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9. Personal Authors: Eric K. Lundberg, U.S. Department of State

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If U.S. intervention in Iraq is necessary, terrorist groups operating there should be among the decisive points attacked, along with Saddam's regime, the Iraqi military, weapons of mass destruction, SCUD missiles, and elements threatening the oil fields. Such groups as *Ansar al-Islam*, the Kurdish Workers Party, the *Mujahedin-e-Khalq*, and the Palestinian Liberation Front could otherwise serve as galvanizing elements for hostile groups opposing a U.S. presence or pro-Western regime.

Taking on these terrorist groups before termination of hostilities could preserve freedom of action, shore up the fledgling Iraqi government, and potentially speed the redeployment of U.S. forces. Coalition forces should target the enemy's critical factors by denying their hold on territory, freedom of movement, access to resources, recruits, survivability of emplaced forces, and command, control, communication, computers, and intelligence (C4I). More than joint or combined, these efforts could entail broad interagency coordination, as all tools of intelligence, diplomacy, law enforcement, economic policy and information, as well as military, could come to bear.

In doing so, fidelity to the principle of "economy of force" should be maintained, so as not to undermine the primary attack on Iraq's strategic center of gravity – Saddam and his regime.

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

WHY ATTACKING TERRORIST GROUPS IN IRAQ SHOULD BE A CONFLICT-TERMINATION OBJECTIVE IN THE COMING WAR (U)

by

Eric K. Lundberg
FS-02, U.S. Department of State

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: _____

3 February 2003

_____
Dr. David Chandler
Professor of Operations

UNCLASSIFIED

Abstract

WHY ATTACKING TERRORIST GROUPS IN IRAQ SHOULD BE A CONFLICT-TERMINATION OBJECTIVE IN THE COMING WAR

If U.S. intervention in Iraq is necessary, terrorist groups operating there should be among the decisive points attacked, along with Saddam's regime, the Iraqi military, weapons of mass destruction, SCUD missiles, and elements threatening the oil fields. Such groups as *Ansar al-Islam,* the Kurdish Workers Party, the *Mujahedin-e-Khalq*, and the Palestinian Liberation Front could otherwise serve as galvanizing elements for hostile groups opposing a U.S. presence or pro-Western regime.

Taking on these terrorist groups before termination of hostilities could preserve freedom of action, shore up the fledgling Iraqi government, and potentially speed the redeployment of U.S. forces. Coalition forces should target the enemy's critical vulnerabilities by denying their hold on territory, freedom of movement, access to resources and recruits, the survivability of forces, and command, control, communication, computers, and intelligence (C4I). More than just joint or combined, these efforts would entail broad interagency coordination, with all tools of intelligence, diplomacy, law enforcement, economic policy and information – as well as military – are brought to bear.

In doing so, fidelity to the principle of "economy of force" should be maintained, so as not to undermine the primary attack on Iraq's strategic center of gravity – Saddam and his regime.

"And tonight I have a message for the brave and oppressed people of Iraq: Your enemy is not surrounding your country — your enemy is ruling your country. And the day he and his regime are removed from power will be the day of your liberation."[1]

President George W. Bush, January 28, 2003

I. Introduction

As indicated by his 2003 State of the Union speech, President Bush has determined that – should war with Iraq come to pass – it will be insufficient just to remove Saddam and destroy his weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The United States government appears committed to ensuring that the new regime is representative and able to offer its people order and prosperity.[2] It follows then that new sources of threats, not just the old regime, must be neutralized to create the necessary conditions for achieving this strategic goal. One such threat is the presence of terrorist groups in Iraq.

The Republican Guard, WMD, SCUD missiles, and oil facilities are decisive points on the path to the Iraqi strategic center of gravity, namely Saddam and his regime. Given the number of objectives, a combatant commander could be forgiven for wanting to postpone until the post-hostilities phase an additional decisive point not directly tied to the Iraqi center of gravity – namely terrorist cells resident in Iraq.

However, I would argue that the degradation or destruction of these terrorist organizations comprises a key conflict-termination objective and, thus, should be conducted simultaneously or, at the very least, in tight sequential order, prior to the end of hostilities.

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[1] George W. Bush, "State of the Union," Speech to the U.S. Congress, January 28, 2003. Available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/ [29 January 2003]

[2] Colin Powell, U.S. Secretary of State, "The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building Hope for the Years Ahead," Speech to the Heritage Foundation, Washington, DC, December 12, 2002, Available at http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2002/15920.htm [29 January 2003]

Supporting this thesis are the following arguments: First, there are terrorist entities in Iraq that pose a threat to our forces, as well as a new regime; second, existing terrorist groups have the potential to attract, assist, or galvanize disaffected elements – be they Saddam's loyalists, Islamic extremists, or Iran and other neighbors; third, attacking these elements simultaneous or in tight sequential fashion to the primary effort would offer U.S. forces relative freedom of action, could help stabilize the new regime, and should speed the redeployment of U.S. forces; fourth, in defeating terrorist organizations, possible lines of attack include the denial and disruption of territory, movement, resources, recruits, and C4I,[3] as well as the attrition and annihilation of forces; finally, these objectives can be pursued through joint, combined, and interagency applications, giving due regard for the uniqueness of each challenge and the need for economy of force.

II. Terrorist Groups in Iraq

Much ink has been spilled following the attacks of September 11th refuting the tie between Saddam Hussein and *al Qaeda*. U.S. officials have become skeptical about reports of an April 2001 meeting in Prague between hijacker Mohammed Atta and Iraqi intelligence official Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani.[4] Analysts likewise downplayed purported pre-9/11 visits to Baghdad by senior al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri. However, recently U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage told the following to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "It's clear that Al Qaeda is harbored to some extent in Iraq, that there is a presence in Iraq. There are other indications of a recent assassination of our diplomat in Amman, Mr. Foley, that was apparently

[3] Command, Control, Communications, Computers & Intelligence
[4] Richard M. Smith, "Mohammed Atta in Prague FAQ," no date. This is a helpful summary of where the debate stands on this issue. Available at <http://www.computerbytesman.com/911/praguefaq.htm> [31 January 2003]

orchestrated by an Al Qaeda member who is a resident in Baghdad."[5] The *al Qaeda* official referred to was Abu Musa'ab Al-Zarqawi.

The Department of State's 2001 "Patterns of Global Terrorism" does not tie *al Qaeda* to Iraq. The report mentions only bases provided to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), *Mujahedin-e-Khalq*, the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) and the Fatah Revolutionary Council, more generally referred to as the *Abu Nidal* organization (whose leader was reportedly shot dead in Baghdad in August 2002).[6] One group unmentioned in the report, and as yet not included in the U.S. government's list of designated foreign terrorist organizations, is *Ansar al-Islam*.[7]

Ansar al –Islam: According to press reports, *Ansar al-Islam* is a militant Islamic group with an estimated 600-700 fighters concentrated near the Iranian border among the Shinerwe mountain range outside of Halabja.[8] This region, ethnically Kurdish, has been out of Saddam's direct control for some years, causing some analysts to dispute whether *Ansar al-Islam* has ties to Saddam, or is in opposition. One of *Ansar al-Islam's* predecessor groups, *al Tahwid*, held the city of Halabja (site of Saddam's infamous chemical weapons attack ten years previous) until driven out by *Peshmerga* fighters from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in 2001.[9] Most recently, *Ansar al-Islam* attacked PUK militiamen in December 2002, killing about 30. Captured fighters

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[5] "Administration: Al Qaeda in Baghdad," *Foxnews Online*, 31 January 2003. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage briefing the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 30, 2003. Available at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,77135,00.html> [31 January 2003]

[6] Department of State *Patterns of Global Terrorism – 2001,* (Washington, DC: 2002). Available at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2001/html/10220pf.htm> [17 January 2003]

[7] Department of State, Terrorism Fact Sheet, (Washington, DC: 2002). Available at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/2002/12389.htm> [17 January 2003]

[8] Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Great Terror," *The New Yorker*, 13 (March 25, 2002): Sections 6-7. Note: To date, this remains the most comprehensive open source article on Ansar al-Islam.

[9] Ibid, 13

told the PUK that *Ansar al-Islam* has a number of "Arab Afghans" who trained in *al Qaeda* camps – 150, according to one source. [10]

Captured fighters claimed that *Ansar al-Islam* has worked with Iraq's intelligence service, the *Mukhabarat*, to smuggle materials via Iran to Afghanistan. Other PUK officials claimed that *al Qaeda* fleeing Afghanistan have increasingly sought refuge in *Ansar*-held areas surrounding the village of Byeara.[11] Press reports quoted an anonymous U.S. official who had interviewed some captured fighters who claimed that a tie to *al Qaeda* exists, an assertion "confirmed by *al Qaeda* documents found in Afghanistan by the New York Times."[12] Press reports also cited a "senior Bush administration official" that U.S. intelligence has indications of connections between a group of Algerian nationals arrested in Britain with the chemical ricin and *Ansar al-Islam.*[13] The group's leader, Najm al-Din Faraj Ahmad, a.k.a. Mullah Krekar, has Norwegian residency. Krekar was detained by the Netherlands from September 2002 to January 2003 pending resolution of a Jordanian extradition request. In the end, believing the Jordanian request too weak to pass muster with local courts, the Dutch Minister of Justice deported him to Norway, where he is now a free man.[14] U.S. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, upon Krekar's arrest in September, announced, "there are *al Qaeda* in a number of locations" in Iraq.[15] Press reports claimed that U.S. officials were

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[10] "Kurdish Islamic Leader Held," *BBC News Online.*, 13 September 2002. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle_east/2256736.stm> [17 January 2003]
[11] Ibid.
[12] C. J. Chivers, "Kurds Face a Second Enemy: Islamic Fighters on Iraq Flank," *The New York Times*, 13 January 2003, sec. 1, p. 1.
[13] "U.S. Probes Link Between Terror Suspects in England, Iraqi Kurdish Group," *Fox NewsOnline,* 16 January 2003, Available at <http://www.foxnews.com/0,3566,75800,00.html> [16 January 2003]
[14] Phil Kosnett, Law Enforcement Coordinator, U.S. Embassy The Hague, email to author on 1 February 2003. Misreading the incident, Newsweek cited this release as casting doubt on the al Qaeda-Ansar tie. Hosenball, Mark. "A Radical Goes Free," *Newsweek*, 4 (January 27, 2003).
[15] Ratnesar, Romesh, "Iraq & al-Qaeda: Is there a link?" *CNN.Online,* 26 August 2002. Available at <http://www.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/08/26/time.iraq/> [17 January 2003]

considering sending commandos into *Ansar al-Islam's* territory to knock out a clandestine chemical weapons laboratory.[16]

PKK & MEK: The four groups mentioned specifically by the State Department as resident in Iraq are all groups with a traditionally external focus. Thus, it is difficult to judge to what extent they might be tempted to undertake operations against U.S. personnel or a new Iraqi government. But there is reason for concern. The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has enjoyed off-and-on patronage from Saddam (and, until 1998, from Hafez al-Assad in Syria) and continues to maintain a guerrilla army of several thousand near the Turkish border, notwithstanding the imprisonment in Turkey since 1999 of its leader Abdullah Ocalan. The *Mujahedin-e-Khalq* (MEK), for its part, has several thousand fighters and some equipment scattered throughout Iraq. According to the Department of State, the MEK in 1991 "assisted the government of Iraq in suppressing the Shi'a and Kurdish uprisings in northern and southern Iraq and has continued to perform internal security services for the Government of Iraq."[17]

Palestinian Groups: Palestinian terrorist groups have longstanding financial ties to Saddam, as with other regional Arab states. Both the PLF and *Abu Nidal* Organization received sanctuary in Iraq. *Hizballah*, perhaps the most threatening global terrorist organization after *al Qaeda*, has pursued ties to Saddam, including a rumored shipment of Iraqi missiles to southern Lebanon. A post-Saddam Iraq could potentially be viewed as fertile territory for an expansion of its activities.[18] *Hamas* provides a conduit for Iraqi funds to the widows of terrorist "martyrs" and its leader, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, has called for global attacks on Americans in the event of war. Hamas also possesses an extensive network throughout Europe.

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism – 2001,* (Washington, DC: 2002). Available at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2001/html/10252.htm> [17 January 2003]

Other Groups: An additional rumored terrorist grouping is *al Qarea*, created by Saddam's son Uday and described by CNN as "a vicious 1,200-man commando force trained to carry out terrorist attacks against American targets."[19] However little about it is known and the account might prove to be an empty boast.[20]

III. Terrorist Inroads in a Post-conflict Iraq

However popular the American-led liberation of Iraq may be with a large number of Iraqi citizens, there could be thousands of disenchanted elements in Iraq and the region that would be intent on preventing a post-conflict rehabilitation. U.S. forces must be prepared for this. These potential adversaries can be divided into three categories: Saddam's loyalists, Islamic militants, and agents from neighboring countries, chiefly Iran.

Saddam's loyalists: Whether or not *al Qarea* exists in more than name, we should anticipate that Saddam loyalists, found particularly among his Tikriti clan or *Al-bu Nasir* tribe, would strenuously oppose the presence of U.S. troops or emplacement of a new government.[21] Numerous observers estimate that Iraqis who suffered under Saddam are likely to take revenge on members of his inner circle, dominated by clan members from Tikrit. Like Taliban stragglers in Afghanistan, these hardliners may lie low in anticipation of U.S. redeployment. Another possibility may be that they will join up with existing groups like *Ansar al-Islam*, MEK remnants, or the PKK to construct a more immediately deployable opposition paramilitary. In any event,

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[18] "Hizballah misfires first missile of Iraqi shipment," *Debkafiles Online*, 30 December 2002. Available at <http://www.debka.com/article.php?aid=232> [17 January 2003]

[19] Ratnesar, 3

[20] Ibid.

[21] Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Iraqi Wild Card: Tribal Loyalties Hard to Predict," *Washington Post*, 19 January 2003, p. A1.

operations conducted to disrupt such attempts will be necessary from the moment the first square mile of Iraqi territory is liberated.

Islamic Radicals: Given *al Qaeda's* presence in over 60 countries and even factoring in conservative estimates of its ties with Baghdad, there is every reason to believe that *al Qaeda* will be offering resources and manpower to militant Sunni Islamic elements opposing the U.S. presence and a presumably secular new government in Baghdad. Moreover, the growing realization that *Ansar al-Islam* is a genuine terrorist organization that commands militants and controls territory has also increased the fear that *al Qaeda* could have an entrée into Iraq.[22] Sunni Imams interested in profiling themselves among the inevitable body of disgruntled citizenry will inevitably be tempted to contribute their services to such a radical body. Donors from the ultra-conservative *Wahhabi* sect in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States might be inclined to support militant groups, particularly if a secular government in Baghdad is perceived as too closely linked with the West.

In the south, Shi'a radicals might coalesce behind an organization that attacks American interests or the new government, particularly if they perceive the new government to be insufficiently Shi'ite or Islamic. The U.S. and UK have worked with the two main Shi'a bodies, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and *al Dawa*. While neither has expressed overt hostility to the U.S. – indeed, both hope to use an American-led invasion to further their influence – it is conceivable that whichever group is on the losing side of a potential regime-change power play may resort to violence.

Iran: Indeed, observers believe that Tehran, a sponsor of both SCIRI and *al Dawa*, may already be playing the two organizations against each other in order to hedge their bets on a post-

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[22] C.J. Chivers, "Kurds Face a Second Enemy: Islamic Fighters on Iraq Flank," *The New York Times,* 13 January 2003, sec. 1, p. 1.

Saddam Iraq.[23] Each organization has support and legitimacy within Iraq.[24] Tehran, rather than the groups themselves, could be the driving force for terrorist acts against the new Iraqi government. Iran has in the past allied itself with the Kurdish PUK against its rival Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). Tehran has also been accused of supporting *Ansar al-Islam* against the PUK – both by the PUK itself and Saddam's son Uday.[25]

While such claims of Iranian involvement appear at first blush contradictory, Iranian behavior during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) is instructive. Tehran's hostility to the Taliban regime initially manifested itself in a cautious stance toward the U.S. military intervention. Some Iranian security service (MOIS) agents fed information to the United States on Taliban tactical positioning in Afghanistan and the government detained *Hizb-e-Islami* leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as soon as OEF commenced. However, some MOIS functionaries also offered sanctuary to fleeing *al Qaeda* fighters. Hekmatyar was allowed to leave for Pakistan. A year following the attacks of September 11th, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld charged publicly that *al Qaeda* training camps were located in Iran.[26]

Iran has played a double game with the United States in Enduring Freedom and might do likewise with Iraq. Iran could play the sanctuary role for *Ansar al-Islam* that Pakistan's Northwest Frontier plays for *al Qaeda*.[27] Granted, Iran appears to be cooperating with U.S. naval vessels in the Persian Gulf to interdict Iraqi oil smugglers traversing Iranian waters. However, Tehran has repeatedly stated its concerns about a stepped-up U.S. presence on its border and can be expected

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[23] *RFE/RL Iraq Report*, 4 May 2002, Volume 5, Number 12, Available at <http://www.rferl.org/iraq-report/2002/05/12-040502.html> [18 January 2003]
[24] *RFE/RL Iran Report*, 30 September 2002, Volume 5, Number 35, Available at <http://www.rferl.org/iran-report/2002/09/35-300902.html> [17 January 2003]
[25] Ibid.
[26] *RFE/RL Iran Report*, 30 September 2002, Volume 5, Number 35, Available at <http://www.rferl.org/iran-report/2002/09/35-300902.html> [17 January 2003]
[27] Marc Kaufman, "On Afghan Border, War Drags On," *Washington Post*, 25 January 2003, p. A1.

to act on these concerns once Saddam is removed. Some of the Iranian practice of playing both sides against each other may stem from a Near Eastern propensity to hedge bets. Some of this might also be indicative of differing factions of MOIS agents working at cross-purposes. Whatever the motive, the prospect of Iranian assistance to terrorist cells in Iraq is real, particularly if there are groups in place to receive this aid.

Other Neighbors: All of Iraq's neighbors will seek a hand in influencing events after regime change and numerous countries have track records of supporting terrorist or insurgent groups, either through government organs or private "philanthropy."[28] In addition to Iran, both Syria and Libya are listed as state sponsors of terrorism by the United States government. Many journalists accuse senior Saudi citizens of supporting *al Qaeda*.[29] Just as the PKK and MEK have extensive financial support networks throughout Europe, other potential Iraqi-based terror groups could over time establish their own networks, exploiting gaps in European law enforcement practices. An ally like Turkey, while distinctly not a sponsor of terror, would be keenly sensitive to developments in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq regarding independence moves and the treatment of ethnic Turkmen. All of these factors threaten to complicate the combatant commander's job in Iraq.

IV. Advantages to Simultaneous, Rather than Sequential, Operations

As noted above, U.S. and coalition forces will have numerous decisive points on the road to neutralizing the Iraqi operational center of gravity (Saddam's Republican Guard and Special Republican Guard) and strategic center of gravity (Saddam's regime). However, the broader

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[28] Kenneth Katzman, "Terrorism: Near Eastern Groups and State Sponsors, 2001," *CRS Report for Congress*, 10 September 2001 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 2001): 25-30.

achievement of acceptable military conditions in Iraq will rely on more than just the defeat of Saddam's Republican Guard. The dismantlement of his chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons stores; destruction of SCUD missile launchers (both mobile and stationary); and the preservation of oil fields are also key objectives.[30] All are essential in order to ensure that coalition forces can control Iraq removed from the threat of WMD attacks. However, given the experience of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, the extent to which terrorist groups, like *Ansar al-Islam*, continue to control even small areas of territory is the extent to which coalition forces will remain vulnerable and opponents of a U.S.-led operation will be afforded opportunities to destabilizing it, particularly in the event that they acquire weapons of mass destruction. At the core, the military end state – those military conditions that are needed before the conflict can be safely concluded – cannot be achieved until all terrorist entities in Iraq are neutralized.

Among the compelling reasons why it is preferable to address these terrorist cells during, rather than following, hostilities, are these three:

- ***Preserving freedom of action*:** Acting only after the cessation of hostilities and establishment of an interim Iraqi regime would expose the U.S. force commander to second guessing from rival factions with differing views on the status of targeted terrorist cells. Some factions or outside powers may deem the destabilizing force of an insurgent or terrorist group to their advantage. Some international donors or NGOs might adopt a paternalistic attitude toward such groups, particularly if the donors in question opposed the

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[29] Council on Foreign Relations, "Terrorism Questions & Answers: Saudi Arabia," Available at <http://www.terrorismanswers.com/coalition/saudiarabia.html> [29 January 2003]

[30] This view, commonly presented in the press, was shared by three retired U.S. generals and veterans of Operation Desert Storm – Gen. Boomer, Gen. Horner, and Gen. Peay – while participating in a 23 May 2002 Iraq Watch roundtable. Available at <http://www.iraqwatch.org/roundtables/rt2-findings-final.htm> [31 January 2003]

war. Likewise, once hostilities cease, U.S. military operations could be more sharply criticized by international opinion, leaving fewer options.

- ***Shoring up the new Iraqi regime:*** Diminishing the terror threat prior to the installation of an interim Iraqi government would permit this regime and aid workers to concentrate on immediate reconstruction. Prolonged counterterrorism operations could cast a negative light on the effectiveness of the new government, undermine donor and investor confidence, and mobilize potential opposition from broader sectors of the society.

- ***Speeding redeployment of U.S. forces:*** Nipping in the bud potential terrorist or insurgent movements in Iraq would shorten the amount of time necessary for the new regime to secure its territory, which would in turn allow the U.S. and its coalition partners to draw down manpower in theater at an earlier date.

V. Lines of Attack toward Defeating Terrorist Organizations

During his September 20, 2001 address to Congress, President Bush declared that the United States: "... will direct every resource at our command – every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war – to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network."[31]

As the combatant commander draws up his operational plan, he should be mindful that the available counterterrorism tools are not just military, but diplomatic, intelligence, law enforcement, economic, and informational. Indeed, ideally one deploys a combination of two or more. While

the non-military tools are well elaborated in the literature, more seems to have been written on how the military should **not** be used, rather than how it should.[32] Fundamentally, as with a conventional enemy, there are for every terrorist organization certain "critical factors" which enable it to function. Some of these critical factors are likewise critical vulnerabilities, which can serve as objectives on the road to destroying the enemy's center of gravity.

A terrorist organization's critical factors may be its 1) territory controlled; 2) freedom of movement; 3) financial and materiel resources; 4) recruits and supporters; 5) command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I); and 6) ability to mass. While an attack on any one of these would probably not suffice in defeating an enemy terror group, success in all or most areas almost certainly should. Indeed, all tools of counterterrorism should be utilized as a layered approach, never completely divorced from each other.[33]

- **Denial of Territory**: One of the sources of *al Qaeda's* strengths is its diffused global network, made possible by its sophisticated use of computer communications, transportation, and low-visibility financial networks, such as the *"hawala"* system of transnational moneychangers. That said, it would be an exaggeration to assert that *al Qaeda* is a "virtual" terrorist group with no need for a geographic haven.

  The loss of Afghanistan as a training area, staging area, and sanctuary for *al Qaeda* did not defeat the organization, but it appears to have degraded it capabilities. Mullah

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[31] George W. Bush, "Presidential Address to Congress," 20 September 2001. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> [29 January 2003]

[32] Military historian Michael Howard unconvincingly relegates the use of military force to a "last resort," and opposes the term "war on terrorism." Michael Howard, "What's in a Name?" *Foreign Affairs*, 1 (January/February 2002): p. 8. For an alternative view see Gabriel Schoenfeld, "Could September 11 have been Averted?" *Commentary Magazine*, 12 (December 2001. Available at <http://www.gabrielschoenfeld.com/GSCommentary/Web/2-2002Sept11.htm.> [16 January 2003]

Omar and a cadre of Taliban diehards are rumored to remain in the highlands of Oruzgon Province, but the greater threat appears to stem from areas adjacent to Pakistan's frontier provinces. In Iraq, groups such as *Ansar al-Islam* can also profit from a nearby safe-haven that is inaccessible to U.S. forces. Still, the group should not be allowed to have control of any villages prior to the end of the military phase of operations, for the reasons cited above. One note: Such counter-terror operations could be the most fruitful avenue of combined U.S.-Kurdish insurgent operations, given that the *Peshmerga* might not be a match for Saddam's regular forces.

- **Denial of Movement:** Possibly a terrorist organization's most formidable critical strength, movement and maneuver can be very difficult to degrade. As Operation Anaconda exemplified, it is exceedingly difficult to sever the escape routes of terrorists who blend in. Likewise, small cells operating in urban or rural environments can easily avoid detection, absent good intelligence sources. In Iraq it will be vital to control access at airports and major border crossings and to cordon off known areas of terrorist concentration.

- **Denial of Resources:** "Money is like oxygen to terrorists, and it must be choked off."[34] Other branches of the U.S. government have foremost responsibility for enforcing financial restrictions on foreign terrorist entities, but the combatant commander will need to ensure that financial institutions within Iraq are in full compliance. Materiel resources are also key to a terrorist organization's operations and coalition forces will need to cut off all

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[33] Audrey Kurth Cronin, ed., *The Diplomacy of Counterterrorism: Lessons Learned, Ignored, and Disputed* (Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace, 2002): 7

[34] *Patterns.* Available at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2001/html/10220pf.htm> [17 January 2003]

access to Iraq's WMD early on. Re-supply, particularly for those groups such as *Ansar al-Islam* operating near the Iranian border, must also be checked.

- **Denial of Recruits:** One observer has asserted, "The center of gravity in the war against militant Islam is in the hearts and minds of uncommitted Muslims."[35] The success or failure of the new Iraq will shape this battle far more than all the public relations efforts the U.S. government can muster, and this entails both the minimilization of collateral damage during hostilities and the installation of a just regime afterward.[36] While there may always be a "core of incorrigibles"[37] that may never abandon the fight, new recruits are motivated by momentum. "Fewer people are willing to risk their lives for an apparently losing cause than will do so in the vanguard of a movement with a future."[38] The key here is to exercise the principle of the "offensive" and the concepts of "continuity" in order to ensure that coalition forces retain the momentum.

- **Disruption of C4I:** Tactics like decapitation, division, dislocation, and infiltration are historically very effective, and very difficult, means to disrupt the C4I of a terrorist organization. Examples of a severed C4I drastically impairing an entity include the decline in power of Shining Path, the Kurdish PKK, and the German Red Army Faction following the arrests of their leadership. There is not always "someone else" to replace a fallen leader. Likewise, the mere act of disrupting terrorist operations can win the U.S. important

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[35] For an excellent analysis, see Stephen Biddle, "War Aims and War Termination," in the compilation, *Defeating Terrorism: Strategic Issue Analyses,*ed. by John R. Martin (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2002): 10
[36] David L. Bongard and William R. Schilling, "Terrorist Operations in Nontraditional Warfare," *Nontraditional Warfare: Twenty-first Century Threats and Responses* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, Inc. 2002): 63-64.
[37] Paul Pillar, *Terrorism and Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2001): 32
[38] Biddle, 11

gains, even if these are insufficient by themselves to bring about total victory. In Iraq, U.S. forces can isolate parts of terrorist cells from the C4I, they can imprison or kill terrorist leaders, or they can utilize friendly Iraqis to infiltrate these organizations, provided there is sufficient time.

- **Attrition & Annihilation of Forces:** The most directly military approach to counter-terrorism operations is the attrition of armed militants, when one is fortunate enough to find them massed. To the extent that terrorist organizations are able to occupy territory, they are more likely to organize paramilitary units to maintain the occupation. If such paramilitaries mass in order to conduct conventional operations, they are susceptible to annihilating attacks by massed coalition forces, as in northern Afghanistan. Once massed forces are located and attacked, a key follow-on effort will be to keep them on the run through the employment of constant engagement – what Clausewitz called the "principle of continuity."[39] As Sun Tzu advised: "When the enemy is at ease, be able to weary him … when at rest, make him move."[40] For his part, U.S. Korean War hero, General Matthew Ridgeway, described the principle as follows:

> *"The first rule in war is to make contact with your enemy at the earliest possible moment. Once you get that physical contact, never lose it. You hang on to it with a bulldog grip."*[41]

VI. Application: Joint, Combined & Interagency

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[39] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976): 570.
[40] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War,* translated by Samuel B. Griffith (London: Oxford University Press, 1963): 96
[41] Matthew B. Ridgeway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgeway* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1956), 205

In pursuing the above objectives, the combatant commander has with his joint and combined forces, as well as through the interagency process, access to all counterterrorism tools. Again all tools – be they military, intelligence, diplomatic, law enforcement, economic, or informational efforts – can be weighed and balanced for each task and synthesized in the appropriate mixture. The operational design for counterterrorism actions could be either sequential – as the various interagency actors address their particular target areas – or simultaneous – to minimize the enemy's ability to adapt and evade. Actions are most likely to be non-linear, given the dispersed, non-contiguous locations of enemy forces.[42]

Against an emplaced terrorist group like *Ansar al-Islam*, for example, intelligence and special operations forces, in conjunction with friendly local forces, could work to identify enemy force locations. If an appropriate target is identified, the commander could launch a combined air-ground assault against the cells and pursue all operatives until they are killed or captured.

Meanwhile, the intelligence community could work with friendly services throughout the world to track and disrupt the movements of the terrorist group's operatives. State Department officials could exert diplomatic pressure on states in the region and in Europe to curtail the movement of operatives across borders. State and Treasury officials could press the UN and key countries to freeze the assets of the organization, as well as those of its European-based leaders and supporters. Law Enforcement could press for Mullah Krekar's arrest and extradition to Jordan or another country with the evidence to prosecute him, and also launch further investigations of other leaders. State and military public affairs officers could spread the message via media to isolate the group from potential supporters – exposing its atrocities and impressing upon all Iraqis the consequences of cooperation with *Ansar al-Islam's* cells. While some of these activities could

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[42] Paul J. Willie, *Operation Art of Counterterrorism* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff

take place outside of the Iraq area of operations, it would behoove the combatant commander to influence and coordinate the process, assigning liaison officers to all non-Defense agencies engaged.

For groups focused on cross-border activities – the PKK and MEK – intelligence should ascertain their intentions toward coalition forces and the new regime in Baghdad. Pressure short of military force could potentially compel these groups to withdraw or disarm. Given its long-held hostility to Turkey, it is unlikely the PKK would cooperate with a U.S.-led coalition, though it might choose to avoid confrontation. (In nearly 20 years of operations, the PKK has never intentionally targeted Americans – evidently unwilling to face an escalation of the U.S.'s largely indirect support to Turkish efforts to crush the group.) The MEK, notwithstanding its pre-revolution targeting of Americans, may offer tacit cooperation, though its status as a terror group should not be brushed over. The bottom line for these groups is that the United States should not stoke antagonisms where they do not exist, but should immediately quash any that arise.

For more sedentary terrorist organizations resident in Iraq, such as the PLF and the rump *Abu Nidal*, the "joint" nature of the combatant commander's responsibilities would be supplanted by a broader interagency process, as law enforcement and intelligence play the forward role, supported only rarely by ground and air forces. While the command relationship in this interagency paradigm may not be delineated vertically from the commander's headquarters, interagency coordination must be tight.

Finally, for all such secondary operations, the combatant commander must employ "economy of force," that principle of warfare described by Clausewitz as ensuring "that no part of

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College, 2001). An interesting analysis of how operational art applies to counterterrorism operations.

the force is idle,"[43] and by the Doctrine for Joint Operations as the allocation of, "minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts."[44] The governing principle is that no asset critical for the primary objective should be drawn away for a secondary objective.

VII. Recommendations

From open-source information on Iraq, as well as recent experience in Operation Enduring Freedom and other counterterrorist operations, we can draw the following recommendations:

1. Regardless of whether terrorist organizations are separate from or part of Saddam's power base, they comprise a "threat in being" to American troops and any new government we support. If a combatant commander wishes to create the military conditions necessary to achieve America's strategic goals, defeating the enemy's center of gravity is not the only critical war termination objective.

2. Disenchanted elements – be they Saddam's loyalists, militant Islamists, agents of regional states, or jealous friendly international partners – will look for avenues to exert influence and potentially undermine any possible government we help take power. The fewer such hostile groups we allow to operate freely at the end of hostilities, the fewer the tools these problematic elements will have to undermine the stability of the new order.

3. Conducting counterterrorism operations during hostilities affords U.S. forces greater freedom of action, decreases the vulnerability for a new pro-Western Iraqi regime, and

[43] Clausewitz, 213

could speed the redeployment of U.S. troops. It is much more difficult to resume military operations once the momentum has been lost and international groups spread out through the country.

4. Critical factors for terrorist groups include the ability to hold territory, conduct movement, draw on resources, attract recruits, maintain C4I, and mass forces when necessary. Many of these may comprise critical vulnerabilities and can be attacked. The United States and its coalition partners can defeat or degrade terrorist groups by pursuing all of these critical vulnerabilities in a joint, combined, and interagency fashion.

As Clausewitz notably wrote:

> *"... even the ultimate outcome of a war is not always to be regarded as final. The defeated state often considers the outcome merely as a transitory evil, for which a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date."*[45]

Substitute "defeated state," with those remnants of the state enjoying continued access to the use of violence and one has an accurate picture of what the U.S. in Iraq should face following the defeat of Saddam. Chances are that various elements will work to undermine our efforts of reform in Iraq. It is to our benefit if we neutralize, prior to the end of hostilities, as many of these sources of violence and instability as possible while the means and the will to do so are at their highest pitch.

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[44] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, Joint Pubs 3-0 (Washington, DC: 2001): Appendix A, p.1.
[45] Clausewitz, 80.

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