NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

Selected Principles of War as They Apply to Counterdrug Operations

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____

17 May 1999

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Professor D.F. Chandler

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A
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DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 4

19991122 135

Security Classification This Page: Unclassified

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. Report Security Classification: UNCLASSIFIED	
2. Security Classification Authority:	
3. Declassification/Downgrading Schedule:	
4. Distribution/Availability of Report: DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.	
5. Name of Performing Organization: JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	
6. Office Symbol: C	**7. Address:** NAVAL WAR COLLEGE 686 CUSHING ROAD NEWPORT, RI 02841-1207
8. Title (Unclassified): Selected Principles of War as They Apply to Counterdrug Operations	
9. Personal Authors: Edward M. Cook, COL, USA	
10. Type of Report: FINAL	**11. Date of Report:** 17 May 1999
12. Page Count: [redacted] 17	
13. Supplementary Notation: A paper submitted to the Faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.	
14. Ten key words that relate to your paper: Principles of War, Counterdrug Operations, Unity of Command, Southwest Border	

15. Abstract: **From a doctrinal perspective the Department of Defense has two distinct sets of principles for conducting operations, one for war and one for operations other than war. It is my contention that in order to win the "War on Drugs" we need to apply a hybrid set of principles. I feel that the principles of unity of command, objective, offensive, surprise, security, and perseverance have the most utility in this war. This thesis will look at the historical background of the "War on Drugs", how it is currently being fought, and, with the application of this hybrid set of principles, how we can improve our counterdrug operations. My thesis and recommendations will focus on the operational level of war with specific attention being paid to America's southwest border.**

16. Distribution /	**Unclassified**	**Same As Rpt**	**DTIC Users**

Introduction

Since the inception of the current "War on Drugs" America has struggled with how to wage such a war. The Administration and Congress, not wanting to look soft on drugs, have included ever increasing amounts of money in each budget cycle in an attempt to bring the crisis under control. Congress has gone so far as to elevate the Director, Office of the National Drug Control Policy, to a cabinet level position. We currently have over 30 federal agencies, to include the Department of Defense, engaged in counterdrug operations. Yet for all of these efforts, we have a problem that continues to plague our nation.

From a doctrinal perspective the Department of Defense has two distinct sets of principles for conducting operations, one for war and one for "military operations other than war." Joint doctrine classifies counterdrug operations as a military operation other than war. Consequently, the principles of objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy should all be invoked by commanders and staffs planning and executing counterdrug operations. The set of principles for "war," (Objective, Security, Surprise, Simplicity, Unity of Command, Maneuver, Economy of Force, Mass, and the Offensive), have been supplanted as a set because the nature of operations presumably make the "new" six principles more relevant.[1]

It is my contention that in order to win this war we need to emphasize a particular number of principles. The case can be made for any one of principles on either list; however, this unique combination will give us the foundation for taking the initiative away from the drug trafficker. I feel that the principles of unity of command, objective, offensive, surprise, security, and perseverance have the most utility in this war.

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[1] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations (3-0)(Washington, D.C. February 1, 1995), II-1

To support this thesis, this paper will look at the historical background of the drug war, how it is currently being "fought," and, with the application of this hybrid set of principles, how we can improve our chances for success in counterdrug operations. After developing my thesis, the paper will conclude with recommendations focussing on the operational level of war, with specific attention paid to America's Southwest border.

Background

Throughout her history America has had a problem with the illegal use of controlled narcotics. Cocaine, introduced into America in the nineteenth century, was initially touted as a wonder drug capable of revolutionizing the medical industry.[2] It did not take long for the Nation to realize that the uncontrolled distribution of an addictive narcotic had a detrimental effect on society. In 1914 Congress stepped in and, in a sense, fired the first shot in the "War on Drugs" with the Harrison Act. The Harrison Act established the Drug Enforcement Agency with the specific task of enforcing America's drug laws.[3]

Since the Harrison Act, Congress and the Administration have passed a series of laws in an attempt to control the illegal use of narcotics. In 1986 President Bush issued National Security Directive 221, declaring drug trafficking to be a threat to national security.[4] In 1987 the President established the National Drug Policy Board (NDPB) under the leadership of the Attorney General.[5] The NDPB was tasked with the responsibility for coordinating

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[2] Office of National Drug Control Policy, National Drug Control Strategy (Washington, D.C. 1999), 1

[3] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Counterdrug Operations (Joint Pub 3-07.4)(Washington, D.C. February 17, 1998), I-1.

[4] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Counterdrug Operations (Joint Pub 3-07.4)(Washington, D.C. February 17, 1998), I-1

[5] Ibid.

international and domestic law enforcement efforts as well as developing a strategy for counterdrug operations.[6]

Congress, concluding that the NDPB was incapable of meeting the challenge, passed the 1988 Anti-Drug Control Act, which eliminated the NDPB and established the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).[7] The ONDCP was created to "establish a coherent national policy to unify the more than 30 Federal agencies and innumerable state and local authorities."[8]

The Director for National Drug Control Policy provides the leadership and direction for ONDCP. The first National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) was published in 1989. Its goals have changed little since then. The goals published in the NDCS for 1999 are:

1. Educate and enable America's youth to reject illegal drugs as well as alcohol and tobacco.
2. Increase the safety of America's citizens by substantially reducing drug-related crime and violence.
3. Reduce health and social costs to the public of illegal drug use.
4. Shield America's air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat.
5. Break foreign and domestic sources of supply.[9]

The President's message in the 1999 NDCS stressed that one of the areas that deserved particular attention was:

> Securing our borders: the vast majority of drugs consumed in the United States enter this Nation through the Southwest border, Florida, the Gulf States, and other border areas and air and sea ports of entry. The flow of drugs into this Nation violates our sovereignty and brings crime and suffering to our streets and communities.[10]

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.,I-2.
[9] Office of National Drug Control Policy, National Drug Control Strategy, 7
[10] Ibid., iii.

The President's emphasis on what is essentially the fourth goal of the National Drug Control Policy has been the focus of the Department of Defense since the fiscal year 1989 National Defense Authorization Act.

It tasked the Department of Defense to be the "single lead agency of the Federal Government for the detection and monitoring of illegal drug shipments into the United States."[11] The Department of Defense operates under several constraints in the execution of this mission.

Two of the most important are the Posse Comitatus Act and Title 32 of the United States Code. The Posse Comitatus Act, in its earliest form, prohibits federal troops from enforcing civil law. Congress has amended the Act to allow, under very specific circumstances, military assistance to civilian law enforcement agencies.[12]

Title 32 of the United States Code applies to the National Guard. The statute states that National Guard units not in federal service can be used for law enforcement activities. The statute does require that state governors specify to the Department of Defense how National Guard personnel will be used when supporting law enforcement agencies.[13]

The Principles at the Operational Level

Despite these constraints the Department of Defense set about developing a strategy rooted in military doctrine that would enhance counterdrug operations. The nine principles of war, cited in the Introduction, are the basis for all military doctrine.[14]

The number of missions that are referred to in joint doctrine as military operations

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[11] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Counterdrug Operations, I-9.
[12] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Counterdrug Operations, I-4.
[13] Ibid., I-9.
[14] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, II-1

other than war has dramatically increased since the collapse of the Soviet Union. These operations other than war have their own unique set of principles. As outlined in Joint Publication 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations, they are objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy.[15]

The counterdrug mission, with its unique legal restrictions and rules of engagement, led the Department of Defense to develop a strategy based on the set of principles for military operations other than war. In theory, the principles would seem to be most appropriate based on the nature of the mission. However in this case what is needed is an amalgamation of the two sets with the emphasis on the *selected principles which will best meet the operational requirements of this war.*

From a doctrinal perspective two of the principles apply regardless of whether it is war or operations other than war. These are the principles of security and objective. They are so important to a military operation that to ignore either of them is to court disaster. They are the cornerstones of my hybrid list for counterdrug operations.

First and probably foremost is the principle of objective. Both sets of principles share a common definition for objective in that it must be "clearly defined, decisive, and attainable."[16] The NDCS for 1999 clearly defines specific strategic level objectives that can be used to measure the success of the program. Most applicable to the Department of Defense are those that specifically apply to reducing the availability of illegal narcotics on America's streets.

At the operational level, the objectives outlined in the national strategy are clearly not

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[15] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, XIV
[16] Department of the Army, Peace Operations (FM 100-23)(Washington, D.C. December 30, 1994), 15

quantifiable or measurable. The lack of a clearly defined, decisive objective makes it difficult to gauge the effectiveness of the counterdrug program at the operational level. The lack of a clear set of objectives is highlighted by the fact that there is no single operational level headquarters that can refine the strategic objectives down to measurable objectives for the operational and tactical level commander. This absence of quantifiable objectives allows each agency to claim success regardless of the results of their actions.

Security is the second principle both sets have in common. The two sets share the same definition for security in that you should "never permit the enemy to acquire unexpected advantage."[17] The NCDS does not directly address the issue of security; however, it is implied that operational security, especially between law enforcement organizations, is a key element in the war on drugs.

At this point the two sets begin to diverge. The principles of war take on an offensive spirit while the principles for other than war focus on unity of effort, legitimacy, and the restrained use of force. The problem is which set is best suited for counter drug operations?

Fundamental to the thesis of this paper is the belief that a unique combination derived from both sets will best assure a successful campaign. The principles for military operations other than war lack an offensive spirit, something desperately needed if we are to meet the objectives set forth in the NDCS. However, if history has taught us anything, this will be a war that requires perseverance on everyone's part.

I would not propose that legitimacy and restraint are not important. This mission however, is different from most peace enforcement or peacekeeping missions. Congress and the American people consider this a legitimate operation with clearly defined *strategic* goals

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[17] Department of the Army, Peace Operations, 16

and objectives. We have laws in place that clearly govern the use of force while supporting law enforcement operations. What the American people expect is results, and without adopting an offensive spirit we are destined to fail.

It is my contention that the principles of unity of command, objective, offensive, surprise, security and perseverance are most applicable at the operational level to the war on drugs. To focus the application of this unique set of principles at the operational level I will narrow my analysis to the Southwest border of the Continental United States. The Southwest border of the United States is " the most porous part of the nation's borders, it is there that we must mount a determined effort to stop the flow of drugs."[18]

Unity of command is defined as having a "single commander with the requisite authority to direct all operations."[19] That is anything but the case along America's Southwest border.

America's Southwest border is 2000 miles long with 24 ports of entry and an additional 39 sanctioned crossing points. Presently there are six governmental departments and 22 federal agencies charged with conducting counterdrug operations along the border.[20] Yet there is no one Federal official charged with coordinating the efforts of these organizations.

While no specific individual is charged with command of the Southwest border area, Operation Alliance is tasked to "facilitate federal agency advisory support to state and local law enforcement agencies and their supporting Active, Reserve, and NG forces in their

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[18] Office of National Drug Control Policy, National Drug Control Strategy, 70

[19] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, A-2

[20] Christopher S. Wren, "U.S. Drug Chief Seeks Overhaul of Strategy to Stop Illegal Flow From Mexico," New York Times, 20 September 1998, p 30

interdiction efforts along the US Southwest border."[21] Operation Alliance is comprised of representatives from 13 federal agencies, four states, and three counties.

Joint Publication 3-07.4 describes the command structure of Operation Alliance as:

> being under the policy guidance of ONDCP Southwest Border Committee and the Operation Alliance Joint Command Group (OAJCP) and under the direction of the Southwest Border High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area coordinator. The OAJCP functions under the Director, Operation Alliance, as a coordinating and planning group.[22]

Joint Task Force Six, the DoD command responsible for counterdrug operations within the Continental United States, receives its mission guidance from Operation Alliance; however, it is under the operational control of Forces Command in Atlanta, Georgia. Figure 1 shows the current organization of Operation Alliance.

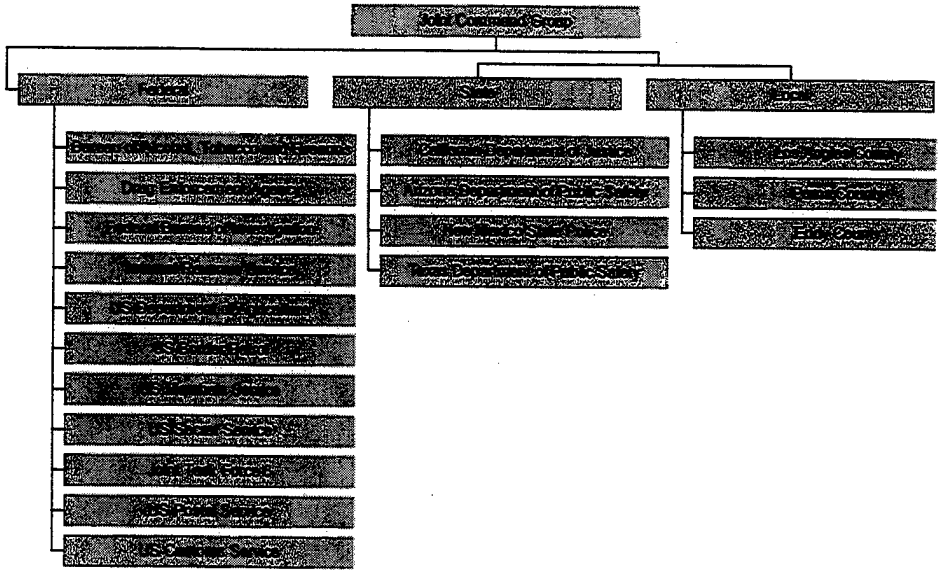

Figure 1

The lack of a coherent command structure with a focus on the objectives outlined in the NDCS prompted General Barry McCaffrey, Director, ONDCP, to propose that a single federal official be assigned to coordinate efforts along the Southwestern border.[23] This lack of focus and direction has resulted in a failure to disseminate intelligence

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[21] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Counterdrug Operations, I-9.
[22] Ibid. , III-28.
[23] Wren, "U.S. Drug Chief Seeks Overhaul of Strategy to Stop Illegal Flow From Mexico,", p 30

in a timely fashion, incompatibility between communications systems, and a lack of centralized planning. General McCaffrey's recommendation is under review by both the Justice and Treasury Departments. It is unlikely that Congress will review the recommendation until the Justice and Treasury Departments endorse the plan.

A command structure designed for success would centralize all of the governmental agencies under their appropriate department and establish a single individual as the head of Operation Alliance. Additionally, county law enforcement agencies would be placed under the control of the appropriate state agency. This would facilitate the introduction of new technologies, standardize communications equipment, and enhance the distribution of intelligence. A civilian, preferably one with law enforcement experience, should head the command. Joint Task Force Six would be assigned as a subordinate command to expedite requests for DoD support and facilitate the transfer of intelligence between geographic CINCs and law enforcement agencies.

A level of funding commensurate with its operations would necessarily accompany the creation of a centralized command. Currently, at the federal level, all but $36 million of the nearly $16 billion dollars appropriated for the National Drug Control Strategy is spent by the individual departments and agencies.[24] There are no figures supporting exactly how much is spent along the Southwest border; however, with the establishment of a single command headquarters, funds would be allocated

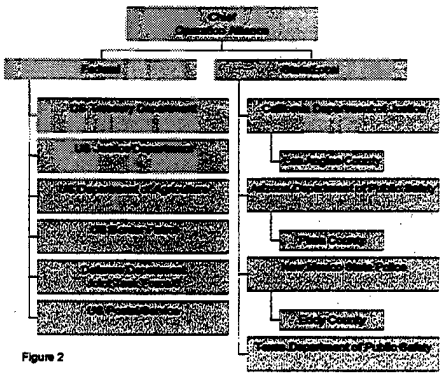

Figure 2

[24] Robert Dreyfuss, "The drug war: Where the money goes," Rolling Stone, 11 December 1997, pg. 37-44

based on a master plan. Figure 2 is a proposed command structure that reflects a consolidation of agencies with a single individual as the head of Operation Alliance.

The creation of a centralized command would greatly enhance the nation's ability to implement the next significant principle -- the offensive. General McCaffrey, in describing operations along the border, said, "Whether we and the traffickers end up at the same point is all too often left to luck and gritty individual police work."[25] To meet the objectives outlined in the NDCS the U.S. will have to go on the offensive.

The principle of the offensive as defined by joint doctrine is "the means by which a military force seizes and holds the initiative while maintaining freedom of action and achieving decisive results."[26] Currently the initiative lies with the drug runners and not with federal law enforcement agencies. The lack of shared intelligence and centralized planning forces the individual local, state, and federal agencies to conduct operations based on the intelligence available through their individual directorates.

In order to seize the initiative, centralized planning has to be conducted by a single headquarters. According to statistics supplied by General McCaffrey in a recent speech, United States border agents searched more than a million commercial trucks and railway cars last year and made only six cocaine seizures.[27] That is a remarkable statistic considering that slightly more than half the cocaine smuggled into the United States comes through Mexico.[28]

To seize the initiative at the operational level, we have to establish a single command tasked with developing a plan that keeps the drug smugglers off balance. Operations, as they

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[25] Wren, "U.S. Drug Chief Seeks Overhaul of Strategy to Stop Illegal Flow From Mexico," 30
[26] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, A-1
[27] Wren, "U.S. Drug Chief Seeks Overhaul of Strategy to Stop Illegal Flow From Mexico," 30
[28] Ibid

are currently conducted, are predictable and relatively unsophisticated. The introduction of new technologies, such as those that allow for the scanning of trucks to locate hidden compartments, coupled with a plan that randomly selects where this new technology is used, would significantly improve counterdrug operations.

The principle of surprise is key to wrestling the initiative from the drug smuggler. Joint doctrine states that the "factors contributing to surprise include speed, effective intelligence, deception, application of unexpected combat power, operations security (OPSEC), and variations in tactics and methods of operation."[29] Surprise is achieved through either luck or solid planning. Currently most of what is achieved in the counterdrug war is a matter of luck.

To achieve the element of surprise it will take centralized planning, the distribution of current intelligence down to the tactical level, and the development of new technologies. We must begin to develop plans that when coordinated at the operational level achieve tactical surprise. The key to surprise is found in the principle of unity of command. As stated earlier, a single command structure capable of coordinating operations along the Southwest border would dramatically improve counterdrug operations.

We have lost the element of surprise because we are predictable. Single agencies or even departments are incapable of developing plans that allow for leveraging both technology and intelligence at a level to achieve operational surprise across the Southwest border. Until we are capable of dealing with drug smuggling at an operational level the small tactical loses he suffers will hardly deter his efforts.

The last principle is perseverance. Joint doctrine states "... the patient, resolute, and persistent pursuit of national goals and objectives, for as long as necessary to achieve them, is

often the requirement for success."[30] The Army's manual for Peace Operations states that "perseverance requires an information strategy that clearly explains the goals, objectives, and desired end states and links them with US interests and concerns."[31] At the strategic level the goals, objectives, and a desired end state are articulated in the National Drug Control Strategy.

The strategic level goals do not, however, easily translate to the operational level of war. Consequently the information strategy necessary to ensure success is focused at the strategic level. At the operational level of war, each governmental department and agency attempts to wage an information campaign highlighting their particular contribution to the war on drugs.

The lack of a coordinated information strategy that clearly presents the goals and objectives at each level of command is confusing to both the public and the press. The solution is to develop an information strategy that clearly explains goals and objectives of each level of command. If a single command spoke for the Southwest border it would be significantly easier to implement a strategy.

Conclusion

America's struggle with addictive narcotics is not likely to end soon. America's war on drugs will surely go on well into the next century. The strategic objectives laid out in the National Drug Control Strategy are tied to dates well beyond the year 2000, and yet we cannot bring ourselves to make significant changes at the operational level in the hope of reaching our objectives sooner.

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[29] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, A-2
[30] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, V-4
[31] Department of the Army, Peace Operations, 17

America's Southwest border has been recognized as a high intensity drug trafficking area since we began keeping statistics in 1990.[32] There are 13 federal departments and agencies, four states, and three local counties who are attempting to stem the flow of illegal narcotics into the country. Each one of these organizations has achieved limited success at the tactical level. What we need is a plan developed at the operational level that links the tactical successes to strategic goals.

When the problem is analyzed using the principles of war it becomes obvious which ones apply in this case. We need to derive operational objectives from the strategic goals. The strategic goals need to be quantified at the operational level in order to measure the success of our operations. The importance of the principle of security, from the perspective of force protection and operational security, is critical when dealing with groups and individuals whose only motive is monetary.

Although every principle is important, the real key is the principle of unity of command. We will never make any significant strides along the Southwest border until we charge a single federal official with planning and executing counterdrug operations. In a time of ever decreasing resources, a single command would greatly reduce duplication of effort within the federal agencies and allow for the most efficient allocation of resources based on an approved campaign plan.

The establishment of a centralized command would facilitate the other principles of war. We could seize the offensive if we had a coordinated campaign plan that incorporated federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. Under the current system the smuggler has

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[32] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Counterdrug Operations, III-27.

the initiative. He decides where and when he will cross the border. We need to wrestle the initiative away from him.

The principle of perseverance is certainly important when approaching counterdrug operations. As long as America's drug habit remains steady drug traffickers will continue to risk prosecution in exchange for a quick profit. By putting our focus on the recommended principles we can increase the possibility of apprehension for the drug traffickers.

Achieving victory in the war on drugs is not an impossible objective. We need to refocus our efforts, streamline the command and control structure and take the initiative away from the drug trafficker.

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