

MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY

**COUNTERINSURGENCY LEADERSHIP
IN AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ AND BEYOND**

THE ART OF BATTALION COMMAND IN COUNTERINSURGENCY

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BING WEST: We were going to, in this panel, move from the general to the very particulars. You consider this the panel that deals with fighting in the trenches, the tackling and blocking that happens upfront in the line. And I was asked basically if I would establish the context for the three battalion commanders.

Dave had one-one. But, you know, what you received about these gentlemen really, really didn't tell you the reason that they're here. I mean, Bill Journey, when we were in Ramadi, a lot of people, including, me didn't think you could get that place under control, and Bill Journey was the battalion commander who did it.

And Dale Alford, of course, is a legend because Dale went out to Al-Qa'im, 250 miles from Baghdad, and that place on the Syrian border was just totally out of control and with one battalion he established not only control out there but managed to work with the tribes so that after he left it continued to be quiet. And everyone felt that on the Syrian border that just couldn't be done.

And so you do have the opportunity this morning or listening to a few people whose credentials are just absolutely remarkable.

Concerning the context, I've been to Afghanistan four times, I'd like to just focus it on that and I was there in April and May and again in June and July and I was on about 40 combat patrols up north and down south and so I'll just tell you what really concerns me.

It's very, very simple – that every valley has a mountain. And all the mountains are controlled by the Taliban and the watchers are everywhere. No American or Afghan patrol leaves the wire without being watched and reported on the whole way. And I'll tell you, H.R., that really concerns me because it indicates that there's a substrata of that society that we're dealing with, and if everywhere you go they're watching you all the time, this is a big, big problem.

May I have the next slide, please? Now, the way in which we had been – next slide, please – the way in which – this is the Korengal Valley but this could be anywhere in Afghanistan.

The way in which all the firefights had been taking place up until the last couple of months was very simple. We were fighting apaches who remained very, very hidden. You'd never get a distinct target and generally the ranges were 400 to 600 meters. And this is in the Korengal and we're firing at targets that were firing at us 600 meters away but you had to go down a valley and up the other side so there's no way you could close with them. So we automatically were using air strikes.

And H.R. was talking about company commanders having these indirect fires at their disposal. Yes, every single patrol has it, but we now have a new tactical directive that says, knock off using most of it because you're also killing civilians. And that leads to a very big problem about what takes its place.

And there's another element about Afghanistan that concerned me greatly. May I have the next slide, please? Look at this photo. This is Ganjgal where the four Marines and the ETT were killed last week and eight Afghan soldiers. I've been in Ganjgal a couple of times. The 1st of 32nd is there.

And we took this picture because they said, look behind us. And as you're moving along in an MRAP to go to this one small hamlet in a ravine and next to the mountains, the kids were coming out right behind us and putting the rocks behind us in order to trap us, just like that. We sat down. We had shurahs with these people in Ganjgal. We did everything according to the book that you're supposed to do for counterinsurgency for the last two years and they betrayed the Marines and the Afghan soldiers when they went into that village and that's why they killed them all.

So there are some hearts and minds that you're just not going to win. The politics of each valley differ but every single battle space owner, every single battalion commander that we now have in Afghanistan, could come to this meeting, give you a map of his area, and take a red line and show you the areas where he cannot go without getting into a firefight.

And to show you what's happened in the firefights and the biggest concern I have about finishing them – will you show this firefight, please? This is a typical firefight. This is down south.

(Begin video segment.)

MR. WEST: This is Bing West with the Afghan Army, British advisors and United States Marines in southern Afghanistan.

MR. : So you start suppressing all the – (inaudible) – across a certain ground.

MR. : You can hear the incoming.

MR. WEST (?): See, those were the PKM rounds, the machine gun rounds that hit just above our heads.

(End video segment.)

MR. WEST: Stop. If you can get it going, once you try to get it going again. But the point about this firefight was it was from one compound to the next – why don't you replay it and see if it will just start – one compound to the next. They were firing RPGs. It was an open field. You couldn't determine whether there were women or children in that compound, therefore you were stuck. You had one or two options. You either withdrew or you went across the open field. We withdrew.

And the dilemma that we're going to be facing – may I have the next slide please if that doesn't work? The dilemma that we're going to be facing in the future is that the more we have constrained our indirect fires, which has been the principal way in which we were doing this, you

leave the question, or two big questions dangling out there at the battalion level: How do you finish the firefights?

Right now we're not finishing firefights. So we're not doing damage basically to the enemy. The enemy isn't doing damage to us because we have our armor. But we have now an attrition warfare. We don't have mobility warfare. The Taliban run circles around us because they're not wearing heavy armor. They're in much better shape, incredible shape. And as a result, they hold the initiative. They decide when to initiate a firefight. They decide when to stop the firefight. And we react to them and we're not finishing the firefights. So we're not killing the enemy.

Now, are we arresting the enemy? Excuse me. I used to say detain or something. Now we say "arrest." No. The Afghans arrest practically no one. And the average number of arrests for an American battalion is one person every two months.

So we're not killing them and we're not arresting them. And the blocking and tackling them that are fundamentally essential are right now really lacking.

So we can put in more troops, but my concern about this is, if we don't find a way of finishing these fights, we could be having this conversation a year to two years from now and the Taliban would still be intact.

And that basically leads to the other issue which is where are we going? Basically, if we're managing what we measure, we have some adjusting to do in what it is we think we're going to be doing in Afghanistan.

And particularly – may I have the next slide, please? The question of what is our theory of victory. It seems to me if you read the assessment that I think that H.R. and others worked on – you read the assessment that McChrystal came out with the other days and you read it very carefully, its theory of victory is not victory – it's transition.

And when you look for how do we transition, it becomes a little bit fuzzy. And if transition is the name of the game, then the very best paper I've ever seen on it was written by actually Maj. Gen. Bob Neller when he was an obscure brigadier general out in Okinawa or something and had time to work it. It's the best single paper that I've ever seen about how you transition.

But the problem we now have with the Afghan Army is very simple. We build it in our image. They're all wearing armor. They're all wearing helmets. They are no more mobile than we are. When you get into the firefight, they immediately turn to the advisor because only the advisor is permitted to call in the indirect fires. The minute you call in the indirect fires, you're positioning the troops, you become the leader in the combat.

The Afghan leaders are absolutely the key to the success, but Mark Moyar's – and that's a good book he wrote – Mark has this fascinating section in the book where he interviewed something like 250 advisors. And they estimated that 65 percent of all Afghan battalions have

poor leaders. And yet, our advisors have about zero effect on promotions in the Afghan system. So here I go.

I know that Pete Mansoor said, you know, Bing's for these joint promotion boards but Gen. Petraeus had another way of doing it. I think, Pete, we're out of time for being gentle in Afghanistan, and if we're going to make a difference, I think we have to get more control over who's in charge in the Afghan army.

That's my overview and against that background, I'd like to turn it over first to Dave and then we'll go to Bill and then we'll go to Dale. Dave?

COL. DAVID FURNESS: Thank you. I'd like to thank Marine Corps University for including me on the panel and so I join two of my friends and distinguished Marine officers.

Mark Moyar asked me to talk about battalion command in counterinsurgency operations. That's kind of a broad left and right lateral limit. So what I'll do is I'll kind of define it to actions that we took prior to going into combat and then those that we did while we were in combat.

Now, these are no new ideas here. There's nothing earth shattering. Most of them were borrowed from peers that I respect, like the two gentlemen to my right, things I learned while I served on the staff of the 1st Marine Division in '03 and '04, and things that I read through self-study. So I tried to apply them in a dynamic environment, and so here are some of the lessons that I learned.

There's the agenda. Here's how I broke up the topic. Just a little bit of orientation. Here's Baghdad, Fallujah, and Ramadi. So my experience was all based in southern Baghdad in '05 when I was commanding officer BLT 11, part of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit. And then in '06 at a place north of Fallujah, a place called Karmah which – or “bad karma” as we'd like to refer to it. But it was all eastern Anbar province, western Baghdad.

As you drill down, here's Karmah. It's about 10 kilometers northeast of Fallujah. The other little red dots are small villages that were my principal population centers in and around the area: Saqlawiyah, Sitcher (ph), Ganether (ph), (Abu Ghraib ?). I had part of the northern Zidon which was kind of a no man's land at times. But this is the area in '06 that I operated in when I was attached to RCT-5.

Pre-combat leadership – we've all said, you know, what's the difference between a leading battalion and conventional battalion and leading battalion, counterinsurgency? And I think it was covered well by the brigade commanders and I won't repeat it.

I will say it's a decentralized fight. Everybody agrees with that. And if you're going to be successful in a decentralized fight, you have to operate on commander's intent. We all – no one will dispute that. But how do you get people to understand intent and be able to use intent? And then who really tells you about that?

What I learned from watching Gen. Mattis at the division level, go down to the PFC level and just embed his ideas, his thought process, what was important to him down to the private. I said, okay. That's what I have to do when I get battalion command.

So what we did was everybody's got philosophies of command, philosophies of training, philosophies of this and that, and I'm no different. I came into command with them and spent a lot of time trying to craft a language that actually meant something.

But I handed those things out, had a one pager for the Marines and NCOs. I had a more complex, a little longer version for staff NCOs and officers. I gave them out. I had them read them, and then in groups of 20 platoon size, I went around after they had read them and we had discussions. We had (team meetings ?). What am I talking about when I say this? What does this mean? What am I telling you to do?

And you try to operationalize it because you want them to understand in so that when they're in that point where they have to make a decision and no one's around and it's corporal so and so, he can do it. He knows what Furness would want him to do and that's probably the only thing – if that's the only thing he can remember, it's something he can fall back on and hopefully it gets him through that difficult decision.

So I think that's the most important thing that you have to do right upfront as a battalion commander. You've got to put your fingerprints on your unit right from the start, the first day you grab the guide on.

And once they understand it, then you reinforce that every day by what Gen. Krulak used to say "leadership by walking around." You've got to get out of your office, you've got to get away from the computer and you've got to talk to your Marines, and sailors, and you've got to – where they work, what do they care about, and everything they do, you give them a little, that's the way I want it done, pat on the back, or hey, next time you do it, how about his way, you're doing a great job, but you have to imprint what you feel is important into their brain housing groups.

The next point, individual small unit discipline is the key in counterinsurgency. Gen. Zinni once said that elite units are better at counterinsurgency because they have greater discipline. And discipline is what's going to give you restraint, which is going to give you discrimination in the use of fires, and it's the bedrock on which everything else is build. So you have to instill it.

With our op tempo going 100 miles an hour, discipline can sometimes fall by the wayside because we don't have time to correct it right on the spot, you know, we'll get to that later. Well, you can't do that.

I think you have to be – somebody said, well, if you could do anything to a battalion to prepare it for counterinsurgency operations, what would you do? I thought for a minute and I said, I'd put him through recruit training, all as a group, and let a bunch of gunnies with Smokey

Bear hats just beat discipline into them for 13 weeks. And I think when you came out the tactics are fairly simple but the discipline is hard to instill.

The sergeant major – I had a big long talk with staff NCOs and NCOs about their role in helping me attain a level of individual and small unit discipline which would carry the day when we got into this dispersed dynamic environment.

And I also told them is, your discipline will be your hallmark and it's the only IO message that as a small unit in Iraq you control. You control how you're perceived by the population, the way you walk out the gate, the way you wear your gear, how you carry your weapons, they instantly perceive that and that's the only IO message that you control as a small battalion in this big, wide, long war.

The thing I focused more on in pre-deployment training is NCO training because, again, I think Gen. McMaster said it: That's where it's going to be won – corporal, sergeants, lieutenants. That's where you have to focus on because that's who is going to be way out there on the edge of the empire, the pointy end of the spear, like we say. Those are the Marines that are going to make those tough calls and if they're not trained to deal with that type of decision making, if they don't have the requisite excellence and their weapons handling and their small unit tactics, they're not going to be able to do that job.

So we ran a battalion in house through the PTP and all the things you have to do with that, we ran a battalion in house. We call it the Leaders' Course because there were some lance corporals that were filling NCO billets that got the training as well.

But the bottom line was we wanted to control how Marines would be led in 11. We didn't have enough quotas for the great sergeants' course or the division squad leaders' course. You just couldn't put them through the pipeline fast enough so we did it ourselves. It was each company took a block of instruction and it was basically a five-week course. It could have been better. I'm sure it could have.

But it was good enough and it focused on prep for combat, how to give an order, how to prep a unit to get out the door and do a mission, how to inspect them, how to do a post-mission critique and learn from what you did right, what you did wrong. And so you're teaching them the skills that then you're going to demand that they use when they get out there in a very challenging environment in Iraq.

We talked about language training. What I did on my first deployment – Col. Greenwood got DLI instructors from Monterey to come in the battalion. We had about a 60-day emerging course, 30 days in Camp Pendleton and then in the trans-Pacific – when you're on the ships, you've got nothing to do. We had about 100 Marines at that time in language training, and then, when we go to Kuwait, the instructors went back home and we have a fairly good training base.

What I changed the second time I deployed as a battalion commander is I gave everybody the DLAB so we looked at people who had propensity to learn languages as we picked those

people. And then like Gen. McMaster said, I look for people who just naturally had a gift of gab because we wanted to add those talkers in every squad throughout the battalion.

And so, with those two elements, we picked 150 Marines. They did a 90-day immersion course because I had the contacts with the instructions from the previous deployment, brought them down to Camp Pendleton, and that's all these Marines did. They were Marines that already had a tour under their belt so as far as going through the PTP, again, with a five-month turnaround I felt I could assume risk without putting them through it. I didn't ask anybody. But they didn't do anything but study language.

And some of them I was amazed at how quickly they picked up conversational Arabic. And could they write it? No. Could they read it? A little bit. But they could speak it enough to where they could act on it on the street.

And everybody said this is a fight for information or intelligence. Well, if it is, you've got to talk to people to gain it. If you talk to them in their own language they are much more perceptive to talk to you because they realize most Americans don't speak Arabic and they're kind of impressed when you do.

And it's one of those things, to build rapport which is the first key to starting up a relationship, and relationships mean everything in this culture. It really helped and I think it paid significant dividends. And I would even do more Marines if you could and for longer periods of time because I think it was that important.

Culture training was the same as every other unit. The basic infantry TTPs – they're important but the tactics are not so – they're not complex. The decisions are complex, and that's again, what you focus on. You use your training always as a vehicle to put people and test their decision making through TDGs all the time so that you can do this.

Intelligence collection you had to spend a lot of time training on because we don't routinely do it at the squad, platoon, and even battalion level. So we looked at a process to do that.

Here's how I organized to solve the problem, and the only thing I'll talk about on this slide is H&S Company – 245 Marines in H&S Company: cooks, bakers, candlestick makers. But what I used them for is to reinforce my main effort because I formed provisional security platoons out of H&S Company because most of H&S Company's duties are to life support for the battalion. But when you live on Camp Fallujah, you don't need any more life support. You've got more life support there than you do at Camp Pendleton.

So I put these guys out in the fight and they loved it. Every Marine or rifleman, they're actually doing fixed site security so my infantry Marines, when they come back from an eight-hour patrol don't have to stay on guard duty. They can either do mission prep or sleep, rest, do something else. But it increased my ability to maneuver.

ROE – the thing I’ll talk about at this is it’s a commander’s issue, and I taught it. Now, the JAG was with me for any technical questions but Marines don’t like lawyers. They don’t listen to them. And they don’t want to be talked to the guy who they think is a pencil-neck geek anyway. Most of your Marines didn’t go to college. They don’t understand lawyers and they don’t want to be told about a very critical part of their decision making process, which is a law of armed conflict, by somebody they don’t respect. They want to hear from their commanding officer. And so that’s why I taught it.

We reset – every time we pulled platoons out to give them a shower, hot chow, we reset and re-taught LOAC, and we went over vignettes that we had either done well or things we didn’t do well while we were executing the mission.

The thing you have to remember is your hearts of your Marines will harden overtime. If you don’t understand that, you miss the point. These guys are on third, fourth tours. They’ve seen buddies get killed, blown up. They may have been blown up themselves and come back to duty. It’s hard to tell them to like these people but you have to talk to about it in a relevance to the mission and how – treating them well and using the law of armed conflict. It benefits them as far as their legitimacy, as far as their ability to execute the mission and actually save fellow Marines’ lives.

Combat leadership – I’ll say this is the big thing: supervise, supervise, supervise. You come out there. Once you’re in the fight, you have to get out of that CP and go see every unit. I had, at one point, seven maneuver companies, 30 platoons. It took a week to see everybody face to face. When I talk about two levels down I’m talking looking the lieutenant in the eye, having him brief you on what he’s doing. You know what he should be doing because you’ve given him the order, but you’ve got to go out there and see them actually do things.

Again, the non-kinetic focus – what I’ll talk about here is the kinetics are easy. We get that. The non-kinetic civil affairs CI ops, IO, working with civilian leaders, that’s the hard part. I’m not saying going to guns is not important – and I think Gen. McMaster said it well: don’t ever lose a firefight, pursue those guys until you got them, that’s shooting. No one gets a free shot, is what I used to say. I don’t care how far you’ve got to chase them. Chase them, run them down, and kill them if they choose to oppose you. But focus your efforts of your staff, the battalion on the non-kinetic aspect of the fight.

Partnership – you’ve to eat, live and sleep with them to be effective.

And I don’t care about that. I’ll get to the last slide. The last bullet is if you remember nothing else, I would say – we had all these signs that said, complacency kills. And I told my Marines that that’s really not true because it’s the divine right of the PFC lance corporal to be complacent. That’s his right. He gets to do that. After he has his first firefight, he’s going to be complacent. He’s going to get comfortable in his environment and it’s his leadership that mitigates that natural phenomenon.

If his leadership isn't caring, active, involved, he will be complacent and he will get himself killed because you didn't have the balls to do it right, get in his face, jack him up, and make sure he did it right.

So that's my presentation. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

COL. WILLIAM JURNEY: Good morning. Dr. Moyer, again asked us to address a few points from the battalion perspective regarding lessons and experiences from Ramadi, '06, '07 timeframe.

I would start by saying that the employment concept of military forces is first and foremost based on getting at the enemy so that's the perspective that I'm going to come from.

With an offensive mindset and not defensive you look for and go after that which allows you to take and maintain the initiative against that which opposes you. There is no cookie-cutter solution or template for this. And I think all too often, that's what we see folks seeking, that there's got to be one set template approach. And I would submit to you that that's just not going to be the case.

However, in counterinsurgency, you can't expect the key terrain to be the population. We've heard some folks talk about that today. So the question comes up as to whether you should be population focused or enemy focused. And I submit to you that the answer is yes. You cannot look at one without understanding the full implications to the other.

The key thing that I said just now was "understanding," which is much different from assuming or misplacing your own Western bias onto the actions or reactions of particular events in a given AO. Wide variances can exist from one local area to the next, therefore you must account for and understand these specific nuances for each local area or community.

From that point, you can already see that an effective tactical concept of employment, by necessity is going to come predominantly from a bottom-up point of view.

Nevertheless, back to the question of population focus or enemy focus – in my framing of the two, I would submit that the population is viewed more as a means to get at the enemy versus a standalone end state. It's not that CMO or civic actions should not be aligned to meet the needs of the people. It's just that they have to be more closely aligned and prioritized by that which gives you the greatest tactical advantage to get to the enemy first.

Oftentimes, I've seen civil military actions that are not connected to either the needs of the people or anything else that ties to improving a unit's ability to hurt the enemy.

Now, that's not meant to be a disparaging comment about our civil affairs efforts but rather at the decisions of commanders because it is a commander's decision no different than ordering an attack, which brings me to my next point which is that you cannot understand something that you do not live with, sleep with, and operate with every day and night.

Effective COIN operations in and around populated centers require a permanent, persistent, credible security force. It cannot be part time. You will not gain the level of understanding of the situation, nor the trust of the people if you're not there 24/7.

The best security force is homegrown. It's local. Some might think that I'm simply advocating the last experience in Ramadi with the Awakening. Actually, no. The Awakening was a growing movement that was making a difference outside the city of Ramadi in late '06. And although it helped in providing new recruits for outside the city of Ramadi – which was a good thing – this movement and its recruits were from surrounding rural areas and they would not operate within the city proper. And therefore, not the ideal local type that you want, who knows the streets and knows the people.

Yes, at some point we hoped that a national identification of governmental forces transcends a struggling country psyche, but near-term COIN is not going to happen. Make no mistake.

The best security and sense of security for locals are a local, and that local security force will also know the area and its people in such a way that no level of cultural understanding will ever bring.

A local security force is the enemy's worst nightmare come to town. If the enemy loses its ability to hide in plain sight, he then loses his freedom of movement and action. He also loses the ability to replenish its own ranks with new recruits. So you're hurting the enemy and you're meeting the essential needs within your AO for employment, money, prestige, honor, and even a sense of adventure for some by joining a legitimate government security force which also allows, culturally speaking, a desired venue to prove yourself a man and a warrior.

Some will argue that a 24/7 combined action battalion concept for partnering and entire battalion and its leadership with newly forming security forces in the populated areas is simply too risky. I would not disagree more. I submit there's not only greater risk to the force but also an even greater risk to successful accomplishment of the mission if you choose to operate from some isolate disconnect FOB while conducting independent or intermittent partnered U.S. ops that lack permanent presence and a connection to the people.

Lastly, I suggest that our tactical concepts of employment must pursue multiple lines of effort concurrently if you're going to take the initiative.

Kinetic and non-kinetic, regular, irregular, conventional, non-conventional – you pick the moniker of the day. There are many. However, focusing on the enemy by only pursuing U.S. targeted raids, all under the framework of “clear, hold and build” are not enough to truly be on the offensive and take the initiative. They're essential and they're viable ops. But I would not suggest that such a narrow approach would be pursued.

I have seen time and again the limited activity of general purpose forces waiting on the big one, waiting on the big one to emerge for that game changing targeted raid, the kill or capture an all important individual. This single line of effort is simply not going to work in gaining you

the initiative, nor will it work for a unit that simply follow a lockstep sequential approach along the clear, hold, build construct.

I suggest that building or holding one might in fact clear the enemy without a firefight. If so, then why would you limit yourself to only those tools that traditionally associate with conventional ops against a fixed enemy force especially when you can't even find the enemy?

Therefore, you should cast your net wide along all viable lines of effort if they can help you get at the enemy. Actions that you take should either directly or indirectly lead to improving our ability to impose our will on the enemy.

Discussions of civil military ops, key leader engagement, training employment of local security forces, restricting lines of movement, population control measures, census taking, improving governance and essential services, all are techniques and methods to be applied and/or combined as a leader sees fit based on a continuous process that sees a tactical advantage at taking up such actions.

If not, then I submit that you're likely putting men and women at risk for nothing. Moreover, you could actually be making your own situation worse by inadvertently disenfranchising the most critical element of getting at the enemy: the population.

And with that, I'll turn it over to the Dale who I know has been on the ground in Afghanistan. Thank you. (Applause.)

COL. DALE ALFORD: I'd like to start by saying us three on the stage here, first of all, we've known each other as brothers literally for 20 years. Our families, our friends, we've spent many, many hours over the last 20 years drinking beer together and on occasion sipping a glass of whiskey talking about this stuff. And what I just heard over the last 30 minutes, I could say again over and over and expound on each of those points because we literally know what each other think. And that's a unique thing about the Marine Corps that you need to understand.

What I will talk about – I was asked by Mark to talk about the lessons from Al-Qa'im and how they transfer to Afghanistan. I had an opportunity to command a battalion in Afghanistan '04, came home for seven months, went back to Iraq with the same battalion, literally the same battalion, same five company commanders for the most part, the three – the XOs all just – that was a unique piece the 36 were able to do. And then this past year I spent nine months in Afghanistan working for a great soldier named Gen. McKiernan.

What I will say is what Bill said. It is population centric versus enemy centric? Yes. Again, it's both. And you call look at al-Qaim and you can say we did Iron Fist, a battalion size operation – got to do everything that everyone believed that you would want to do as a battalion commander: shot rockets, dropped bombs, threw hand grenades, the whole bit – and then a regimental size operation, Steel Curtain, in order to take back the area of Al-Qa'im.

That was a means to an ends though. As we moved and did that, we literally dropped off platoons that built position and at the end of a 10-week period, we have 14 positions. And we

immediately moved the Iraqi army in with us. I learned many of those things at the first tour in Afghanistan – mistakes made – and was able to use that the next year in Iraq.

And how does that transition to Afghanistan? Right now, what I see in Afghanistan, and I had the opportunity to travel around the entire country, visit many, many units including our NATO partners, that we're completely an enemy-centric force.

We need to re-position a significant portion of our FOBs and COPs among the population because right now they're not. The problem is they were built for CT missions in '02 and '03 and in '04 in wrong locations for a population-centric COIN effort.

And the second thing is we talk about it a lot, we write about it a lot but we are not focused on the Afghan army and the Afghan police and the Afghan border police. We don't live with them as partnered units. We consider partnering to link up and do operations. If you're not sleeping with them, eating with them, and crapping in the same bucket, you're not partnered and we're not partnered in Afghanistan.

Real quick. COIN population centric is not about being nice to them like – (inaudible) – said. “Hearts and minds” gets confused sometimes. It's about separating the population from the insurgents, protecting them, influencing them, and controlling the population, especially in the initial stages. And we talked about already about the enemy. It's fluid; it hides in plain sight. The enemy does it.

And what do we mean by hearts and minds? I think, Dr. Mansoor, you brought up “trust and confidence.” I totally agree. The heart or the trust is that we're in their best self-interests. We're in their best self-interest. The people have to believe that and in their mind or their confidence in us they have to believe that we are going to win, and when I say we, it's the Afghan army and police with our support and their government. They have to believe that we're going to win and we're going to protect them. In their heart they have to believe we're in their best self-interest and in their mind they believe that we are going to win. We're failing to do that.

I'll talk a little bit about if you're going to do population-centric COIN and you're going to live with the Afghan army and police, how do you do that? And the very first step is you really need to understand who you're dealing with. I'm going to talk a little bit about understanding the Afghan people from my 17, 18 months experience in the country.

First off, this is a quote I found and I totally agree with it. They've learned to survive 30 years of war by hedging their bets. They've learned to play both sides. And they are still doing it. Why? Because they're getting slapped on one cheek by their government and the other cheek by the Taliban. They don't have a good choice and we're not providing them a good choice because we're not population centric, we're not amongst the people, and we're not with their army and police force. That's the first step. I was pleased to see Gen. McChrystal's paper that came out Monday that he's writing about it. Now we've got to execute it.

The next thing is these people can read you better than any people I've ever been around including my uncles that live in north Georgia which are very similar to. (Laughter.) They live off the land. They've learned over their lifetime in order to survive how to read people. You've got to understand that when you deal with them on a daily basis. If you're not sincere, they will see through you in a heartbeat and you will not be successful with them.

And the next point is about their problems. Their problem is they don't have honor. They don't have justice in their government. They believe that their government is corrupt. Whether it is or not, they believe it. And they don't believe that they have physical security and a significant portion of the population doesn't have food security four or five months out of the year; those three things, we – if we're among the people and with their army – we can focus on those.

This is an important list. First bullet: The Afghans have based all their thoughts and decisions on history. When an Afghan looks at life, he looks backwards. He thinks about his history, he makes decisions off of his oral history that he knows of his society.

When we, the Western world, look at life, we look forward. We think about how we're going to have a bigger house, we're going to have a better retirement, I'm going to get a better car, I'm going to send my kid to college and get a better education, which in my case, it's not very difficult to do.

When you deal with an Afghan, he makes decisions. You've got to know that. He looks at life 360 degrees from the way you look at life. It's difficult for us to wrap our minds around and understand that. We must try better.

It's an agricultural-based society which is extremely important and it was – and much of their agriculture was destroyed in past history and we must focus our effort and our development to bring that back. First thing is we've got to be there amongst them.

And then the rural versus the city – 80 percent of the population is a rural force, rural people. They don't want electricity in many of the homes. We think they do. Why did Iraqis want electricity as soon as we – because they had electricity. The Afghan – many of the Afghans never had electricity. They want electricity to move water in their clinics and to schools but in their basic homes, they're not begging for it, but we're trying to give it to them in many cases. We need to understand them better before we try to help them.

And the last one, how do you get them to pick our side? This whole thing is about getting them to pick our side. Right now, they're playing defense. They're on defense because they're not picking our side because they don't believe in their heart that we're in their best self-interest, and in their mind they don't know if we're going to win.

The Afghan culture, it's like the Iraqi culture on steroids. It really is. It's a weird mix between Pashtunwali and Islam, which in many cases are opposed to each other. And the parts where the insurgency really is, the East and the South – because this is a Pashtun insurgency, make no error about it – Pashtunwali is extremely strong even though something similar to

Pashtunwali is throughout the rest of the country. And it is a great code. It is a very similar code that my uncles in north Georgia live by.

Understanding the people and their culture, and you need to do that because that's all they have. That village elder that you deal with on a daily basis, if you're doing this business right, his honor and his culture and his history is all he has in life and he will kill you for it.

We'll go through the Afghan army real quick. One thing I'll say about it is you've got to leverage a culture. The leadership we've talked about already, the logistic of their force is weak and we had to work on that. You've got to accept chaos when you deal with the Afghan Army because it's going to be there. And you've got to show that you're committed and risk your life right beside them. If you don't do that, they will not fight with you.

The army – I'll talk about all three of them – the army is an extremely credible force especially at the company and below. The battalion and above, they're struggling. Battalion and above is struggling because they're trying to build the airplane while they fly it. And if we're them all the time, which we're not now, as a partnered force, we can make that a lot better. Advisors and mentors are not enough. We have to evolve for that. We had to start with a partnered force and evolve to mentors and advisors and then work our way out of a job. We got it backwards, I believe.

The Afghan police – there's got to be a local-based police, as Col. Journey talked about. It must be from the local area and the people have to know who they are. That's where the intelligence comes from and I believe that we, as a general purpose force, have to live with the police force.

I can do some math for you really quick. How do you do that because there's a lot of places. Let's just say there are 360 districts. There's 388 but we'll say 360. I think an infantry battalion can do about 12 positions, 12 districts, and we've got some examples of this down south with the Marines in Delaram. You divide that and it comes out to be 30 battalions. Thirty battalions is 10 brigades. We've got to do some real math and tell some real truth about what it's going to take if we're going to do population-centric COIN because the police are the most important thing we're doing and right now we're not focused on it.

Those clusters in those districts, you'd be amazing at what happens when the Marines live with them or the soldiers. The governor, the district governor moves and he puts his house right by the police station. The district police chief moves right by the police station and stays there 24/7. The judge moves there. He can move the DSTs, the district support team out of PRTs into those areas. It becomes a cluster in those districts and that's where it matters in Afghanistan, down at the district level. We're failing to do that.

And last, the last piece is the Afghan border police, the forgotten soldiers. They are a paramilitary fighting force. If you want to get into a firefight in Afghanistan you go partner up with the Afghan border police. You'll get all the fighting you want. We're not doing it. And we must change the way we're doing it and we must do some real math on what it's going to take if we want to make a viable, stable Afghan country that no longer harbors terrorists. If that's so,

then there are some hard lessons, some hard decisions that have to be made about what's going to take.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. WEST: I'll just summarize what they said and then turn it over for questions. Dale just said, and so did Bill, they don't know if we're going to win, they being the population. There is no more devastating statement that could be made than that after we've been there for eight years.

And I listened. I went down the list of the recommendations versus what we're doing, and the five points, and it struck me between the eyes that really the reason we're not doing any one of them is that risk aversion has now become so much part of our culture that I'm not persuaded we can make the changes and the risk aversion obviously starts right at the top and it starts throughout our entire society.

It's the question, are we willing to have the casualties that it takes to turn things around? And the recommendations were, first, you needed 24/7 patrolling in the populated areas. Right now we are averaging one patrol per platoon per day for six out of the seven days because a platoon is about the least size that we're sending out with the MRAPs, et cetera, and we're tied to them in order to have water.

So if you do the math, we're showing up in any of the populated places for about 30 minutes a day. So there's a big difference between being visible 30 minutes a day and being invisible for the rest of the day.

MR. : And if it's U.S. only, it's least preferred.

MR. WEST: The second point was everyone said you have to be unrelenting and finish the firefights. We're not finishing any firefights. The third one was we need the combined action program concept recruit, Bill said, the local security forces is the enemy's worst nightmare and it sure is. It sure is.

We're not permitted – no battalion out there today is permitted to go and recruit local forces the way we did in Vietnam and the Sons of Iraq. This CSTC-A organization I think is a little bit batty but it controls things and we're doing everything from the top down according to a certain schedule, but the individual battalion isn't allow to go out and do what Bill and Dale did so successfully, and Dave in Iraq.

I have seen combined action platoons pulled out because they're too risky by brigade commanders when they had a platoon overnight somewhere, leaving the ETTs there with the Afghans, the exact opposite of what we should be doing.

And finally, the notion of living with the Afghans, with the exception of the ETTs, and the British armlets, and our advisor teams that's really not just not being done today. So the gap between what the battalion commanders recommended and what we're doing couldn't be larger.

Against that background, I invite your questions. Gen., are you the only one brave enough to ask a question? I think we could also hear you better if you just stand up please.

Q: Just the question I want to ask the panel goes to Dale's question there. We've heard – (inaudible) – as you probably know, it's evolved to aid training back in 2004. At the company level, they're superb; they want to fight, they want to end the fight. The British army had a policy in Oman in the '60s and '70s to company officers to the alliance to get their officers through Sandhurst and through the system. It's – (inaudible) – the battalion commanders operations, XOs, how did that go over in Afghanistan?

COL. ALFORD: I think it worked because we partnered with them. The battalion commander, just like out in Al-Qa'im, have moved – Rezok (sp), Col. Rezoc, now Brig. Gen. Rezok – into my office, gave him a machine. People thought I was a little nuts when I did that. We had a civilian Internet connection. That became his machine where he could talk to his division commander. And overtime, because you're with him 24/7, he learned from you. That's the only way to do it.

Q: Would you advocate putting Americans in charge of Afghan units?

COL. ALFORD: No. No, sir. You've got to be partnered. And I believe in the Petraeus model where you influence him to do the right thing because you're with him all the time.

MR. WEST: General.

Q: The three of you have been intimately involved in the Marine Corps University in your preparations at one level or another. Some of you have actually taught the University. Based on your experiences, how did we do in preparing you? Where are the short falls and at what levels, in order to do the things that you've talked about here today?

COL. JURNEY (?): Well, I think I'm kind of a fan, sir, to be honest with you. I mean, you are a product of your experiences, and mine would go back to the recruit training through the process, all based on the Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication One: Warfighting. And those things have served us well.

The mental agility and desire to continually beat the enemy and outthink him, it's a thinking man's game, alright. So action, reaction and counteraction, "do loop" – as I refer to it – that is the system that you have to anticipate. And so, if we're working on further developing leaders across the board I would just submit to you that we continue to reinforce the piece about there's no set template. You have to be creative, you have to be agile, you have to beat him within that particular process, just as an example.

MR. WEST: Dave.

COL. FURNESS: I would say for the officer education I think we do a great job. I think where we're falling down miserably is the education of our NCOs and our staff NCOs. And I

think we have to get that – I mean we talk about education a bridge to the 21st century. With the staff NCOs and NCOs, I think we need a bridge to the 18th century. I mean we're still teaching drill and ceremonies, and I got it, it's all – that crap is all important.

But, I mean, to fight an irregular warfare in these small wars that we're going to be dealing with for the next foreseeable future, we need to train them more like we're trained. And that's not currently happening.

And I got a good friend who's trying to do that. He's the guy in charge of enlisted education at MCU and he's fighting an uphill battle against the sergeant major mafia on a daily basis to try to make that happen. And we just have to do a better job in that vane.

And I think that would pay big dividends on the battle field because we are so dispersed. These guys are taking – I had four staff sergeant gunny platoon commanders because of different things that happened with officers, some I relived, some got hurt. But they need to be able to step in and fill that role, and if they can't, it's a liability.

COL. ALFORD: Real quick. Can I answer?

MR. WEST: Go ahead, Dale.

COL. ALFORD: I'm a product of EWS Command and Staff and Marine Corps War College, then I taught at Command and Staff, and what I see is the Marine Corps University do is, each director comes in and each – they throw out the syllabus. And we do that yearly. We start over and we continually try to make ourselves better. And that's the key that we're always trying to learn. The last guy was always screwed up, so I got to make it better is a good thing. And we really do that well at the Marine Corps University and I think that helps us in this kind of warfare.

MR. : But we're not going to throw out our core competencies along with it, you know, the shoot, move and communicate.

MR. WEST: You're right. Sir? And then Pete.

Q: Thank you. I'm Andrew Rubin from Stephens Media. For Col. Journey and Col. Alford, what was it that the locals saw in you and your Marines in Ramadi and Anbar that can be transported up in Afghanistan? You had Sheikh Sattar, you had Mayor Latif, you were with the mayor in Baghdad and the mayor of Al-Qa'im. We don't have that yet in Afghanistan. What can we bring up there?

COL. ALFORD: The reason in Afghanistan that we don't have it is because we're not there where the mayors or the village elders are. That's the reason. And the reason that it worked in Ramadi for Bill and me in Al-Qa'im is because we were there. I was there every day with Mayor Farhan, everyday, with my five sheiks, everyday. That's the difference. And I think if we're in the villages and we're in the districts – and we should start with the district centers, 388 of them – then we'll develop those leaders.

MR. WEST: Bill.

COL. JURNEY: I would just reinforce what Dale said in that respect. But I would also tell you that relationships and trust, no different than here at home, don't happen over night. Never say something that you cannot produce on or do. I mean, if you tell me something and you don't produce on it, it's only going to happen once because I ain't never gonna trust you again. And I found them to be no different, and I respected that.

And I made sure – as Dave pointed out, you have to communicate those things down to the individual level. I mean, that's where it has to exist because the individual lance corporal and corporal's capability to interact on a daily basis with the population and represent those things that we believe to be true will all be undermined by one faulty step there.

MR. WEST: I was talking to a group of infantry officers at a course yesterday and they had read the assessment by Gen. McChrystal and they asked a question, I think it's very pertinent. They asked why is it that we fought for eight years and didn't learn anything and now we're told that our entire operational culture has to change when we're the same guys who fought in Iraq and now we're fighting in Afghanistan.

You see the thrust of the question. Why is it that the same system that seemed to work in Iraq has failed in Afghanistan and it's like we're not doing it in Afghanistan? What caused that over the last eight years? I mean, why has it taken eight years before you finally get a general who says, everything has been screwed up for the last eight years? Pete, do you want to answer the question? (Laughter.) I mean, it is a little bit of a puzzle, isn't it? You know, but Pete –

COL. MANSOOR: I think –

MR. WEST: Go ahead.

COL. MANSOOR: I'd say we're – I've been to Afghanistan 10 times on congressional delegations, so you get a slanted view of it, so I'm not an expert on Afghanistan. But what I see is, we make the same mistakes there that we made earlier on in Iraq.

I think the thing that we should do first off is get rid of these damn big bases. I'd send every Green Bean coffee shop home to the United States. I mean, there's a point in taking care of Marines and soldiers, but I don't know that you do it by killing them with kindness. And I think these giant bases where we want everybody to live because it's better for force protection. It prevents us from living with the people. It's a wall against us and the population. And we need to get the hell off of them.

I think what Gen. Petraeus did was, he ordered people off the base. He said, get in the city, get in the village, sit there, build your little joint security station, shut up and color. And somebody needs to say that now in Afghanistan.

Until they do, we will continue to sally forth in MRAPs, or seven tons, or whatever on extended battle spaces which puts us right in the shooting gallery of the enemy. And when you're surprised IED events go up dramatically, well, why? You're driving 90 miles to get to the one village that you have to – that's in your AO, on a road. It's not rocket science. He watches it. He knows where the choke point is and he blows you up.

MR. WEST: Dale, isn't that that your new job?

COL. ALFORD: Yes, sir. We're going to help Gen. McChrystal use his force more efficiently. And one of the things is that MWRs – and one of the things he has tasked us with is looking at the big bases. So he's on it. He understands it. I can tell you that Gen. McKiernan understood it. He had a two-year plan for this thing. I got to spend a lot of time listening to him over the last – for nine months. He understood it also. We have just got to execute it now.

MR. WEST: Final question, sir.

Q: I'm Rick Lerer (sp) and I'm a professor at SUNY-Binghamton. And this question is for Col. Alford. I'm not getting a sense of the real difference between Iraq and Afghanistan. Let me throw two things at you that are hitting me on the side of the head.

In your opinion is the difference between the two, topography and culture? The battle space in Iraq is flat and here it's mountainous, which means you can be more vulnerable, number one.

Number two, the key to the surge was that the Sunnis eventually got fed up with al-Qaida and decided to side up with the Americans, whereas in the Pashtun areas as you've already described they're on the fence and historically they have not sided with external forces.

Is that the difference, topography, culture and history? And if that's the difference, how do we start thinking about Afghan policy?

COL. ALFORD: The difference between Iraq and Afghanistan is Iraq was essentially an urban-based insurgency and Afghanistan is a rural-based insurgency. Right? So that's the first thing you got. So that's your topography thing and culture really. So it's more spread out. It's tougher. It takes more forces. We've had significantly less forces in Afghanistan than we have in Iraq.

So some of the tactics and some of the principles can be transferred from Iraq to Afghanistan, but each time you go into an area it's different. And you've got to understand the people of the different cultures. And they are different. The Pashtun aren't picking our side because they – we haven't given them good reason yet. We gave the Sunnis a good reason to pick our side. They saw us as the strongest tribe.

MR. WEST: Pete, you have the last question.

COL. MANSOOR: I concede my time back to the gentlemen from north Georgia.
(Laughter.)

MR. WEST: I believe then that brings us to the end of the panel. I think it was a very stimulating panel. And I thank you all very much. (Applause.)

(END)