. The latter included the employment of combined units made up of a mix of U.S. and local forces. To provide the necessary leadership, the Marines were usually compelled to establish local schools for their own NCOs to improve their understanding of local language and culture, and to improve their basic warfighting skills.

Vietnam and the Combined Action Program

The Marines fulfilled a wide range of roles in Vietnam, including their initial landings and defensive missions in Da Nang, the savage defense of Khe Sanh, and the brutal city fighting in Hue City. However, one of their more innovative concepts for irregular conflicts in Vietnam was known as the Combined Action Program (CAP). Several U.S. Army students of the war in Southeast Asia have credited the Marines with a unique and valuable initiative.

Marines trace CAP back to their own experiences in the "Small Wars" of Central America, specifically during their involvement in Nicaragua. Some authors draw upon similar programs employed by the French. But the official origins of CAP in Vietnam were from the bottom up. Drawing upon some Vietnamese-speaking officers and a cadre of volunteers, one Marine commander formed combined teams with local forces built around the Marine basic rifle squad of 13 Marines and a Navy corpsman. Each of these squads was integrated into a local militia (PF) platoon to form what was known at first as a "joint action platoon." These units would live, eat, train, and operate together within a village. The Marines would provide training and moral support, advise on patrols, strengthen the defensive positions in and around the village, and coordinate fire support from U.S. assets if needed.

The program grew over time, and included crash courses in Vietnamese culture and political architecture at the local level. Critics of the program note that language training was

notably absent, a weakness of the program that would continue throughout its existence. But early results were achieved, and local security improved to the point that government officials and elders began sleeping in their homes again instead of at fortified positions. As the villagers began to feel more secure from VC coercion they began to provide tactical intelligence on the VC, and VC-initiated ambushes and activity declined markedly. Other Marine units throughout the I Corps zone soon emulated the technique. Ultimately the CAP effort got official support from senior Marine leaders, especially LtGen Lewis Walt, the Commanding General of III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF), who was a veteran of the earlier Small Wars era. Yet, the program was criticized by Army leaders who favored destroying the insurgents via "search and destroy" missions, and felt that the Marines were too passive sitting in defensive positions.

In 1967, LtGen Walt formally approved and established the CAPs as a distinct element of the Marine counterinsurgency program. He set up formal chains of command, formulated equipment plans, and grouped the squads into Combined Action Groups (CAG's). The training and preparation of the CAP Marines and their supervision improved. A total of four CAGs were eventually operating in 1969, the apex of the program. At that time some 2,000 Marines were devoted to 114 CAP platoons.

By the metrics of the day, CAP was hugely successful. It was a relatively low cost program, and many Marines bonded effectively with their local units and with the villagers themselves. The proverbial "hearts and minds" contest for the population swung over to the South Vietnamese and their American partners. Numerous contested villages were brought over to supporting the Saigon government. As demonstrated in Francis "Bing" West's book *The Village*, the Marines bonded with their villagers and PF teammates, and organized an effective combined Marine/PF defense that helped set the stage for the population's security and established a foundation for other pacification efforts to take root.

The important point to take away from the CAP program is the concept that defeating an insurgency is rarely a function of the external supporting force achieving victory itself through kinetic means. The CAP program did not attempt to defeat the insurgency directly, it indirectly sought to isolate the VC and deprive them of the support and sanctuary they garnered by intimidating the local villagers. This indirect approach remains critical to the

Corps operational philosophy as captured in its Maneuver Warfare doctrine which is applicable in all modes of warfare.

Operational Iraqi Freedom

After their rapid mechanized drive to Baghdad in April 2003, the Marines had to shift swiftly from high intensity combat operations in the eastern half of the city to post-conflict stability operations. This required extraordinarily disciplined Marines and well-established techniques and procedures, adapted to the circumstances on the ground in the specific cultural context of the country being assisted. It would have been very natural for the Marines, honed as their combat skills were for the "March Up," to continue focusing on the kinetic side of things and chase down the remnants of opposition. Instead, General James N. Mattis reinforced the shift by issuing a new mission order and a new Commander's Intent to ensure his force made the necessary shift in attitude and deportment. The additive "Do no harm" phrase to the Division's rules of engagement, shifted the Marine orientation from fighting against an enemy to one that was fighting *for* a population. The Marines leaned on the Small Wars Manual and T. E. Lawrence for inspiration. While public order would have to be established quickly, an indirect approach was recognized as the long term solution. Lawrence's famous maxim that "better that they do it tolerably than you do it yourself perfectly" was widely quoted in theater.

The Marines of I MEF quickly established local order and set up Regimental and Battalion level Civil-Military Operations Centers to coordinate the provision of aid from U.S., Coalition, and private international relief organizations with local leaders. Within a few days, the Marines were ordered to occupy a different area of the country, and to divide their ground forces in seven different cities and towns. As part of this physical shift, Mattis ordered his Marines out of their armored vehicles and trucks to conduct dismounted patrols in order to get closer and more intimate contact with the populations they were securing. Body armor was reduced, commensurate with the local commander's estimate of the tactical situation. Marines were ordered to remove their helmets and sunglasses. "Wave tactics" were emphasized to Marines to improve their interaction with the local population by smiling and waving on patrols. All of the Marine's tanks and heavy weapons were shipped

back south to Kuwait to begin their redeployment to America; they were anathema to their historical conception of SASO. An intimate connection with local leaders and the general populace was to be gained by constant patrolling and direct interaction with local leaders. Local solutions to local problems were to be sought and rapidly implemented. Direct action by Marine military power was taken only in emergency situations where no other solutions existed. The application of force or firepower would be purposeful and discriminate, not overwhelming and potentially counterproductive.

Given the enormous challenge of initially trying to gain access and maintain a modicum of control over this diverse area, the Marines decided to decentralize responsibility for each local area to the designated military battalion commanders assigned to each town. They each became the military governor of their respective area, although they were not to act as such. The Marine approach was to quickly bring the maximum benefit to the greatest number of people possible, trying to build momentum and support for local leaders to arise and take responsibility.

Trained to work with minimal policy guidance and to visualize what their commander was trying to achieve, the Marines didn't wait for detailed guidance or expect a lot of help from the Coalition Provisional Authority as it struggled to get its arms around the major political problems in Baghdad proper. Marines are trained to expect ambiguity in Small Wars and Marine officers are educated to exploit every opportunity. These commanders recognized from their education and the *SWM* that waiting for external assistance or more prescriptive instructions was unnecessary. They also recognized that leadership would have to be even further decentralized from Battalion and Company commanders down to the Lieutenants and squad leaders on patrol who would provide the vast majority of day-to-day contacts with the indigenous population.

Armed with the clear intent of their commander, and the modicum of common sense and lessons passed on from the past, they set to work armed with initiative, imaginations, and intellect. Basic services and a veneer of security were quickly set in each city and town. These efforts were hamstrung by the inadequate and looted infrastructure and absent technicians to operate and maintain it. Each commander took charge of his adopted city, and tried to put it on a clear path for a sustainable recovery and a better peace. Each

commander took a slightly different approache based on the peculiar make up of his city or "microclimate." Each city had a different tribal or religious composition, as well as different problems.

Operating under broad guidance, each commander set to work with his local leaders. Priority of work was established under the mantra of Police, Power, and Popular Government. Once physical safety was satisfied in terms of local security, the Marines would turn to power (especially electricity). Power was required to restore a suite of essential services. Without energy distribution, maintaining order would be unfathomable. Finally, the Marines would seek to generate popular governance, and introduce the Iraqi population to democracy—subject to their own culture, not necessarily a microcosm of mainstream America.

Due to the large areas to be covered with limited manpower shortages, and demonstrating the cultural attribute of "every Marine a rifleman," Marine commanders employed their artillery and weapons company assets as provisional rifle units to increase street presence and local order. Indirect approaches to maintaining order were quickly sought by enhancing the clout of local leaders and raising a new police force. Several Battalion commanders established their own police training academies and began producing new local police elements untainted by any association with the prior regime to begin patrolling with the Marines.

Demonstrating an enormous degree of cultural sensitivity and discipline, as well as decentralized command and control, the Marines of I MEF served from April to October in the volatile Shiia dominated area within only one fatality caused by a sniper. The California-based Marines then shipped home in late 2003.

But these same Marines were ordered back to Iraq in March of 2004. They had hoped to apply some time-tested principles derived from the Corps' extensive experience with insurgencies captured in the classical *Small Wars Manual* and from Vietnam. A major component of the strategy required a greater emphasis on training the Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi Police. The Marine Corps has always understood that the training of indigenous forces is a crucial aspect of any effective counter-insurgency strategy. One option for improving Iraqi security force operational effectiveness was the creation of a hybrid CAP

program – with U.S. Marines living among the Iraqi people, training together, and conducting Joint U.S./Iraqi security patrols.

This "hybrid" CAP concept met with mixed success. Each battalion was required to assign and train one platoon for CAP duty. The CAP element was considered by senior officers to have been fully successful, albeit limited due to the constraints on forces. Depending on the tactical situation, some CAP elements served largely as training advisors. Other lived, ate, and fought with their Iraqi counterparts, apart from their parent unit and away from the well-defended American camps. This approach, "living with their counterparts and sharing all duties and dangers with them, this common bond facilitated communications and understanding, enabling both cultures to solve the complex problems faced in combat," noted one participant. Some CAP units, led by Marine NCOs, fought very effectively in the high intensity cauldron of the second battle for Fallujah in November of 2004. Others were ineffective or infiltrated by insurgents and corrupted from within.

The Marines involved in this mission are extremely proud of their accomplishments, and senior leaders claim it was a success, "hands down." But some of the challenges of the original CAP concept in Vietnam came up again. Too many of the assigned CAP Marines were young and on their first enlistments. They had insufficient language training, proficiency in foreign weapons, and instruction on indigenous culture. They had little grasp how to train foreign forces in the midst of an insurgency. From this experience in Iraq, the Marine Corps has learned, once again, the importance of highly prepared and skilled trainers and advisers as a key component of effective counterinsurgency. Accordingly, it has set up new permanent units with a formal training regimen to serve around the globe training foreign militaries as needed.

The Expeditionary Ethos

The Marines have a unique institutional culture drawn from 230-odd years of storied campaigns and selfless service. From this rich trove of legacy, numerous norms, values, and rituals have emerged. Yet, the most powerful and most relevant cultural characteristic is their expeditionary ethos. This ethos is the most critical contributor to the Corps' success at SASO and complex contingencies. The astute student of military history in general, and the

Marine Corps institutional history in particular, can see this ethos emerging from the Corps' Small Wars period, and its modern-day exposition in situations like OIF. This ethos has been assiduously cultivated and exploited by Marine leaders over several generations. It is this ethos that animates many of the innate actions that the Marines have undertaken during SASO in their history and most recently in Iraq.

Many military organizations use the term "expeditionary" to describe themselves or to label distinct units. Marines believe the term "expeditionary" encompasses far more than a mission involving actions beyond U.S. borders, the official Joint definition. To Marines, the term "expeditionary" describes an institutional capacity and cultural predisposition, a perspective or philosophy that influences every aspect of organization, training, and equipment. One can find this characterization in the Marine's capstone concept *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*. The Marines describe an expeditionary force as: "An agile force, flexibly organized, and prepared to accomplish a broad range of military objectives in a foreign country or region. Such a force must be able to deploy rapidly, enter the objective area through forcible means, conduct a wide set of military tasks, sustain itself for an extended period of time, and withdraw quickly."

For Marines this is a basic capability statement, and a fairly high standard for military professionalism, but behind it is the idea of expeditionary culture or ethos. For Marines, the term "expeditionary" connotes more than the mere ability to deploy overseas quickly when needed. Expeditionary is an institutional belief system that influences all aspects of organizing, training, and equipping by acknowledging the necessity to deploy rapidly, arrive quickly, and begin operating from the instant you arrive. Such "come as you are" attitudes are embedded n the force design of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) construct, the way the Marine Corps designs its operating forces.

This expeditionary mindset is a powerful component of the Marine Corps' unique Service culture. Beginning with recruit training, Marines are imbued with the notion of doing more with less, of fighting and prevailing in an austere operational environment, of living a lean existence: all metrics on the expeditionary readiness yardstick. They are prepared to use their own initiative and readily solve problems on their own with a minimum of guidance. They are eager to apply their creativity to unforeseen problems, without doctrine or clear

guidance, within a foreign culture. These things are not platitudes or recruiting slogans. They are necessary parts of creating and maintaining mental preparedness for complex contingencies. The rugged lifestyle to which they become inured through training is second nature, and is held as a point of pride. Economy is elevated to an art form. The result is that Marine units can operate almost indefinitely with low logistical overhead. General Jim Jones, the former Commandant and now NATO Supreme Allied Commander put it best when he noted the Marines are "trained to do as much as we can with as little as we get."

Conclusion

Because of this expeditionary mindset, Marines are constantly prepared to adapt to new situations, and mentally agile enough to create innovative solutions to unanticipated circumstances. SASO contingencies generate more than their share of such circumstances. Thus, Marines look to creative solutions, prepared often at low levels. Marines do not look for explicit guidance, formal doctrine, or tactical templates or checklists. An expeditionary mindset is correctly defined as "an attitude of multi-functionality rather than specialization, curiosity rather than complacency, and initiative rather than compliance." In short, this expeditionary ethos prizes adaptability and creativity as a part of warfare, and mandates the ability to make things happen, to improvise on the fly like a jazz ensemble.

This does not suggest that the Marines do not prepare their personnel, or that a deep study of military history is frowned upon—quite the opposite. Professional study gives the modern warrior an edge, as doctrine and experiential learning must furnish the intellectual tools with which to diagnose unexpected requirements, and a menu of combat proven options from which Marines can create their own solutions quickly and effectively. The ultimate objective of this rigorous preparation is not to constrain initiative or creative thinking—but to foster it to gain an advantage. A component of this preparation is a general understanding of culture and its influence on operations in Small Wars.

Another key lesson has been the need to appreciate the primacy of political and socio-economic aspects of counterinsurgency or SASO missions. Campaigns are planned with as detailed an understanding of the local population and its underlying grievances and perceptions as can be gained. Indirect approaches over kinetic solutions are to be sought.

Securing the local population is understood to be a basic requirement, with, relentless small unit patrolling undertaken to establish credibility with the citizenry and to maintain pressure and isolation of the insurgents. Decentralization and empowerment at the local tactical level is prized over hierarchical deference to senior officers and delayed responses or approvals. A principal and recurring element of the indirect approach is the training of locally grown constabulary forces. This often starts with the employment of combined or integrated units made up of a mix of U.S. and local forces.

The expeditionary ethos is the crucial component of the Marine's unique institutional culture and is the basis for the Corps' success in complex contingencies in the past. Given that most prognosticators project a coming "perfect storm" of ethnically or religiously-based conflict to characterize the near term security landscape, this expeditionary ethos will continue to give the Marines an edge in tomorrow's inevitable contingencies.

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CULTURE WARRIORS:

MARINE CORPS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

AND ADAPTATION TO CULTURAL TERRAIN

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Strategic Analysis & Assessments

Introduction

As Soldiers and Marines began returning from Afghanistan and Iraq in 2002 and 2003, a grass roots debate erupted over the ability of our military to operate amongst indigenous cultures. Lessons learned in irregular warfare campaigns dating back to the early 20th Century had not been sufficiently institutionalized to prevent our troops from making thousands of grievous cultural errors in the Global War on Terror, or the "Long War."[1] The services responded to this critical failure with a deluge of cultural and language programs. The Marine Corps, with a rich tradition of cultural study and decades of experience fighting at the outreaches of the American empire, is well suited to take the lead in developing and institutionalizing the kinds of military cultural competencies required to achieve victory in the Long War.

This article will discuss the historical, doctrinal, and institutional factors that make the Marine Corps adept at embracing organizational change and at operating in culturally complex environments. A relatively small organization compared to the other services, the Corps always has been forced to do more with less, adopt unorthodox methods to win, and grant unusually high levels of authority to its junior leaders. The Marine Corps' empowerment of junior leaders and its confident warrior ethos tend to produce mavericks who effect change disproportionate to their rank or status. These Marines in turn are shepherded and championed by seasoned officers with similar inclinations.

Purposefully decentralized authority makes for an inherently flexible and adaptive fighting force. This flexibility imparts an innate ability to adapt to foreign cultures and empowers a vocal and nearly continual grass-roots appraisal of Marine Corps field tactics. All ranks openly and aggressively debate history and tactics in professional journals, school houses, letters and over the more than occasional beer; a reverence for Marine history sustains the visions of the mavericks and the experiences of combat. Both revolutionary ideas and grounding lessons in the oft-forgotten complexities of foreign culture and irregular warfare are thereby woven into the institutional fabric of the Marine Corps.

Although Marines become periodically distracted from a focus on culture, they have usually been able to quickly adapt their tactics to operate in the kinds of "small wars" they

will most likely face in the coming decades. This capability took root during the "Banana War" campaigns of the early 20th century.

Small Wars Shape the Corps

Marines reverently refer to the Small Wars Manual of 1940. [2] For many, it is proof that the Marine Corps has always "gotten" counterinsurgency operations and cultural terrain; in many ways it is seen as the Corps' secular bible. The Manual mines the collective experience of Marine expeditions in the Philippines, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua from 1900 through the early 1930s. Republished in 1986, it fed the development of the maneuver warfare concepts that lie at the heart of modern Marine Corps doctrine. The lessons of the Marine experience described in the Manual are playing a central role in the current debate over counterinsurgency theory.

Keith Bickel closely examines the genesis of the Small Wars Manual in *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps' Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940*.[3] Far from glamorizing the Corps as inherently adaptive to complex counterinsurgency (COIN) tactics, Bickel describes the slow, turbulent, and often inefficient transformation of a Marine Corps that had until that time been fixated on large scale combat or security duties. Until the publication of the Small Wars Manual the Marines principally relied on Army doctrine and writings to prepare them for COIN operations.[4] Marine lessons learned in the Philippines and Haiti had to be painfully relearned in the Dominican Republic and then again in Nicaragua before they became part of the Corps' collective knowledge.

The cultural and tactical experiences of Marine icons like Smedley Butler, Merritt "Red Mike" Edson, and Lewis "Chesty" Puller[5] earned in the Caribbean campaigns are reflected in the actions of veteran Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan. These concepts are expressed by David Galula in his seminal work on small wars, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*:[6] control of the population is the key to victory; uncertainty and friction are exponentially greater when fighting insurgents rather than conventional forces; knowledge of the indigenous culture, language, and psychology are critical combat multipliers. These last lessons are expertly articulated by Marines in a series of professional

journal articles written during the Banana War campaigns and captured in a separate section on psychology in the Small Wars Manual.[7]

Operating in small groups often far removed from major bases and with minimal supplies, both Marine and Army leaders in the Caribbean and the Philippines were forced to make the most of the assets they had on hand. Realizing the criticality of population control in the absence of overwhelming force, they engaged the local populace with medical and reconstruction projects while working to provide local security. Whenever possible, they trained local security forces to execute the tasks that required the most interaction with civilians - checkpoints, urban patrols, local security, and administration.

Both Marine and Army leaders (many with several tours in COIN campaigns) adopted non-doctrinal procedures, learned from their mistakes, wrote articles, and engaged their peers in pointed debate on small wars tactics. However, only the Marine Corps followed through with comprehensive doctrine. What was it that led the Marine Corps of 1940 to embrace counterinsurgency lessons of the early 20th Century while the Army remained fixated on conventional missions?

The answer is complex and open to debate: The smaller Corps inherently was more flexible than the Army from a broad organizational standpoint; Marine officers had greater latitude to write professionally on small wars subjects and serve as proponents for doctrine than their Army counterparts; larger-than-life Marine personalities like Butler and Edson had a disproportionately significant impact on doctrine in a relatively small Marine Corps. It is possible that the Marine Corps simply was searching for a unique mission to set it apart from the Army as it struggled for institutional survival. Marine Lieutenant General Victor Krulak refers to what he called a "sensitive paranoia" as one of the primary motivators driving successive waves of Marine transformation.[8]

Bickel points out that the Nicaragua campaign played a significant role in the transformation of the Marines into true small wars practitioners. Prior to the six year campaign in Nicaragua, the Corps had made only halting attempts to incorporate COIN and cultural warfighting lessons into doctrine and professional education. One general officer lamented this lack of preparation: "We received no training in (small wars) when we were ordered to these places... I arrived in Managua... and three days later I was out in bandit

territory with a patrol, having received no instruction on the situation, the general intelligence situation, the methods to be employed, training (sic)."[9]

Within a year of the initial Marine deployment to Nicaragua, however, Headquarters Marine Corps was officially sanctioning professional writing on small wars and lessons learned from the ongoing campaign. Edson and two Majors (Harrington and Utley) led the dialectical charge in the Marine Corps Gazette and other venues.[10] By the time the Marines had drawn down in Nicaragua, small wars lessons had been inculcated in the Marine Corps professional education system. The preliminary edition of the Small Wars Manual was published by 1935.[11]

The big personalities behind the development of small wars doctrine went on to teach lieutenants and pass along their experiences to new generations of Marines. By 1929, Edson was teaching at the Basic School; Puller followed in 1936. The Basic School,[12] an institution unique within the American military, brings all newly minted lieutenants together for several months before sending them off to their various specialty schools. This period of common bonding traditionally has offered a tremendous opportunity for the Marine Corps to shape its officers and jump start transformation.[13]

Insightful school commandants shepherded the small wars curriculum through several attempts to eliminate COIN training in favor of other lessons. Between seven and ten percent of formal officer schools curricula were devoted to small wars courses in the decade prior to World War II.[14] Although the Small Wars Manual was momentarily forgotten as the Marines focused on advanced basing doctrine and amphibious operations, its imprimatur had been stamped on the Marine ethos.

Willful men trying to press home new ideas in a large bureaucracy often are ignored, sidelined, or cast aside by status quo ante bureaucrats. There was something different about the Marine Corps that allowed a few men to have such an impact on the Corps' central mission. Both Keith Bickel and Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl, USA, (*Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*)[15] examine the role of the individual visionary in the transformation of an organization. They both infer that bright individuals at the junior as well as senior level must see an idea as worthwhile to allow it to germinate.

The Marine Corps had the requisite mid and high-level thinkers required to champion the small wars cause. The Marine Corps of the early 20th Century was also what Nagl calls a "learning organization." He lays out a checklist to determine whether a military organization encourages internally generated transformation.[16] Arguably, the Marine Corps of the 1930s meets all five of his requirements: it promoted suggestions from the field, encouraged subordinates to question policies, institutionally questioned its basic assumptions, generated local SOPs, and had a senior officer corps in close touch with men in the field.

Development of the Small Wars Manual set a standard for transformational process that Marines continue to replicate today. The Corps is an organization that has always valued and exploited its history to preserve the hard-won lessons of past generations. Although the Manual itself represents a benchmark in doctrinal development, the history of the process and the personalities are equally critical to sustaining the learning culture of the Corps. For Marines steeped in institutional history, the development of the Small Wars Manual is the foundation for successive waves of innovation and doctrinal adaptation.

A Chinese Communist in the Commandant's Court

Although the onset of World War Two effectively cut short the progress towards a comprehensive counterinsurgency doctrine for the U.S. military, the Marine Corps continued to experiment with cultural terrain and behavioral sciences. Influential individual Marines also continued to have great impact on the evolution of the Corps. Brigadier General Evans F. Carlson was perhaps the most controversial of these visionaries. Military historians have given Carlson short shrift,[17] but he left a distinct and lasting impression on the Marine Corps approach to warfighting, culture, and human behavior.

Heavily decorated in World War One and Nicaragua, Carlson spent six years in China over the course of three tours, immersing himself in Chinese culture and studying first-hand the operations of the 8th Route Army as it battled Japanese occupying forces.[18] Carlson's time with the Chinese evoked significant personal transformation. He observed the success of communist guerilla and conventional operations against the Japanese as he lived, marched, and ate with his counterparts under demanding conditions.

After one particularly grueling march of 58 miles, Carlson came to the conclusion that the "ethical conditioning" of the Chinese lay at the heart of their success. Each and every soldier knew why he was fighting and believed in the cause. Perhaps more importantly, they believed in the officers and men around them and labored as one towards a common goal. They defined this spirit as *gung ho*, which loosely translates as "working together."[19] The Chinese Communists practiced an egalitarianism unseen in Western militaries.

Carlson embraced the *gung ho* concept and transferred the fighting ethos of the Communist Chinese to the Marines of his Second Raider Battalion, an elite unit formed early in the war to conduct raids on Japanese held islands. He altered the standard fighting formation to fit this new, flexible spirit, creating what eventually would become the modern Marine fireteam.[20] Carlson's communist-inspired classlessness won him little praise at the time but arguably gave birth to several central tenets of contemporary Marine Corps leadership: officers eat and dress as their men; every Marine down to the most junior private can professionally critique an exercise or operation; self-discipline and individual motivation are more valuable than forced obedience.

From an institutional standpoint, Carlson's success was further evidence that the Marine Corps was a learning organization, albeit an unlikely one. An institution that prides itself on tradition and obedience to orders would not appear to be fertile ground for Carlson's communist philosophy. His impact was so dramatic, however, that an Internet search for the words "gung ho Marine" returned 9530 results.[21]

A dichotomy in the Marine personality is revealed here: The soldierly virtues reflected in the ramrod-straight poster Marine are in conflict with the rebellious and occasionally piratical instincts of men raised on romantic notions of heroism and expeditionary service. Many Marines simultaneously adhere to a strict warrior code while willfully - sometimes gleefully - disobeying orders and speaking unkind truth to power. It is this instinct that leads junior Marines to worship unconventional men like Evans Carlson and a few senior Marines to shepherd his ideas to fruition.

Viet Nam: Small Wars Reborn

The Marines sustained an intensive focus on cultural terrain, guerilla warfare philosophy and counterinsurgency tactics even as the Department of Defense fixated on the Soviet threat during the early Cold War. The Marine Corps Gazette, published since 1916, continued to serve as a semi-official professional debating forum for Marine officers and staff NCOs, and in 1962 the Gazette published a collection of articles and essays entitled *The Guerilla and how to Fight Him*.[22] Through liaison officers and official exchanges the Corps kept close tabs on the development and philosophy of the Army Special Forces units as the advisor mission to Viet Nam expanded in the early 1960s. Through these exchanges the Marines absorbed the lessons of the SF advisors,[23] coupling their Viet Nam experiences with the tactical lessons of Haiti and Nicaragua. Marine units trained hard in counterinsurgency tactics in the early 1960s with the expectation they would be deployed in increasingly greater numbers to Viet Nam.[24]

By the time the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade landed in Da Nang in 1965, a great number of Marine officers were primed to experiment with small wars tactics to defeat the Viet Cong. The most successful and famous of these experiments began as a battalion-level initiative by 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines in Phu Bai. Marines working to secure the area around the Da Nang military airfield found they had too few troops to provide full time coverage of their tactical area of responsibility. In an effort to multiply their combat power, the Marines decided to beef up the local Vietnamese "Popular Forces," or PF, a poorly organized local militia who often fled the Viet Cong.[25]

Lieutenant Colonel William "Woody" Taylor, the battalion commander, wanted the PF to defend their own villages from the Viet Cong when the Marines were unavailable. To give the PF some backbone, Taylor and his staff planned to embed a Marine rifle squad within each unit, a risky tactic that would leave the Marines and Corpsmen exposed and in need of a nearby quick reaction force. Taylor assigned Paul Ek, a Marine Lieutenant who had served as an advisor with the Army Special Forces and who spoke some Vietnamese, to teach and mentor the Marines assigned to this mission. The Combined Action Program was born.[26]

CAP was a tremendous success. The Third Marine Amphibious Force expanded the four CAP squads in Phu Bai in August of 1965 to 111 by July of 1969. CAP Marines

accounted for 7.6% of (Marine-related) reported enemy KIA while suffering only 3.2% of Marine casualties during that time.[27] The CAP school started by Ek was expanded, and the quality of the program was improved and shaped to match the changing nature of the fight in South Viet Nam and the differences between various areas of operation. Two quotes from South Vietnamese officers on CAP are informative:[28]

I would emphasize that in thinking about CAP teams, we must view them from both a military and political point of view. The important thing politically is that the CAP team symbolizes American presence in Viet Nam. By their behavior, the CAPs refute VC propaganda. They show the people that the U.S. presence is different than that of the French. *Major Dai, Sector Chief for Regional Force/Popular Force troops, Quang Tri Province*

What can one company of regular troops do, operating in an area? Compare this with ten CAPs – going on patrols, setting ambushes, doing some civic action – they're really having an impact on 30,000 people. I'd pick one Combined Action Company over a battalion of infantry, if I had a choice. We need some big units, yes, but in general this war is for the people. *Colonel Vin, Commander of all PF troops in I Corps*

Development of the CAP concept mirrored that of the Small Wars Manual; it required the initiative of relatively junior officers coupled with the aggressive mentorship of senior leaders. In this case, the III MAF Commanding General, Lewis W. Walt and Lieutenant General Victor Krulak, both decorated combat veterans, recognized the value of CAP and championed its growth. Walt understood the cultural terrain of Viet Nam; he reflected the comments of the Vietnamese officers in his memoirs: "The struggle was in the rice paddies....in and among the people, not passing through, but living among them, night and day...and joining with them in steps toward a better life long overdue."[29]

Walt and Krulak's efforts to sustain CAP had the backing of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr. This support was critical as the Marines fought to sustain the program in the face of determined opposition from General Westmoreland,

the head of the Military Assistance Command (and later the Army Chief of Staff). Westmoreland eventually was successful in turning the pacification programs over to the South Vietnamese. These programs failed in the absence of American support.[30]

Greene may have lost the fight with Westmoreland, but the Commandant's efforts in support of CAP had a lasting impact on the Marine Corps.[31] The position of Commandant is as much historical, ceremonial, and sentimental as it is administrative; the Commandant is often revered by Marines of all ranks and his dictums carry significant weight within the Corps. It is not uncommon to hear Marines say, "The Commandant says so, so that's the way it's going to be."

With such venerated status, the Commandant traditionally has wielded more institutional authority than his service counterparts. Although bureaucratic inertia drags on the Marine Corps as much as it does any other organization, the Commandant can sometimes effect paradigm shifts against strong currents of internal and external protest. This authority has proven critical to the ability of the contemporary Marine Corps to adapt to asymmetric threats. Commandants have often served as the ultimate champion of maverick or revolutionary ideas.

The Commandant's support for the combined action mission was matched with enthusiasm in the officer and enlisted ranks. The CAP experience was etched into the collective conscious of the Corps. Hundreds of articles, books, and papers were written by Marines or about the Marines in CAP units. As it had many times in the past, the Marine Corps Gazette captured and popularized a critical small wars tactic. The thousands of Marines who participated in CAP passed along their lessons learned to new generations. By the time the Marine Corps went into Iraq in 2003, the cultural and counterinsurgency lessons of the program were still fresh in the minds of the colonels and general officers leading the way.

Paradigm Shift: The Corps Adopts Maneuver Warfare Theory

As early as the late 1970s, a few Marine officers began to experiment with new doctrinal warfighting concepts in an effort to break free from the doldrums of the post-Viet Nam era. Articles on Maneuver Warfare began appearing in the Marine Corps Gazette in late 1979,

and military historian William S. Lind wrote a seminal piece on the subject in the March 1980 Gazette.[32] Lind, a civilian with no military experience, came across as the epitome of a quirky Marine "wannabe." He frustrated, irritated or alienated every Marine officer he met bar one: the future Commandant of the Marine Corps General Alfred M. Gray.[33]

An experienced combat Marine with service in Korea and Vietnam, Gray saw genius where others saw irrational unorthodoxy. While commanding the Second Marine Division in 1981, Gray set up a board of 15 officers to examine, develop, and promulgate Maneuver Warfare theory at Camp Lejeune.[34] Gray was changing the warfighting doctrine of his division without the official sanction of the greater Marine Corps. This faintly rebellious grass roots divergence met with hostility but was allowed to flourish at the division level. It was not until Gray's term as Commandant that Maneuver Warfare would be adopted as the foundational doctrine of the Marine Corps.

The vehicle for transformation came in 1985 with the publication of Bill Lind's *Maneuver Warfare Handbook*.[35] Maneuver Warfare was not a revolutionary concept. Lind essentially boiled down the time-tested warfighting philosophies of Sun Tzu, Carl von Clausewitz, and Colonel John Boyd[36] and situated them in the context of the decentralized tactical theory of the World War I and II German Armies. Command orders were to be purposefully imprecise to allow for low-level initiative and innovation. Tempo took on greater significance than force. Marines would avoid enemy strengths and attack their weakest points. Evans Carlson had expounded many of the same theories in the late 1930s.

The Marine Corps of the 1980s was not, however, the decentralized, high-tempo, free-flowing organization envisioned by Lind and Carlson. Gray forcefully drove home his effort, commissioning the *Fleet Marine Force Manual 1: Warfighting*.[37] Later republished as a Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication, *Warfighting* flew directly in the face of the conventional, attrition-style warfare studied and practiced by the Cold War U.S. military. Gray leveraged the brilliant simplicity of *Warfighting* to transform the operational philosophy of the Corps. By the early 1990s, Marines were teaching, practicing, and executing Maneuver Warfare and had begun to embrace Lind's decentralized command theories.[38] There was ample precedence for this kind of leadership in Marine Corps history from the early days of the service through Viet Nam.

Gray and Lind, an outspoken general and a quirky outsider, dramatically restyled the Marine Corps. Lind provided the philosophy while Gray sustained the Maneuver Warfare vision through what would become a highly polarizing ten year debate.[39] They reshaped not only the way the Corps would fight on future battlefields, but also how Marines down to the fireteam level would act and react in confusing, non-linear battlefield environments. The concepts of flexibility, personal initiative, and self-reliance championed by Smedley Butler, Merritt Edson, Evans Carlson, and Lewis Walt were reinvigorated just in time to prepare the Corps for the next wave of small wars.

The New Small Wars: Somalia to Iraq

The first test of Maneuver Warfare theory in a small wars environment would come when the Marines landed in Somalia in 1992 in support of Operation Restore Hope. Although they lacked the cultural expertise and training of the Banana War veterans, their inherent flexibility allowed them to succeed in an oftentimes bewildering urban and tribal environment. Marine General Anthony Zinni, a cultural pragmatist and strong proponent of cultural intelligence in support of military operations, pushed the Marines to work with the local clan leaders and to practice many of the tactics embodied in the Small Wars Manual. Zinni would continue to propagate cultural small wars theory as the Commanding General of the United States Central Command.

As Marines deployed around the globe in the years following Somalia, it became more and more apparent that the disintegration of the Soviet Union meant increased involvement in collapsed states, more dispersed small unit operations, and more interaction with indigenous civilians. General Charles C. Krulak, the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, clearly articulated the nature of modern small wars and identified the skills required to succeed in a complex cultural environment: "In one moment in time, our service members will be feeding and clothing displaced refugees, providing humanitarian assistance. In the next moment, they will be holding two warring tribes apart - conducting peacekeeping operations - and, finally, they will be fighting a highly lethal mid-intensity battle - all on the same day... all within three city blocks."[40]

Krulak postulated that in order to succeed in the complex three-block war environment, young enlisted Marines would have to possess especially strong moral character and leadership ability.[41] The "strategic corporal" would be mentally agile and tough enough to quickly transition from humanitarian operations to urban combat without losing the goodwill of the local populace. Krulak was describing the same kind of Marine Evans Carlson recruited for his Second Raider Battalion and the combined action units were looking for in Viet Nam. There was nothing new here; the strategic corporal article simply reminded Marines of their small wars narrative.

The sine wave of Marine focus on culture and counterinsurgency is sustained by a latent small wars capability resident in collective history, doctrine and philosophy of the Corps. Marines often find themselves poorly trained in foreign culture and language at the onset of a campaign but they quickly adapt when faced with complex cultural situations. The persistent legacy of the Small Wars Manual and the CAP experience, continual deployments to developing countries, and the robust professional military education program of the Marine Corps all sustain this capability. There always are Marines on hand with cultural and counterinsurgency experience, even in the interwar years. This inherent adaptability to complex cultural environments played a critical role in the initial Marine operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Marines deploying to Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 were as poorly trained in cultural intelligence and cultural terrain as their counterparts in Somalia or even 1920s Nicaragua. Arabic language skills were almost non-existent and even the most rudimentary cultural nuances were a mystery to many Marines. Although they made a great number of mistakes and lost tremendous opportunities along the way, the Marines quickly adapted and were conducting complex stability and counterinsurgency operations within months of deployment. By the summer of 2003 the Marines in southern Iraq had implemented a small CAP program and were making strides in developing local government and security.

Prior to returning to Iraq in 2004, then-Major General James N. Mattis, Commanding General of the First Marine Division, held a conference to discuss the kinds of counterinsurgency tactics he wanted to employ in the Al Anbar Province. The conclusions

and orders from the Security and Stability Operations (SASO) conference read like a distillation of the Small Wars Manual.

Among the more than 80 key points were instructions from the tactical (if you knock at the door of a house as part of a cordon operation, try not to look directly inside when the door opens) to the strategic (the insurgent center of gravity is the support of the population).[42] Mattis ordered each infantry battalion to field a CAP platoon to mirror the success in Phu Bai in 1965 and Hillah in 2003. The Marines, however, had little chance to test out the CAP program or other non-kinetic counterinsurgency tactics in Anbar.[43] Just one month after the Division re-deployed to Iraq, they became embroiled in the first battle for Fallujah.

Leading the Cultural Charge

Mattis returned from Iraq in 2004 dissatisfied with the cultural intelligence and cultural training provided to his Marines.[44] He realized that unless the Marine Corps institutionalized the small wars tactics and cultural lessons of Fallujah, Ramadi, and Hadithah, the next battle in the Long War would be as painful as the first. As the new commander of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), Mattis was perfectly positioned to ensure that culture became an integral part of Marine training and education.

Far from meeting opposition, he discovered that a grass-roots cultural renaissance already was underway amongst the officers and non-commissioned officers recently returned from Afghanistan and Iraq. These Marines were teaching local unit-level cultural and language classes across the Marine Corps with little guidance from above. Simultaneously, the Commandant directed that the Marine Corps attack the weaknesses in cultural training exposed by OEF and OIF. Within a year of returning from Iraq, LtGen Mattis had established the Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Learning (CAOCL) at Quantico, the seat of the Marine Training and Education Command.

By the end of 2005, cultural terrain classes had been incorporated into several levels of Marine professional military education.[45] Marines were receiving live training in mock Afghan and Iraqi villages to prepare them for deployment while conducting focused language training supplemented with computer-aided training materials.

The Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, already heavily involved in cultural studies, picked up the lead for cultural intelligence within the defense intelligence community. "Cultural Intelligence" is now taught at the Marine intelligence schools, and MCIA continues to develop a range of detailed ethnographic studies to support expeditionary operations. The doctrine division at MCCDC began working on incorporating cultural terrain and cultural intelligence into new publications that will have a lasting impact on Marine operations and training. The new Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned created an Internet-based information vacuum to capture combat and cultural lessons for analysis and promulgation. As of mid-2006, every Marine lieutenant passing through the Basic Officer's Course will be assigned a region of the world to study; this study will be supported with appropriate culture and language material from the CAOCL.

While none of these programs perfectly meet the cultural training or cultural intelligence requirements of Marines deploying to fight global terrorism, they constitute a critical step beyond previous efforts to institutionalize culture in the Marine Corps. Acutely aware that culture as a core competency might quickly be discarded in the face of a resurgent conventional threat (as it was in the late 1970s), every effort has been made to drive deep stakes in the professional education system. Also aware that aggressively pushing culture on Marines rightfully focused on offensive combat skills could backfire, culture instead is sold as simply another element of battlefield terrain, or "cultural terrain."[46]

In late 2001, culture typically was an afterthought in a Marine training schedule. By late-2006, culture is an integral part of Marine training, intelligence, and professional military education. Cultural competency is accepted as a critical skill by most Marines. Tens of thousands of Marines have direct experience applying cultural training in multiple tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Marine Corps flexed in the first decade of the new millennium to meet the cultural challenges of the small war just as it had in the 1920s, 1930s, 1960s, and 1990s.

Conclusion

At some point within the next few decades a new threat will emerge that will shift culture and language skills to the back burner. Cultural classes will be pushed out of crowded PME

curricula to meet new requirements; officers pressed to train Marines for combat will allow training schedules to drift towards core skills like shooting and patrolling; intelligence professionals will be distracted by pressing new requirements from above and below. Some of the progress towards cultural competency made in the first few years of the Long War will be lost.

As long as the Marines retain their reverence for history, continue to deploy to developing nations, and sustain their expeditionary character, however, the foundation of cultural skills laid with the Small Wars Manual will remain intact. Institutional flexibility, ingenuity, and tolerance for internal dissent will allow the Marine Corps to rapidly adjust to any complex cultural situation it is faced with in the foreseeable future. The wholesale realization and acceptance of cultural competency as a critical warfighting skill by the veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq will ensure that the programs instituted today survive until Marines face their next great cultural challenge - the Marines will remain preeminent culture warriors.

Notes

[1] The "Long War" is a term recently coined by several Department of Defense officials, including the Commander of the US Central Command General John P. Abazaid, to replace the term, Global War on Terror. This term appeared in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report of 2006, page 9, available at: http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/report/Report20060203.pdf

[2] *Small Wars Manual.* Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Schools, 1940. Reprint, Manhattan, KS, Sunflower Univ. Press, 1987.

[3] Bickel, Keith B. *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps' Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940.* Boulder, Westview Press, 2001.

[4] Ibid, page 58.

[5] Edson was given his nickname in Nicaragua due to the color of his beard. Puller's posture and physique (he typically is photographed with his chest jutting forward) earned him his moniker. The "red" in "Red Mike" leads some to confuse Edson with one of his contemporaries, Evans Carlson, who spent a great deal of time with the Chinese Communists and incorporated communist leadership practices into his command style. See "A Chinese Communist in the Commandant's Court" in this paper.

[6] Galula, David, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice.* New York, Praeger, 1964.

[7] *Small Wars Manual,* Section III, pages 17-32.

[8] Krulak, Lieutenant General Victor, *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps.* Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 1984. Krulak stated that, "Beneficial or not, the continuous struggle for a viable existence fixed clearly one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Corps - a sensitive paranoia, sometimes justified, sometimes not. It is in this atmosphere of institutional vigilance that the Marines have been nourished over the years. This instinctive personal concern of the Marines as individuals for the survival of their Corps has certainly been one of the principal factors in its preservation."

[9] Bickel, page 144.

[10] Bickel, pages 172-203. The Marine Corps Gazette is the independent but officially sanctioned professional journal of the Marine Corps published by the Marine Corps Association on the Marine Corps Combat Development Command in Quantico, Virginia.

[11] *Manual for Small Wars Operations.* Quantico, VA, Marine Corps Schools, 1935.

[12] The Basic School (TBS) is home to the Basic Officer's Course, the formal name of the school for new lieutenants. Further information available at: https://www.tbs.usmc.mil/

[13] This proved especially true in the late 1980's and early 1990's as the Marine Corps instituted the transformational Maneuver Warfare concepts described in *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 (Warfighting),* Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of the Navy, 1989.

[14] Bickel, pages 190-191.

[15] Nagl, John A., *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Viet Nam.* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002.

[16] Nagl, page 10. The question set is drawn from Gordon R. Sullivan and Michael V. Harper, *Hope is not a Method: What Business Leaders Can Learn from America's Army.* New York, Random House/Times Business, 1996.

[17] Carlson, who resigned from the Corps in 1939 out of frustration with American policy and restrictions on his freedom of speech, was seen as a Communist sympathizer and erratic maverick by many of the senior and more traditional Marine officers. He rejoined the Corps in 1941.

[18] *Brigadier General Evans Fordyce Carlson, USMCR*, Who's Who in Marine Corps History. History Division, United States Marine Corps. Available at: http://hqinet001.hqmc.usmc.mil/HD/Historical/Whos_Who/Carlson_EF.htm

[19] Evans F. Carlson, *Twin Stars of China*. New York, Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1940.

[20] A fireteam consists of four Marines, one carrying an automatic weapon and one leading the team. There are three fireteams in a standard Marine rifle squad.

[21] 07 November 2006 search results for "Gung Ho Marine" obtained from http://www.google.com.

[22] Green, LtCol T. N., *The Guerrilla and How to Fight Him: Selections from the Marine Corps Gazette*, ed. for the Marine Corps Gazette, New York: Praeger, 1962. The book leads off with a selection from *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse Tung*, also known as the *Little Red Book*.

[23] There is little competitive comparison between the Marine Corps and the Army Special Forces units in terms of cultural and counterinsurgency capabilities. Special Forces units are specifically designed to operate in complex cultural environments.

[24] Krulak, chapter 12.

[25] Allnut, Bruce C., *Marine Combined Action Capabilities: The Viet Nam Experience*. Virginia, Human Sciences Research, Inc., 1969, published for the Office of Naval Research.

[26] Ibid, pages 9 and 10. Allnut and others point out that the program originally was called the Joint Action Program but was changed to match official doctrinal terminology.

[27] Ibid, page 11.

[28] Ibid, pages 11, 12, and G-1 to G-3.

[29] Lewis W. Walt, *Strange War, Strange Strategy*. NY, Funk & Wagnals, 1970.

[30] Sheehan, Neil, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Viet Nam*. New York, Random House, 1988, and Corson, LtCol William R., *The Betrayal*, New York, W.W. Norton Co., 1968. Corson served as Director of Combined Action for General Walt.

[31] Major (then Captain) Keith Kopets, USMC, ably summarizes the CAP experience in "The U.S. Marine Corps and the Combined Action Program in the Viet Nam War: An Exposition and Evaluation," given at the May 2001 Society for Military History Annual Conference in Calgary, Canada. Available at: http://capdelta4a.homestead.com/kopets.html.

[32] Lind, William S., "Defining Maneuver Warfare for the Marine Corps," *Marine Corps Gazette* (March 1980): 55-57.

[33] This conclusion is based on the author's personal observation of Lind interacting with Marine officers at the Basic Officer's Course (BOC) in the mid-1990s and tens of conversations with fellow officers of all ranks about Lind, most recently in 2006. In the early 1990s, Lind frequently would dress up in a World War I German officer's uniform to participate in BOC and Infantry Officers Course classes and discussion groups. During the 1995 mess night of the TBS Bravo Company class, Lind, an invited guest, gave a lengthy and impromptu toast to "the brilliance of Operation Barbarossa," the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. The universally negative reaction to this speech by the attending officers was typical of the response Lind evoked with his heartfelt but socially awkward outbursts.

[34] Anonymous, "Maneuver Warfare Board at Lejeune," *Marine Corps Gazette* (October 1981): 6-7.

[35] Lind, William S., *Maneuver Warfare Handbook*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1985.

[36] Respectively: Griffith, Samuel, *Sun Tzu: The Art of War*. London, Oxford University Press, 1988 (reprint); Clausewitz, Carl Von, *On War*. Translated and edited by Michel Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton, Princeton

University Press, 1989 (reprint); Robert, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War*. New York, Little, Brown, 2002.

[37] Schmitt, Captain John, Fleet Marine Force Manual 1: *Warfighting*. United States Marine Corps, 1989.

[38] For an examination of the developmental and philosophical differences and similarities between Maneuver Warfare and the U.S. Army's AirLand Battle doctrine, see: McKenzie, Major Kenneth F., USMC, "Defining the Event Horizon: The Marine Corps and the Dialectic of Maneuver Warfare and Airland Battle," Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1992, available at: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1992/MKF.htm

[39] Captain John Schmitt, the author of FMFM-1 (and later Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1), deserves a tremendous amount of credit for developing and clearly articulating the philosophical underpinnings to Maneuver Warfare theory.

[40] Krulak, Gen. Charles C. "The Three Block War: Fighting in Urban Areas." *Vital Speeches of the Day*. New York: December 15, 1997. Vol. 64, Iss. 5, pages 139-142.

[41] Krulak, Gen. Charles C. "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War." *Marines Magazine*, (January 1999), available at: http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/strategic_corporal.htm

[42] Points from the First Marine Division Security and Stabilization Operations (SASO) conference held at Camp Pendleton on 19 December, 2003. Author retains unpublished notes in electronic format.

[43] Several battalions implemented CAP and every unit down to the platoon level continues to execute various traditional counterinsurgency tactics in a trial and error effort to achieve local tactical success. In 2004, the Second Battalion, Seventh Marines of Lieutenant Phillip Skuda had an effective CAP program in the Hit area just north of Ramadi.

[44] Observation based on the author's experience supporting MCCDC in standing up the Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Learning for LtGen Mattis.

[45] The goal of the Training and Education Command is to develop a laddered series of culture classes that will build upon each other as a Marine progresses through his or her career.

[46] As of December, 2006, this is a non-doctrinal term. Cultural terrain is also referred to as "human terrain" within the Marine Corps and the Department of Defense.

D. Workshop Materials

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U.S. Marine Corps Culture & Cultural Intelligence for Stability Operations

Scitor Corporation

Strategic Analysis & Assessments

Post-Workshop Briefing – 20 February 2007
Prepared for the Office of Net Assessment,
Office of the Secretary of Defense

(b)(4)

Agenda

- **Background**
- **USMC Organizational Culture**
- **Impact of Organizational Culture on Innovation**
- **Impact of Organizational Culture on Cultural Intelligence and Stability Ops**
- **Insights, Issues, and Ideas**

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2

Background

- **Project sponsored by OSD/NA**

- **Based on earlier projects examining how Service organizational culture affects innovation**

- **Desire to look at the organizational culture of one Service in more depth**

- **War in Iraq prompts focus on cultural intelligence and stability operations**

USMC Organizational Culture

- **Tensions within USMC org. culture**
  - *Technology – Equip the man v. Man the equipment*
  - *Mission – Small Wars v. Expeditionary*
  - *Command – Decentralized v. Centrality of Commandant*
  - *History – Extensive v. Selective, Laudatory v. Critical*
  - *Unity – Homogeneity v. Difference*

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4

USMC Organizational Culture

- **Belief in importance of Corps as organization allows tensions to exist without destroying organization**

- **Allows USMC to exploit and use tensions selectively to ensure flexibility and adaptability**

- **Warrior ethos and concern for organizational survival are key elements**

Impact of Org. Culture on Innovation

- **Tensions make it impossible to achieve 100% solution**

- **Resultant pragmatism (80% solution) means rapid adaptation**

- **Innovation more challenging**
  - *Difficult to achieve single-minded focus*
  - *Difficult to institutionalize change*

- **In both cases, change agents must have standing as warriors and change must be sold as incremental**

Impact of Org. Culture on Cultural Intelligence

- ## Homogeneity
  - *No separate primary MOS for FAOs*
  - *Goal is to provide all Marines with basic cultural framework*

- ## Pragmatism
  - *Focus on realistic goals for language training*

Impact of Org. Culture on Cultural Intelligence

- **Expeditionary Ethos**
  - *Short (7 month) deployments for units*
  - *Tradeoff between local familiarity and burnout?*

- **Warrior Ethos**
  - *Marines emphasize leaving FOB, interacting with population*
  - *Cultural intelligence has to be pitched using terrain metaphor*

Impact of Org. Culture on Cultural Intelligence

- ## History
  - *Efforts to improve cultural awareness must be sold as minor shift*
  - *Efforts also closely linked to USMC history of COIN (too closely?)*

- ## Decentralization
  - *Focus on cultural awareness at lower levels mean deficiencies remain at operational and strategic levels for campaign planning (not unique to USMC)*

Impact of Org. Culture on Stability Operations

- **Homogeneity**
  - *Limited capacity in specialty areas like civil affairs, engineering*
  - *No incentives to retain Marines with specialized skills*
- **Expeditionary Ethos**
  - *To ensure deployability and reduce costs, force is very young with high turnover*
  - *Leadership at lower levels may not have experience to deal with demands of future*
  - *Demographic changes making model less sustainable*

Impact of Org. Culture on Stability Operations

- **Warrior Ethos**
  - *Marines want to be where fighting is – prefer COIN to stability operations*
  - *Is it possible to identify determinants of unit performance in stability ops?*

- **History**
  - *USMC able to sell stability operations as something it has always done*

- **Decentralization**
  - *Limited ability to implement necessary programs from above (e.g. integration with Iraqi units)*
  - *In past, less centralized lessons learned process – much improved in recent years*

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Insights for DOD

- **Increase pragmatism in planning**
  - *Focus on realistic goals and minor adjustments*
  - *Divide efforts up into discrete, feasible chunks instead of trying to do everything perfectly at once*
  - *Recognize and accept uncertainty*
- **Allow greater decentralization of effort**
  - *Issue broad guidance more rapidly*
  - *Minimize micromanagement once guidance issued*
  - *Encourage varied implementation*
  - *Experiment, collect data, revise, repeat*

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Issues for Exploration

- **Effects of tour length on effectiveness in stability operations**

- **Applicability of USMC "business model" for stability operations**

- **Determinants of unit effectiveness in stability operations**

Other Ideas

- **Stability Operations without a Net**
  - *US forces are likely to apply NCW to stability operations*
  - *Asymmetric adversaries may target the network*
  - *How do US forces conduct stability ops without a net?*

- **US forces and the Long War**
  - *US forces confront a conflict that could last decades*
  - *Stability ops will play a key role in the Long War*
  - *How have militaries conducted similar conflicts in the past?*
  - *What are potential ramifications for US forces?*

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