CIWAG Case Study on Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups:

Influence Operations and the Human Domain

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INFLUENCE OPERATIONS AND THE HUMAN DOMAIN

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Editors' Introduction

In 2008, the U.S. Naval War College established the Center on Irregular Warfare & Armed Groups (CIWAG). CIWAG's primary mission is twofold: to bring cutting-edge research on Irregular Warfare into the Joint Professional Military Educational (JPME) curricula; and to bring operators, practitioners, and scholars together to share their knowledge and experiences about a vast array of violent and non-violent irregular challenges. This case study is part of an ongoing effort at CIWAG that includes symposia, lectures by world-renowned academics, case studies, research papers, articles, and books. Our aim is to make these case studies part of an evolving and adaptive curriculum that fulfills the needs of students preparing to meet the challenges of the post-9/11 world.

In many ways 2015 is shaping up to be a pivotal year for irregular warfare: the withdrawal of U.S. general-purpose forces from Afghanistan is fraught with political and operational challenges; President Obama refocused U.S. efforts on challenges from armed groups in the Middle East and Africa's Trans-Sahel region in his May 2014 speech at West Point; and the rise of ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and Levant) has redefined U.S. priorities. These three events, together with the continuing budget issues facing the U.S. Department of Defense and concerns about waning public support for U.S. military operations overseas, help to frame the future face of irregular warfare challenges going forward. These events also make this case study on influence operations particularly timely and important, since the "influence operations mindset" advocated in this case study is particularly suited to smaller-footprint, persistent-presence operations that Special Operations Forces will be tasked with in the future.

Lieutenant Colonel Edward M. Lopacienski (USA) and Major Thomas Scanzillo (USA) are the authors of this case study, which developed out of research papers from the U.S. Naval War College and the Naval Postgraduate School. The case study addresses a common problem: how to influence the human domain—a local population—as part of a strategic plan. The U.S. Army Special Operations Command strategic document *ARSOF 2022* places particular emphasis on the human domain, which is amplified in this case study. As the authors argue, successful influence operations such as those carried out in support of the strategic aims of Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P) between 2004–2008 can undermine support for an adversary, disrupt their operations and strategies, prevent recruitment and logistical support, and ensure that the adversary does not receive sanctuary and support in the future. Moreover, as new threats from armed groups continue to emerge around the world, there is a strong demand signal for in-depth analysis of successful influence operations from a variety of cases, including JSOTF-P.

The challenge in crafting and implementing effective influence operations that influence this human domain is threefold. The first is how to clearly define influence operations. The argument that Lopacienski and Scanzillo make is that the commonly misrepresented and ambiguous term "Information Operations" does not comprehensively or adequately address the scope of such operations. Instead they propose and clearly define a new joint doctrinal term – *Influence Operations.* Influence Operations builds on existing joint doctrine and skill sets and does not require expensive new technology or weapons platforms. Instead, the authors argue, it is about adopting a particular mindset and applying core skill sets for which Special

Operations Forces such as Army Special Forces, Psychological Operations, Naval Special Warfare, Civil Affairs teams, and Marine Special Operations units are selected for and are trained to achieve.

The second challenge is practical and operational: how to integrate multiple lines of effort to support and capitalize on Influence Operations. Common phrases such as "the population is the center of gravity" and "winning hearts and minds" can be interpreted and applied in many different ways. *The question is: what are the operators' roles, and how does an operator "do" Influence Operations?*

The authors argue for a straightforward approach: to focus the preponderance of effort on influencing the human domain and integrating multiple lines of operation to include capacity building, civil-military engagement, information engagement, and intelligence support operations into that single focus. All activities are carried out with the purpose of "influencing the population" in order to achieve the goals of the task force or theater commander. The presented examples of success display aspects of joint and combined SOF operations whose methods affected the civilian populace, terrorist leaders, and insurgent forces.[1]

The third challenge is to identify what conditions make influence operations a success (or failure) and whether those conditions are specific to a time and place or can be more generalizable. The examples in this case come from the authors' experiences in JSOTF-P and focus on two armed groups: Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and Jema'ah Islamiy'ah (JI). Using a snapshot of examples from 2004–2008, the authors found that as local attitudes began to change, the two armed groups began to lose varying degrees of support and influence. Eventually, local people began to make a conscious choice to accept the positive change offered by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and JSOTF-P efforts, with commitments to increase the process as the people helped secure the island. As a result, more and more people chose not to continue to house the ASG and JI, which would entail enduring insufficient health care, income, and security.

It is also important to note four critical caveats to this case study. First, the opinions found in this case study are solely those of the authors and do not represent the views of the Department of Defense, the Naval War College, or CIWAG. Second, while every effort was made to correct any factual errors in this work, the authors are ultimately responsible for the content of this case study.

Third, this is just one approach to dealing with human domain issues. The argument Lopacienski and Scanzillo make in this case is that clear definitions, a clear understanding of how lines of effort support the overarching goals, and an examination of various examples of success and failure can provide the starting place for an Influence Operations mindset to grow and develop. Moreover, the authors are very clear that their framework is not meant to be conclusive or exclusive; rather, it is meant to be a starting point for current operators to consider when conducting their own Influence Operations. As always, it is up to the practitioners and operators to adapt this framework and others to suit their specific environment and conditions.

Fourth, the study questions presented in all CIWAG case studies are written to

[1] MAJ Edward Lopacienski, "SOF and the Use of Influence Operations to Defeat Terrorists and Insurgents in the Southern Philippines," *Collective Papers for the Naval Post Graduate School*, Monterey, CA, Academic Year 2010-2011.

provoke discussion on a wide variety of topics, including strategic, operational, and tactical matters, as well as ethical and moral questions confronted by operators in the battlefield. The point is to make these case studies part of an evolving and adaptive curriculum that fulfills the needs of students preparing to meet the challenges of the post-9/11 world and to show them the dilemmas that real people have faced in high-pressure situations.

Finally, in addition to a range of teaching questions that are intended to serve as the foundation for classroom discussion, students conducting further research will find the extensive bibliography at the end of the case helpful. Compiled by the case study authors and by CIWAG researchers at the Naval War College, the bibliography is a selection of the best books and articles on a range of related topics. We hope you find it useful and look forward to hearing your feedback on the cases and suggestions for how you can contribute to the Center on Irregular Warfare & Armed Group's mission here at the Naval War College.

Author Biographies

MAJ Thomas M. Scanzillo is an operations officer with the Office of Special Warfare, under the U.S. Army's Special Forces Command. He is a U.S. Army Special Forces officer with over 12 years of SOF experience, including nearly four years serving Operation Enduring Freedom - Philippines. During his time with Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P), he served as a detachment commander, operations officer, and the Director of Operations, where he authored the OEF-P Campaign Plan under COL William Coultrup. Following his service in Southeast Asia, MAJ Scanzillo led operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and deployed again to oversee several operations in the USAFRICOM theater. A graduate of the U.S. Naval War College, Major Scanzillo has contributed to DARPA, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab, and CIWAG research and curriculum since 2010.

LTC Edward M. Lopacienski is currently a deputy commander on special assignment. He is a U.S. Army Psychological Operations officer with over 10 years of SOF experience, including nearly three years serving Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines. During his time with Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P) he served as the operational planner for the JSOTF-P influence campaign, U.S. country team advisor, and commander of JSOTF-P psychological operations forces. Following his service in Southeast Asia, LTC Lopacienski led U.S. Army psychological operations forces as both a battalion operations officer and battalion executive officer. A graduate of the Naval Postgraduate School's (NPS) Defense Analysis program, LTC Lopacienski has contributed to CIWAG, NPS, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab, and DARPA research on influence warfare.

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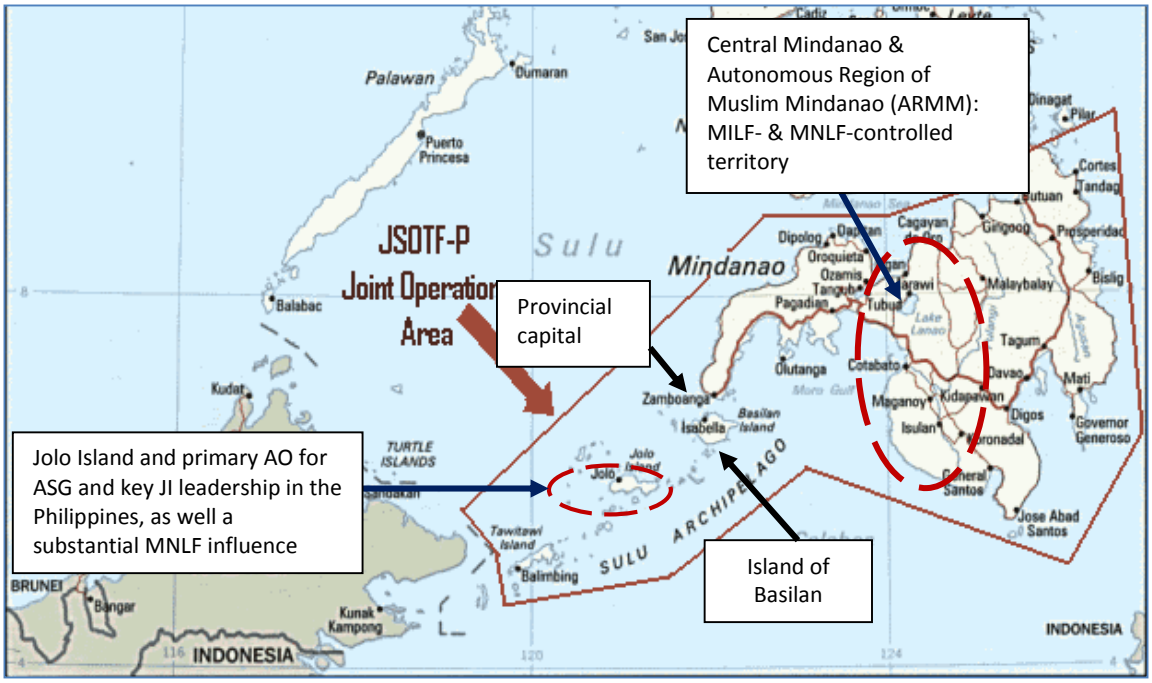

Figure 1. JSOTF-P JOA[2]

[2] Thom Shanker, "U.S. Counterinsurgency Unit to Stay in Philippines," *Coin Central*, NY Times, August 20, 2009, http://coincentral.wordpress.com/2009/08/20/u-s-counterinsurgency-unit-to-stay-in-philippines/ (accessed 30 August 2010).

Introduction

Wars among the people that emphasize influencing population groups rather than an exclusive emphasis on battle is an ancient concept. – USASOC ARSOF 2022[3]

Because guerilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation. - Mao Tse-Tung[4]

As the nature of contemporary warfare continues to evolve geographically, demographically, and politically, it is increasingly crucial for commanders and staffs conducting full-spectrum counterinsurgency operations to truly understand the complexity of the operating environment and to employ forces and assets in a predictive and multispectral manner. In wars that are irregular in character, in which armed groups recruit from, hide among, and are willing to attack communities, the nature of the conflict is a fight for the population.[5] In these environments, the preponderance of effort must be focused on influencing the population more effectively than the adversary.[6] This is the fight for the *human domain*.

The human domain includes the physical, cultural, and social environments that combine to influence human behavior.[7] Our ability to achieve successful influence depends on how much we are willing to learn about the human terrain, in combination with the type of relationships that we and our adversary establish with the people who reside throughout the human domain.[8] Success will be determined by our ability to overcome our outsider status—

[3] U.S. Army Special Operations Command, ARSOF 2022, p. 8, www.soc.mil/Assorted%20Pages/ARSOF2022_vFINAL.pdf.

[4] Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 46.

[5] Irregular war is defined as violent struggles among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over relevant populations. (DODD 3000.07, December 1, 2008)

[6] As defined across political-military milieus, including the U.S. Army Special Forces manuals for unconventional warfare (UW), irregular warfare (IW), foreign internal defense (FID), and counterinsurgency operations (COIN). The civilian center of gravity role is likewise defined by counterinsurgency theorists David Galula and Roger Trinquier, as well as by insurgency theorist and former Communist Premier of the People's Republic of China Mao Tse-Tung.

[7] Roulo, Claudette, American Forces Press Service, "McRaven: Success in Human Domain Fundamental to Special Ops," June 5, 2013, www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=120219, accessed 02 September 2013.

[8] Ibid.

most often through local partnerships—allowing us to operate equal to or better than the adversary. Achieving this takes an investment in time, the establishment of trust, and an understanding of the people to effectively thwart and prevail over an adversary who seeks to maliciously manipulate the population.[9]

This case study addresses the segment of Operations Enduring Freedom – Philippines (OEF-P) history that spans July 2004 through July 2008. It discusses the synergized efforts to use Influence Operations to change the socio-cultural environment by disrupting the tactical and operational advantage of two armed groups: the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and Jema'ah Islamiy'ah (JI). As local attitudes began to change, the Abu Sayyaf Group and Jema'ah Islamiy'ah began to lose varying degrees of support and influence. Influence of the population boiled down to the population making a choice: Choose the positive change being offered by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) efforts with commitments to increase the process as the people help secure the island; or continue to house the ASG and JI and endure the existing conditions of insufficient health care, income, security, and more. As credibility began to shift in favor of the AFP/U.S. presence, the once-hostile population began to change from a predominantly belligerent status to a more favorable disposition. The mission has recently ended, but it was one that favored the efforts of the AFP and the U.S. The presented examples of success display aspects of joint and combined SOF operations whose methods affected the civilian populace, terrorist leaders, and insurgent forces.[10]

This case study uses our collective operational experiences and research to illustrate the application of successful SOF interdependence using our methodology of SF/PSYOP interoperability in JSOTF-P. It proposes a joint doctrinal term for "Influence Operations" and highlights JSOTF-P methods as a model for successful application in confronting insurgencies in the human domain.

Note: The authors of this paper limit their analysis to their own experiences and the four-year time frame 2004 to 2008. This is not intended to be a comprehensive assessment of all aspects of the JSOTF-P, nor is it intended to represent all perspectives or experiences. The authors also note that our SOF, DoD, and interagency brethren who continue to operate successfully throughout the world have used similar methods. More articles and studies are needed to capture their insights and perspectives into what makes for successful Influence Operations.

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[9] Ibid.

[10] MAJ Edward Lopacienski, "SOF and the Use of Influence Operations to Defeat Terrorists and Insurgents in the Southern Philippines," *Collective Papers for the Naval Post Graduate School*, Monterey, CA, Academic Year 2010-2011.

I. The Foundations of Influence Operations

When those crosshairs line up on a soldier and that teenager sees a U.S. or Filipino flag on the sleeve, he will hesitate, remembering all of the good that the Philippines Security Forces and Americans have brought. That hesitation is the effect we are trying to achieve, as we have truly penetrated the thought processes of the insurgents and sown the seeds of doubt in their own causes.– BG James Linder[11]

The argument in this case study is that Influence Operations[12] can play an important role in winning the fight against radical insurgents and aligning the population with the legitimate, responsible, and recognized government.[13] As the U.S. and its allies continue to face these kinds of challenges around the world, it is vital to consider many different examples of how influence operations have been successfully used and what lessons we can learn from those experiences. This raises some important questions, which include: How can SOF employ Influence Operations to disrupt or subvert terrorist or insurgent centers of gravity at the tactical or operational levels?

The argument in this case is that special warfare provides direction for the application of Influence Operations.[14] Moreover, when applied correctly and with sufficient resources, SOF Influence Operations are perhaps the most effective and sustainable means to marginalize and defeat terrorist and insurgent operations. The effective implementation of special warfare requires a synergetic approach by SOF and conventional forces working with and through host nation forces.[15] Indeed, Influence Operations are the downrange application of special warfare in today's environment of operations in the human domain.

In order to understand some of the advantages of and challenges to successfully carrying out influence operations, this case study looks at influence operations through the perspective of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM – PHILIPPINES (OEF-P), which was an economy-of-force operation that relied on the deliberately synchronized efforts and expertise of joint, multinational, and interagency partners. The U.S. ambassador, the JSOTF-P commander, the Philippine government, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) shared common strategic and regional goals and focused on maximizing cooperation and progress—everyone "rowed together" toward the shared ultimate goals of regional stability and long-term effective partnerships.

One of the first lessons we noted from our research was that above all, achieving successful and sustainable results takes willing partners, the *right* force, excruciating

[11] COL James Linder, during a conversation with the authors in the Philippines, November 2005.
[12] Information Operations (IO) is a *combination of, or unilaterally executed, operations* conducted by psychological operations (PSYOP), public affairs (PA), electronic warfare (EW), operations security (OPSEC), computer network operations (CNO), and military deception (MILDEC), for purposes of supporting or conducting military operations. Only one of the Information Operation LOE specialties is required to operate with regional expertise (PSYOP), but all of them can and do operate across varied operational paradigms.
[13] Inversely, the legitimate government must maintain its social contract with the population, remaining aware of how fragile the newly gained trust will remain for years to come.

[14] Special warfare, as defined in *ARSOF 2022*, is "the execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and non-lethal actions taken by specially trained and educated forces that have a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, subversion, sabotage and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain or hostile environment."
[15] Lopacienski, "SOF," 2010.

patience, and time—more time than most commanders and politicians have the patience or tenure for. Moreover, developing the mindset for successful influence operations is an art that can only be learned by a willing mind and applied by those who recognize that constant change is the only certain factor. In addition, putting influence operations' key tenets into practice requires consistency and leadership commitment.

In this case example, COL James Linder, the commander of JSOTF-P in 2005-2006, began achieving these effects by reinforcing the mindset of patience and influence within his own task force, rather than using primarily kinetic solutions. His initial guidance to JSOTF-P focused efforts not mainly on the insurgents but on children between the ages of 6 and 12, as well as women. He believed that the older children had, for the most part, made up their minds about the Philippine government and what ideologies they believed. COL Linder recognized that the Philippine government, with U.S. assistance, was in a protracted fight to influence the younger generation over the course of several years through a deliberate campaign of positive messages and actions across a large geographic and demographically diverse area.

Building Philippine government and security forces' legitimacy was vital to improving their perception so the population would no longer view them with suspicion, but see them as public servants who serve and protect citizens. This is not a new concept—indeed the 18th-century French writer Jean-Jaques Rousseau was talking about just this principle when he wrote about a "social contract" between a people and its government.[16] In this case, we can see that a U.S. commander, COL Linder, took the doctrinal term of Information Operations (IO) and told his people to think of IO as "Influencing Others."[17] This mindset took hold and became the mantra of JSOTF-P Influence Operations from 2006 to 2010. Indeed, COL Linder noted that 10 years into his strategy, when one of those children becomes a teenager who has bought into radical propaganda and been led astray, he will be looking through a sniper scope at U.S. or Philippine security forces. He told his task force: "When those crosshairs line up on a soldier and that teenager sees a U.S. or Filipino flag on the sleeve, he will hesitate, remembering all of the good that the Philippine security forces and Americans have brought. That hesitation is the effect we are trying to achieve, as we have truly penetrated the thought processes of the insurgents and sown the seeds of doubt in their own causes."[18]

A. Definitions and Clarifications

It is critical to delineate between *Information* Operations and *Influence* Operations. In the current organizational and doctrinal design, Information Operations (IO) is defined as a parallel coordinating function between the maneuver commander, U.S. military information executors, and the commander's operational staff.[19] Joint Doctrine defines IO as:

> the integrated employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security, in

[16] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right* (1762), trans. G.D.H. Cole (1782), http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm.

[17] Linder, November 2005.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Information Operations (IO) is a *combination of, or unilaterally executed, operations* conducted by psychological operations (PSYOP), public affairs (PA), electronic warfare (EW), operations security (OPSEC), computer network operations (CNO), and military deception (MILDEC), for purposes of supporting or conducting military operations. Only one of the Information Operation LOE specialties is required to operate with regional expertise (PSYOP), but all of them can and do operate across varied operational paradigms.

> concert with specified supporting and related capabilities to influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own.[20]

The argument in this case is that the current concept of *Information Operations* is deficient and obfuscates the role of a command's Information Operations staff function with the Information Operations line of effort (LOE). The Information Operations LOE is executed by a diverse set of forces unique in their highly specialized fields. As an example, Army Special Operations' psychological operations forces are the DoD's subject matter experts in influencing mass foreign audiences; electronic warfare is the Army and DoD's force dedicated to protecting and exploiting the electromagnetic spectrum of the battlefield; computer network operations focus on the cyber spectrum; public affairs is an information provider for the American public; military deception is an operational function, along with operational security; and the mere presence of U.S. forces on the ground creates an influence effect through their daily duties and operations. The Information Operations staff is charged with coordinating or deconflicting all of the effects and activities between these unique fields of expertise as a type of information air-traffic controller. The crux of the confusion comes from intermingling the IO terminology and IO staff positions responsible for coordinating operational security, military deception plans, and information narratives with the command's Information Operations subject matter experts and operators from psychological operations, computer network operations, electronic warfare, military deception, and combat forces who are assigned specific missions to develop influence effects.

In 2009, RAND defined Influence Operations as:

> the coordinated, integrated, and synchronized application of national diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and other capabilities in peacetime, crisis, conflict, and post-conflict to foster attitudes, behaviors, or decisions by foreign target audiences that further U.S. interests and objectives.[21]

However, this broad definition is not all-encompassing. While it is theoretically sound, it remains focused at the strategic level and emphasizes mass communications, thereby overlooking the critical operational and tactical aspects of Influence Operations and special warfare that are essential for achieving strategic objectives.

To alleviate the confusion, the current "IO" LOE should be redesignated as the "Influence Operations" LOE. *Influence Operations* is specific in the role and importance of positively affecting the local and wider populations in order to successfully isolate and eliminate insurgents and terrorists that destabilize local communities and a country's national leadership institutions. Currently, there is no standard accepted joint force doctrinal definition of influence operations, although Joint Doctrinal Publication 3-0 says:

> Focused at the local and community levels, [Influence Operations] shape operational conditions by fostering changes in the behavior, attitudes, civil dispositions, and operating environments across targeted social

[20] Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*. Joint Publication (JP) 3-13, Second Draft (Washington, DC: CJCS, 14 December 2004), GL-12.

[21] RAND Corporation, "Foundations of Effective Influence Operations," 2009, p. 2. http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG654.pdf, accessed October 12, 2010.

> groups, populations, and political-military organizations.[22]

We further argue the following:

> Influence Operations regularly identify and adapt to evolving conditions within the targeted audiences' social structure at an interpersonal level. These operations use both physical and nonphysical methods of persuasion to affect conditions across diverse and complex socio-political networks to generate advantageous behavior, perceptions, and attitude changes. Ultimately, these methods shape the operating environment by achieving desired effects to enable U.S. and partner nation objectives across all lines of operations.[23]

Army Special Forces and psychological operations forces are special operations forces uniquely suited for Influence Operations by nature of their distinct regional specialization and design to execute missions within and across complex cultural and social domains in strategically and politically sensitive regions of the world.[24] The most important critical factor to enduring success is the effective cooperation between the involved joint, interagency, and multinational partners. All stakeholders must understand the desired end state, the collective tasks, the operation goals, and the capabilities and limitations of the collective effort. Each player must additionally understand that every action (or failure to act) has an influence effect—whether intentional or unintentional—on one or more of the target audiences. Whether or not friendly actions are intended to have psychological, emotional, or cognitive effects[25] on the population, government, security forces, or other audience, every action undoubtedly has a positive or negative incremental impact. Therefore, all executors of Influence Operations must proactively and cognitively manage actions, messages, and perceptions at all times. More importantly, in addition to political and cultural awareness, leaders must understand the greatest needs, interests, and desires of the population, as well as those of the adversary.

Influence Operations offers a holistic approach to shaping the environment of the human domain while simultaneously undermining the adversary's ability to do the same. Influence Operations and influence effects must be continuously analyzed and interwoven into all activities in an operation or campaign. In general, the overall theme of an operation creates a common purpose to shape or change behaviors and attitudes toward the desired end state, enables precise and minimally invasive combat actions, and alleviates the need for prolonged or expanded military actions. Furthermore, Influence Operations are proactive in nature and must adapt to the daily effects of friendly forces, the enemy, and the population.

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[22] U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-05.130 Army Special Operations Forces Unconventional Warfare, September 2008, 2–11, http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-05-130.pdf.

[23] Lopacienski, Hoke, Carr, Grieshaber, *Influence Operations: Redefining the Indirect Approach*, Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, June 2011, 5.

[24] There is an innate influence effect, whether deliberate or circumstantial, in any military operation. For instance, deploying a BCT of the 82nd ABN DIV is a military operation designed to change the behavior of, or render ineffective, a belligerent or hostile force. However, the influence effects on the population and any other relevant party are circumstantial and will typically have disparate (i.e., unsynchronized) second- and third-order effects.

[25] David Kilcullen, in a 2007 NOETIC brief, delineates popular perception into the emotive ("hearts") component and the cognitive ("minds") component.

B. The Human Domain: Competing for Attitudes, Perceptions, and a Vocal Majority

In irregular and unconventional warfare, everything revolves around the competition for people, perceptions, and their support. The French counterinsurgency theorist Roger Trinquier said, "The *sine qua non* of victory in [insurgent/counterinsurgent] warfare is the unconditional support of the people."[26] A counterinsurgency fight is entirely a struggle for influence in order to achieve the ultimate objective. Gordon McCormick breaks down the "mobilizable population" into three distinct categories: "core supporters of the state, core supporters of the insurgency, and a large middle group of individuals who are prepared to support one side or the other depending on the circumstances of the struggle."[27] The latter are the fence sitters weighing the cost and benefit of aligning with one side or the other. This group is the focal point of the influence struggle.

The first two groups are generally ideologically driven and are highly unlikely to change sides. For the core supporters of the state, a specialized U.S. task force conducting Influence Operations and working with host-nation forces generally provides the host government with the resources, training, and/or support that is most appropriate for the operating environment. This assumes that Influence Operations are in support of a legitimate and recognized government. Furthermore, desired effects become increasingly difficult to synchronize, conduct, and achieve as the expeditionary force grows beyond a single specialized and unified command. To address the core supporters of the insurgency, the ideologically driven "hardliners" who are unlikely to change, the task force must apply an indirect approach (short of unilateral kinetic operations) to disrupt, deny, or otherwise prohibit their extreme actions and behavior that may alienate the third population group from the legitimate government.

That large middle group, the impressionable majority of the population, becomes the focal point in a struggle between the insurgents and counterinsurgents for decisive influence. Many in this group will have an initial preference toward one side, but the side they choose to support depends on the "expected costs and benefits of their alternatives."[28] Influencing that choice is a decisive opportunity and requires the collaborative will and resources of counterinsurgent forces to engage the population over the long term, often within the population's communities.

One need only look as far as the successes brought forth by the Viet Cong's influence campaign in rural South Vietnam villages, or how Hezbollah is infecting the urban and rural populations of Lebanon. Consider the narrative example well-known in the Army's SOF community—the "ball of rice" scenario.[29] A remote rural farmer is barely able to scrape enough food together to feed his family and livestock. What little income he has goes to providing for his family and bringing his harvest to the nearest market. One day a man approaches him with some money (more than he would make in a season), food for his family, and a rifle. The man tells the farmer, "If you join our group, we will provide a ball of rice for each of your family members every day for as long as you are a member." The farmer says that he does not know of this group nor does he wish to fight,

[26] Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, trans., Daniel Lee (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), 8.
[27] Gordon H. McCormick & Frank Giordano, "The Dynamics of Insurgency," paper presented to the Insurgency Board of Experts, Department of Defense Analysis, Naval Postgraduate School, June 2002.
[28] Gordon H. McCormick, "Things Come Together," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2, 2007, 301.
[29] This narrative is Special Forces institutional lore, and most SF candidates are exposed to vignettes like this throughout the Special Forces Qualification Course. It is recalled in the authors' own words.

but the man reassures him that the rifle can also be used for the protection of his family and crops, and that the likelihood of ever fighting is very low. The farmer agrees and becomes obligated as a full-fledged, armed member of an anti-government insurgent group.

That group influenced him to join by exploiting his needs and isolation. He weighed the cost—the small chance he might have to pick up his rifle and fight—with the benefit of guaranteed food for his family, one of his greatest needs. The insurgents established a basic relationship with the farmer, making it easy to further manipulate his actions on the basis of whatever cause they hold. This anecdotal example highlights events transpiring throughout the underdeveloped regions of the world.

Insurgent groups are well-placed to recognize the needs of a targeted population and sway or compel them to support "the cause." On a macro scale, the concepts are routinely similar, and our contemporary adversaries are savvy at influencing the large middle group of fence sitters before the host government or a coalition of forces are in place to prevent this. Successful Influence Operations recognizes the criticality of popular support and bases every decision, both short and long term, on the projected first-, second-, and third-order effects.

II. Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P) Method of Engagement

Whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives, relying on exercises, rotational presence, and advisory capabilities. –U.S. Defense Strategic Guidance 2012[30]

The Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P), through significant trial and error, mastered the synergetic approach to influencing the target population with a low cost and a small footprint. Its successes directly supported both U.S. mission and USPACOM theater security cooperation plan goals in the Philippines. One of the most important factors that enabled its continued success was its flexibility: the entire mission was a choreographed effort in which every element had a specific function in the operating environment and could be guided, surged, or withdrawn at any given time to apply appropriate pressure at the appropriate time and place. Influence Operations were broken down and interwoven into each specific and mutually supportive LOE, and each LOE ultimately supported the operational goal of winning the support of the population through superior influence. It is also important to remember that the adversary gets a vote; some threat groups in the Philippines proved surprisingly adept at the same type of influential tactics, so it was important to understand their goals and methods in attempting to achieve influence superiority.[31] For example, the Abu Sayyaf Group, Jema'ah Islamiy'ah, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front have active recruiting campaigns that highlight, or even misrepresent, any actions of the Philippine government that cause hardship to the people of Mindanao.[32] Consequently, these

[30] U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,* January 2012, p. 3, http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf.

[31] Influence superiority, a non-doctrinal term used by the authors during the planning and execution of OEF-P operations, entails conducting Influence Operations (as defined in this case study) more effectively than an adversary.

[32] Many other smaller Islamist groups also contribute to the overall threat to stability in the Philippines,

groups exploit the discontent they generate to contribute to national and regional instability. (See **Appendix A: Threat Groups in the Philippines** for more information about these groups.)

The acme of skill of the true warrior is to be victorious without fighting. –Sun Tzu

In 2006 the commander of Special Operations Command, Pacific, Lieutenant General David P. Fridovich, asserted, "We think there's a model here worth showcasing . . . there's another way of doing business."[33] During a time of more kinetic solutions in Afghanistan and Iraq, LTG Fridovich highlighted JSOTF-P's highly effective alternative approach to rooting out terrorists and winning the support of the population by, through, and with a willing host nation. JSOTF-P was an economy-of-force mission that relied on unity of effort between joint, multinational, and interagency partners. The task force worked closely with the U.S. mission in the Philippines to ensure the deconfliction and accomplishment of U.S. regional goals and provide a mutually beneficial relationship at all levels. All participants recognized the importance of the "whole government" approach and generally strove toward achieving mid- to long-term goals without stereotypical political infighting. JSOTF-P practiced centralized planning and decentralized execution. The commanders and staff understood how to most effectively employ each component of the task force, which is critical when flexing a particular capability forward to support or execute a mission, or preempt or respond to an incident. There are also strong cultural bonds and relationships (both positive and negative) between each of the numerous subcultures that had to be accounted for throughout engagements with local population groups.

One of the strongest core values within JSOTF-P was the overall adherence to the first SOF principle: **Understand your operating environment**. Although Influence Operations are not necessarily SOF-specific, Special Operations Forces are typically the best suited to coordinate and conduct deliberate influence efforts, especially in areas of operations not engaged in large-scale combat operations. The requirement is not for SOF soldiers; rather it is for *adaptable* soldiers.[34] Over the past decade, several military unit types (including general purpose forces) have proved remarkably capable of adapting and operating within influence-centric operational environments, but this is outside of their traditional operational focus. SOF is traditionally the force of choice when adaptation, ambiguity, and political sensitivities are critical, as is typically the case in special warfare environments.

JSOTF-P created a dynamic influence operations working group that regularly met to analyze feedback-driven mission requirements, ongoing projects, future opportunities, and past and projected effects of friendly actions. The construct of the working group was comprehensive, and generally run by the JSOTF-P Operations Officer (J3) and the Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Detachment

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such as the Misuari Breakaway Group and the Rajah Solaiman Movement. The New People's Army is the Communist terrorist movement in the Philippines; their goals are entirely different than the Islamist groups' but their methods are similar (i.e., delegitimizing the government, recruiting from the population, etc.). See Appendix A for background on threat groups operating within the Republic of the Philippines.

[33] John Falk, "This Is the War on Terror. Wish You Were Here!," *Outside*, January 16, 2007, http://www.outsideonline.com/adventure-travel/asia/philippines/This-Is-the-War-on-Terror--Wish-You-Were-Here-.html.

[34] John A. Nagl, who has written extensively about counterinsurgency, notes: "Not all soldiers can adapt, and putting those who cannot in command of a counterinsurgency effort is counterproductive." John A. Nagl, "Foreword," in David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), x.

Commander, who typically doubled as the JSOTF J39. While the working group met twice a week, or when needed based on mission requirements, there was a smaller standing Influence Cell consisting of the J3, J39, J2, PSYOP Commander, Civil Affairs Liaison Officer (CA LNO), and Public Affairs Officer (PAO) that met almost daily. This cell constantly ensured that the coalition messages propagated and were appropriately incorporated along each LOE. The cell was critical to predictive analysis, managing operations within the information environment, and synchronizing all lines of operation.

JSOTF-P utilized four LOEs: capacity building, civil-military engagement, information engagement, and intelligence support operations. All contributed to the overall influence campaign and were based on proven strategies that had measurable effects.[35] The maneuver elements (SF, NSW, PSYOP, civil affairs, and eventually MARSOC) coordinated their activities based on ground situational awareness combined with analysis provided by the influence operation fusion cell. The influence operations fusion cell synchronized ongoing influence activities and continuously assessed successes in shaping the operational environment for future targeting.

The primary target audience for JSOTF-P's Influence Operations was the diverse Philippine population within the joint operations area. Secondary audiences included local Philippine government officials, Philippine security forces, and the Philippine population not directly affected or targeted by the insurgents. JSOTF-P's vocal and widely publicized purpose as it engaged local Filipino communities was as follows:

> In the fight against terrorism, the JSOTF-P assists the Armed Forces of the Philippines in bringing peace and prosperity in Mindanao. [We are here to] help strengthen security forces, set the conditions for good governance, defeat terrorist organizations, and protect U.S. and Philippine citizens from terrorist attacks. At the invitation of the Philippine Government, the United States is here to assist the Armed Forces of the Philippines as they create a secure and stable environment.[36]

The phrase "as *they* create a secure and stable environment" was particularly significant. It remained critical for the Filipino population to see their own government in the lead, which made enhancing the Philippine Security Forces' capacity to operate autonomously and more effectively a primary JSOTF-P mission.

A. Capacity Building

The Armed Forces of the Philippines had difficulty overcoming their reputation as an oppressive and heavy-handed force. U.S. forces generally hold the moral high ground and are predominantly perceived as a force for peace that respects the rule of law. Early in the execution of OEF-P, several teams reported that local populations throughout the joint operations area in Mindanao were wary, even untrusting, of the AFP based on past incidents or word-of-mouth rumors of AFP violence against Muslim populations.[37] When U.S. advisors were present for community activities, the local Filipinos were much more comfortable engaging with both U.S. and Philippine

[35] USPACOM, JSOTF-P unclassified promotional video, as created and published by the JSOTF-P J39 and Influence Operations Cell in 2008.

[36] Ibid.

[37] This was illustrated in several Commander's Comments of SFODA SITREPs to JSOTF-P throughout the first few years of Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines. It is important for the reader to understand that this *was not* the case throughout the entire Philippines, and that the AFP was well respected in most areas even during that time. The affected areas referred to herein are generally those that contain the "relevant population," or the population from which various secessionist groups may draw support.

soldiers. The U.S. presence enabled the AFP and Philippine National Police (PNP) to engage the population and reverse the negative perceptions and biases.[38]

JSOTF-P explains capacity building as the following:

> training the Philippine military and national police to fight lawlessness. Villagers lived in fear of kidnap-for-ransom gangs and other criminal acts, but now live in a more secure and peaceful environment. This increased capability provides improved security and allows the AFP and PNP to increase the legitimacy of the government.[39]

The themes and messages of the overall influence campaign were constantly interwoven into each capacity-building event. For instance, a U.S. element training a group of Filipino Scout Rangers constantly reinforced to them their legitimacy and professional duty throughout the course. The same message was applied to a different target audience, the population, when that same group of Scout Rangers delivered several boxes of books to a rural school. This exemplified JSOTF-P's deliberate influence acts and influence messaging. The perception was that the AFP delivered much-needed books to the school, which was probably in an area vulnerable to insurgent recruitment. The books, meanwhile, may have come from USAID or any other number of sources external to the task force.

JSOTF-P also encouraged other U.S. government efforts to reinforce their Influence Operations. For example, when USPACOM coordinated for theater security cooperation plan events in the Philippines, JSOTF-P had the lead in bringing them to the joint operations area. This maximized training benefits and operational effects in specific areas, but it also enabled JSOTF-P to utilize those events where they would provide the greatest influence effect. For example, all services participated in joint/combined exchange training events with their Filipino counterparts, to include Army Special Forces, Navy SEALs, Marine Special Operations Teams, PSYOP teams, DEA, FBI, and other security and police agencies. This was a coordinated effort to increase the professional capacity of each Philippine agency to operate both in an autonomous capacity, and in a more interoperable manner within their government.[40] Once the government is able to effectively communicate within itself, it can begin to effectively engage the population in the form of humanitarian support and civil-military engagement.

B. Civil-Military Engagement

Providing basic human needs further legitimizes the government and aids in positively influencing a malleable population. Backed by U.S. assistance and resources, the AFP and PNP brought civil infrastructure and humanitarian support to the people who need it most. This primarily came in the form of free medical, dental, veterinary, and engineering assistance to communities in need. AFP and JSOTF-P PSYOP detachments produced materials stating, "Aside from providing security [the AFP is] armed with the tools and resources to rebuild schools and hospitals, provide medical and dental care, and provide fresh water."[41] The method of application began with a targeting process to identify which communities were most vulnerable to a particular threat or hostile influence. The next step was a planning process that

[38] Maintaining legitimacy and effective access to the population requires a professional force, and all JSOTF-P operational elements were chartered with assisting the AFP and PNP in fully establishing their systems and methods.

[39] JSOTF-P promotional video, 2008.

[40] Stew Magnuson, "To Counter Terrorism, Philippine Army Takes Lessons From U.S. Forces," National Defense, February 01, 2008, http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2008/February/Pages/ToCounter4664.aspx (accessed May 15, 2014).

[41] JSOTF-P promotional video, 2008.

incorporated the Philippine Security Forces and local leaders (building capacity and strengthening the bond between the government and the people). The AFP and JSOTF-P focused civil-military engagement support on permissive and semi-permissive communities that were supportive and amiable to the Philippine government and resisted the insurgents' push toward lawlessness. The overall desired effect was to build a cascading shift in favor of the Philippine government, ultimately affecting non-permissive communities.

One of the more effective CME venues was the annual Balikatan[42] exercise and its respective capacity-building, CME, PSYOP, and U.S. embassy strategic communication activities. Balikatan was an Influence Operation unto itself that directly supported the JSOTF-P lines of operation. Philippine security forces were in the lead when it came to engaging the population, with U.S. forces providing significant material and personnel support. This increased Philippine government and AFP legitimacy in the eyes of the Philippine population. JSOTF-P also employed some special longer-duration programs, often with U.S. Embassy support, to teach vocational skills to local communities. These efforts generated income, increased prosperity, and influenced communities to support the government. Most successful Filipino military leaders adopted the same philosophy over the past several years, as illustrated by the AFP's SALA'AM Program.[43] It became standard practice to integrate CME into nearly every AFP operation in Mindanao.

The message to the people resonated: "Reject violence and embrace peace, and good things will come to your village."[44] Historically, the Abu Sayyaf Group conducted retribution attacks on communities that supported government-led peace initiatives, especially those that involved American support. These tactics quickly backfired, and increased the momentum and perseverance of AFP and JSOTF-P soft power. A new paradigm emerged as ASG threats began to lose influence. The ASG learned that if they attacked civil-military projects it would cost them access and support of the local population, thereby "forcing the enemy to collaborate in its own defeat."[45] Furthermore, many of the families of ASG members belonged to those communities and would not refuse free treatment. For the AFP, this was an opportunity to show these families and sympathizers first-hand that the government cared about them, a demonstration not replicable by the Abu Sayyaf Group. It was also an opportunity to engage the people on a personal level, thereby allowing effective Influence Operations, community relationships, and productive information exchange among a willing and supportive population.

C. Information Engagement and Psychological Operations

The cooperation and support of a population is integral to gathering the

[42] *Balikatan* means "shouldering the load together" in Tagalog. Asia Pacific Defense Forum Staff, "From Balikatan to Mudslide Relief" (Asia Pacific Defense FORUM, Winter 2006-2007), 39.

[43] The AFP began the SALA'AM (Special Advocacy on Literacy/Livelihood and Advancement for Muslims) Program as "the cornerstone of the AFP campaign in the Southern Philippines," according to MGEN Hermogenes C. Esperon, Jr. in 2005. U.S. civil affairs and PSYOP provided advice and assistance in developing the program of instruction, manual, and initial operating capability, but the AFP significantly increased their own capacity to conduct this civil-military engagement on their own. See Armed Forces of the Philippines, *SALA'AM Manual* (Camp Aguinaldo – Quezon City, Republic of the Philippines: AFP SOT Center, 2005), i.

[44] JSOTF-P PSYOP Multimedia Campaign - Project Sandra, designed to highlight the cost of terrorism and demonize violent extremist organizations in the Southern Philippines. (See the authors for additional details and samples) This campaign was developed in cooperation with local Philippine marketing and research companies.

[45] Falk, 79.

intelligence needed to weed out insurgents and render them ineffective. Establishing a productive and collaborative connection between the government and the people is vital to conducting effective operations. However, maintaining the connection between those two entities is often the challenge. The primary executors of JSOTF-P's influence LOE were the AFP's and JSOTF-P's PSYOP, civil affairs, special forces, naval special warfare, MARSOC, and medical assistance elements. To maintain the attention of, access to, and support from the population during Influence Operations, the task force required constant dialogue to reinforce PSYOP themes and messages. Providing a deliberate range and amount of influential information to target audiences and local populations increased two-way dialogue. The most basic benefits occurred when people understood what the government was doing in their communities and developed a desire to support those efforts. In response, the government and task force gained otherwise unattainable information about social dynamics, attitudes, and insurgent activities, while elements of the insurgency began to question their own leadership and decision making. This facilitated government actions to marginalize or remove the insurgents as the population continued to receive civil-military assistance and other benefits from NGOs and community support functions.

The influence messaging process gained momentum and drove a wedge further between the population and the insurgent groups. PSYOP themes and messages reached the population through a broad array of media including radio, television, social events, flyers, posters, text messages, and other social media. The JSOTF-P PSYOP detachment employed these media and methods through four primary PSYOP Lines of Effort (LOEs) within the JSOTF-P influence line of operation.[46]

D. PSYOP: A Core SOF Capability

Our PSYOP detachment established four key PSYOP LOEs to shape JSOTF-P's influence environment and affect the insurgents' ability to operate. Due to their methods of engagement within numerous local communities, as well as their access to senior U.S. and AFP senior leadership (political, civilian, and military), the PSYOP and civil affairs forces often possessed more access, placement, and trust with local community leadership and had unique access to informal persons of influence within the population. This was due in no small part to collaboration and coordination with the SF and NSW teams that lived and worked with the AFP throughout specific priority areas. The ability of the PSYOP and civil affairs teams to directly engage with the wider population increased the credibility and access of the other SOF teams assigned to work with the AFP throughout key areas of interest.

The first PSYOP LOE supported JSOTF-P's civil-military engagement by personalizing AFP and JSOTF-P support to local communities. The second PSYOP LOE was focused on disrupting insurgent operations by creating dissent among the insurgents as well as between the insurgents and the communities that traditionally supported or tolerated them. The third major PSYOP LOE was the Rewards for Justice Campaign. This LOE identified the most heinous insurgent leaders, offered rewards leading to their arrest, and, more importantly, made personal connections between the atrocities committed and the insurgent leaders responsible for them. JSOTF-P's fourth PSYOP LOE—the Mass Media Campaign—provided operational-level influence support to the task force as a whole and galvanized all three previous PSYOP LOEs together through an extensive

[46] "A *line of effort* links multiple tasks and missions using the logic of purpose—cause and effect—to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions." *Joint Operation Planning*, Joint Publication 5-0, Aug. 11, 2011, p. xxii. Lines of operation are typically employed using subordinate lines of effort.

and overt commercial multimedia campaign.

To facilitate change in the populations' perceptions, enable favorable behavior toward AFP and U.S. forces, and build intolerance toward the ASG-JI, the PSYOP LOEs were persistently interwoven into all of JSOTF-P's operations. Civil-military engagement provided a series of successful events (i.e., deeds) that validated JSOTF-P's influence messaging. Creating dissent within and between the two insurgent groups and the populace was dependent on fostering trust and developing favorable options for the affected people, thereby providing a viable and desirable alternative to living with an insurgent presence. AFP and JSOTF's civil-military engagement was the first layer in disrupting ASG and JI access and freedom of movement by providing basic health care and much-needed civil projects for afflicted communities in need.

A unique aspect of JSOTF-P's influence messaging was the primacy of using CME and face-to-face engagements to validate the influence messages instead of employing reactive messages to address events after they occurred. Once a local influence foundation was established, PSYOP managed a reciprocal message-deed, deed-message cycle that became mutually supporting and validating for the AFP and U.S. civil-military efforts. The messages were routinely adapted to inform local villages and population groups about projects, why the AFP and U.S. were providing them, and, more importantly, to demonstrate a long-term local investment in the community by the Philippine government.

The tailored messages and the interpersonal engagements supporting them was a systematic and less aggressive approach toward gaining populace support and alienating ASG and JI fighters, versus the more straightforward practice of directing or telling a population to support the government's endeavors. For example, the AFP and JSOTF-P conducted and enabled events to rebuild schools, establish clean water wells, provide basic medical and dental care, develop roads, and even host veterinary clinics for local farm animals. The PSYOP detachment participated in these events to capture the positive changes taking place through pictures and casual conversations with community members. PSYOP soldiers then used images and information to personalize these stories in imagery, media, and print products that were disseminated back into the affected and neighboring communities to prolong the lasting effects of the AFP and JSOTF-P missions taking place across the region.

Communities on the periphery of these efforts also received the products (both verbal and nonverbal) to further spread the influence effects and to create demand for similar civil-military assistance into previously inaccessible communities. Although the imagery was personalized to each local community, the general theme remained the same: the AFP and U.S. forces can continue the good work of the medical, dental, and building projects for areas that no longer tolerate the actions of JI, ASG, and other unlawful groups. The products were careful not to single out individuals, but focused on the improvements made to the communities that no longer provided overt or tacit support to ASG or JI elements.

The PSYOP civil-military LOE began to generate momentum in conjunction with SF and NSW synchronized civil-military engagements within local communities. Civil-military events provided access to free basic and advanced medical, dental, and veterinary care. Under the insurgents' coercive influences, these services were rarely available to remote communities throughout Sulu, Basilan, and into the Muslim areas of Mindanao. Each event was actively promoted and designed as a community-wide event by AFP and JSOTF-P personnel and supported by local community leaders. The PSYOP detachment's forward support teams mingled with the crowds and ran engagement events in the local language

to build or improve the social-operational picture. This method of engagement proved invaluable in developing follow-on messages and products that captured the positive achievements of the events. More importantly, they created interpersonal messages and increased access to a growing social-group network. With each favorably affected community, a new conduit opened up for passing on and spreading future information throughout the provinces.

The PSYOP Disrupt LOE created dissent between population areas typically used by the insurgents and the threat groups by challenging the abilities of the insurgent groups' main leadership. For this effort, a series of PSYOP messaging, products, and actions focused on amplifying the negative attributes, actions, and distress caused by the ASG and JI groups operating within communities and across the affected areas of Mindanao. Not only did this include communities targeted for ASG attacks, but it also included those communities affected by the second- and third-order of effects of insurgent attacks and extortion activities. It further included as an audience the families of ASG members, who were not receiving the aid and benefits of the communities open to AFP and U.S. assistance.

Although the influence approach was tailored for each community, the end objective was to create a divisive attitude between the ASG and its support base in the population. Each attack or attempted attack was captured through imagery and messages to the populace, marking JI and ASG as the culprits within minutes to hours of an event. By seizing the information initiative, the AFP and JSOTF-P maintained and increased the influence momentum. Similarly, when a medical, dental, veterinary, or engineering civic action program was held, disrupt messages coupled with civil-military engagement influence messaging shaped the local environment by publicizing the positive event and inviting local and surrounding communities, specifically those communities that were known for tacit and active support for the ASG. This served to further enhance the positive effects of the AFP/JSOTF-P presence versus the increasingly negative impacts the ASG was having across the area of operations. Significantly, the PSYOP disruption messages and products amplified internal ASG/JI dissent, which began to surface through sources. Our PSYOP messaging mediums capitalized upon these seams by amplifying the population's silent-majority concerns and grievances with the ASG.[47] ASG-associated communities and those affected by terrorist attacks began to realize they were not isolated in their struggle, and that there was an alternative to living with JI/ASG/MILF exploitation.

Examples of the SF and PSYOP combined capability took place when attacks occurred against community centers of gravity like marketplaces, malls, or bus stations. The PSYOP and SF operators made every effort to provide aid and security and to capture images of the devastation. To further alienate the insurgent groups, the PSYOP detachment researched the victims and, with their consent, tailored a series of influence products highlighting the atrocity, the losses, and the terrorist leader responsible. Information was gathered through local sources, AFP and U.S. forces, or through our PSYOP ethnographic research and media resources. The PSYOP detachment injected the information into the media campaign, along with more community-centric messages and products, to create a local and regional layered influence effect against the ASG and JI elements responsible for ordering and executing the attacks. With the civil-military and dissention aspects of the disrupt effort building upon each other, the Rewards LOE further tied the PSYOP portion of the influence campaign together by presenting various incentives for information that would

[47] A common exploitation tactic was a special protection or security tax levied by ASG and MILF, which compelled communities to provide monetary and logistical support.

lead to the capture and arrest of multiple terrorist leaders, severely hindering terrorist activities.

The PSYOP Rewards LOE originated from supporting the U.S. country team's effort to establish a Rewards for Justice Program in the Philippines.[48] After several months of establishing and linking the PSYOP influence LOEs into the wider JSOTF-P influence campaign, the rewards program was adapted into a format that negatively personalized the most-wanted terrorists by accurately and rapidly affiliating specific ASG-JI terrorists with their associated attacks, as well as with the affected and neighboring communities. To overcome ASG's familial ties with their affiliated communities, PSYOP messages personalized the attacks by publicizing the effects on the victims and their extended families. The empathy and sense of loss began to resonate within the ASG's own support base.[49] Imagery of the damage was associated with imagery of the terrorists responsible for ordering or executing the attacks.

The PSYOP detachment paid careful attention not to show carnage but to encapsulate the fear and anguish of the witnesses, as well as the grim determination of the AFP and U.S. forces that were often the first to arrive on the scene with medical aid and security. By directly linking attacks with terrorist leaders identified in the Rewards products and the emotional and physical effects on the victims, we slowly began to break through familial and clan loyalty. With each success the AFP and JSOTF-P increased the number of information tips received, often enabling key intelligence developments for future operations. The terrorists quickly lost the influence initiative while the AFP and JSOTF-P steadily increased their positive momentum and built upon each gain.

One particularly successful approach for eroding the terrorists' influence with traditional familial and clan loyalties was through a mass media campaign as a separate LOE. What began as a small two-to-three-month effort quickly expanded into a yearlong influence campaign that used TV, radio, and print media disseminated to specific audiences throughout the JSOTF-P AOR. This was possible only through the coordinated support of the U.S. country team, AFP senior leadership, and the most popular media outlets in the Philippines. Using marketing and ethnographic research, each broadcast, newspaper advertisement, dialect, and theme was managed on a daily basis in response to events unfolding on the ground. During a major AFP offensive, several variations of "wanted" and "victim" commercials were aired to disrupt ASG and JI movement away from traditional safe havens and evasion routes.

In this case, the victims' stories were pivotal influence messages that galvanized empathy with audiences. The campaign provided an uninterruptable voice for the victims' stories and selected private pictures to make each terrorist attack personally resonate with the target audiences.[50]

[48] The Rewards for Justice Program in the Philippines is part of the larger U.S. State Department rewards program established in 1984. The Philippine segment of the RFJ program only focused on the terrorists operating within the Republic of the Philippines. For details see http://www.state.gov/m/ds/terrorism/c8651.htm and http://www.rewardsforjustice.net/.

[49] Victims' stories were used with the express permission of the families, community leaders, the AFP, JSOTF-P commander, and the U.S. embassy country team.

[50] In retrospect, this process became an automatic intent to create a layering effect while incorporating underlying social bias to channel the audiences' perception in line with our influence purpose against the terrorist and unlawful groups subverting the local population. The nonverbal messages provided by the imagery of our comic book, commercials, CME print products, booklets, and other imagery proved the most effective means of reaching and relating with our audiences who wanted change and a means to help them get started in creating it.

Specific attention was given to sharing the stories of affected Filipino Muslim families and children. The media campaign reinforced and complemented more localized PSYOP products, creating a massing influence effect against the insurgent groups and their leadership. The media products were disseminated into areas known for active, tacit, and coerced support to the terrorist or insurgent groups responsible for attacks throughout the JSOTF-P AOR.

After 12 months of incremental successes, in 2007 the PSYOP detachment expanded the media LOE by developing a text-messaging social-media platform to further broaden the scope and reach of our Influence Operations. The effort was purposely kept attributable as a reliable means for the population to report JI, ASG, and other insurgent activity, but also as a reliable information and news conduit for communities that voluntarily opted in to the program. The program began by working with a major Philippine telecommunications provider with established service in remote areas.

To comply with Philippine law, AFP and JSOTF-P outreach-event attendees were asked to sign up as members of the information news service. This enabled them to receive news and community information, including free minutes or a set amount of prepaid minutes for their current cellular account to offset the cost of receiving text messages.[51] The "subscribers" in turn agreed to receive periodic news and messages from our information service. After establishing the service as a credible, reliable, and responsive information service, the PSYOP text messaging number was incorporated into community Disruption and Rewards products and messages to expand the reporting options on local JI, ASG, and other lawless group activities. Over a period of time, subscribers, and even ASG members, began conversing with PSYOP team members managing the text messaging service. The information was shared with our AFP counterparts and passed on to appropriate leadership for action. Within a matter of weeks, information regarding the location and planned action of ASG bands on Sulu began to flow into the service.[52] The text-messaging concept was developed based on our combined SF-PSYOP initiatives the year before, supporting an AFP Marine request to improve their influence and operating environment in and around the city of Marawi.

Achieving these effects was in no small part due to a fusion with the JSOTF-P intelligence operations. It is essential to include the intelligence effort within the influence fusion cell in order to successfully shape and mutually support the intelligence support operations LOE. This process develops into a reciprocal mechanism for effectively influencing the information and operational environments over the long term. Embracing COL Linder's Influence Operations intent, we would later learn that our actions supporting the AFP Marines in Marawi became the catalyst that started our SF-PSYOP fused influence concept.

E. Intelligence Support Operations

Intelligence support operations designed to track and interdict terrorist leadership and networks became increasingly successful due to the improved AFP-JSOTF-P influence campaign. The AFP's capacity to conduct effective tactical operations, civil-military

[51] The PSYOP promotion items incorporated a noticeable and effective message in local dialects with the symbol and message of "working together hand in hand." Items that were desirable, coveted, and prominently displayed by the population included sandals, soccer balls, water bottles, stickers, t-shirts, umbrellas for the rainy season, toys, pencils, school notebooks, and school backpacks.

[52] Unfortunately, the text service proved short-lived. Shortly after our respective redeployments from JSOTF-P, the text-messaging service was discontinued rather than expanded and resourced as a continued information and influence conduit.

engagement, psychological operations, and intelligence gathering has increased exponentially over the past decade.[53] The U.S. supported the Philippine government and security forces with access to information, intelligence, and modern technology to assist their efforts to build and maintain situational awareness, provide predictive analysis, and react to insurgent threats.[54]

JSOTF-P embedded liaison coordination elements with AFP units (at their request), conducted subject matter expertise exchanges with AFP units throughout the country, and leveraged U.S. country team support and programs to improve interoperability. AFP leadership and staff were also invited and encouraged to regularly participate in the daily activities of the joint operations center. Despite limited intelligence-sharing agreements, AFP and U.S. intelligence professionals worked closely to find solutions while protecting the sensitive interests of their respective countries. This reflected the realistic obstacles of balancing the needs for intelligence sharing and protecting sensitive capabilities and methods without sacrificing regular engagement between U.S forces and our host nation partners.

Key to JSOTF-P's Intelligence LOE success was the ability of U.S. intelligence personnel to "export" the processing, exploitation, and dissemination of the collected intelligence to the partner or host in order to build their capacity and give them ownership of the decision-making cycle. This step cannot be overemphasized. The U.S. will almost assuredly gravitate toward its strengths (powerful technology and resources that are out of reach for most developing countries), while assuredly falling short in fully leveraging the cultural nuances associated with understanding the enemy. The needs of the local population, the limitations of the host's or partner's intelligence capacity, and the sheer manpower required to fully analyze the deluge of information collected requires a combined partnership.[55] The application of intelligence is situational and sometimes commander-dependent, but the goal remains the same: maximizing support to operations while simultaneously increasing the host nation's self-reliance and capacity to operate autonomously. The desired effect for terror groups is dissent within their ranks, discord from the populace, and their surrender, dissolution, and demonstrated defeat.

III. Influence Operations in Action

Cohesive AFP and JSOTF-P influence operations began with the arrival of JSOTF-P's new commander, COL James Linder. What he began by rapidly adapting the mission into an overall Influence Operation to shape the environment and enable decisive AFP offensives against the insurgent terror groups continued with subsequent JSOTF-P commanders. The subsequent arrival of COL William Coultrup elevated these operations to new heights.

As JSOTF-P began changing its operational design, the Armed Forces of the Philippines were charged with three missions: (1) get control of the instability created by southern Philippines secessionist groups, (2) address the issues in accordance with the rule of law, and (3) reinforce the legitimacy of the government of the Philippines. In order to support the AFP in restricting the movement of the three key armed groups—the ASG, JI, and "rogue" MILF elements—COL Linder quickly decided that the headquarters of JSOTF-P needed to relocate south from

[53] The AFP does not employ a U.S.-defined IO intermediary staff. Their public affairs and PSYOP forces operate in a combined or fused construct with their civil affairs teams to maximize the productivity of their influence methodology. The AFP employs their strategic communications force as a national asset with a sensitive operational purview.

[54] Personal communcations with MAJ Matthew Worsham, USMC, JSOTF-P intelligence officer 2008-2009, September 2010 to February 2011.

[55] Ibid.

Manila to the operational theater in Zamboanga. The relocation to Zamboanga was particularly important because of the limited number of U.S. forces assigned to the task force, which required immersive exposure to local culture and the environment. As it stood, U.S. SOF was not operating as a contiguous effort and was divided across the JSOTF-P AOR. With the exception of one Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA),[56] all U.S. Special Operations Forces were relocated to Zamboanga with the tactical detachments moving to reinforce Jolo, Tawi-Tawi, and eventually Basilan in an economy-of-force effort to deny the enemy traditional safe haven access.

The following two operational cases demonstrate how Influence Operations supported the goals of the host nation and the joint Special Operations task force. In the first case of the Islamic city of Marawi, the Mindanao-based ODA was assigned the key supporting-effort mission to maintain the operational picture of all of Central Mindanao and prevent it from growing into a cauldron of ASG/MILF influence against the U.S. and the Republic of the Philippines. In the second case, Influence Operations were used to shape the environment and close off escape routes while AFP Marines and JSOTF-P began to deny Jolo as an ASG-JI safe haven. Each case provides different lessons on successful Influence Operations methods in semi-permissive and non-permissive environments. A significant contributing factor in each case was the JSOTF-P commander's overarching guidance to build positive relationships with the AFP and Philippine government, to assist the U.S. mission with improving the security situation, to find and fix the ASG and JI through Influence Operations for AFP tactical operations, and to apply our SOF mindset and resources towards JSOTF-P and U.S. country team regional goals.[57]

A. Together In the Islamic City of Marawi

In central Mindanao, the city of Marawi is a microcosm of Arab influence. Marawi is the only "Islamic city" in the Philippines and is comprised of almost 200,000 Filipinos from various tribal and ethnic backgrounds, concentrated into a 35-square-mile area. The level and integration of Wahhabi and traditional Arab Muslim characteristics by the people of Marawi is in stark contrast the rest of the Philippines Muslim communities. Arabic signs, posters, and script replace nearly all Filipino local and national language public information conveyance methods throughout the city. The Saudi Fund for Development, an organization that is comparable to USAID, is one of many Arab funding sources that maintain active initiatives in Marawi. These funding activities foster and maintain varying degrees of influence over the city's Muslim religious and community leaders.

Marawi was important to our operations because it bound us together as a team of Special Forces, PSYOP, and AFP Marines in a fused and combined effort to break into a non-permissive influence environment. Our operations in Marawi presented particular challenges. Each village, community, province, and hostile group was unique within the concept of population-centric warfare, but they all shared cultural and personal commonalities. For example, outrage over the arbitrary killing of children by bus bombs, the need for medical assistance for all children in Mindanao, and

[56] "Special Forces teams are generally organized into small, versatile groups, called Operational Detachment Alphas. A typical ODA contains 12 team members, each with his own specialty." http://www.goarmy.com/special-forces/team-members.html

[57] "USASOC forces provide expertise to enable operational-level headquarters in their effort to tie tactical capabilities to regional or national strategies." ARSOF 2022, p. 17, www.soc.mil/Assorted%20Pages/ARSOF2022_vFINAL.pdf.

the general desire for a safe and secure environment were bridges across all groups, religions, and clan perceptions of self-identity. However, there were no friendly intelligence assets trained or allocated to produce this information in and around Marawi. We were able to identify these pressure points through the evolution of our operations, by being the SOF operators on the ground mired in the mud with the AFP Marines who lived within the communities. Through these efforts, we enabled the Marines to apply appropriate action and reaction using our combined specialties and our understanding of how to use information and actions to shape the operating environment.

One of the most important relationships the SF ODA established in Marawi was with the local Philippine Marine brigade. The brigade wanted an ODA to live and operate with them to get in touch with the people throughout Marawi and the surrounding rural populations. Creating a positive relationship between the population and the local Marines did not come overnight, but it did grow due to persistent initiatives that proved to be the founding element to success in Marawi.

Prior to our work with the this Marine brigade, their interaction with the people of Marawi was limited because of the perception that the Philippine Marines were aggressors sent by the GRP as occupiers. A few staunch anti-GRP community leaders who were supported by foreign entities incited friction. As a result, the Marines limited themselves to the physical terrain they owned, such as the small ridge line that bisects the city. The Philippine Marines were slowly building trust through limited conflict resolution initiatives among the community, but they did not have the resources to mitigate JI, rogue MILF, and other foreign actor-sponsored malicious influence efforts against the Marines and the Philippine government within Marawi.

The local Philippine Marines brigade commander wanted to build off of their initial successes as mediators and a trusted security force for local conflicts. The Marines understood they were in a position to become a trusted, unbiased force in ending and preventing long-standing familial blood fueds called *ridos*, but they needed support in building and sustaining an influence advantage. One of the Marines' first initiatives was to establish their own tip line for anonymous callers to help identify crime, terrorism, and corruption without risk of reprisal. Before building an influence edge that the Marines could maintain and continue to grow, we began training senior Marine leadership on the nuances of information narratives and civil-military engagement. The Philippine Marines began to learn and embrace the purpose of education programs on proper sanitation practices, targeted MEDCAPs, targeted engineering projects, and identifying key community nodes (formal and informal) to establish trusting relationships for use as information conduits. This process was instrumental in properly targeting semi-permissive communities that would support friendly/permissive communities while at the same time serving as a mechanism to open up non-permissive, or hostile, communities to further build trust.

After weeks of extensive conversations with our AFP counterparts and limited local community leaders, we began to understand the depth of malicious and non-malicious influence from JI and other foreign Muslim actors in Central Mindanao that seemed to propagate out of Marawi. As our engagements and relationships grew with our AFP counterparts, we increasingly learned of JI leadership and training cells that were seeking and establishing refuge and operational ties to smaller Islamist groups and rogue MILF elements throughout the city and its surrounding highlands.

Learning the cultural idiosyncrasies between different tribes and clans despite similar political affiliations only came by living and embedding with our AFP counterparts. For example, although the Maranaoans and Maguindanaoans coexisted in the ARMM

and generally spoke with a unified pro-ARMM voice, there were underlying *ridos* that outsiders—such as the Philippine Marines and their American SOF advisors—would regularly encounter and address before engagement initiatives spanning multiple clans and subcultures. Unassuming bits of social intelligence were increasingly interwoven into the larger picture; learning Khadaffy Janjalani[58] attended Mindanao State University, for instance, was significant. This seemingly small piece of information began to highlight ASG's wider ideological recruiting and support base, and helped us discover how to disrupt and deny that support. As our understanding of Marawi improved, we were able to help focus the Philippine Marines efforts to expand the personal and professional choices available to the people by augmenting the Marines' efforts to demonstrate alternatives to illicit activities and income. This tangentially improved the local population's relationship with the Philippine Government, as the Marines were increasingly recognized as public servants and not aggressors.

In addition to understanding local social dynamics through persistent presence and engagement with the AFP Marines, the SF and PYSOP teams put direct pressure on the people who were actively or tacitly supporting ASG and JI activities. The approach was simple but extremely effective. First, the SF team took photos of a broad set of the Arabic writings and posters throughout the city. The PYSOP team then identified the Arabic dialect and any malicious information, and translated existing PSYOP messages and products into the same Arabic dialect to establish a competing counter-effort. The newly translated "Wanted" posters and leaflets directly communicated to the target audience that Marawi would no longer be a permissive environment for extremist ideologies. One of the key factors in the success of this program was having the SF and PSYOP teams in close proximity to the operating area and to each other. This allowed the effort to be nuanced, precise, and timely. After several months of working with the 1st Marine Brigade, the Philippine Marines adopted the influence practices as their own and continued to build upon each success.

As the ODA mentored the Philippine Marines and engaged with the population, the PSYOP team customized influence messages and products to support the influence effort. PSYOP print products depicted the Marines' support to the community. Each PSYOP product was tailored so local populations would recognize their own neighbors and the Marines assigned to those areas. Over an eight-month period, the Marines gained positive influence as friends and supporters, rather than still being seen as an outside threat to the local community. At their request, PSYOP posters and handouts included phone numbers of local Marine leaders to contact for help. This brought the Marines closer to the community as trusted and fair arbiters of local disputes.[59] The SF ODA and the Philippine Marines' Influence Operations in Marawi benefited from a very responsive PSYOP approval process with the JSOTF-P commander and the U.S. country team. Due to strong professional relationships between the ODA, the PSYOP commander, the JSOTF-P commander, and the country team—not to mention the trust earned over weeks and months of operations—we were empowered to invest sufficient time and resources toward

[58] Khadaffy Janjalani became the eventual leader of ASG and was the younger brother of Abu Sayyaf founder Abdurajak Janjalani, with direct al Qaeda ties.

[59] There is a distinct difference in how the different components of the PSF are perceived, specifically, in the contrast between AFP Army and Philippines Marine forces. AFP Army units tend to recruit and assign soldiers to divisions that are stationed within provinces and regions nearest their homes and family. Conversely, the AFP Marines purposely strives to station their Marines in areas and regions without familial ties to help ensure that there are no personal distractions.

supporting the 1st Marine Brigade and capacity-building initiatives.

As operations progressed in Marawi, two key principles emerged in achieving and sustaining success that became mutually reinforcing and provided a testing ground for how Influence Operations can be applied.[60] The first is a core SOF principle:

- *Build trust and legitimacy with the host nation forces.*

This requires patience, respect, and a continued presence living, eating, and operating with your counterparts for prolonged periods. There is simply no substitution for building and maintaining core relationships.

These relationships enable the second principle:

- *Successful Influence Operations are sustained by supporting messages with deeds/actions and synchronizing them with those your counterparts are exercising.*

It is essential to ensure that host-nation partners understand the purpose, plan of action, and systematic process of conducting Influence Operations. Every word and deed has an effect, and every mistake has the potential for a magnitude of adverse effects and loss of the influence initiative. In Marawi and its surrounding communities, the sustained and synchronized AFP and/or U.S. presence on the ground in each village and community was vital to developing intelligence networks and recognizing the cultural and linguistic nuances that allow an Influence Operation to grow within the target audiences. Details matter —whether a local dialect or a matter of timing. Targeted influence narratives and acts are most effective and credible when friendly forces are persistently present and adeptly aware of the unique characteristics within each community.

Although it was not systematically planned or considered when we developed personal and professional relationships with our Philippine Army counterparts, our combined efforts began to mitigate the operational seams and gaps in our area of operations as we traveled throughout the countryside. For instance, JI was using political and geographic boundaries to position their safe havens between three separate and unaligned AFP division areas of responsibility. This was mitigated by the ODA closing the information gaps between the divisions with respect to the ASG-JI threat. At the same time, the dissemination of PSYOP messages and products built on ASG and JI perceptions that the ODA and AFP units were actively pursuing ASG-JI cells, reinforcing their fear of settling into a safe haven. The methodology that we intuitively developed can best be described in military terms as influence bounding overwatch, or influence bounding. This is similar to the U.S. Infantry's concept of bounding overwatch, in which squads or platoons alternate positions to cover for each other as they move forward. The SF and PSYOP techniques used in Marawi became the catalyst that fused our elements into a cohesive, interdependent SOF team executing comprehensive Influence Operations at the operational and tactical levels. This technique organized and synchronized efforts to affect multiple targets and audiences across seemingly disparate social groups and geographies. Our Special Forces and PSYOP actions rotated the main effort role based on what the situation required for each village, community, and area we encountered. The message-deed, deed-message roles between our respective capabilities became intertwined in a unity of effort to favorably influence each community in support of the larger JSOTF-P mission.

[60] Most small units assigned to unconventional and irregular AORs intuitively recognize and apply these elements, but may not apply them in a deliberate and methodical manner as key part of a larger operational and strategic effort.

Moreover, as the Philippine Marines and JSOTF-P became more involved in Marawi and the surrounding areas over the next few months, NGOs and organizations like USAID began to increasingly invest in the population to ensure that malicious influence against the people and GRP did not regain the influence initiative. For example, USAID brought in sewing machines and education programs to teach the women in Marawi a skill set that enabled them to become income earners for their families. This was an unprecedented change to the dynamics of the community and served as an income alternative to illicit activities.

The Marines' influence efforts were reinforced when the JSOTF-P commander authorized a portion of the USS *Blue Ridge*'s MEDCAP to support the ODA and AFP in Central Mindanao. The USS *Blue Ridge*'s support began with the introduction of what we called "doctors without helicopter doors." In close coordination with JSOTF-P and the USS *Blue Ridge,* medical personnel provided a physical demonstration of the investment by the Philippine Marines, the GRP, and the United States in the people of Marawi and the surrounding areas. The doctors, primarily Filipino with a small contingent of U.S. physicians, were clearly visible in their traditional white coats as they circled the city several times in the USS *Blue Ridge*'s helicopters before landing and beginning the first of a series of MEDCAPs dedicated to the area. This left a lasting impression on the population and cemented the PSYOP messages that the AFP and U.S. personnel were present to support the people against violent extremist groups—not to police the people or kill them, as suggested by the enemy's word-of-mouth propaganda campaign. The tipping point against the enemy's influence effort was apparent with the turnout for the MEDCAP. Despite the hostile attitudes of the male Islamist population, their wives and children attended the MEDCAP in unexpected numbers. When the MEDCAP concluded, the women repeatedly thanked the doctors, Marines, and U.S. personnel for their support and help. With tears in their eyes, the women repeatedly asked if the AFP and U.S. would stay longer and not forget them.

What started as a modest request initiated by the local Philippine Marines' commander led to a combined AFP Marines/JSOTF-P Influence Operation using techniques that became integrated into the Marine Brigade's planning and operations as a matter of routine. JSOTF-P subsequently dedicated a full Special Operations task force, with embedded PSYOP and civil affairs teams, to support the AFP efforts throughout Mindanao to sustain the Influence Operations initiated by our earlier engagements with the local Marine brigade. USAID also fulfilled its commitment to the area with additional trade skill transition programs, new farm-to-market road construction, computer education programs, and support to expanded NGO activities in the region. As a result, the Philippine Marines' effort became a conduit for the GRP-U.S. anti-terrorism effort, feeding into the wider intelligence community. This increased the collective GRP-U.S. ability to develop better target sets for collection and more accurate characterization of threats, counter violent extremist influence endeavors, and assess malicious foreign activities throughout the Southern Philippines.

B. Sulu: Message, Messenger, and Medium[61]

In October 2005, JSOTF-P and the AFP set about gaining safe access to the island of Jolo through civil-military initiatives.[62] Civil-

[61] MAJ Edward M. Lopacienski, "SOF and the Use of Influence Operations to Defeat Terrorists and Insurgents in the Southern Philippines: The Role of PSYOP Within Influence Operations," Monterey, CA, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010. This paper comprises the majority of this section, most of it verbatim (with updates).

[62] The ASG retreated to Jolo from Central Mindanao following an AFP offensive into Central Mindanao

military engagement grew rapidly over a period of six months and resulted in the development of dozens of civil infrastructure projects, free medical clinics, and free veterinary clinics for the people of Jolo.[63] Initially, the projects were provided to the least hostile communities along the periphery of the island's capital city.

In contrast to the Islamic city of Marawi and the MILF-controlled areas in Central Mindanao, Influence Operations on Sulu spanned a smaller geographic area with equally complex political and social group dynamics. The Sulu AOR also encapsulated the maritime environment and a maritime population of increasing operational importance. For instance, the Bajau people (locally referred to as the "sea gypsies") possessed an unparalleled understanding of everything that moved throughout the Sulu Archipelago. The vast majority of the population on Sulu was openly hostile to the AFP. Conditions between the AFP and the Tausug population remained volatile due to a history of friction and sometimes open conflict between local Tausug militias and the AFP on Sulu. AFP relations were particularly poor with the Tausug MNLF faction that controlled most of the eastern half of Sulu.[64] AFP and JSOTF-P Influence Operations helped to shape the environment, rebuild trust between the AFP and Sulu's array of communities, and successfully disrupt ASG activities. Similar to Marawi, AFP forces and JSOTF-P SOF elements increasingly gained access to previously unreceptive communities using the Influence Operations methodology. These engagements provided a wealth of influence "do's and don'ts" by identifying unique local community and Tausug cultural sensitivities. The culmination of this information allowed AFP and JSOTF-P teams to quickly capitalize on ASG mistakes, and ultimately undermine the hostile support systems.

One of the first and most important challenges on Sulu was helping to restore the credibility of the AFP forces. With the cooperation of local community leaders, the combined efforts of JSOTF-P's maneuver elements (Army Special Forces, Naval Special Warfare, PSYOP and Civil Affairs personnel, and their AFP counterparts) began a systematic effort to rebuild relations with the local population. These efforts eased residual tensions still simmering from hostilities in 2004 and 2005, when the AFP attempted unilateral conventional operations against the insurgents. The previous operations severely alienated the population to the point where many locals joined civil militias to actively resist AFP efforts. The U.S.-first approach was used only until the AFP's trust among the locals was re-established, allowing a reversal of the AFP-U.S. roles.

Initial operations on Sulu focused on building AFP tactical combat capacity, with PSYOP and civil affairs actions serving in more decentralized and supporting roles. This changed with JSOTF-P's new shift to Sulu. Influence Operations became the principal LOE, with a primary emphasis on the message, messengers, and media, all of which were tailored to specific audiences. AFP and JSOTF-P Influence Operations were setting the stage for more precise AFP combat actions. Coupled with civil-military engagements synchronized by Special Forces teams on the ground, AFP and JSOTF-P PSYOP forces amplified the reach of key communicators supportive of the AFP and U.S. presence. The AFP, accompanied by U.S. Special Forces and PSYOP teams,

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against "rogue" MILF military camps. The offensive forced the MILF into peace negotiations, and the resulting political and military pressure forced the MILF to revoke sanctuary arrangements for the ASG and their JI affiliates.

[63] Herb Daniels, "Keeping COIN Simple: The Outhouse Strategy for Security Development," M.A. Thesis, Defense Analysis department, Naval Post Graduate School, http://jsou.socom.mil/PubsPages/OtherResearchandReportsofInterest.aspx.

[64] Raul Pare, "Sulu Revolt Death Toll Climbs to 60," Philippine STAR News, February 5, 2005, http://www.philstar.com/headlines/268370/sulu-revolt-death-toll-climbs-60 (accessed May 15, 2014).

disseminated messages through an array of local and wide-area messaging techniques and actions in an effort to affect the behavior and attitudes of the local population, disrupt the insurgents, and build local community support. JSOTF-P's maneuver elements worked with the AFP to interpersonally engage with local villages and communities. Simultaneously, the influence narratives on the ground were reinforced by the PSYOP detachment using broader-reaching media (such as radio, television, and text messaging) to create a massing effect of influence messages and actions/deeds throughout the JSOTF-P AOR.

AFP and JSOTF-P forces engaged each community, from permissive to non-permissive, in a village-hopping type of campaign with great effect. Each of JSOTF-P's core SOF capabilities alternated main effort roles based on the needs of the operation to ultimately influence non-permissive communities to become semi-permissive, and semi-permissive to become permissive to AFP access and anti-ASG objectives. The general population's attitude and perception began to positively shift from a hostile anti-AFP disposition to one that would support future AFP military operation against the ASG on Sulu. One by one, semi-hostile (and eventually hostile) villages began to change their opinions of the U.S. and the AFP. After a period of six months, a 180-degree change in local attitudes and behavior was underway based on feedback from JSOTF-P's maneuver elements on the ground.[65] Villages known to support the ASG due to family or other ties began requesting similar civil-military medical and engineering activities that were occurring on the periphery of their communities. Villages and municipalities within the AFP and JSOTF-P focus areas of operation began to shift their disposition from guarded and negative to a generally positive attitude toward U.S. forces and hesitantly accepting of the AFP's engagement efforts.

In August 2006 an ASG commander ordered an IED attack on the local Jolo City co-op, which was refusing to give in to ASG extortion efforts. That attack became a catalyst in improving AFP relations with local residents and undercutting ASG support on the island. The attack on the Jolo co-op killed or wounded 12 people, all of whom were Philippine Muslims. Within minutes of the attack, AFP and U.S. forces were on the scene providing medical aid and security and stabilizing the situation. The JSOTF-P PSYOP detachment rapidly developed products following the attack to amplify and spread local criticism of the ASG and share images of AFP Marines and U.S. forces running to aid the bombing victims. Additional PSYOP messages and products countered enemy propaganda blaming the AFP for the bombing, and demonized the ASG actions and their JI "puppeteers" as cowardly and self-serving. As a result, a potentially negative psychological action (PSYACT)[66] against the AFP turned into a successful "influence counter-ambush" against the insurgents. Instrumental to this success was the unified AFP-U.S. relationship and response to the attack.[67] AFP senior leaders, the U.S. country team, and the JSOTF-P commander credited the AFP-JSOTF-P response to the bombing with helping to solidify changes in local attitudes and behavior against the ASG. As local key communicators began to call on their supporters to stop or resist supporting the insurgents, more and more village and

[65] "U.S. Troops Get Warm Welcome in Jolo," *Mindanao Examiner,* 31 August 2006, http://zamboangajournal.wordpress.com/2006/08/31/us-troops-get-warm-welcome-in-jolo/ (accessed 2 December 2014).

[66] PSYACT: "an action conducted by non-PSYOP personnel that is planned primarily to affect the behavior of a TA [target audience]." When PSYACTs are planned in support of an existing PSYOP program, the Army requires synchronous integration and execution of each PSYACT with PSYOP programs and themes to maximize effects. Army FM 3-05.30.

[67] In this case, the message was the supporting effort to the actions taken by U.S. Special Forces and AFP Marines who immediately responded to the bombing.

religious leaders began to openly speak out against the ASG and their JI associates.[68]

Following the Jolo co-op bombing, AFP and JSOTF-P Influence Operations increased in volume and momentum. AFP and U.S medical personnel visited an increasing number of villages and communities to conduct medical, dental, and veterinary civil action programs. Engineering civil action programs also renovated local school buildings, dug fresh-water wells into semi-permissive communities, and improved roads into semi- and non-permissive communities to improve access. These efforts served to further alienate hostile groups throughout the island and enabled rapid movement of AFP and JSOTF-P forces to respond to calls for aid from local villages resisting the ASG. As AFP and U.S. medical personnel visited an increasing number of local villages to conduct MEDCAPs, the clans and families associated with ASG leadership and frontline fighters began to try to slow the effects. During one particular MEDCAP, a neighboring ASG faction was preparing an IED attack against AFP and U.S. forces who were conducting the MEDCAP.[69] When the local ASG commander whose family resided near the village heard of the planned attack, he immediately cancelled it. As reported by our AFP counterparts and community leaders, the ASG commander's family and his soldiers' families were participating in the MEDCAP and wanted no hostile interference with it. The local commander was reportedly concerned about the safety of his family, and that an attack would prevent future medical assistance visits.[70] The trend of behavior and the positive measures of effectiveness toward the civil-military initiatives continued to grow.

Several weeks after the Jolo co-op bombing, preparations for a major AFP operation against ASG safe havens on Sulu began to coalesce. AFP and U.S. PSYOP, civil affairs, and SF teams began a new phase of Influence Operations, solidifying the populations' positive disposition toward the AFP and U.S. A persistent challenge in engaging the ASG on Sulu was countering their ability to find sanctuary in the jungle and among sympathetic villages. The ASG and JI maintained logistical support architecture in Central Mindanao, and they were historically adept at using their maritime connections to escape by sea to and from Central Mindanao. While AFP and JSOTF-P forces began to set conditions on Sulu for the pending AFP Marines offensive, JSOTF-P began preparing adjacent operating areas to affect the ASG's ability to withdraw or call upon their habitual local support. JSOTF-P's Central Mindanao ODA and the strategic PSYOP team initiated an operation to further disrupt ASG and JI forces from leaving Sulu during the pending AFP Marine offensive.

This effort began with increased dissemination of the "Rewards for Justice" messages and products through multiple dissemination media.[71] The messages factually attributed past ASG-and JI-orchestrated atrocities against Muslim Filipinos, called out extortion tactics, and sought local support in turning over ASG and JI leadership. Additionally, the PSYOP detachment surged disruption messaging using informal social networks, key communicator engagements, text messaging, print, and other activities to prevent the ASG from fleeing Sulu. The PSYOP wide-area multimedia campaign also reallocated TV and radio broadcasts into and around Sulu and across Central Mindanao in areas known to harbor JI and ASG. The multimedia surge further criminalized ASG and JI leaders by recounting past events in mini-thematic commercials that told the stories through

[68] Simon Elegant, "Elevated Threat," *Time*, 27 October 2003, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,526545,00.html (accessed 2 December 2014).
[69] COL Linder, James, Weekly Operational Briefing to the U.S. Country Team, September 20, 2006.
[70] Ibid.

[71] U.S. State Department, "Rewards for Justice," http://www.state.gov/m/ds/terrorism/c8651.htm.

the eyes of witnesses and victims. The campaign balanced the hard-hitting anti-ASG and rewards messages with "Mindanao Peace" themes supporting the positive effects of resisting the "terrorists," and "allowing good things to happen."[72]

On Sulu, JSOTF-P maneuver elements and their AFP counterparts continued Influence Operations throughout the periphery of the AFP engagement areas to disrupt ASG's and JI's withdrawal routes to safe havens deeper inside the jungle. Simultaneously, the SF ODA in Central Mindanao and JSOTF-P's strategic PSYOP team began a disruption effort against the ASG and their supporters to create the belief that the AFP and U.S. were positioned to capture ASG-JI leadership if they tried to flee Sulu to their previous Mindanao safe havens. Together, our SF and PSYOP teams and AFP counterparts in Central Mindanao initiated an influence campaign in and around previous ASG safe havens and sympathizer enclaves to demonstrate an increased and active AFP-U.S. presence. This effort was synchronized with increased PSYOP rewards and media campaign message dissemination. Similarly, AFP and U.S. Naval Special Warfare elements further reinforced the influence effort to disrupt ASG-JI escape plans by cordoning off select maritime areas between Sulu and traditional transit routes into Central Mindanao.[73]

By increasing uncharacteristic AFP and U.S. military activity in Central Mindanao, querying local key communicators and sources for information by AFP and SF ODA elements, and increasing PSYOP dissemination of TV, radio, and face-to-face influence messages, the joint and combined efforts of Special Forces and PSYOP made ASG and JI relocation plans to Mindanao seem untenable. Intelligence later reported that ASG and JI leadership were informed by their own people not to flee to Central Mindanao because the AFP and U.S. were expecting them. In the end, ASG senior leaders did not attempt to flee to neighboring islands or Central Mindanao for fear of being captured.

With the conclusion of the AFP's offensive, the ASG remained pressured and increasingly isolated as AFP and U.S. forces rapidly expanded Influence Operations into the former ASG-dominated areas on Sulu. During AFP combat operations on Sulu, villages that actively resisted the AFP just 12 months earlier either stayed out of the fight or actively provided information for the AFP's assault against ASG enclaves. Villages outside the combat area refused to support the ASG, reported ASG movement, and resisted calls from the ASG and their local allies to actively fight the AFP. This served to further disrupt ASG withdrawal routes and was a 180-degree change in local attitudes from the AFP's prior offensive actions on Sulu in 2004 and 2005. Within days of the assault on ASG camps in Sulu, the AFP overran several ASG strongholds, forcing them deeper into Sulu's mountainous jungle interior and further away from their deteriorating support from the population.

Similarly, as a result of the disruption messaging and increased AFP pressure in Central Mindanao, the foreign JI cells became isolated within Central Mindanao's Butig Mountains. The multi-faceted approach to setting conditions for selective operations against the ASG on Sulu through comprehensive Influence Operations paid off. These efforts would be duplicated over the next four years to address other insurgent activities in Eastern Sulu, Basilan, and again in Central Mindanao. *The synchronized and deliberate approach to message, messenger, and medium applied by the AFP and JSOTF-P increasingly improved their access and acceptance as operations expanded to other islands and provinces.* Word spread quickly about the

[72] Magnuson, Stew, "U.S. Special Forces Target Hearts and Minds," National Defense, February 1, 2008, http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2008/February/Pages/U2357.S2357.Special2357.aspx (accessed May 15, 2014).

[73] As cited in unclassified reports authored by MAJ Thomas Scanzillo, Commander ODA-1116.

positive changes on Sulu into neighboring regions, with AFP and JSOTF-P civil-military support increasingly requested and welcomed into communities that previously resisted AFP access.

C. After Sulu: Shoring Up Basilan and Zamboanga

Nearly a year after the Sulu offensive, different and more aggressive examples of successful Influence Operations took place on the island of Basilan and in the provincial capital of Zamboanga. In 2007, brothers Omar Sailani and Iting Sailani, two notorious mid-level ASG leaders, responded to AFP successes by planning a coordinated IED attack against an AFP regional headquarters that also housed many JSOTF-P personnel. As reports of the brothers' plans and their whereabouts in the area began to accumulate, the stage was set for Influence Operations to play a pivotal role in disrupting and deterring their ability to operate from traditional safe havens.[74] Unbeknownst to the Sailani brothers, several weeks earlier one of their critical vulnerabilities had come to light, and it would ultimately lead to their downfall.

The Sailani brothers were native to the island of Basilan, and routinely returned there. Two weeks prior to their planned attack on the AFP base, a U.S. PSYOP team, Marine Special Operations force, and civil affairs team executed a series of civil-military and security assistance events with their AFP counterparts on Basilan near the Sailani brothers' home village. The village was only a few miles from the AFP-U.S. medical outreach event, and the Sailanis' home village inhabitants were in attendance. Novelty items and information handouts were given to attendees during the event as part of the PSYOP mission. The handouts included information on the brothers' links to past ASG attacks and identified a reward for information leading to their capture. While AFP and U.S. PSYOP soldiers mingled and casually engaged attendees in conversation or translated for other U.S. forces supporting the event, two locals Filipinos approached asking about the rewards program. After several minutes of conversation, the two men specifically asked about the reward for the Sailani brothers. The ability of the U.S. team to speak local dialects and reassure the men that the rewards program was a legitimate U.S.-sponsored program solidified their willingness to work with the AFP Marines in providing information on the Sailani brothers' known local safe houses.[75] This information would later prove vital in closing the net around the Sailani brothers as they fled back to Basilan.

As the timeframe for the ASG attack against the AFP headquarters drew closer, U.S. and AFP sources confirmed the Sailani brothers were present somewhere within the Muslim neighborhoods of the city. The brothers were allegedly planning a combined vehicle and personnel infiltration attack against the AFP base that bordered several Muslim neighborhoods. Reports of an IED supply shipment and stockpile into the city mounted, making an attack appear increasingly imminent within the next 48 to 72 hours.

The PSYOP detachment initiated a plan to disrupt the attack. In coordination with AFP PSYOP and intelligence personnel, local police forces, and their contacts, more than 75,000 rewards and other disruption messages and products that targeted the Sailani brothers were disseminated throughout select Muslim neighborhoods in the city of Zamboanga. The JSOTF's PSYOP detachment developed and produced the Sailani products for the AFP operation, and

[74] The summary of events is unclassified and posted in mission report archives at US SOCPAC and JSOTF-P.

[75] Unfortunately, trust in the Philippine government and perceptions of government corruption continue to affect AFP operations. Transparency International, "Global Corruption Barometer," *Global Coalition against Corruption*, 2009, http://www.state.gov/m/ds/terrorism/c8651.htm.

further reinforced it with wide-area messaging through text messages and radio commercials. As the JSOTF-P PSYOP detachment's AFP counterparts and contacts began to circulate within the Muslim neighborhoods, they were reinforced with text messages written in local dialects citing past atrocities of the Sailani brothers and reward values for their capture. The AFP also spread the word the two brothers were suspects linked to the highly publicized Jolo co-op bombing the year prior, further alienating the brothers from the local Muslim communities. Within 48 hours of the AFP's and JSOTF-P's influence efforts, intelligence reports indicated a shift in ASG plans. The attack was reportedly delayed or canceled, and the Sailani brothers were confirmed as having left the city for Basilan, less than 10 miles away.

The Sailani brothers' luck then ran out. The locals who recognized them on the "Wanted" handouts from the Basilan MEDCAP earlier in the month contacted AFP Marine and U.S. PSYOP personnel with information on their return. The men and other locals provided vital information leading to a successful AFP operation against the two ASG leaders. The AFP, supported by local village militia, executed a nighttime raid on the Sailani brothers' safe house. After firing on AFP forces that were attempting to arrest them, both brothers were killed, removing them from the ranks of ASG leadership.[76]

IV. Alternating Effort to Maximize Influence Effects

These three vignettes of JSOTF-P Influence Operations provide a brief summary of the thousands of hours and hundreds of Filipino and American civilian and military personnel who worked to counter the insurgency in the southern Philippines. The operational examples identify several of the methods SOF applies within Influence Operations to affect terrorist and insurgent networks in special warfare environments. The exploitation of critical nodes and vulnerabilities directly led to the disruption and degradation of insurgent aggression. JSOTF-P, alongside the AFP, applied successful influence methods to prevent a repeat of a population uprising against the AFP and the Philippine government. SOF's Special Forces, PSYOP, NSW, MARSOC, and civil affairs maneuver elements, including intelligence and other enablers, combined to shape the human domain against insurgent activity. As a result, the terrorists' own families shifted dispositions, resulting in a loss of ASG cohesion.

JSOTF-P improved the security environment by enhancing AFP military training and capabilities while facilitating offensive operations against insurgent targets. The effects, activities, and actions of joint special operations forces, supported by U.S. Navy and Air Force conventional elements, serves as an example of how SOF Influence Operations can successfully affect the human domain to mobilize against insurgent and terrorist elements that operate within indigenous populations and exploit them. As proven in previous conflicts, the impact of living and operating with host-nation counterparts as military advisors, conducting operational support, intelligence support, and other support actions, is immeasurable. The combined efforts of both the U.S. and the AFP played a pivotal role in changing the socio-cultural environment, which in turn subverted ASG and JI support and freedom of maneuver.

Focusing on the conflict's decisive points—population support mechanisms and the human domain—and subverting the insurgents' ability to solicit and coerce support from the population proved the most effective and enduring means of attacking terrorist and insurgent critical vulnerabilities. Influencing the human domain increases favorable operating conditions for both U.S. and responsible

[76] Al Jacinto, "Two Alleged Assassins Slain in Philippine Raid," *Arab News*, 22 June 2007, http://www.arabnews.com/node/299964 (accessed 2 December 2014).

host-nation forces. Conventionally trained forces are typically used in displays of force, brinksmanship, and large-scale combat actions. Because of these traditional missions, most national-level militaries are not readily aligned and trained to apply unconventional and irregular methods to defeat sub-national groups and non-state actors. Highly specialized and regionally expert U.S. Special Operations Forces invested years in developing the operational and social environments within the conflicted areas of the southern Philippines. Those investments resulted in significant gains in countering and reversing ASG and JI momentum.

The disposition of the population, the human domain, in a contested or adversary-controlled region is the center of gravity in irregular conflicts. Presented with the appropriate incentives, opportunities for trust, dedicated security, and livelihood alternatives, the populace will often make sufficient choices that will adversely impact terrorists and insurgent forces. Likewise, the population's choice against terrorist and insurgent forces empowers the host nation to regain the support that was previously at risk.

Other key factors that emerge from these vignettes include the following:

- There is no substitute for building trust and legitimacy with host-nation forces. This requires patience, respect, and a continued presence—living, eating, and operating with your counterparts for prolonged periods. The operating environment in JSOTF-P permitted this approach and remains one of the most significant variables in current and future irregular and unconventional conflicts.
- Sustaining influence messages with supporting deeds and synchronizing Influence Operations with our counterparts was vital. Continuity of effort coupled with continuity of personnel were key enabling factors.
- The synchronized and deliberate approach to message, messenger, and medium applied by the AFP and JSOTF-P maneuver forces increasingly improved access and acceptance as operations expanded to other islands and provinces. Success built on success, and momentum did not falter. Persistent, sustained presence and strategy was vital.
- The ability of U.S. Special Forces and PSYOP operators to speak local dialects established rapport and legitimacy, and provided immediate unfiltered feedback on initiatives.
- The legitimacy and trustworthiness of U.S. forces helped to build the legitimacy and trustworthiness of AFP forces and build confidence that the AFP was willing to deliver on their promises. The AFP's ability to assume the lead and maintain the influence temp was critical to long-term success.

V. The Future of Influence Operations

Recalling that Influence Operations should be the predominant focus in counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, and irregular warfare environments, some would argue that Influence Operations are a supporting effort to conventional stability operations. This may be true if the operational goal is to accomplish a quick kinetic defeat and withdraw U.S. efforts from the region. However, given the increasingly irregular character of contemporary warfare, the ability of the U.S. to limit itself to short-duration conflict in the near future is unlikely. It is more likely that the United States will continue to engage in protracted conflicts in underdeveloped countries, thereby necessitating continued proficiency in unconventional and irregular operations. The conventional mindset of destroying the enemy without addressing the effects on the population contradicts the idea of long-term stability, as both the destruction from combat and the suppression of any segments of the population will surely lead

to further discontent.[77] This mindset assumes that destruction of the enemy is accomplished quickly in a kinetic manner and oversight of the population is necessary through the presence of a superior security force for a limited period. One need only look to events in Iraq, Georgia, and the Ukraine as examples. However, the unconventional mindset of influencing the population to enable you to destroy the enemy establishes a basis for building a durable and attainable environment of local and regional stability and is also applicable within a larger conventional conflict.[78]

The conventional mindset of stability operations focuses on "controlling" the population by providing basic human needs and a democratic government, thereby giving the population an alternative to supporting the insurgency. This is a flawed assumption, as basic human needs and the definition of democracy and responsible governance varies drastically throughout the world. Classic stability operations also do not take into account the ambiguity and requisite decades-long duration of the operation. Too often unrealistic time-driven benchmarks are set for neutralizing the adversary, establishing security, and handing the mission over to a host nation that has not yet developed the capacity to maintain it. Trying to "kill all the terrorists" (a common parochialism) will only serve to create more insurgents and prolong hostilities. Adversaries are increasingly politically and ideologically driven, socially embedded, and capable of affecting local populations for recruitment and other resources.[79] Doctrinally, stability operations seek to produce long-term results and require thorough joint and interagency cooperation, but do not necessarily require or incorporate cultural understanding.

Understanding the human domain and stakeholder interests is essential to both sides of a conflict. In the affected nation, the relevant population will generally choose the side that provides them with the greatest stability. For the executors of special warfare operations, requisite degrees of cultural understanding, professional maturity, and patience are inextricably linked to the degree and speed of success. It is incumbent on the executing forces to *influence* the relevant population to align themselves with their responsible, representative, and legitimate government. There is no manual or all-encompassing model that serves as a lock-step method for success. As with any operation, the commander synchronizing Influence Operations is responsible for providing clarity on the employment method for his forces. The most critical guidance addresses when kinetic or non-kinetic missions assume the lead role in operations, as well as when and which core capability assumes the main effort and key supporting-effort responsibilities. In irregular conflicts, the influence LOE is the underlying approach that enables the command's overall effort to achieve long-term stability. The main effort will most likely be aligning the population through effective messages and activities, as well as building the host nation's capacity to operate effectively in an autonomous role.

A. Preparing SOF as the Executors of Influence Operations

The most effective way to prepare any force to operate in an ambiguous environment is to conduct realistic and adaptive training. This allows leaders to plan and train for the most likely contingencies, rather than attempting to broadly apply conventional training to all scenarios. Theater security cooperation plan events provide excellent opportunities to train with host-nation partners and exchange lessons

[77] Gordon H. McCormick, Steven B. Horton, and Lauren A. Harrison, "Things Fall Apart: The Endgame Dynamics of Internal Wars," *Third World Quarterly* 28 no. 2 (March 2007): 321-367.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Alexander Simmons, "Socially Embedded Insurgencies," M.S. thesis, Defense Analysis Department, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2009.

learned from several theaters before a crisis occurs. Additionally, these events provide a venue for building strong relationships between partner-nation militaries and conducting influence area assessments to support future operations. Units that are regionally specialized must incorporate and maintain proficiency in regional culture and language training. Understanding that it is not possible to prepare for every crisis (i.e., learning all cultures and languages), all SOF units must direct some focus on working through interpreters, understanding insurgencies and counterinsurgency operations, understanding civil infrastructure, and appreciating the multiple roles and responsibilities within Influence Operations and special warfare. Establishing baseline proficiency leads to productive relationships with the host nation and fellow Special Operations forces.

An essential facet of adaptation is cultural expertise. Cultural awareness and willingness to engage in strange and unfamiliar situations are critical to gaining credibility and trust, and therefore to achieving and maintaining legitimacy. Major General (Ret.) Robert Scales, Jr. notes that "every young soldier should receive cultural and language instruction, not to make every soldier a linguist but to make every soldier a diplomat with enough sensitivity and linguistic skills to understand and converse with the indigenous citizen on the street."[80] SOF soldiers receive rigorous interactive cultural and language instruction as a matter of baseline training. These are core skills for SOF organizational mission sets, specifically FID, COIN, and UW. However, while a solid understanding of (and appreciation for) indigenous language and culture provides a collective knowledge base, a significant amount of planning, analysis, and synchronization is required to achieve influence superiority.

Leaders must assess long-range and emerging threats and develop adaptive flexible policies to account for the uniqueness of each area of operation (down to the neighborhood level), to include intelligence and information sharing. While Moore's Law dictates that technology will change, basic human nature will not.[81] There will always be a need to revert to the most basic of tactics, techniques, and procedures in order to support and develop capacity in countries that have scarce resources. Overreliance on technology in an attempt to offset a lack of understanding toward the AOR's human domain will only result in failure. Technology should serve primarily to augment sound operating principles, enhance tactical advantages, and exploit the adversary's seams and gaps. Intelligence focused on the human domain is paramount. Intelligence professionals must adapt to the dynamic nature of Influence Operations and develop a firm foundation in the basics so they can become "adaptive soldiers" that provide the most relevant intelligence analysis and subject matter expertise to their host.[82]

Influence Operations require a deliberate focus to fuse SOF's distinctive core competencies. Although the term *influence* is frequently used in contemporary policy and plans, its scope and relevance are rarely encapsulated and incorporated. A commonly accepted doctrine will assist in categorizing operations, providing commanders and staffs with planning direction, and establishing realistic training requirements based on a common understanding of the mission scope. Incorporating Influence Operations into U.S. Army Special Warfare and joint doctrine will facilitate institutional understanding and combine the expertise of SOF's distinctive

[80] Robert H. Scales Jr., "Culture-Centric Warfare," *Naval Institute Proceedings* October 2004, http://www.military.com/Content/MoreContent1?file=NI_1004_Culture-P1 (accessed 4 December 2014).

[81] "Moore's Law is a computing term which originated around 1970; the simplified version of this law states that processor speeds, or overall processing power for computers will double every two years." http://www.mooreslaw.org/

[82] Personal communication with MAJ Matthew Worsham, 2011.

core competencies to achieve a common objective. Operating as a synergetic force that adapts and cycles the main and supporting efforts to mission requirements is necessary for conducting Influence Operations effectively and efficiently in the application of special warfare.

B. Conclusion

As noted in the introduction, as the irregular warfare landscape continues to evolve, so the demand for using an Influence Operations approach continues to expand. In addition to countering and defeating an insurgency and terrorist threat, influence operations are equally applicable against hostile host-nation states that sponsor insurgencies or terrorist groups and/or oppress and manipulate their own population. These methods are adaptable with a variety of options for U.S. forces in or around the area of operations to affect an insurgency or a hostile nation state through their own populations. This approach can help disrupt the ability of the hostile state, insurgents, and terrorists to oppress a population, threaten regional stability, and endanger U.S. national interests. There are exploitable vulnerabilities and advantages for us to use Influence Operations to affect a hostile nation state from within when that nation is itself an oppressive and subversive regime. Moreover, when the hostile state is engaging in irregular warfare by sponsoring insurgencies within its regional neighbors, our Influence Operation advantages grow exponentially.

Long-term success is ultimately dependent on coordinated strategic efforts to solidify the gains made by operators on the ground. If the strategic focus is not fully aligned with the tactical and operational conditions, successes within target populations will be short-lived. Influence Operations are key components of special warfare, but they require the strategic endurance to achieve long-term strategic objectives. This is essential to solidify accomplishments on the ground and not undermine operations. Statements and actions that facilitate a perception of indecisiveness or lack of dedication, such as withdraw dates, force constraints, rules of engagement exposures, and so on, undermine the credibility and influence capabilities of the operators working in support of national objectives. The synchronization of tactical, operational, and strategic endeavors will reduce operational costs for logistical support, infrastructure investment, and lives lost. When initiated in the early stages of an insurgency or budding conflict, dedicated Influence Operations can aggressively and proactively shape the operational environment and prevent the situation from escalating into a prolonged, costly, and controversial conflict.

Consistency in Influence Operations is essential. It begins with how our influence messages and deeds are developed, planned, interwoven, and employed for specific target audiences to achieve an overarching desired effect or outcome. In our experience, Influence Operations were most successful when they were able to balance the need to defeat the insurgents' ability to grow, undermined their ability to sustain their activities, and increased the degree of trust between local populations and government/military representatives. To be sure, this is a challenge, but Influence Operations are a continuous endeavor with not only constant incursions by hostile actors but also daily events within the population that can counter those stories or distract the audience. Maintaining, competing, responding, reinforcing, or countering competing efforts is the norm and requires an adaptive and dynamic core of operators and resources to be successful.

Some of our key measures of effectiveness were unique:

- unsolicited reporting of armed group activities;
- expanding access into previously non-permissive communities;
- attempts to destroy influence signs and poster products;

- armed groups' reluctance to attack MEDCAPs;
- children trading comic book pages;
- threats to radio and TV stations broadcasting commercials.

These unique measures of effectiveness were reinforced by more traditional measures such as tips called in from previously silent populations, local militias providing support for government forces, and high-value targets captured or killed. The net result over this period of time was also tangible: multiple lines of effort curtailed the ability of the most-wanted leadership of various armed groups to evade detection, and new access to previously closed communities helped to undermine the ability of armed groups to subvert local communities and the national government.[83]

Influence Operations are not a new form of operations. Key elements that resulted in success link directly back to the very roots of Special Operations core skill sets: language skills that allow trust to develop; patient and persistent presence that allows relationships to be formed and nurtured; tailoring messages to the nuances of a microculture; attention to detail and local sensitivities; continuous adaptability; and the willingness to include nontraditional groups, perspectives, and approaches to solve a problem in a dynamic environment.

All operations have an inherent influence effect. Influence Operations are deliberate and synergistically focused efforts that are interwoven across a command's other lines of effort. They are applied using an overall theme to influence a target group for the purpose of accomplishing political, military, and/or regional goals. Understanding the culture, constantly engaging in capacity-building activities with the population, and enabling the host-nation government to become independently effective are critical to long-term regional success. Regardless of the environment, the success of any Influence Operation hinges on the ability to favorably affect the human domain and adequately eliminate active and tacit population support to the enemy.

[83] JSOTF-P PSYOP Operational Detachment Activities (U), August 2006. These efforts complemented an increase in maritime interdiction operations by AFP and U.S. NSW forces, Army Special Forces initiatives with the AFP, and increased fixed and rotary wing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance activities.

Teaching Questions

Influence Operations

1. How do Influence Operations differ from stability operations?

2. What SOF attributes and skill sets—core competencies—support the conduct of Influence Operations?

3. The authors argue: "Synergy between all partners is a must for effective Influence Operations." If this is NOT maintained, what could then be the result?

4. What strategies can be used to disseminate key Influence Operations themes and messages to their target audiences? What are some of the measures of success?

5. Why is capacity building an integral part of Influence Operations?

Human Domain

1. Which groups and individuals should we focus on when thinking about Influence Operations activities? Why? What does this suggest about how and where to direct development, infrastructure, and education resources?

2. Trust is an essential element in successful Influence Operations. In conflict zones, what effective initiatives can rebuild trust with the local populace? What can undermine that trust? How can setbacks be addressed?

3. In conducting Influence Operations, what are the most critical activities to focus on in order to achieve long-term regional stability and denial of insurgent safe havens? Who should take the lead in conducting these activities? Why?

4. What insurgent vulnerabilities or centers of gravity are most important to focus on? Why? How did this alter the strategy of armed groups in this case study? What measures of progress are useful to determine which strategies are successful?

Application of Influence Operations by Adversaries

1. Do our adversaries—state actors or armed groups—conduct Influence Operations? If so, what can we learn from them?

2. What can we learn from how armed groups such as Hezbollah or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) use influence operations?

3. Are these operations considered successful by these groups? If so, what accounts for their success?

4. How have armed groups used psychological warfare in their Influence Operations?

5. How do armed groups combine kinetic and non-kinetic activities to achieve operational and strategic goals?

6. What can we learn from the failures of their Influence Operations?

Appendix A: Threat Groups in the Philippines

- The Abu Sayyaf Group[84] (Arabic for "Bearer of the Sword," or ASG, formerly known as Al-Harakatul al-Islamiya[85]), most notoriously known for brutal kidnappings, beheadings, bombings, assassinations, and extortion, was founded by Abdurajak Janjalani after the ASG split from the Moro National Liberation Front in 1991.[86] The Philippine National Police killed Janjalani in 1998. ASG's professed ideology is to establish an independent theocratic Islamic state in Mindanao,[87] though the group has consistently demonstrated "no willingness to negotiate a political settlement."[88] While this may have been the driving focus under Janjalani, a seasoned *mujahidin* fighter who fought in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, the current remnants of the group primarily engage in criminal actions and terrorism to discredit the government and fund their cause. ASG leadership and ranks have suffered great losses in the past few years at the hands of the Armed Forces of the Philippines but still share some collective goals with other violent extremist organizations like Jema'ah Islamiy'ah.
- Jema'ah Islamiy'ah[89] ("Islamic Community," or JI) is a jihadi Islamist Southeast Asian terrorist network, based in Indonesia and established by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir in 1993 when they broke from Darul Islam.[90] While JI remains independent from al Qaeda, it has strong affiliations, as it is led by *mujahidin*[91] who have served in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[92] JI has suffered severe losses of leadership and recruiting freedom of movement due to increased pressure from Indonesian and Philippine Security Forces. However, JI's goal of establishing a sovereign Muslim state continues to unite members (internally and with elements of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front) and serves as a catalyst when recruiting from the Southern Philippines, Sabah (Malaysia), and other remote areas of Southeast Asia.
- The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)[93] is a belligerent organization in the Southern Philippines that also seeks to establish an independent Islamic state. The MILF broke away from the Moro National Liberation Front[94] (MNLF, the current political party that administrates the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao), citing ideological differences. The group continues to engage in anti-government rhetoric and violent acts, while recruiting from Mindanao to bolster its considerable ranks.

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[84] For a detailed history of the Abu Sayyaf Group, see *Seeds of Terror*, by Maria Ressa, and *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, by Zachary Abuza.
[85] Zachary Abuza, "Balik Islam: The Return of Abu Sayyaf" (information paper, Carlisle, PA: U. S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute), 2.
[86] Lito Dimabildo, *Southern Philippine Secessionist Groups* (Fort Andres Bonifacio, Republic of the Philippines: HQ, Intelligence and Security Group, PA, 2004), 86.
[87] Ibid, 98.
[88] Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2003), 207.
[89] For a detailed history of Jema'ah Islamiy'ah, see *Jema'ah Islamiy'ah: Radical Islamism in Indonesia*, by Greg Barton, and *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, by Zachary Abuza.
[90] Greg Barton, *Jema'ah Islamiy'ah: Radical Islamism in Indonesia* (Sydney, Australia: UNSW Press, 2004), 113.
[91] *Mujahidin* are Muslim fighters, or those engaged in *jihad* (holy struggle) (Barton, 115).
[92] Barton, 113.
[93] For a detailed history of the MILF, see *Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao*, by Marites Danguilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria.
[94] Dimabildo, 57.

- Balik Islam[95] (Tagalog for "Return to Islam") is a countrywide underground movement to convert Christians to Islam, on the questionable basis that all Filipinos were originally Muslim before the Catholic Spanish colonized the Philippines. The movement is generally peaceful, though the ASG and MILF have capitalized on the beliefs of some of these new members and conducted successful recruiting. Converts to Balik Islam played roles in every major or attempted attack in 2005.[96]
- Kidnap for Ransom Gangs (KFRG) are prevalent in the southern Philippines, and often affiliate themselves with the MILF or ASG (though either rarely recognizes them). The ASG has historically used some of these gangs for their area expertise, human contacts, logistical support and navigational skills through terrain unfamiliar to the ASG.[97]
- Other: There are many other smaller Islamist groups that contribute to the overall threat to stability in the Philippines, like the Misuari Breakaway Group (MBG) and Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM). The New People's Army (NPA) is not Islamist at all, but rather the militant wing of the Communist Peoples' Party of the Philippines. Also known as the Communist Terrorist Movement, their goals are entirely different but many of their methods (i.e., delegitimizing the government, recruiting from the population, etc.) similarly contribute to regional instability.[98] As stated by the Philippine Government on countless occasions throughout past decades, the NPA represents one of the greatest threats to internal security in the Philippines since its establishment in 1969.

[95] For more on the Balik Islam movement, see "Balik Islam: The Return of the Abu Sayyaf," by Zachary Abuza.
[96] Abuza, "Balik Islam," ix.
[97] The authors refer to the 2005 example of ASG's Isnilon Hapilon's group attempting to move through the Daguma Mountain Range on Mindanao by using the Abu Suffia KFRG for food and shelter and as guides. The Abu Suffia gang has since been eliminated by Philippine Security Forces.
[98] The NPA represents one of the greatest threats to the Philippine government due to their strong organization, numbers, recruiting, and offensive capability. It is one of the few organizations that are capable of physically attacking (to some degree) the financial and political epicenter in Manila.

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