

TWELFTH ANNUAL SOMMERFELD LECTURE*

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* This is an edited transcript of a lecture delivered by Dr. John A. Nagl on August 2, 2010, to members of the 54th Operational Law of War Course, staff and faculty of The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School, and their distinguished guests at The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School, Charlottesville, Virginia. Established in 1999, the Sommerfeld Lecture series was established at The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School to provide a forum for discussing current issues relevant to operations law. The series is named in honor of Colonel (Ret.) Alan Sommerfeld. A graduate of the 71st Officer Basic Course, Colonel Sommerfeld's Army judge advocate career was divided between the Active and Reserve Components. After six years of active duty, he became a civilian attorney at Fort Carson, Colorado, and then at the Missile Defense Agency. He continued to serve in the Army Reserves, and on September 11, 2001, Colonel Sommerfeld was the Senior Legal Advisor in NORAD's Cheyenne Mountain Operations Center, where he served as the conduit for the rules of engagement from the Secretary of Defense to the NORAD staff. He was subsequently mobilized for two years as a judge advocate for Operation Noble Eagle and became a founding member of the U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) legal office, where he served as its Deputy Staff Judge Advocate and then interim Staff Judge Advocate. He retired from the Reserves in December 2003.

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I'm going to talk to you today about counterinsurgency doctrine and how you develop learning organizations. That's really what my doctoral dissertation was about: learning organizations and how armies adapt to learn about counterinsurgency. I'm going to talk about the wars we're currently fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan and about the future of conflict, which I think is likely to look not too dissimilar from the wars we're currently fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I'd really like to do this interactively. I gave a version of this talk last month to the Defense Science Board, which is thinking about some of these same problems, and was scheduled for an hour; we went two and didn't get through all of the slides. I'd be completely happy not to get through all of the slides if we can establish that kind of discussion. The hard part is always getting somebody to break the ice and ask the first question and turn it into an interactive discussion. Once we get that going, I think we'll be fine.

So where are we going to start? So much of all of this goes back to Vietnam and the case studies I looked at for my doctoral dissertation. I came out of West Point, went to Oxford for finishing school, and then fought in Desert Storm and came out of Desert Storm absolutely convinced that we were so good at the tank-on-tank, fighter-plane-on-fighter-plane kind of war that our enemies weren't going to fight us that way anymore. We were too good. Our conventional superiority was going to push our enemies toward the edges of the spectrum, either toward the high end to try to acquire weapons of mass destruction—as North Korea has, as Iran has in what I think is likely to be one of the major national security questions of the next year or two, and as we thought Iraq had—or toward the low end, toward insurgency and terror.

So I decided to look at that low end—at insurgency and terror—when the Army sent me back to Oxford after Desert Storm—because we all make sacrifices for national security—to get my Ph.D. If you study insurgency and counterinsurgency, you really have to look at Vietnam, so I spent a bunch of time thinking about Vietnam and could talk for a long, long time about Vietnam. Western armies, conventional armies,

and *The New York Times Magazine*. Dr. Nagl has appeared on *The Jim Lehrer News Hour*, *National Public Radio*, *60 Minutes*, *Washington Journal*, and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. He has lectured domestically and internationally at military war colleges, the Pentagon's Joint Staff and Defense Policy Board, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, major universities, intelligence agencies, and business forums.

tend to start badly when they're fighting insurgencies; that's why insurgents fight them as insurgents. Conventional militaries are designed for conventional force-on-force kind of war, but over time, successful armies adapt and learn.

I looked at the case study of the Brits in Malaya. The Brits fought a counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya, what is today called Malaysia, from 1948 to 1960. It started badly, as you'd expect, but they adapted, they learned, and they ultimately defeated their insurgent enemies in what is today widely viewed to be the classic case of successful Western counterinsurgency in the 20th century—and it only took them twelve years. I looked at that case, and I looked at the case of the American Army in Vietnam, a conflict which also started badly as you would expect. The U.S. Army also adapted and learned but didn't learn fast enough, and we were ultimately defeated in Vietnam at enormous cost to the people of the region, the security of the nation, I would argue, and also to the military services of the United States, especially the Army, which really took a generation to recover. I came into the Army in 1984, when I started at West Point, and the Army was really just starting to recover from Vietnam.

We, as a nation, decided that we weren't going to do those kind of wars anymore. This is literally true. I did research at Leavenworth at the Combined Arms Research Library and went to the classified floor. Obviously I couldn't use anything classified in my dissertation—that would have been against the law—but sometimes it's interesting to see what's classified. I asked the nice lady who ran the classified area, "Can I see the Vietnam stuff? Where's the Vietnam stuff?" And she said, "We don't have any." I said, "I'm sorry. It was a really big war. Really, you must have something . . ." And she said, "No. I've been here a long time. In the early '80s, there was a colonel here who said, 'Vietnam was a bad war. We're not going to study it here. Get rid of the records.'" That was really the attitude that we, as a nation, took toward Vietnam: that was a bad war; counterinsurgency is a bad way to fight a war; we're not going to do it anymore.

When the insurgencies started in Iraq and Afghanistan in this decade, we were unprepared. We were not ready to fight those kinds of wars and that meant we had to dig ourselves out of a hole and relearn a lot of old lessons—a lot of lessons that had been paid for with blood, with our blood, with the blood of our friends. There's been a gap in the intellectual development of our understanding of warfare and our

understanding of how to apply U.S. national power to achieve national objectives. That intellectual gap has cost us a great deal. And this is not just a matter for historical interest. I think these are harbingers of an era of persistent irregular conflict. I think these are the kinds of wars we're going to be fighting for the foreseeable future, and these kinds of wars require the development of special capacities and capabilities.

The first quote in the *Counterinsurgency*¹ manual is from a Special Forces friend of mine. In 2005, I sent him a note and told him I was working on counterinsurgency doctrine, and he wrote back and said, "Remember, counterinsurgency isn't just a thinking man's war; it is the graduate level of warfare," by which he meant you have to be able to do all of the usual warfare kind of stuff. You've got to be able to use artillery, direct fire, close air support, naval gunfire, all of those sorts of things, but you also have to have a whole other set of skills, ones that are much better suited to developing host nation governance and to establishing and enforcing the rule of law. It's an enormously challenging intellectual task, and it requires the integration of a large number of skill sets that we're getting better at using. But we still have, I think, a long way to go.

My dissertation looked at how the British Army adapted, how it learned, and how the American Army adapted and learned, and like any good graduate student, I didn't have any new ideas of my own. I just stole them from my friends. Richard Downie wrote his Ph.D. at the University of Southern California. His book, *Learning from Conflict*,² also looked at organizational adaptation, and he took the theories of John Boyd.

John Boyd, an Air Force pilot who tried to figure out why we were so successful in the Korean War in fighter-on-fighter conflict, despite the fact that, arguably, the MiG-15s were better airplanes than the airplanes we had, developed the OODA loop.³ The idea was that the pilot who observes what's going on, orients himself to the situation, decides what

¹ U.S. DEP'T OF ARMY, FIELD MANUAL 3-24, COUNTERINSURGENCY (15 Dec. 2006) [hereinafter FM 3-24].

² RICHARD DUNCAN DOWNIE, LEARNING FROM CONFLICT (1998).

³ Observation-Oriented-Decision-Action loop. See Colonel John R. Boyd, Patterns of Conflict (Dec. 1986) (unpublished lecture notes), available at <http://www.ausairpower.net/JRB/poc.pdf>. Colonel Boyd continued to develop and modify his Patterns of Conflict briefing between 1986 and 1991.

he wants to do, and acts faster than the enemy gets inside the enemy's OODA loop, or decision cycle, and that pilot wins nine times out of ten.

Downie⁴ took that same idea of getting inside the enemy's OODA loop and applied it to organizations, because we seldom fight as individuals. Today, even fighter pilots are part of a much broader team, so how do you get that broader team to learn and adapt?

Downie's model of organizational learning flows clockwise, and I'm going to start here at ten o'clock. If you have an Army organized, designed, trained, and equipped for conventional tank-on-tank conflict and it suddenly finds itself fighting irregular wars—fighting enemies who won't meet it in frontal conflict, who wage war in the shadows—there are going to be individuals in the organization who pay attention to what's going on; that's always true in every organization. Those individuals are going to identify organizational performance gaps. They're going to say, "Hey, this isn't the enemy we war-gamed against. The plan ain't working." They're going to come up with new ways to do business, but this is where it gets hard—at six o'clock. The organization has to come to a sustained consensus that the old ways of doing business are insufficient and that new techniques have to be adopted. That's enormously difficult. If you're able to do that, if you're able to come to that kind of consensus, it's then comparatively easy to transmit the new interpretation by publishing doctrine that should change the way the organization acts on the ground. In a healthy organization, that cycle repeats endlessly. In a successful organization, that cycle repeats faster than the opponent's.

Increasingly the military is learning from business. Businesses do this all the time, and they reward people very, very highly, but it works really well in business because you can tell literally every day how you're doing. Dell and HP are consciously competing against each other and know literally every day who's selling more. So there's enormous pressure to find people who can identify gaps, come up with new ways to do business, and a lot of organizational consensus behind making those changes as rapidly as possible.

⁴ Dr. Richard D. Downie. Downie currently serves as the Director of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies at the National Defense University and is the author of *Learning from Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War* (1998).

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sir, how do you define a sustained consensus?

DR. NAGL: That's hard, but a really good question. Part of it, I would argue, is doctrine. Doctrine is supposed to be a generally accepted body of beliefs that an organization follows. There's an old line about the American Army from the Germans: The Americans have the best doctrine in the world—fortunately, they don't read it. But, in fact, writing it isn't enough. You have to believe it and you have to implement it. This is why we were so enormously fortunate, I would argue to have had General Petraeus, the guy who literally wrote the counterinsurgency doctrine, put the theory into practice in Iraq, a theater of war that clearly was not going well, and developed a degree of consensus behind that way forward—although by no means is there universal consensus, even inside the American Army, that the doctrine is correct. In fact, there's a raging debate among a small group of people over whether we got the counterinsurgency doctrine right and whether it works. The title of my talk is subtitled "Winning the Wars We're In," and I've been conducting a debate in the pages of *Joint Force Quarterly* with a serving colonel named Gian Gentile over whether we got this doctrine right or not.

I would argue that the outcome of Afghanistan is going to be incredibly important in determining whether there is, in fact, a sustained consensus or not. Secretary Gates has weighed in on this to an extraordinary degree. He's made programmatic changes in line with a future of irregular warfare, at least on the ground side, but even those decisions are not locked in. A lot of that's going to depend on how long Gates stays in office as Secretary of Defense and who follows him, so this is by no means a decided question. There's a cottage industry. Literally every week I get a note from somebody who's writing a doctoral dissertation on this question.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sir, how does the momentum of the alternatives overcome the inertia of established doctrine?

DR. NAGL: Great question. The best book on this is probably by David Ucko. Ucko just published with Georgetown Press. His book is *The New Counterinsurgency Era*,⁵ which plays on a book called *The*

⁵ DAVID H. UCKO, *THE NEW COUNTERINSURGENCY ERA: TRANSFORMING THE U.S. MILITARY FOR MODERN WARS* (2009).

Counterinsurgency Era, by Blaufarb.⁶ There are a number of different schools of organizational learning, in particular in the military, and one of the big questions is how does the process happen? What does it require for organizational adaptation to take hold?

Most people agree that one of the key factors is influential sponsors who create promotion paths guaranteeing success for acolytes. Naval aviation is a great example of this at work. In the nuclear submarine force, Rickover's nuclear Navy, Admiral Rickover personally made things happen, and in my own service, armor, Patton was influential in the early years of armor. So the personage of General Petraeus is enormously important in causing all of this to happen, and, I would argue, he performed a national service two months ago by volunteering to at least nominally take a step down and take up the cause in Afghanistan at really a critical time when he could have coasted on a very well-deserved reputation for success.⁷

The Fourth Star, written by Greg Jaffe and David Cloud, looks at David Petraeus, John Abizaid, George Casey Jr., and Peter Chiarelli and goes through their intellectual histories.⁸ It's really an intellectual biography of four general officers and asks the very hard question, the question we, the military, should be asking as an institution: Are we promoting the right people to positions of strategic leadership? Petraeus, one of the smartest guys on the planet, was famous in the Army not for his Ph.D., but for the fact that he could do more one-armed pushups than anybody else in any of his units. He really didn't take his intellect out from under a bushel basket until he took command at Leavenworth. Admiral Jim Stavridis, sort of the Navy's version of Petraeus, has a Ph.D. from The Fletcher School.⁹ So, are we putting the right emphasis on strategic thinking, on academic thinking, as warfare changes and as we need a different kind of strategic leader to perform the functions and the strategic communication skill set that Petraeus has so well and that Stavridis, for those of you who know him, has so very well?

⁶ DOUGLAS S. BLAUFARB, *THE COUNTERINSURGENCY ERA: U.S. DOCTRINE AND PERFORMANCE, 1950 TO THE PRESENT* (1977).

⁷ General Petraeus assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan on July 4, 2010 after serving as Commander of U.S. Central Command. President Barack Obama nominated General Petraeus to the position after the resignation of the General Stanley McChrystal. See President Barack Obama, Statement by the President in the Rose Garden (June 23, 2010).

⁸ DAVID CLOUD & GREG JAFFE, *THE FOURTH STAR* (2009).

⁹ The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sir, you stated that success is not obtained by merely completing the decision-making circle but by doing it quickly, and it seems to me that what you've explained so far is not going to be accomplished quickly, at least not if it's only being operated from the very top. The more junior officers—the majors and lieutenant colonels—have a lot of knowledge. They're the ones who are out there right now. They're the tank commanders. They're the squadron commanders. They're the ones who really need to get their information to the top. If the fourth star is really where all of this policy, all of these decisions, are made, how would you speed up this process?

DR. NAGL: Everything you said is true and is great. I was responding to a slightly different question, though. I was asked about solidifying it, and to come to the sustained consensus you have to have the senior leaders who believe in it and lock it down and nail it in. In any organization, you're going to have the bright, younger folks coming up with ideas, some of them good, some of them bad; that is particularly evident here.

One of the many fascinating things about this has been the role of information technology—the Internet—in enabling and accelerating the learning process. The *Small Wars Journal*¹⁰ has an extraordinary website that pulls together sort of an *Early Bird*¹¹ kind of compilation of defense and national security press, but more importantly empowers and enables a really raging debate over these questions. And there were a number of more junior people whose thinking has been really important. Conrad Crane, who was the lead editor of FM 3-24,¹² was Petraeus's classmate at West Point. Dave Kilcullen, a name many of you should recognize—an Australian former infantryman—just published his new book, *Counterinsurgency*.¹³ Dave's thinking is important. Jim Thomas, a young Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, did a lot of important driving and thinking during the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR).

¹⁰ SMALL WARS J., <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/>.

¹¹ See *Current News Early Bird*, OFF. OF THE SEC'Y OF DEF., <http://ebird.osd.mil/index.html> (last visited Jan. 28, 2011). The *Early Bird* is a "daily compilation of published items and commentary concerning significant defense and defense-related national security issues" prepared by the Current News Service of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. *Id.*

¹² FM 3-24, *supra* note 1.

¹³ DAVID KILCULLEN, *COUNTERINSURGENCY* (2010).

Every four years, Congress mandates that the Department of Defense conduct a soup-to-nuts evaluation of the strategic environment it finds itself in, its capabilities, and whether the two match up. The 2006 QDR pushed the Department hard in the direction of irregular warfare, but there were no programmatic changes, and no weapon systems were canceled as a result of it. It created the intellectual foundation for a lot of the transformation that Gates has now been doing for the broader Department of Defense. People really do matter. If Secretary Rumsfeld had not been replaced by Secretary Gates, it's hard to imagine that we could have made the changes that we made in Iraq in 2007. Gates enabled and empowered a whole lot of thinking that had been going on by an increasingly frustrated number of junior officers and junior academics from all over the place, who suddenly were nurtured by Petraeus in particular. We started writing the *Counterinsurgency* manual in November of 2005.

In February of '06, when the Iraq War really turned sharply down, the Samarra mosque bombing took place. We were at Leavenworth to review a draft of the *Counterinsurgency* manual, and we were in a room about this size. Petraeus sat in the front row for the whole two and a half-day session questioning, engaging, running sort of a seminar from the chair on how to write the book, engage in the learning process, and empower the young minds who were not happy with the direction things were going. You've got to have the bright, young minds, but they're going to get nowhere if the leadership says no, if the leadership turns into a roadblock.

Interestingly, Dave Kilcullen was pulled out of that conference to go to Iraq because of Samarra. It didn't take a long time for Kilcullen to understand what Samarra meant, but it took a long time for us, for the big organization, to understand what Samarra meant.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sir, earlier you talked about how, in Desert Storm, we were so good at tank-on-tank that we pushed the enemy to the edges. In an insurgency, as we get better at this loop, where do we push the enemy to? Do you believe that we go with counterinsurgency? And what's the next war going to look like?

DR. NAGL: My objective is that we become as good at irregular warfare as we are at conventional warfare, and you leave the enemy no place to run to, no place to hide. Right now there's a gap in our capability, although we've developed enormously well, and, with respect

to my two British friends in the room, I think we've taken the mantle. The Brits used to be the best in the world at counterinsurgency. I would argue that we're there now. I think that they've written some great doctrine. Recently, Colonel Alex Alderson has just stood up a counterinsurgency center for the British military. General Sir David Richards, now taking over as their version of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, understands this kind of war and is moving in that direction.

We've become the best in the world at it, but I would argue we're the best now. If you fight a protracted warfare strategy, you have a chance of exhausting the U.S. political will and you have a better chance of achieving your objectives. I think that that is likely to remain the case. I think we're likely to maintain our conventional advantage over any conventional opponent for at least the next two decades. One of the things the QDR panel I sat on recommended was more investments in the Navy, interestingly, as the rise of Asian powers is exposing some vulnerabilities, but we've got to find that balance. In November 2008, Gates gave a great talk at the National Defense University arguing for more investments in irregular warfare capabilities. He then published his remarks in the January/February 2009 issue of *Foreign Affairs*.¹⁴ In response to a question, he said, "I've got plenty of spare Naval and Air Force capacity to deal with conventional threats. What I don't have is sufficient capacity to deal with irregular threats." But it's a valid critique. I don't think we've overadjusted. I don't think the pendulum has overswung. There are those who disagree. And in particular I think that there are lots and lots of skills that translate. Because counterinsurgency is the graduate level of war, you've still got to be able to do all of the killing; a good, interesting *New York Times* piece yesterday on this argued that the counterinsurgency part hasn't worked very well in Afghanistan. We've had more success with counterterrorism.

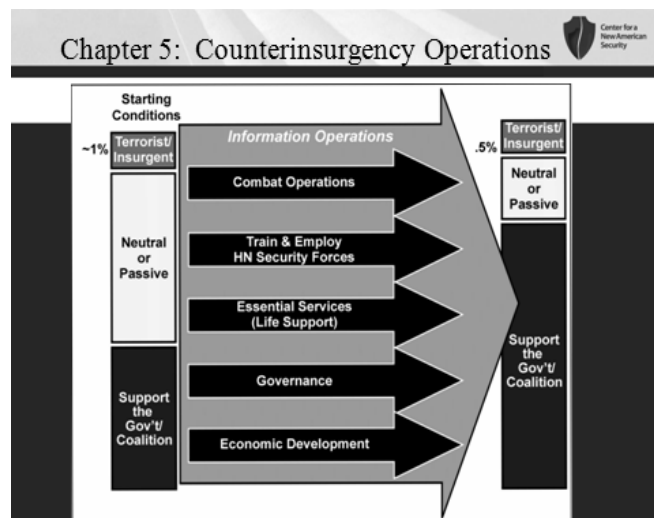
In any counterinsurgency campaign, you're fighting a fairly small number of enemies. So in the fight I know best—in al Anbar in 2003, 2004—I was responsible for a town named Khaldiya. For those of you who haven't had the pleasure, it's between Ramadi and Fallujah, so it's a pretty good neighborhood. In my sector in Khaldiya, there were about 60,000 people I was responsible for. Of those 60,000, as near as we could tell about 300—about half of one percent—were actively trying to kill me and my guys. Those 300 were stacked up against a tank battalion

¹⁴ Robert M. Gates, *A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age*, FOREIGN AFF., Jan./Feb. 2009, at 28.

task force of 800 people and we had tanks. We had Bradleys. We had close air support. We had everything. Still, over the course of a year, they managed to kill twenty-two of us, wound 150 of us, and there were more of them, at the end of the year, than there were when we started. How could this be?

The answer is because they were enabled and empowered by the neutral or passive part of the population. The objective in a counterinsurgency campaign is not to kill or capture those guys because, believe me, we did our fair share of that. And this is the problem I have with the *New York Times* piece from yesterday, which says that counterterrorism is the answer in Afghanistan. We killed or captured way more than 300, but if you don't change the conditions, you will literally be fighting their brothers—literally their brothers—and we saw that in a number of cases. So the ultimate objective can't be just kill or capture. It has to be to increase the number of people who support the government, the coalition, to drain the swamp that supports the bad guys and bring this number down. You're never going to bring it to zero. You try to bring it down to a level where the local government, local military, local security forces can deal with the problem.

And how do you do that? We came up with six logical lines of operation.¹⁵



¹⁵ DOWNIE, *supra* note 2, ch. 5.

Combat operations. Kill or capture bad guys, an inherent part of counterinsurgency. The hard part isn't killing or capturing. It's figuring out who to kill or capture.

Train and employ host nation security forces. Ultimately that is your exit strategy. "Exit strategy" isn't a good phrase; it's a victory strategy. You've got to build a host nation's capacity, so you knock some of the insurgents out to make the problem easier. You do this to increase the host nation's capacity to deal with the problem.

Provide essential services to the population. There's a lot of debate about how important that really is. You create good governance to increase support. The ability of the people to support the government or coalition only works if the government is part of the solution, not part of the problem. Probably the biggest problem we have in Afghanistan right now is the governance problem. This is where judge advocates can really help as we develop an expeditionary capacity to improve governance. We've got a long way to go as a department, as a nation, in terms of economic development to defeat the "accidental guerrillas," to use Kilcullen's phrase.

"Economic insurgents" is a phrase I use, and my model of insurgency is an onion. You've got a hard core of really committed Jihadis who have to be killed or captured, and we know how to do that. But as you get further out, you've got folks who are less committed ideologically but are doing it for other reasons—because of nationalism, because it's the most exciting thing going on in the valley that particular year. Kilcullen did some interviews of an American squad. A Special Forces team, I think, got pinned down in a valley and the insurgents just kept coming. A couple of weeks later, he got to do interviews with some of the insurgents and asked why, because they were not committed Jihadis. He asked, "Why did you go shoot at those Americans?" and the answer was, "This is the most exciting thing that's happened in my valley for five years. This is all we're going to talk about for the next five years. I'm going to be a part of it, man."

In Anbar, in my fight, we did exit interviews with insurgents we captured, and one of the metrics we tracked was how much they got paid to conduct attacks against us; in Al Anbar in 2004, we estimated unemployment at seventy percent. The one thing the former regime elements—we weren't allowed to call them insurgents then—had was lots and lots of money, and the place was just littered, literally, with

artillery shells and munitions in the streets when we initially got there in late 2003. So if you've got unemployed young men, weapons readily available, and people who are willing to pay those unemployed young men to shoot at you, you've got the recipe for a long-term insurgency but not very committed insurgents. This is why you set up employment systems to try to get them off the street, try to wean them away from the insurgency.

Which logical line of operation is the most important? Information operations was the big arrow that incorporated all of the little arrows.¹⁶ (If I could change one thing in the book, that's what I'd change, because nobody gets that. We didn't think people wouldn't see that.) Ultimately, you're changing people's minds. You're trying to change people's attitudes. So everything you do in every one of these lines of operation should have an information operations component. And if you're really good, you should think through the information effect first before you do anything else, before you come up with the combat ops plan, before you think about how you're going to aid and mentor the government.

And anybody wants to guess which of these we're worst at?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Information operations.

DR. NAGL: Information operations, right. I'm sure you all have your horror stories. Let me tell one of mine just quickly. Every private E-2 in my tank battalion had shoot/no shoot authority. If my private believed that there was a threat to U.S. personnel or to our allies in the field, he or she could use deadly force; that's what I told them. Shoot/no shoot authority all the way down to the private.

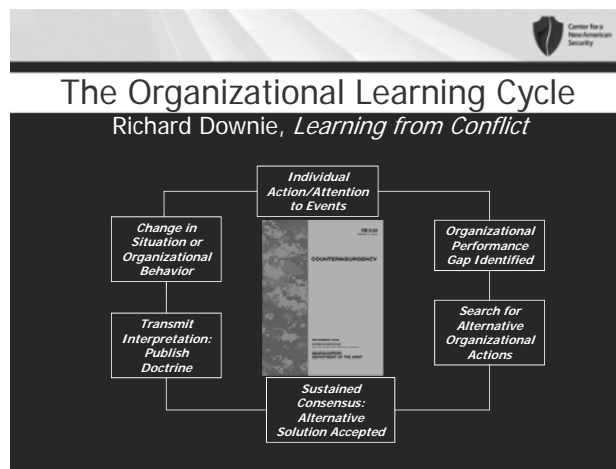
If I wanted to put out a flier that said, "Wanted: Individuals responsible for the murder of this Iraqi family, photo follows, killed by an improvised explosive device in the streets of Khaldiya at this date/time group. Reward," anybody want to guess whether I had the authority—I was a major at the time—to do that?

The two-star division commander had the authority to approve that poster. So my private can kill somebody, but the major can't put up a poster. I don't know whether that's still the case or not; I'm a little disconnected now. I will tell you that I ultimately got so frustrated that I

¹⁶ See FM 3-24, *supra* note 1, fig.5-1.

decided just to do what I was doing, to post them, and simultaneously send them up for approval—that is, “I posted this at these locations, at this time. If you tell me to take them down, I will.” Never got anything back.

My friend Erik Kurilla, whom some of you may know, was my West Point classmate. Erik is now commanding the Ranger Regiment. Erik did me one up. In his Strykers, he preprinted the forms in Arabic and just left blanks to put in the date/time group and to put in the picture. He had printers and laptops in the back of his Strykers and he would literally, while they were doing incident reaction, hit print and start handing out flyers to people who had gathered around, doing basic police work. We have to empower our people in the field. We have to trust our majors and give them the authority to put out flyers.



This is the heart of the manual. Those two slides, the organizational learning slide and this slide,¹⁷ are really the heart of what I’m going to talk about today.

I’ll talk about Iraq a little bit in terms of where I think we are. I mentioned the Samarra mosque bombing in 2006. The basic fundamentals of Iraq were that the Sunnis, although a minority in the country, had long held disproportionate power. When we toppled Saddam’s government, we established democracy without a clear idea what that was; that essentially put the Shia in power. The Sunnis reacted

¹⁷ DOWNIE, *supra* note 2.

badly against that, and fought an insurgency against it. Initially, at least, their objectives were in alignment with those of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Al-Qaeda in Iraq successfully revved up that Sunni-Shia split in Iraq. They did it in Al Anbar. In particular, the day the 4th Infantry Division captured Saddam Hussein will forever be, for me, the day that AQI launched a car bomb on the police station. I'll back up. I'll tell a story.

So, I get to Al Anbar in the fall of 2003, and I know how to do this stuff. I did my doctoral dissertation on counterinsurgency, and I've read a lot of books, right? So I take my best company commander because I know it's an important mission and because to succeed in counterinsurgency, ultimately, you have to have local police forces that work. So I told my best captain, "Go down to the police station, grid follows, and go on a joint patrol with the police and come back tonight and tell me how you did." Clear, simple instructions, major to captain, just the way it's supposed to go. My captain, Ben Miller, comes back to me that night and reports mission failure to me. He said, "Sir, I was unable to perform the mission of going on a joint patrol with the police," and I said, "Ben, come on. How hard could this be? I told you where they were. Did you go to this location and link up with the police?" He said, "Sir, I went to the location, but I couldn't link up with the police. They were too fast." I said, "I'm sorry?" He said, "When we pulled up, they ran away, and a bunch of them jumped out of the windows and off of the roof, and I couldn't catch any of them in time." I said, "Okay, Ben. I clearly sent a boy to do a man's job. All right, I will come with you tomorrow and we will successfully go on a joint patrol with the police in the Iraqi city of Khaldiya." We pulled up, and, sure as shootin', it was like popcorn; they were going on all over the place. But we managed to pin two of the slow ones down in a corner, and there was just an absolutely wonderful Laurel and Hardy exchange. I found an AK-47, and I'm having a discussion through an interpreter with my new friend, the Iraqi policeman, and we were fighting with the AK-47.

"You're going."

"No."

"You're going."

"No."

"You're going."

“No.”

“You’re going.” It was probably illegal. So these two cops went on patrol with us literally at gunpoint. What I was too dumb to understand at the time but figured out only in retrospect was that my PFC’s rifle barrel was a life insurance policy for this cop, that if he had been seen at that point, given the conditions in Khaldiya, to be willingly cooperating with us, his head would have been hanging from the police station the next morning. It took me a while to figure that out.

Over time, we started to develop relationships with the police, and they started working with us and it became a threat. Al Qaeda in Iraq had a significant presence in the area, you’ll recall, and they launched their version of a strategic missile attack. They launched a car bomb on the police station at shift change on a Sunday morning, which killed thirty-four and wounded another forty or fifty. This was an attack with strategic effect. It was the local version of the Samarra mosque bombing and set relations back a ways. We continued to work with them.

My police chief—I was on police chief number three; as we were pulling into town, his predecessor had ingested a full clip of AK-47 rounds and been left in the town square—was a former Iraqi Republican Guard armor officer. He and I had actually fought together before—although on opposite sides, in Desert Storm. And now we got to work through all of this together. After an improvised explosive device (IED) that killed one of our lieutenants, his radio telephone operator, and two Iraqi policemen, the Iraqi police stood with us and conducted cordon and search operations and tried to help us figure out who the bad guys were. And there was an IED on my police chief in his driveway. Think about that and what that says about local support and the guts of that cop.

Then, in Fallujah in March of 2004, when the Blackwater guys were killed, we made some bad strategic choices. We went into Fallujah in a big way, and Iraq exploded. I got multiple, credible reports that my police chief was passing on some of the body armor, some of the weapons, some of the ammunition that I’d gotten for his guys to the insurgents inside Fallujah.

What do you do?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Nothing.

DR. NAGL: Nothing? So this guy is giving weapons and ammunition to people who are fighting against your friends, literally your friends, and you're not going to do anything?

I didn't do anything; that's what I did. I didn't do anything. My analysis was that this was the least he could do and stay alive given the conditions in Iraq at that point. I had this discussion with Steve Inskeep from *Morning Edition* and said the same thing, said I did nothing. Steve did the same thing to me I just did to you, and they called back and said, "We need you to explain this again because the American people are not going to understand it." They were seriously concerned that I was going to get in big trouble when they played this on *Morning Edition*, but I ended up getting overwhelmingly positive reactions, especially from people who had actually done it.

Ultimately, it always helps to fight a dumb enemy, and AQI overreached; they did some remarkably barbaric things. There's a new book on this out by Jim Michaels, who writes for *USA Today*, called *A Chance in Hell* about the fight in Ramadi, which is really where the awakening started, with outreach to a Sunni sheik, not a major sheik, who started to turn against AQI. Al Qaeda in Iraq was doing things like cutting off fingers if somebody was smoking, forced marriages, assassinations of sheiks in the local community, those sorts of things. The sheik created sort of a local militia. This ultimately became the Sons of Iraq. His highest ambition was to meet President Bush, and when President Bush went out to Al Anbar late in his presidency, this guy, this sheik, actually sat next to him and was killed by an IED two weeks later.

An extraordinary story of enormously brave people. We go there for year-long tours, but this is their life. They go there forever, and an enormous number have paid a remarkable price. Ultimately, because of the Sons of Iraq, because a number of brave Sunnis turned against AQI because AQI made it easy to do so by being so stupid and brutal, we broke the fundamental cycle of violence, brought the Sunnis on board, made it impossible for the Sunnis we brought on board to return to the fight, with biometric IDs. Once you know somebody who has been an insurgent and you can gather indelible information on them, it's impossible for them to turn back to the insurgency, and the fundamental cycle has been broken.

One of the fundamental policies of the last administration was democracy promotion. I'm a big fan of liberal democracy, which has

protections for the rights of minorities; that requires institutions. We haven't built the institutions in a lot of places where we tried to have democracy. I think you need to build the institutions first, as, for example, we did in South Korea and Taiwan. In Iraq we, I think, went to democracy too soon, before we built the institutions, so we're having a really hard time settling who the next government of Iraq is going to be. That's a problem. It's a challenge. It's going to remain a challenge.

The drawdown is on track, as necessary. The President gave a speech on this to the, I think, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America very recently. I just read about it in the press today. We're going to draw down to 50,000 soon, by August of next year. I'm confident that when an Iraqi government is, in fact, formed, the first thing they'll do is establish a new Status of Forces Agreement with the United States. It's in Iraq's interest to have a long-term security relationship with the United States. It's in the United States's interest. It's in the region's interest. The only people whose interest it's not in is Iran's. Things that Iran doesn't like I'm generally in favor of, but Iraq has purchased M1A1 tanks. They are negotiating to purchase F-16s. Those of you who work in this sort of law work in State Department Pol-Mil and places like that. Our arrangements are not set up properly. It has taken way, way too long to cut through and sell them the F-16s that they need and that we need them to have, but the hard part isn't flying the planes; it's keeping them up in the air. It's going to take a long time for them to develop that capacity. I think there are going to be Americans in Iraq for a long, long time. I think that's okay, and, frankly, I think the American people are going to think that's okay.

Afghanistan: *The Economist* has a really good piece on WikiLeaks and what WikiLeaks shows us; probably the smartest piece I've seen. In short, *The Economist's* argument is what WikiLeaks shows us is that we were not fighting using counterinsurgency methods in Afghanistan. What we were doing was fighting using counterterrorism methods, and it wasn't working. We were not building the institutions. We were not improving the governance. All we were doing was killing or capturing enemies, and without changing the underlying dynamics, you're just going to produce more insurgents.

That situation really started to change in 2009. President Obama has been remarkably consistent, I would argue, in what he's campaigned on versus what he's implemented. He said he was going to shift resources from Iraq to Afghanistan, and he wasn't kidding. He conducted two full policy reviews over the course of 2009. The first one doubled the number

of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, and the last one, announced on December 1st, increased U.S. troops by another 30,000. We're still building up to the total 100,000. The last of the 100,000 should be on the ground this month, but the counterinsurgency campaign hasn't really caught hold there yet.

The year 2009 was also a decisive year in Pakistan. The relationship with Pakistan has been troubled. "Troubled" doesn't half do it justice, does it, but in 2009 the Pakistani Taliban clearly became a strategic threat to the continued existence of Pakistan. This occurred when the Taliban took the Swat River Valley. Swat is to Islamabad as the Hamptons is to New York City. It's about that far away, and they use it for the same thing. It's sort of a vacation spot. The Pakistani government, you may recall, in February of 2009 came to an agreement with the Pakistani Taliban that they were going to cede control of the Swat River Valley. They were going to give that over to the Taliban. That was an extraordinarily underreported, underappreciated diplomatic offensive from the President, through Petraeus, up and down, to Admiral Mullen.

Admiral Mullen is in Pakistan once a month. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff says that the most important thing he does is establish a personal relationship with the leadership of the Pakistani military. That is his number one priority, and if you look at where he spends his time, that's where he spends his time. Extraordinary. The Pakistani Government just renewed General Kayani for another three-year term—hugely important. The pressure we put on Kayani, on the Pakistani military, and the government led to them clearing the Swat River Valley. It wasn't pretty. They need some work in the hold-and-build phases, but they cleared the Swat River Valley.

Importantly, the vast majority of the Pakistani population is strongly opposed to the United States—strongly, strongly opposed to the de facto Pakistani alliance with the United States. That's decisive. What Pakistan decides to do will ultimately determine whether the government of Afghanistan is able to stand or not. So I applaud Admiral Mullen for the priority he places on General Kayani and on those relationships he's building. A fantastic choice.

We're also very fortunate, I think, to have General Mattis of the Marines. Mattis and Petraeus collaborated on the Army-Marine Corps counterinsurgency manual. Some think that the Army and Marines regularly collaborate on doctrine just because they fight the same kind of

fighters, in the same places, against the same enemies, with a lot of the same equipment. We don't. We were able to do so only because of the personal relationship between Mattis and Petraeus, and that relationship, I think, is going to play a big role going forward now with Mattis as the new CENTCOM commander and Petraeus's nominal boss.

We've made big, hard choices. We've pulled out of some of the valleys that we've had horrific fights in. We tried to conduct counterterrorism in valleys at the ends of long supply lines and lost large numbers of our finest to, frankly, no strategic effect. We've pulled out of a number of those valleys. General McChrystal started this process, Petraeus will continue it, and we're going to put our troops now in population centers.

The effort to build the Afghan military, the Afghan security forces, what I consider to be our exit strategy, has been horribly under-resourced throughout. My last job on active duty was training MiTT teams, military transition teams, for service in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was pretty easy with the Iraq guys. JAGs wouldn't have done this by and large, except at the high level, the ministry levels. The Iraq guys, I could tell them, "This is the team you're replacing. Here are their e-mail addresses. Here are their phone numbers. Here's the VTC I've set up for you to talk with them." It was a smooth process. Folks going to Afghanistan, as they were getting on airplanes, I couldn't tell them who they were going to replace, and when they got to country, they were broken up. The sixteen-person teams I had trained were broken up into three- and four-person teams and assigned to this battalion, this kandak (Afghan battalion), this kandak, that kandak, this police station. We—the United States of America—in the summer of 2009, were manning our identified requirement for advisors to the Afghan Army at fifty percent; to the Afghan police at thirty-three percent.

It shouldn't be a big surprise that they haven't improved at a rapid rate. We literally started fixing this in November of last year, November of 2009 when Lieutenant General Bill Caldwell was assigned to take over training the Afghan security forces. He was a three-star. His predecessors had all been two-stars. We started taking the Iraqi military seriously when we assigned a three-star to it, but that was Petraeus in 2004. We're five years behind in Afghanistan where we were in Iraq; that'd be true even if Iraq and Afghanistan were equivalent. The Iraqis all knew how to read; they didn't know how to fight. The Afghans all

know how to fight but not very many of them know how to read. It's tough to teach somebody to read, so we've got a lot of work to do.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sir, in your opinion, why were things so calm in Afghanistan in '03, '04, and '05?

DR. NAGL: There's a number of reasons for that. One of them is we didn't have enough forces to go an awful lot of places, and we really whacked the Taliban pretty hard in 2001 and scattered them, dispersed them, pushed them back across the border into Pakistan. They grew there over a number of years. There was a lot of hope initially that the Karzai Government was going to be effective and the people were willing to give him a couple of years, but the Government didn't get better; the people's lives didn't get better; the Taliban grew stronger; and there really weren't even enough of us to see what was happening and understand what was going on.

We handed over control to NATO in 2006. NATO is not designed for this kind of fight, the NATO command structure was not well designed for this, and we weren't paying attention. Quite frankly, Iraq sucked all the oxygen out of the room, and President Obama, I think, when he was campaigning on Afghanistan as the forgotten war, didn't know how right he was. When the new administration assumed office in January 2009, there was a request for additional troops sitting on the President's desk that had been waiting there for a number of months, that the last administration hadn't acted on, and the administration didn't want to reinforce Candidate Obama's narrative that they'd been asleep at the switch in Afghanistan, but that is increasingly acknowledged to be the case.

Now there are lots and lots of questions. This is going to be a tough fight. When Petraeus took command in Iraq, things were far, far worse than they are in Afghanistan right now. The big question is whether the United States is going to have the political will to do what needs to be done in Afghanistan over the amount of time that's going to be required. My belief is that the answer is yes. It's a very interesting generational debate. There's a lot of push back from folks who are a generation senior to me; those who are still alive. Why do I think we're going to be able to do in Afghanistan what we weren't able to do in Vietnam, the single biggest difference?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: No draft.

DR. NAGL: No draft, right? All volunteer force. The all volunteer force, which was never designed to fight two protracted wars, has held up far better than anybody ever could have imagined. We're seeing the strain, in particular in my former service, in the Army. The suicide rate in the Army now exceeds that of the general population. That's never been the case. It shouldn't be the case.

It's tough to get into the Army, right. Our soldiers have to meet high standards of fitness, health, intelligence, and character to wear the cloth of the nation, so the fact that a subset of the American population that has all those advantages, that has a job, that has people who care about them is still committing suicide at the rates the U.S. Army is now seeing is a sign of cracks along the waterline. And the numbers are extraordinary. We lost more than one a day to suicides in June. In 2009, the Army lost more to suicides than it did to war in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. And General Chiarelli, who I've talked about a couple of times today, has been, I think, spectacular in grasping this bull by the horns and putting a lot of resources against it. But this is a long-term problem, I think. Dealing and caring for the wounded from this war and, in particular, those with silent wounds—the PTSD and the traumatic brain injury—is going to be hard, and it's going to take a long time.

A few lessons from these fights: IEDs aren't going to go away. It used to be that you'd engage in diplomatic relations with the state. You'd declare war, break off diplomatic relations, fight the war, and diplomatic relations would start again. That's no longer the case. Obviously, we're not fighting states anymore in our current wars, and so politics continues throughout the war. You don't negotiate with former enemies at the end of the war. You negotiate with current enemies during the course of the war, and figuring that out has been enormously difficult and enormously important. I've mentioned already strategic communications a little bit and the unfortunate case of General McChrystal, a great American, whose counterterrorism success in killing the enemy in Iraq played a much greater role in our successes there than is commonly acknowledged, because he did most of that in the shadows and, partly, because he came from that shadow world that had not grown up working with the media. When you spend most of your career working in units that we officially don't acknowledge exist, you're probably not spending a lot of time drinking beer with the press, so he was not well prepared for the challenge of the media.

At my center, Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt are writing a history of the war on terror called *Counterstrike*. We just hired David Finkel, who wrote the wonderful book, *The Good Soldiers*, about 2/16 Infantry commanded by Ralph Kauzlarich, my West Point classmate and neighbor at Fort Riley—a fantastic book, beautiful book. Finkel is now looking at some of the long-term effects on America of the wars we’re currently fighting. I don’t think that our friend from *Rolling Stone* did that profession any services. I think he was playing dirty ball.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What’s your thought on negotiating with the Taliban?

DR. NAGL: Sir, I’ll go back to my onion analogy and the core of the onion, the hardcore committed Jihadis—what I call the “big T” Taliban. You can’t negotiate with those guys; you’ve got to capture or kill them. But there are “small t” Taliban. There are economic Taliban, accidental guerrillas. We can, should, and are negotiating with those guys. You peel the onion away to try to make the kill-capture problem as small as you can, and you thwack those guys. We’re having far more success against the mid-level insurgents. This is something the *New York Times* piece yesterday got right. We’re killing and capturing an awful lot of the mid-level Taliban folks, and it’s getting to the point where Taliban are refusing to take promotions. What’s the most dangerous job in the world? Number three in al-Qaeda.

The Taliban are saying, “No. I won’t take that promotion.” When in January, there’s twelve of you, and in February there’s eleven, and in March there’s nine, you start to get the message. And that’s literally what’s happening. There are a lot more successes happening in Afghanistan than we talk about. The problem is the successes we’re having we tend not to be able to talk about, and the WikiLeaks cutoff really happened before we started having those kind of successes, so we can’t even get that out.

Security forces assistance. Our exit strategy, our victory strategy, is Iraqi, Afghan, Yemeni. Yemen, we haven’t talked about at all. A really scary case, but fortunately a case where there is still a state. We need to improve the Yemeni security forces. There was a great *New York Times* magazine cover story on Yemen and the security challenges we face in Yemen a month ago. We need to build better capacity at the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of the Interior, and I’d put a bunch of you in places like that, all the way down to the battalions and the police stations. We

don't have the capacity we need to do that if, in fact, my picture of the future of war is correct at all.

I helped with the 2010 QDR, and there's some irony there. I work at a think tank now, the Center for a New American Security. My predecessor as the president of that place was Michele Flournoy, who is now the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the person responsible for the QDR. In an unofficial capacity, I helped with that, and I was then appointed to the panel to review that. One of the things the QDR didn't get right—and there's a number of reasons for that—is that it did not commit the United States to building more security forces assistance capacity, and that's something our review talks about and something I think we still need to get right. In these kind of fights, the hard part isn't killing the enemy, it's finding him.

Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Bovarnick talked about Galula in his introduction. This is the best book on counterinsurgency still—a spectacular little book. I like to say it's so short an infantryman can read it. You may recall during the run-up to Iraq, there were big, big arguments about how many troops it would take to secure Iraq after the fight, and Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, asked in congressional testimony who could possibly think it would take more troops to secure a country than to topple its government. I like Secretary Wolfowitz, I worked for him, but he got that one wrong, because it's easier to create disorder than it is to create order. So it takes a lot of troops on the ground, a lot of boots on the ground to succeed in a counterinsurgency campaign. We fought and got that number, that historically-based number, in the manual: twenty to twenty-five counterinsurgents for every thousand in the population. In a country the size of Iraq, that's about 500,000; Afghanistan, that's about 600,000. In Iraq right now Iraqi security forces by themselves are north of 700,000; the total Afghan and allied forces in Afghanistan are somewhere between 300,000 and 400,000. So it should be no surprise that in Afghanistan we're not doing as well as we should be, and I've already talked about why, with the failure to resource the security forces assistance effort, that is.

You've got to live among the people because you've got to support the people. Without a secure environment, no permanent reforms can be implemented and disorder spreads. A quick story about that: I was trying to build an Army base inside Khaldiya, inside my town. It kept getting blown up. I'd get it halfway built; it would blow up. I'd get it halfway

built, it would blow up. After the second time it blew up, I got the message—a smarter person would have figured it out the first time—so I got together with my Iraqi battalion commander and said, “I am so saddened. I am so sorry. The station I am building, the barracks I am building for your brave troops in the center of Khaldiya to protect the good people of Khaldiya has been destroyed again by the insurgents. This is horrible. Woe is me. If only I could find a contractor who could provide security.” And he said—any veterans, anybody want to guess what he said?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: “I know a person. I know a person.”

DR. NAGL: “I know a person, and it’s my . . .”

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: “. . . brother.”

DR. NAGL: Brother. He said, “My, I wish you had said something. My brother is a contractor. He can build the barracks and my troops can protect it.” And I said, “Praise Allah. It is a great day,”—and I paid for his kids to go to MIT. But I got my police station. I got my Army barracks. And they didn’t get blown up. So one of the questions I have, and one of the questions you’ll get faced with, has to do with “baksheesh.” “Baksheesh” is the Arabic word for wetting your beak, for bribery—“bribery” is such a hard word. Give me a—

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Grease.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Tips.

DR. NAGL: Tips. Gratuities. Grease. Grease is good. So one of the questions I got asked a lot is how much is too much? And my answer was always 12.7 percent; anything above that is gratuitous. But you’ll have to figure out how you’re going to work that, the fine gray lines of counterinsurgency.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sir, could you talk about the nature of coercion in security. For instance, in Malaya we did things which were very coercive: forceful relocation, control of rations to make people toe the line. What is your view on that?

DR. NAGL: So we did, of course, do a lot of that coercion in Iraq, and that is one of the many reasons why Iraq and Afghanistan are

different. Iraq was an urban insurgency, and we didn't relocate the population wholesale as the Brits did in Malaya and as we tried to do without success in Vietnam. In Malaya, they were called new villages, essentially concentration camps, to concentrate the people and to keep them from smuggling food out to the jungles, to the insurgents. In Baghdad, in particular, we built blast walls, and we controlled access to and from neighborhoods. We used that kind of population control to concentrate the population in areas we could control. Galula says that the first thing you do in any counterinsurgency campaign is you wall off the borders, you seal the borders. The second thing you do is take a census and provide identification papers, and then you follow on down the line. This was the lead source for the counterinsurgency manual.

We still haven't done that either in Iraq or in Afghanistan. In a lot of ways, the dispersion of technology to the insurgents has helped the insurgent more than us. One of the places where it hasn't is biometrics, but we have not made the decisions to create biometric IDs for the entire population, either in Iraq or in Afghanistan. This has been a critical error, but not an unsolvable one. It's like training police. It's nobody's job in the U.S. Government to train police, right, and therefore nobody does it. It's nobody's job in the U.S. Government to conduct a census and issue biometric IDs to populations, so nobody does it. So we have not, I don't think, used coercion as effectively as we should have in Iraq or in Afghanistan, particularly in Afghanistan where it's going to be harder because it's a rural insurgency.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Sir, on that point, in Afghanistan, where seventy percent of the population is not in urban centers, how do you actually go about securing the civilian population?

DR. NAGL: With Afghan security forces.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: But in Afghanistan, where they're not used to any sort of central government control and it's a tribal and ethnic breakdown, the security forces that come into a village or a valley may not be well received. How do you go about breaking that resistance down, or are we just really spinning our wheels?

DR. NAGL: Well, I think we have really been spinning our wheels. The immediate effect of Petraeus was breaking a log jam both with the Karzai Government and with the U.S. State Department to build community defense initiatives, to build local security forces from among

the tribes. The State Department was opposed to that; Karzai was opposed to that. Within a couple of weeks, Petraeus got Karzai's signature on it and, the State Department's signature on it. We're now starting to do that at the local level to create the local security forces, and this is something the Brits did very well all over the world when they were responsible for policing their empire. Then, you have to build the tendrils to connect that to the central Government. Rather than imposing from outside, you're building it from the ground up. That's something, I would argue, the Sons of Iraq—the Sawa, the awakening—did in Iraq, and that's the kind of thing that Petraeus is going to try to empower in Afghanistan. His predecessors have not had as many cards in their hands as he has.

Fighting these kind of wars is a lot more like being a cop than it is like being a Soldier. You do social network analysis. The longest chapter in FM 3-24 is intelligence. Even then, we broke a third of the intel chapter off and put it in as an appendix on social network analysis. There's technology we can use to help with that as well, and a bunch of companies are now starting to do that more effectively. In particular—and this is another place where technology can actually help us—cell phone networks are enormously powerful. As you know, they have location tags. My own personal preference would be that we issue everybody in Afghanistan a cell phone biometrically matched to them, which would only work for them, and I think within a couple of weeks we'd have the insurgency defeated. If you know who everybody is and where they are at all times, that would be enormously helpful.

Ultimately, one of the reasons you're protecting the population is to develop local sources of intelligence. I found it easy to do that and really hard to keep them alive because of the state of the insurgency where I was. You'll have seen, I think, the *Washington Post* three-part series on Top Secret America,¹⁸ which talked about the explosion of Top Secret clearances and of analysts and of the U.S. Government contracting out an awful lot of these responsibilities; if you haven't looked at it, you should. It's a far better use of your time than going through the WikiLeaks stuff.

¹⁸ Dana Priest & William M. Arkin, *A Hidden World, Growing Beyond Control*, WASH. POST, available at <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/top-secret-america/articles/a-hidden-world-growing-beyond-control/>.

Have you guys read Heidi and Alvin Toffler?¹⁹ Anybody? They say there have been three revolutions in human history. Only three in all of 5000 years of recorded history. Go ahead, back row.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: The Agrarian, the Industrial, and the Informational.

DR. NAGL: Great. Fantastic. So the three revolutions in human history are the Agricultural, the Industrial, and the Informational. Each of them has huge implications for how we fight. The Agrarian Revolution, when we domesticated plants and animals, allowed us to live in one place, accumulate a surplus—and that invariably leads to Longaberger baskets and all the stuff that we carry with us on PCS moves, right? But we also use that surplus—being the wonderful species we are—to more efficiently kill each other, and we developed agricultural age warfare. Probably the pinnacle of agricultural age warfare was Napoleon: huge, vast armies killing each other with frankly limited effectiveness. They had to get pretty close to each other to succeed.

Then there was the Industrial Revolution and the great wars of the Industrial Revolution, including here in Virginia—the U.S. Civil War all the way through, I would argue, to the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War, when we applied industry, mass production, rifling, and the railroad to warfare. How did our agricultural age military institutions do at adapting to war in the industrial age? Not so well. The Germans at the Somme described the Brits—have you heard this quote?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Lions led by donkeys.

DR. NAGL: Lions led by donkeys, exactly where I'm going. The enormously brave British troops led by agricultural-age generals who couldn't understand that marching into machine gun fire was no way to achieve success, and it took a long time for the agriculture age military institutions to adapt to war in the industrial age. Really the people who figured that out first were, I would argue, the Brits. The thinkers were the Brits, but the people who implemented it were the Germans. They created blitzkrieg, and it took us a while to catch up.

We are now living in the information age and conducting war in the information age, and it would be surprising if industrial age generalship

¹⁹ ALVIN TOFFLER, *THE THIRD WAVE* (1980).

adapted immediately to war in the information age. So, I would argue that we're living through a really fundamental shift. The first information age war was, arguably, Vietnam, where we never lost a battle but we lost the war. It used to be to win a war you had to defeat the enemy army on the battlefield; that's no longer the case. You can win the war through information media; that's the world we're living in now. Stan McChrystal was defeated not by the Taliban, not by al Qaeda, but through the mechanism of information. It's a hugely important change, I would argue.

In this kind of war, the key terrain is the people, and information, I think, is the single overriding factor. But there are a whole lot of other factors driving change in warfare. Nuclear weapons have essentially made the world safe for low intensity conflict; great powers no longer wage war against each other once they have nuclear weapons. American conventional superiority, I think, is likely to continue. Globalization—the almost instantaneous, almost free exchange of ideas around the globe—is increasing the rate of technological change. Urbanization—seventy percent of the world's population now lives in urban centers, most of them within 100 miles of the seashore. Climate change—it's increasingly hard to argue against climate change. Population growth—increasing. Resource depletion. All this adds up to another bloody century but one in which states that are too weak are the problem; “another bloody century” is Colin Gray's phrase.²⁰

In the 20th century, the primary problem of international relations was states that were too strong: Germany twice and then the Soviet Union for fifty years. In this century, the 21st century, I argue that the primary problem of international relations is states that are too weak. Admiral Mullen has said, correctly, in my opinion, that the greatest threat to the United States today is Pakistan, not because Pakistan is such a big, powerful state that it's going to take us out, but because it's such a weak state that it's unable to control what happens inside its borders, that in an industrialized, globalized world, what happens in the tribal areas, the ungoverned areas of Pakistan, can affect us here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sir, have you had any experience working with sector security reform?

²⁰ See COLIN S. GRAY, *ANOTHER BLOODY CENTURY* (2005).

DR. NAGL: I think that it's a step in the right direction. My big picture argument is that the Department of Defense has done a fairly remarkable job of adapting in the nick of time. We came damn close to losing in Iraq, but the Department of Defense did adapt in time in Iraq. I think it has adapted just in time in Afghanistan, but DoD is way in front of the rest of Government. We really need an expeditionary State Department. USAID²¹ has been gutted. The old USAID was expeditionary, but it no longer exists. There were more USAID officers serving in Vietnam in 1968 than there are in all of USAID to cover the whole world today. In the State Department—you guys know the line—there are more members of military bands than there are foreign service officers to cover the world. Fundamentally, that says we're not serious as a nation about these security problems if we're not willing to pay for the foreign service officers that we need to cover the world, as part of globalization, in the information age we live in; we can replace the bands with iPods. If we're in such trouble as a nation that it's a choice between military bands and doubling the number of foreign service officers, let's double the number of foreign service officers. So, some of the State Department's reforms are absolutely in the right direction.

Former Senator, now Secretary, Clinton has done a good job of pushing State in the right direction, I believe, but they just don't have the resources. They are finally doing a QDDR, Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review. We know what the answer is going to be: we need more foreign service officers; we need more USAID. They can use that to go back to Capitol Hill and say, "Hey, Senators, we need more money for State." It's a fundamental problem. The most effective advocates we've had for increasing the resources of the State Department have been the military. Gates, in particular, has just been spectacular. We've got to get the uniforms saying, "We need more State Department," but it's going to be hard to do in the budget crisis we're facing. If I'm right, if states that are too weak are now the biggest problem, we need more foreign service officers. We need more foreign service officers even more than we need more ships—and we need more ships.

All these factors, I would argue, are making general war less likely—certainly for the United States, for the great powers of the world—but they're also making stable peace less likely. We're moving toward this middle part of the spectrum of conflict, and I think that's likely to remain the case for the remainder of your careers.

²¹ U.S. Agency for International Development.

We still need more work in UAVs.²² Clearly, the future is UAVs. In 2009, the Air Force for the first time ever trained more of these kind of pilots than the seat-of-the-pants kind of pilots. That trend will continue. Without a doubt we're moving to the point where we're going to be flying unmanned planes off carrier decks. It's sad; I got it. My dad was a carrier pilot for a while. It's sad. It's happening. And it gives us all sorts of capabilities.

Contracting reform—I did a big study on this over the last year at my think tank. There are more contractors than U.S. military on the ground in Iraq and in Afghanistan right now. More contractors than U.S. military. More contractors than U.S. Government personnel in both of those fights. The ratios are only going to increase in Iraq as we draw down uniforms, because the President doesn't have to brief, "I've drawn down to 20,000 U.S. Soldiers in Iraq." Nobody asks how many U.S. contractors are on the ground. That gives a lot of flexibility for foreign policy.

History shows us that smaller, irregular forces have, for centuries, found ways to harass and frustrate and sow chaos. Harassed, frustrated, and suffered from chaos—that's my definition of service both in Iraq and in Afghanistan. We can expect that this kind of warfare will remain the mainstay of the contemporary battlefield for some time. These are the kind of fights we're going to be fighting. We've gotten a lot better at them, but we still have a long way to go. This learning process and this doctrinal evolution remains very much a game in being.

You can all influence this. You are the people that commanders—knuckle draggers like I used to be—look to for intellectual stimulation, for ideas, for deep thinking. You can help, and I'd ask you to think hard. The publication of the *Counterinsurgency* manual is the second time a field manual has been published by a university press. The first was the Marine Corps *Small Wars Manual*, published by Kansas State University. This is the second, published by the University of Chicago Press, but this is the first one that I know of that has an annotated bibliography in it. The state of thinking and learning is very much a game in progress. You are all part of that learning, and I thank you very, very much for serving your country in a time of war and for your patience with me today.

²² Unmanned aerial vehicles.