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THESIS

THE SURVIVAL OF THE COMPANY MAN IN IRAQ

by

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March 2008

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THE SURVIVAL OF THE COMPANY MAN IN IRAQ

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ABSTRACT

This thesis describes the decision-making processes for company grade officers operating in combat roles in Iraq and seeks to determine if innovation largely originates among lower ranking officers. It analyzes the incentives structure and the command climate of the U.S. Army in Iraq and how officers operate within this environment. Interviews with officers who served in Iraq illuminate motivations for innovation. The thesis identifies the many obstacles that officers encounter in attempting to "innovate from below."

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND SYMBOLS

1LT	First Lieutenant, O-2
2LT	Second Lieutenant, O-1
AIF	Anti-Iraqi Forces (insurgents)
AO	Area of Operations
BDE	Brigade
BN	Battalion
CPT	Captain, O-3
FM	Field Manual
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FSO	Fire Support officer
HMMWV	High Mobility, Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles. The wheeled vehicle of choice in the U.S. Army
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
MAJ	Major, O-4
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
OER	officer Evaluation Report
OIF (I, II, III…)	Operation Iraq Freedom followed by the number of years after the invasion. OIF I would be until the end of 2003, OIF II until the end of 2004 and so forth.
ROE	Rules of Engagement.
S2	The organization within a battalion responsible for gathering and analyzing intelligence
S3	Usually a Major in charge of the operations within a battalion
SFC	Sergeant First Class in the Army or E-7
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SWEAT Analysis	Sewage, Water, Electricity, Academics and Trash.
TTP	Tactics, Techniques and Procedures
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device
XO	Executive Officer

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I.   INTRODUCTION

A.   PURPOSE

The United States Military faces a critical mission in Iraq. It is fighting a guerilla-style counterinsurgency, a type of conflict that has proven difficult to execute for most modern militaries. The United States experienced strategic and military failure in Vietnam in part due to the inability of its military institutions to adapt their organizational structures and to implement doctrine to conduct counterinsurgency operations.[1] History is repeating itself in Iraq, and we are once again seeing the "failure" of the United States Army to adapt to the non-conventional operational environment.

One explanation for this failure to adapt to a counterinsurgency environment lies in the nature of bureaucratic, hierarchical organizations that are resistant to change. Anecdotal evidence in Iraq suggests that the U.S. military was wholly unprepared for the operational environment it encountered after the invasion and occupation in 2003. The military waited a full three years to adopt a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy after the Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld resigned and General David H. Petraeus, who coauthored the new counterinsurgency manual FM 3-24, was put in charge of coalition forces in Iraq in 2006. Most of the explanations for the lack of a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy focus on the failure of senior officers and officials to develop institutions capable of fighting in this kind of combat environment.

This thesis explains this phenomenon by analyzing the dichotomy between the decision-making process of senior officers and small unit commanders and how these differences affect the daily operations of the soldier on the ground. It describes the operational environment of company grade officers serving in combat leadership roles in Iraq. This thesis offers the proposition that an institutional decision-making framework, known as the "the rules of the game," drives the decision-making process of battlefield commanders at the company level. This institutional framework corrupts feedback loops

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[1] As argued in John Nagl, *How to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002) and John Krepinevich, *The Army in Vietnam.* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990).

between the lowest levels of organizational command and the institutional leadership and effectively prevents the process of organically-driven change and innovation in the Army.

Change is occurring in Iraq after many years of setbacks. General David Petraeus was brought in to enact a top down change in the how the Army is fighting in Iraq. Currently the Army is now in the process of conducting more effective counterinsurgency operations and seeing results. These results can be seen in the decrease in the number of attacks after the surge and the decrease in attacks against U.S. Military forces in the Anbar province. There is still an inherent flaw within the system, however, that does not fully utilize feedback loops to gather useful information from those operating on the ground in Iraq.

The Army professes that it wants internal innovation and change much like a modern day successful business, but these changes that have been discussed by some within the Army since Vietnam have yet to be fully implemented.[2] Internally, important issues seem as if they are hardly addressed before outside political pressures demand these changes. These are reinforced by the fact that today change appears to only occur when the voters in the United States say enough is enough and demand an end to the war in Iraq. Only when this occurred did the powers that be finally react and change their strategy as evidenced by the resignation of Rumsfeld and the promotion of General Petraeus to be in charge of coalition forces in Iraq.

B.   IMPORTANCE

Senior U.S. military officers seem to be especially challenged when it comes to translating information from troops on the ground with existing doctrine into effective operations on the battlefield in Iraq. All combat operations require superior situational awareness to promote a decision-making process that supports successful tactical operations. Low intensity conflicts, however, require particularly good situational awareness and thoughtful analysis by all leaders. This allows them to arrive at the right balance between kinetic and non-kinetic operations against the adversary. Given this

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[2] Steven M. Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic Imperative," *Carlisle Papers in Security Strategy* (September 2003), 12.

situation, it is imperative to explore the strengths and weakness of the current communications between small unit commanders on the ground and their senior commanders. If good information is not being conveyed in both directions, a determination must be made about where and why this breakdown in communication is occurring so changes can be made to enhance the situational awareness of all levels of command.

The U.S. Army has recognized these problems and has slowly been working to change this situation. Mechanisms like 360 degree evaluations are being implemented but still do not have any official bearing on an officer's career. Therefore, these reforms within the Army are ineffectual and the major system changing proposals have all but been ignored. Many observers have suggested that the Army will suffer dire consequences if these reforms are not enacted.[3] By looking at how company grade officers perceive their situations in Iraq, this thesis uncovers a framework beyond the official structure of the Army that describes how officers truly make decisions and whether or not feedback on how to fight the Iraq war, or counterinsurgencies in general, is circulating effectively within the U.S. Army.

C.   LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis relies on information gathered from interviews with officers who served in Iraq from the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom to midway through 2006 at the latest. The thesis frames data from the interviews in the context of bureaucratic organizational decision-making theory. It describes how the Army operated in past conflicts and what it is currently trying to do to make itself modern in terms of decision-making, organization and operations. The information from the interviews will be analyzed from a decision-making theory perspective to describe how the military is making decisions. In conjunction, the interviews will also be analyzed to see how well the Army is meeting its own transformational goals.

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[3] Steven M. Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic Imperative," *Carlisle Papers in Security Strategy* (September 2003), 29.

1.   Survey of Prior Work on Bureaucratic Decision-Making

To understand the outputs of bureaucracy, Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow present three models that describe the decision-making process within bureaucracies. Allison and Zelikow suggest that there is more than just a Rational Actor Model (Model I—i.e., bureaucracies will act unified and rationally on behalf of the state) when it comes to explaining organizational behavior. They expand their description by creating a second model known as the Organizational Behavior Model (Model II). Model II states that decision-making processes reflect the influence of standard operating procedures (SOPs) within organizations. When senior officers or policymakers seek a response to the outside world, they are in effect choosing among SOPs or combination of SOPs to answer these problems. The military, like other traditional bureaucracies, follows many SOPs; so as a result, tracking the influences of SOPs on decision-making in Iraq becomes an important factor in this study.

Allison and Zelikow offer a third model to illustrate how individual groups within an organization act rationally on their own behalf to achieve their own goals and to bargain with other organizations over the division of responsibility in terms of achieving national objectives. This last model is known as the Government Politics Model (Model III).[4] In the Army this means that leaders would be acting rationally on their own behalf instead of trying to win the war. There is also a dichotomy of beliefs in how to fight between the various ranks within the Army, which can be indicative of Model III. This is because of the constant struggle between the various levels of the Army organization in trying to accomplish their mission as they perceive it.

The role higher ranking leaders play in the bureaucratic decision-making on the conduct of the war in Iraq can be seen through the difference in objectives embraced by senior and junior leaders. While it can be argued that everyone wants "to win the war," senior and junior leaders find themselves in vastly different environments. Junior officers face the rigors of combat and are faced with immediate life and death decisions that can have a direct impact on the soldiers under their command. They also have the daily

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[4] Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow. *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis.* (Menlow Park, CA: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc, 1999).

interaction with the people and the ever changing environment that heavily influences their decision-making processes in these times. Senior officers have a broader perspective and must monitor the overall health of their organization, laying the groundwork not only for success in the current conflict, but preparing to fight the next war. It is not surprising, that these different and sometimes competing decision-making priorities create a gap in perception that can affect operational performance in the actual combat operations.

Allison and Morton Halperin further break down the process of decision-making in bureaucracies suggested in Model III, stating that the decision-making process is affected by the process of gamesmanship and the "pulling and hauling" between organizational components.[5] This goes against commonly accepted views that organizations always operate in favor of the larger group instead of individual actors acting in their own self interest. Allison and Halperin point to this behavior as not necessarily being irrational on the individual level, while it may seem that way when viewed as a combined output of an organization.

Jerel Rosati augments the bureaucratic paradigm by suggesting that "…three decision-making structures…are possible depending upon the degree of participants' involvement" in a specific decision.[6] One level of involvement is the Presidential level, whereby, the executive decision-maker is highly involved, most likely because it is an important issue, and they can in fact make themselves omnipotent in the decision-making process. The next level is "Bureaucratic Dominance," which has low presidential involvement but greater involvement on the part of the individual and the organization. The last level is local dominance, whereby the President and the organization all have low involvement and only a small number of individuals are likely to have any interest, so therefore the bureaucratic politics model does not apply.[7] This explains why there is sometimes great variance in outcomes depending on the level of involvement and concern shown by leaders.

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[5] Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin. "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications" *World Politics* Vol. 24, Supplement: Theory and Policy in International Relations (Spring 1972): 43.

[6] Jerel A. Rosati. "Developing a Systemic Decision-making Framework: Bureaucratic Politics in Perspective" *World Politics* Vol. 33, No. 2. (January 1981): 251.

[7] Ibid., 246-247.

In contradiction to the supporters of Model III, Robert Art views the Rational Actor Model as including factors such as domestic politics and generational mindsets. He pokes holes in the idea of using the "…bureaucratic paradigm as an approach for analyzing American foreign policy [because]…first, it undervalues the influence (or weight) of both generational mind-sets and domestic politics on the manner in which top decision-makers approach foreign policy; second, it is too sloppy, vague, and imprecise as presently constituted to make it worthwhile."[8] Although Art recognizes that these factors influence the decision-making process, he acknowledges his critique offers little as an alternative to understanding bureaucratic decision-making. This can be seen in the difference in mind sets between senior officers that have been conditioned on a Cold War mentality and the junior ones that have mainly been exposed to the ideas of terrorism.

Supporters of the Rational Actor Model (Model I), such as David Welch, contend that "…there are convincing reasons to believe that neither Model II nor Model III is as useful as, let alone analytically superior to, Model I."[9] He points out that the system supplied by Model II does not affect the rational decision-making process at the point of the decision but rather affects its final output.[10] Therefore, the rational actor model has the most influence on the decision-making process as a whole and therefore its outcome. Welch believes that at the point of the final decision, there is no need for Model II or Model III. He fails to state why rational decisions made by actors within an organization are supposed to guarantee a rational decision made by the organization as a whole.

In further support of Model I Thomas Hammond modifies the theories of individual decision-making. He suggests that in the discussion of Models II and III, there is not enough said about hierarchy and that the similarities between bureaucratic organizations and legislative bodies need to seriously be taken into consideration. Hammond argues that hierarchy plays a tremendous role in bureaucratic decision-making

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[8] Robert J. Art. "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique" *Policy Sciences* 4 (1973): 487.

[9] David A. Welch. "The Organizational Process and Bureaucratic Politics Paradigms: Retrospect and Prospect" *International Security* Vol. 17, No. 2. (Autumn 1992): 114.

[10] Ibid., 117.

rather than just horizontal bargaining.[11] By pointing this out, he suggests that there is always someone at the top making the final decision and the presence of this so-called "rational actor" is demonstrating that Model I adequately describes the process in which the final decision is made.

Daniel Drezner attempts to fill a gap in the framework set forth by Allison and Zelikow by contesting that these models do little "…to examine the causal mechanisms through which ideas are converted into policies."[12] He does this by discussing how missionary institutions, or an institution based on a belief that they want to perpetuate within an existing bureaucracy, differently survive or thrive based on how they are integrated into the overall larger bureaucratic organization. If an organization is insulated it will be more likely to survive, but it will not be in the position to affect policy. If it is embedded, it will have less of a chance of survival but will be more likely to have a greater impact on current events.

By looking at decision-making at the battalion level operations in Iraq, the tenets of Model III will be further fleshed out. By determining leaders' abilities for innovation and passing recommendations up the chain of command Drezner's notion of missionary institutions will be measured for accuracy. Since the military is a good example of a SOP driven organization, this thesis should be able to determine if Model II has any bearing on the decision-making process within Iraq today. If it is shown that feedback does not really affect the organization systemically at all, then a hard look will be given to Model I and how change is truly enacted to reform an organization.

2.   Survey of U.S. Military Decision-Making in Low Intensity Conflicts

When looking at the decision-making process in low intensity conflict, it is important to look at Vietnam where the U.S. Military faced problems similar to those that might be encountered in Iraq. John Nagl, in his book *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife,* compares the adaptability and learning capabilities of the British Army in Malaya from

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[11] Thomas H. Hammond. "Agenda Control, Organizational Structure, and Bureaucratic Politics" *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 30, No. 2. (May 1986): 380-382.

[12] Daniel W. Drezner. "Ideas, Bureaucratic Politics, and the Crafting of Foreign Policy" *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 44, No. 4. (October 2000): 746.

1948 to 1957 to those of the U.S. Army in Vietnam from 1950 to 1972. In it he argues that the British Army was able to:

> encourage its junior officers to seek out organizational performance gaps and alternative organizational paths of action, hammer out a consensus on the effectiveness of the new doctrines, publish the changes in doctrine, train the organization in the new doctrine and enforce its application to ensure change in organizational behavior, and observe the effectiveness of the new doctrine out in the field.[13]

While the British were able to change and adapt, the U.S. Army in Vietnam was unwilling and unable due to inflexibility of the Army as an institution.[14]

Nagl's own assessment falls in line with the earlier work of Andrew Krepinevich's, who noted that the U.S. Army was erecting barriers to avoid fighting another Vietnam War

> …[and] the result has been that instead of gaining a better understanding of how to wage counterinsurgency warfare within the unique social, economic, political, and military dimensions comprising that form of conflict, the Army is trying to transform it into something it can handle.[15]

Krepinevich's research on Vietnam found the Army to be a change-resistant organization that could not adapt to the requirement that it fight a counterinsurgency. The Army restructured itself after Vietnam in some major ways. This included implementing an all volunteer force system and training that is subject to extensive after action reviews (AARs) of all involved. However, these actions and policies still focused primarily on high intensity conflict and the mindset still remained that the best way to fight a counterinsurgency was to not involve the United States Army in a counterinsurgency. In

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[13] John A. Nagl. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002). 191-192.

[14] Ibid., 205.

[15] Andrew F. Krepinevich. *The Army in Vietnam* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990). 274-275.

this particular area the Army has not prepared or restructured itself for future low intensity conflict situations. Therefore the two assessments lead one to believe that the U.S. Army is not only unwilling and unable to change but that it has a hard time changing because counterinsurgency does not fit into the traditional high intensity war fighting paradigm.

3. Survey of U.S Military Decision-Making in Modern Army

The Army conducted a variety of studies on "command climate" that date from the 1970s to the present. This literature surveys what exactly the Army as an organization has identified as its own problems and what the Army has proposed as solutions. Much of this information is summed up in a report for the U.S. Army done by Steven Jones.[16] Jones points out that the survey results conducted in the last 30 years support the conclusion that the U.S. Army is an extremely hierarchical and rigid structure. As a result, he posits that unless the structure changes and adapts to become more network based with information and feedback flowing freely from all levels to all levels, the Army will continue to lose its best and brightest junior officers. Jones believes that the phenomenon reinforces the problem of hierarchical rigidity within the Army.

This study is important because in the middle of these changes being enacted the war on terror began followed closely by the war in Iraq, which has led to a delay in implementation of these structural changes. The major reforms that it suggests for the Army to become a self correcting and networked organization have largely not been enacted. The Army today freely shares most of its tactical lessons through all levels of leadership. It does this through such things as after action reviews (AARs), the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), as well as various Army branch specific journals. So while information is shared there is no guarantee that anyone has to learn anything. This is reinforced by the fact that there is no official way for those on the bottom of the chain of command, the ones who are on the frontlines, to effectively rate and therefore hold accountable the decision-makers above them. While there are currently 360 degree

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[16] Steven M. Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic Imperative," *Carlisle Papers in Security Strategy* (September 2003).

evaluation programs, the results are not put on a leader's record or shared with anyone other than the leader being evaluated.

D.   METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

This thesis uses the case study method to examine how information gathered from the field is used to plan future operations. By using evidence gathered from interviews of small unit commanders of the company grade rank who have just served or are still serving in combat operations in Iraq, this thesis determines which decision-making model, or combination thereof, applies best. Interview questions were geared towards determining what small unit commanders believed their superiors wanted them to do. Then it was seen how they in turn enacted those decisions while at the same time applying their own innovations to complete their missions as safely and efficiently as possible.

By analyzing Army battalion organizations and operations in Iraq in terms of Government Politics Model or Model III, the thesis will show that decisions are not necessarily made by rational actors but rather by competing organizations that are in fact furthering their own individual causes to the detriment of individual units in the field. Interviewees were questioned regarding SOPs, and how they influenced their decision-making process in an effort to determine if Model II has a bearing on the decision-making process. This thesis will highlight the strengths of Hammond's support of Model I that states that everyone is acting on behalf of what their superiors want them to do. However, there is one very important caveat and that is subordinates actually do what they perceive their superiors want done. This situation is currently what the structure of Army's hierarchy encourages and therefore is the most predominant factor in determining the outputs of the Army in Iraq.

There are two levels of company grade officers, hereafter referred to as "Company Men," that will be described in detail in this paper. Both of them will be in combat military occupational specialties (MOS) or served in similar roles in Iraq. The one requirement will be that they are officers in charge of combat soldiers on the ground in Iraq operating out in sector on a regular basis directly in harm's way. The first of these

two will be the platoon leader, who is usually a brand new officer in the Army. He is the lowest ranking officer in a soldier's chain of command and is directly in charge of the soldiers operating in the field. The next is that of the company commander, who is in charge of the platoons but still for a large part has a lot of interaction out with the local population.

Thirty one interviews with Company Men were conducted for this research.[17] From these interviews stories and examples from operations in Iraq will be examined to determine trends in styles of leadership. The trends in leadership styles that are consistent throughout the interviews will be highlighted. Also, many of the individual experiences in Iraq will be taken on a case by case basis to determine the impact of the Army's organizational structure on any individual innovation and adaptation exercised by the unit commander to accomplish the mission. These individual experiences will be used as well to demonstrate how feedback loops did or did not work.

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[17] Thirty one (31) separate interviews were conducted and these will be combined with my own experiences which bring the total to 32.

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II.   THE COMPANY MAN

A.   INTRODUCTION

As the Iraq war continues, the majority of the operations are being conducted by platoon and company-sized units. These elements are led by Company Men. These young officers serve in a crucial role. Organizational success depends on their leadership abilities and in providing these young officers with sufficient flexibility to adapt tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) as dictated by the operational environment. These leaders must have access to good information to support their decision-making process and should ideally work in an organization that encourages feedback to flow freely not only to their peers but up to higher commanders. Movement towards a more adaptive and learning organization with minimal barriers to effective communication has been the goal of the Army. This has been a precedent set by the U.S. Army in comparison to all other militaries in the world.[18] In Iraq, however, there are inherent flaws that still remain in the system as will be shown in this paper. How do these officers address the competing requirements to maneuver through their daily lives in Iraq in order to accomplish their mission, satisfy the organizational requirements, further their careers and take care of their men?

The platoon leader is the lowest ranking of these Company Men and often times is the most inexperienced of all the officers and in most cases is less experienced than the soldiers in the unit. He, therefore, has to not only please his bosses by showing his competence but also has to accommodate the needs and desires of his soldiers in order to please his boss. The platoon leader needs support from his subordinates because he does not have the experience or knowledge to accomplish any mission without their help. The company commander, on the other hand, is already one level removed from the men and

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[18] Steven M. Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic Imperative," *Carlisle Papers in Security Strategy* (September 2003), 17.

has at least five years of experience in the Army. This gives the company commander an edge over the platoon leader because he can use the platoon leaders as the first buffer of information from below while at the same time using them to make his company and its mission match expectations coming from his own commanders.

## B.	THE PLATOON LEADER

The platoon leader serves in an extremely dynamic position. Many officers describe this position as their best time in the Army even though this is when they are lowest in the hierarchy of officers. The role that this particular officer holds is the officers' ambassador to the men and conversely the men's ambassador to the decision-makers. Therefore this is a difficult position that requires a successful platoon leader to learn the desires of both their men and their bosses and implement enough from both sides to please them at the same time or lose their job.

Most platoon leaders come to the unit as second lieutenants (2LT) straight out of their officer basic courses. In some cases the platoon leader positions are not immediately available and these individuals serve in various assistant staff positions acting as little more than a personal assistant for whomever they are assigned. Once in the platoon leader position they are immediately subject to all the pressures of being in a position of leadership. In many cases are expected to maintain at least the same level of effectiveness in their platoon that their predecessors left it in. They have to accomplish this without the benefit of their predecessor's experience.

Speaking strictly in terms of their careers platoon leaders are only rated by and immediately responsible to two levels above them; their company commanders and their battalion commanders. If they are viewed as incompetent, insubordinate or incapable of learning then they are rated poorly and/or in many cases moved out of their positions entirely. Usually the platoon leader's success as a leader depends on the competence of the platoon sergeant and his relationship with the rest of the platoon. The platoon

sergeant takes great pride in seeing the success of the platoon leader as it reflects not only on his career but also the platoon leader's decisions could directly affect the lives of the men that he is put in charge of.[19]

While the platoon leader is at the whim of his commanders he cannot even begin to achieve success with his very limited understanding of the operations of the unit and experience in general. Therefore on one hand, the platoon leader is reliant upon his subordinates for success in execution of missions. On the other hand platoon leaders are reliant upon their commanders for documentation of success via positive evaluations. The platoon leader is therefore required to respect the wishes and wellbeing of the his subordinates while balancing the need to meet the measures of success set forth by his commanders, with only the rating by his superiors affecting his long term career success. This creates a challenging dynamic.

The new platoon leader is in such a dynamic and turbulent period in his career that even if he perceives the actions pursued by his commanders in a mission are wrong, he has very little basis, either experience or training, on which to stand and voice his opinion. The most open of his superiors may give recognition to his concerns but the fact of the matter is that when his commanders tell him to do something he, by and large, has to do it. Rationally his only options are to do what he is told to do or risk losing his job.

The young platoon leader's most influential source at this time is the company commander. This is because the company commander is his primary rater even though the senior rater, the battalion commander, is the most important rater. It is the company commander who is the platoon leader's advocate to the battalion commander because he is the one who deals with the young platoon leader on a daily basis. This is all contingent on whether or not the battalion commander has made platoon leader development a priority for the organization.

The platoon leader's more experienced peers, the other platoon leaders in the company, will also have a large influence on the platoon leader because they know what the commander wants and will either help the young platoon leader achieve success or if

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[19] Based on the differences between the OER and NCOER systems, NCOs are typically rated on more quantifiable information than the OER system (ie. PT scores, Weapons Qualification, Soldiers promoted, etc…)

it is within a very competitive environment, will from time to time set him up for failure. Either way, the young platoon leader is rationally using whatever he can, whether it is the support of his peers, his men, or his own wits just to impress upon the commanders that he is a good leader so that he is not only positively rated but allowed to keep leading his men. This is reinforced by the current evaluation system in which time in leadership positions is the only variable that is accessible and pertinent to outside review at the next stage of evaluation.[20]

Because the platoon leader is inexperienced and vulnerable in terms of his career, he is subject to the will of his commanders. This means that in most cases the young platoon leader, if his commanders so desire, must take responsibility for his actions or that of his unit which happened in the field or in combat, even if they were not directly related to his decisions. His own personal beliefs must be set aside in order to be in line with what is expected of him by his leaders. If the young platoon leader attempts to defray responsibility away from himself, especially up the chain of command, this will typically be perceived negatively and his superiors will have a host of reasons why the blame still rests with the platoon leader.

As he gains experience, he should use his increasing authority over the platoon to bring its outputs within the desired objectives of his commanders. He is granted more freedom of maneuver within the company, especially if he has demonstrated success in his company and/or a newer younger platoon leader has come into the company as the new junior officer in the company. Usually within three to six months, the successful young platoon leader has come to understand the system and has aligned his views with his commanders. He essentially knows what the leadership's top priorities are and what actions are deemed inconsequential. He also knows what he can overtly have an influence upon in terms of his commanders set priorities and which things to just leave alone or affect in a covert manner.

Once a platoon leader has served for a year, he has set the tone for himself and if left in place to lead a platoon, transitions to being a senior platoon leader. In addition, if

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[20] Currently all lieutenant OERs are masked so that once a lieutenant becomes a captain his evaluations, other than time and place served in a position, are no longer reviewable for future considerations.

the senior platoon leader has served in a combat environment, the senior platoon leader has attained a level of influence with the battalion commander on par with a new company commander. They still have to deliver what their commanders want to be considered successful and if they are in opposition to their leaders' goals, they will likely be removed from their position and put in a less desirable and less beneficial one in terms of their careers. So while they have a much better understanding of the situation on the ground, they must still operate within the confines of the system dictated by their commanders.

This situation is not as bad as it first appears because an intelligent senior platoon leader should by this time thoroughly understand the ins and outs of his organization and should know what causes he can champion. He also has a better grasp on what both his superiors and subordinates want. Even if he does make a mistake in overstepping his bounds with his leadership or even in a tactical sense, he is given much more leeway because of his proven experience. This can be double edged sword though, because he could be expected by his leaders not to make silly mistakes because now he has the experience to know better. The mistakes he is likely to be able to make without serious repercussions are when he takes legitimate tactical risks to accomplish goals set forth by the commanders. If a risk is taken and mistakes are made outside of the parameters of success set by the commanders this can lead to his removal as a leader.

Senior platoon leaders can often times have more clout within the battalion than their commanders because of their meaningful experiences, which will include tactical successes that have caught the attention of their battalion commanders or the other senior officers in the battalion to include the battalion operations officer (S3), battalion executive officer and other company commanders. By this time the platoon leader has also demonstrated by his success in fulfilling his battalion commander's goals that he is loyal to the unit because he has essentially bought into the command climate.

The most important aspects of success for the platoon leader in Iraq are demonstrating his loyalty to his chain of command. Either he has bought into what they are trying to accomplish, or he has been moved to a less influential position. It is much more damaging to his career to simply lose his job than a bad evaluation could ever be.

Also, the senior platoon leader is often loyal to his platoon because he has developed bonds of loyalty from when he was assisted by his soldiers during his experience as a young platoon leader and so he looks out for their welfare. He is not required in any direct, short term way to do so to ensure success in his career.

C.   THE COMPANY COMMANDER

The next individual to be discussed is the company commander. He is almost always a captain, who has been a platoon leader, has been through more standardized Army training in the form of a captain's career course, and usually has served on staff positions within the division. The perception of the new company commander within his new battalion is informed by his performance on staff, his reviews as a platoon leader (time and places served only), and any personal relationships already developed within the battalion.

The new company commander is put in a precarious position from the beginning because most of the time it has been implied, if not said directly that "command is a privilege and not a right."[21] The company commander can easily see that for himself as he usually came from a staff position and was himself waiting months for the prior company commanders time to draw to an end. He would himself have leapt at the chance to take over for a company commander that was deemed less than adequate by the battalion commander.

The first thing the company commander has to accomplish is to understand his higher battalion and brigade commanders' expectations and desires. This includes specifically how his commanders expect him to accomplish his tasks. In terms of Iraq, this usually reinforces the offensive mindset, like "taking the fight to the enemy," as the desired attribute for accomplishing goals and missions.[22] This mindset is engendered by

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[21] Anecdotal statements made by a majority of company commanders interviewed and at the Naval Postgraduate School.

[22] A typical phrase used by Commanders to describe their action that is almost always looked on in a favorable manner.

the command climate and will be discussed in more detail later. However, it is the variable that separates maneuver warfare from counterinsurgency operations.[23]

The point that must be emphasized is the offensive mindset, while present in the majority of officers operating Iraq, is not what drives the company commander's decisions. What drives him is that he is working at the battalion and brigade commanders' discretions and if he does not "toe the line" with the policy of the field grades he will soon find himself without a company command and his career derailed because he did not reach the appropriate amount of time required to become branch qualified.[24] His future options within the Army are extremely limited within the coveted maneuver branch of the Army. He therefore adopts the offensive mindset set forth by his chain of command, which can be traced all the way to the top where the President George Bush repeatedly states that "we will take the fight to the enemy."

For the most part, the battalion and brigade commanders have already weeded out any captains that do not agree with the established command climate from the ranks of the staff captains. The favorite staff captains are put in combat leadership company commands as soon as possible, while the least favorite are held beck for years sometimes until they can place him in charge of an innocuous company or a company that is in garrison in the states. This way if he does not work out they can remove him and replace him with a more conducive personality to the current command climate before they head back to a combat environment.

After a few months time in his position, his status will be determined. The "bad" company commander will be forced out at the year mark and will be extremely micromanaged until that time, while the "good" company commanders will of course have earned more leeway within the battalion and brigade to conduct operations with a little more independence. They also have shown themselves to be a "bad" or "good" company commander to their own subordinates but many times the viewpoints between

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[23] Lt. General David H. Petraeus, "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq, *Military Review* 4 (January-February 2006). 9-10.

[24] The reality is that if he does not reach 18 months in one company command or 24 months in two company commands his overall evaluation as a company commander will be looked on unfavorably during future reviews regardless of any wording on the evaluation itself.

the soldiers and the battalion and brigade leadership are not the same because of the divergent desires and expectations of the respective sides.

When the company commander is branch qualified, having commanded a company for at least a year, it means that he is still on track in terms of his career. Everything beyond this point only makes him look better on his officer evaluation report (OER). The OER is no longer masked when an officer reaches captain and therefore is reviewable for performance and not only positions served. By this time if the company commander is keeping his job bets are he has established a relationship with the battalion commander. Usually this means he is in line with the battalion commander's own perspective enough so that he is basically considered one of the gang.

What is safe to assume by this time is that the innovators who were outside of the battalion and brigade commanders' ways of seeing things have been weeded out. The successful company commanders have also made it to this point by showing their deeds in actions that can be recorded. This is not only beneficial because actions can be rated better than ideas but also because actions make their commanders look like they are accomplishing something tangible.

D.   HOW TO SUCCEED AS A COMPANY MAN

Up to this point, a rather bleak picture has been painted of the Company Man's predicament of how to succeed. Most Company Men, however, are not as cold and calculating as this system might suggest. When conducting the interviews it was found that a majority of leaders in the Army do attempt abide by the leadership principles set forth in FM 6-22. That is to say that all of the Army officers interviewed were looking out for what they perceived as the long term health of the Army as an organization. It is not a requirement to listen to one's subordinates and even the best leaders can easily turn off the spigot when it comes to the information flow from underneath. So being an officer that is aware of all the happenings underneath him, and thus "self-aware", is an endeavor that requires constant effort on the part of the officer himself.

Reverting back to the unfortunate situation the rational Company Man finds himself in, this section will show alternative routes for success and the many different

snares that await them along the way that could lead them to failure. He is still in essence trying to please only his two raters above himself. If he wants to change their viewpoints or if he happens to buy into counterinsurgency types of doctrine while his raters do not; there are alternative methods for succeeding.

The Company Man has to take risks with his own career in order to accomplish tasks he believes are necessary. This of course is measured risk and is usually weighed against what an officer believes that he can recover from if he does not achieve the desired results. Also, while going outside of accepted norms in accomplishing results is often allowed or even encouraged in most command climates, the end result must fit squarely with the command climate expectations.

Here is where the term "satisficing" comes into play. It is a term that was coined by Herbert Simon that means "to accept a choice or judgment as one that is good enough, one that satisfies."[25] In the Army it is often applied as doing just enough to make one's boss happy. Essentially, an officer will produce results that are just enough to fall within acceptable parameters set forth by their respective commanders.

One way for the Company Man to satisfice the command climate is to make his superiors look good. If the parameters for success of the commanders are defined by the number of enemy dead bodies produced by the Company Man then the Company Man could produce other quantifiable metrics that look good on his commanders' evaluations. This would be done especially if the Company Man disagreed with that metric or was unable to fulfill them. The Company Man's superiors may be willing to accept other things in lieu of body counts. For instance, delivering caches of weapons as opposed to body counts might be a suitable alternative. The key is that in any environment even the most idealistic officer has to perform within the parameters of success established by his boss and the chain of command. This usually has to be done by means of quantifiable tasks because ideas still do not translate well to the current way of doing OERs.

In Iraq an officer at any level is usually given quite a bit of leeway in terms of acceptable courses of action when the situation has deteriorated greatly. In this light any

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[25] Arthur S. Reber and Emily Reber, eds., *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), s.v. "satisifice."

innovation that brings about an end state that is better than what is currently taking place is looked upon favorably. At this point it can be no longer about how many insurgents are killed but rather what works. This is because, invariably, just killing the "bad guys" has not yielded any results in providing security. In almost all cases like these, the attacks have gotten so out of hand that when counterinsurgency measures are finally applied there is a very noticeable difference. This is opposed to an area of operations where the number of attacks is relatively low so there is not the need to apply counterinsurgency measures. In these types of environments counterinsurgency doctrines are more accepted because the normal body counts have been accepted as not yielding anything except for more dead bodies, often times on both sides. Coincidentally applying counterinsurgency tactics and techniques works best against an insurgency and will most often yield the long term desired results that are also measurable.

One of the most important attributes that a Company Man can have to be successful and be allowed to innovate is to be charismatic. Charisma helps the officer establish relationships with his higher commanders and build a good rapport. Charisma also helps when selling ideas as well; a great idea poorly presented will certainly be lost by the wayside, while a poor idea well presented will be sure to enable the company grade officer to be in the good graces of his commanders.[26] Due to the lack of feedback that is allowed in the system, even if the plan comes off poorly it usually has others to blame since the higher commander has already bought into the idea. Therefore, the execution must have been off somewhere else besides with the senior commander himself or the man who created the plan.

One of the biggest drawbacks in the restricted feedback system that currently exists in the Army is the issue of not receiving anything negative back up the chain of command. This is because in many instances if the company grade officer complains about something that is not right he is looked down upon. The usual response given to the offending officer is that they must have messed up because they have not fixed it

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[26] The interviews, as well as personal experience, showed that those who developed personal relationships with their commanders were more likely to have their ideas approved.

themselves. In all actuality it is probably much truer that the Company Man's own commander will not address the issues presented in order to not appear to be incompetent to those above him.

E.   COMMAND CLIMATE IN IRAQ

FM 6-22 describes feedback loops and the need to establish a positive command climate. For instance it states that "an open and candid environment is a key ingredient in creating a unit that is poised to recognize and adapt to change."[27] FM 6-22 and other surveys conducted by the Army point out that multi-sourced leader reviews are essential in creating a leader that is self aware. These reviews would require that a leader be not only rated by his leaders but also his peers and subordinates. This self awareness and understanding not only of the leader's unit's capabilities but also the situation on the ground help to create a leader who then can relatively quickly adapt to change. This is because the leader is truly interested in discovering what his peers and those below him think because they will be rating him.

In Iraq, however, the command climate is different. The acceptance of feedback was solely at the discretion of the commanders. For example, even if the idea was one that was agreed upon by all platoon leaders within a company there was no rational basis for the company commander to change his course of action. This was because he did what he thought was right or because he was trying to please his own bosses, or usually a combination thereof.[28] The interviews also showed that while this was not always the

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[27] Field Manual 6-22, *Army Leadership: Competent, Confident, and Agile*, Headquarters Department of the Army, Washington D.C., June 2001, 8-2, 8-13.

[28] Personal experience in serving as an armor platoon leader as part of 1-13 Armor Battalion based out of Taji, Iraq in 2005. In addition it is a generally accepted fact that if permission is required two levels above many times the middle man will say no on behalf of his own boss rather than face being told no himself.

case and there were many open commanders who were willing to listen to their subordinates, there were others who just outright ignored them when it came to certain ideas.[29]

While many, if not most, command climates were very positive and constantly used feedback this paper will look at instances where the feedback loops completely broke down. This can often happen in very effective organizations with only one leader breaking this chain. Once these loops are broken down positive ideas can have extremely negative outputs in terms of exhaustive SOPs. These leave subordinate Company Men and soldiers alike feeling micromanaged. This is due to the interpretation and acceptance, or not, of these inappropriate SOPs by the Company Man.

Command climate was and is especially important in the counterinsurgency in Iraq. This is because for the first three years of the conflict there was no specified doctrine in fighting counterinsurgency type conflicts. Now that there are new manuals, like FM 3-24, the need for information freely flowing from all levels of the organization is absolutely imperative. The most important being from the Company Men up to their commanders because the Company Men are the officers that deal with the indigenous population, as well as their own soldiers, everyday on a daily basis on the ground in Iraq. These men are most likely to discover the most effective tactics, techniques and procedures through the process of trial and error and the necessity to learn quickly because their lives and those of their men depend on it. This same necessity is hardly felt higher up in the chain of command and in many instances a dead American soldier is a good thing for these commanders because it shows that they are operating in a "dangerous" sector.

The way that the command climate primarily exists in Iraq today is from the top down. This is because rationally the officers have to impress their leaders in this hierarchical structure in order to maneuver through and enhance their careers. Therefore they are not likely to push an issue if it runs counter to their career success, even

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[29] Out of the 32 interviews there were at least 10 that directly mentioned and instance like this or being in an organization that operated this way. My own personal experience in Iraq had many of my own ideas that I and my peers arbitrarily shut down by superiors in three of the five battalions I worked for before I could even present them.

sometimes at the expense of the welfare of their men. The soldiers are not without recourse. With correspondence back home they are often able to voice their major concerns to their civilian relatives and friends. This usually then becomes an issue in the media and/or catches a politicians' attentions and is pushed back down the chain of command in the form of a command inquiry.[30]

As a democracy, the United States Government is at the end of the day responsible to its people. The politicians will then for both noble and self-serving purposes jump on board with the support of the troops and demand change. In this situation the desires of the political leadership, are then interpreted as they flow down the chain of command.[31] As Kier provides," the military's culture intervenes between civilian decisions and military doctrine."[32]

Take for instance the issue of up armoring the High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs). In an article on the lack of HMMWVs in Iraq (*Dayton Daily* News, April 30, 2004) Mei-Ling Hopgood describes how there was at first a response to the citizens back home who were hearing that their sons and daughters were being blown up and that there were available products, materials or equipment to deter these actions. The politicians had to take up the cause of procuring these up-armored HMMWVs for the soldiers. The Army, because of its slow manner in synthesizing and acting upon information coming up the chain of command, failed to do anything about this with any haste; even though requests for additional armored vehicles had repeatedly been asked for by commanders operating in Iraq.[33] The nation responded with shock upon hearing this and thus the Army decided that all soldiers would have up-armored HMMWVs. This would be done regardless of their situation and corresponding needs and requests.

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[30] A command inquiry is a formal written inquiry from civilian leadership that poses a specific grievance of a soldier within that command that the company commander must respond immediately to in writing through his/her chain of command.

[31] Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 140.

[32] Ibid., 140.

[33] Richard Whittle. "Pentagon Acknowledges Shortage of Armored Humvees." *The Pitt News*, (December 9, 2004). http://media.www.pittnews.com (accessed February 12, 2008).

This type of environment creates a system where the officers in this command climate become risk averse, not with their soldiers' lives but rather with their own careers. Everything is planned so as to avoid blame from above because this is where they fear retribution coming from.[34] FM 6.0 clearly identifies that responsibility cannot be delegated and that "only the commander has total responsibility for what the command does or fails to do," nevertheless a commander can delegate authority for a subordinate commander or leader to act within the intent of the higher commander.[35] Delegation of responsibility is done so that superior officers can avoid punishment by pushing blame for failures to the subordinate leaders.

All of these are created to prevent repercussions from their own leaders and from the American people. Basically a vicious cycle is created that the soldiers, as a group, ask for something like up-armored HMMWVs. Their superiors ignore them because their recognizing the problem and informing their own commanders is not conducive to their own career success. Then the soldiers write home or tell their family upon their arrival home that they did not receive up-armored HMMWVs.[36] In some instances they even skipped their whole chain of command and asked the Secretary of Defense themselves which is then of course published by the media.[37] There are actually two problems occurring here; the most obvious one to the civilians back home is that the soldiers do not have up-armored HMMWVs, but the more subtle and dangerous effect to the war effort is the fact the men were not listened to by their superiors.

Back home the civilians contacted their government representatives who then saw both political gain and personal attachment to the welfare of the soldiers, stood on their pulpit and demanded that soldiers receive up-armored HMMWVs. It was usually never

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[34] Personal experience as an armor platoon leader in 1-13Armor Battalion on Taji, Iraq serving under 3rd Infantry Division in 2005. Nearly every week a new plan was put in place by a different level of leadership above myself about how to properly clear weapons.

[35] Field Manual 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, Headquarters Department of the Army, August 2003, 2-1.

[36] This was discovered by personal experience when I questioned the soldiers of the 39th Brigade that we replaced on Taji in February 2005. During OIF II they received only the standard HMMWVs with the add on armor. They wrote back home so that they could have steel plates and Kevlar pads sent to them so they could reinforce the HMMWVs that they had which lacked floor armor.

[37] George Edmonson. "Humvee Makers Dispute Rumsfeld Remarks," *Cox News Service*, December 10, (2004), http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/203200_armor10.html (accessed February 11, 2008).

mentioned that the soldiers also needed to have an effective information loop where their suggestions can go up the chain of command as well as orders being give from above down the chain of command. Additionally, there was no recognition that these types of problems would be more efficiently solved going up the chain of command and not around it.

As a result, the Pentagon then hears about these problems and they work their way back down. The question then is why did this information not come up organically through the proper feedback loops within the Army? This answer has a large part to do with the rating system again. Officers have to impress their bosses, if they are complaining about something and do not have a good solution for it themselves, then they are looked upon unfavorably. The officer then walks a fine line usually pacifying his own subordinates by either directly saying, or soldiers know it by implication anyway, that their own superiors would not listen to them, so there is nothing that could be done about the situation.

The counterintuitive part about the whole process is that the leaders within the organization would be better off if they were accountable to their subordinates. Take for instance the issue of negligent discharges. Having any soldier die an accidental death is a horrible thing, not just morally but career wise. That officer's commanders will then look at that officer and ask him what he did wrong. This is only because their own commanders are doing the same thing with them. If the officer's ratings were based on his men then the issue would be quickly resolved.

This would be because if the soldier who fired the negligent discharge was an idiot and problem soldier anyway, the men would then collaborate this fact. Whereas if the commander was to blame for running the soldiers ragged to where they were tired or rushed everywhere they were going then it would fall on the commander. If the problem was higher in the chain of command then the Company Man's peers would corroborate this in their reviews of their mutual commander. This would be because the commanders would be concerned just as much about what his men think about him as what his superiors think.

The problem then is what is actually happening inside of this command climate and do the company commanders know about it? This question has to be asked because if the officer in charge is not self aware, or self unaware, then it can be a pretty good bet that he has no idea what some of the things are that are happening underneath him. For instance with the idea of negligent discharges, it became priority information all the way up to the brigade and even the division levels in Iraq during OIF III in Baghdad.[38] The idea was that leaders would be relieved of their positions or severely reprimanded if a negligent discharge happened and this fear would ensure that there were no negligent discharges.

Division level leaders essentially did not trust or believe that they were receiving all the information or that it was being handled appropriately. They therefore kept all the punishment authority at division level. This then created extreme reactions at the brigade and lower levels to accommodate these new requirements. It reinforced the rationality to micromanage.[39] The climate of zero defects encourages micromanagement out of need for mid and high level commanders to protect their careers from the impact of a normal accident or mistake underneath them.[40]

There were many options by company grade officers to deal with this scenario and not all of them entirely honorable. The first one sought out was to take whatever SOPs that were handed down by brigade or division and tighten them down even more. If division said that every weapon would be checked by an E-6 or higher then they company commander could make it so that every weapon had to be checked by the patrol leader, usually the platoon leader, so that if there was a negligent discharge he could show that he had set up even extra SOPs and now it was the lieutenant that was responsible for the incident.

Other options that were adopted by patrols verged on the simple to very scary when one places the Army in the context of a combat environment. One of the more

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[38] Personal experience; this was the case with 3rd Infantry Division during OIF III operating in and around Baghdad.

[39] Steven M. Jones, "Improving Accountability for Effective Command Climate: A Strategic Imperative," *Strategic Studies Institute*, (September 2003) 11.

[40] Allison Graham and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision* (Addison-Wesley Educational Publisher, 1999), 159.

effective methods was to not have the soldiers pull their triggers when firing into the clearing barrels.[41] This way, theoretically if there was a bullet in the gun, it would not go off. The idea behind the original SOP was that the weapons would be properly cleared. The reality in this situation became that the weapons would not be cleared because the punishment was for the bullet coming out of the gun and into the clearing barrel rather than a soldier walking around with a bullet still in his weapon. It is obviously infinitely more dangerous for a weapon to be loaded and no one to know it than to have it cleared into a clearing barrel. This just shows the irrationality of the micromanagement.

Other ways of dealing with this scenario was to have the soldiers walk around in sector with their weapons unloaded. This was because in all actuality in most sectors firefights did not happen every day or even every month. The most important thing that soldiers and their leaders had to worry about was IEDs and losing their jobs because of accidentally firing a round into the clearing barrel.[42] Accidentally firing a round into a clearing barrel that was designed exactly for that purpose should probably not be as big of a concern as IEDs if the Army is to be an effective fighting organization focused on winning. However, because this was the decision that would be made leaders would rather take the risk of having their men walk around with empty weapons than losing their careers because of a clearing incident.[43]

This is essentially a complete breakdown in the cycle of accomplishing a mission. Once the feedback loop is removed from the equation the planning process yields unintended results. Now the mission planning cycle is essentially creating cycles within

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[41] This was a standard operating procedure for the 3rd Infantry Division in and around Baghdad during OIF III.

[42] A sentiment widely expressed but explicitly described by CPT Dennis Faulkner who served as an infantry company commander in Iraq during OIF III (2005) who had a lieutenant that was relieved from his position as a platoon leader because of an accidental discharge at the clearing barrel. My own personal experience ratified this incident when I was in Iraq at the same time and the information coming from higher command was stating that leaders will lose their jobs if rounds go off in the clearing barrels.

[43] Personal experience as an armor platoon leader in 1-13 Armor Battalion on Taji, Iraq during OIF III where I observed other leaders had various levels of weapon ready status and SOPs so as to deter weapons discharging into the barrel. In my own platoon it was generally a practice not to charge crew served weapons as they had a tendency of going off even when bumped as the safety switches on them would often come undone during hours of patrolling. For a M2 .50 caliber flex machine gun there was not a even a safety so loading would mean that it would probably accidentally fire during the course of a month of patrolling.

itself that are removed from the feedback phase. This is what happens when the commander becomes self-unaware. Depending on how bad these situations become the independent decision-making cycles can spiral more and more out of control with lower level leaders creating their informal SOPs and networks to accomplish the task.

If the company grade officer does decide to push the responsibility even lower than his own current position he will still have to either micromanage everything to ensure success or be able, through exhaustively comprehensive SOPs, to lay blame further down the chain of command than himself. However, this means that the leaders among the enlisted ranks will probably start creating these independent decision-making cycles. The Company Man will often times take these independent decision-making cycles upon himself so as to prevent them from happening underneath him and without his knowledge.

It has already been described in the scenario how these decision-making cycles create interesting and often times dangerous solutions. Even more sinister they, in the long run, start to break down unit cohesion and hierarchy, the very thing they were supposedly trying to protect. Once soldiers start seeing their leaders making decisions like these they realize that their senior leaders are not advocating for them. If the Company Men buy into the senior leadership's command climate and begin to micromanage to achieve these unrealistic goals, then the soldier finds himself in a very unfavorable situation because now he knows that no one is advocating for him.

The next logical conclusion to follow is that the soldiers take these independent decision-making cycles in their own hands. They have much less to lose in terms of career because they are already at the bottom of the heap in terms of the Army's hierarchy and do not have as much responsibility. It will naturally follow that they will suck it up and drive on if it is just an annoyance to them. If they perceive that it is an actual threat, they will seek to derail the careers of officers over them, by "accidentally"

firing a negligent discharge for instance.[44] In the case of Vietnam these soldiers would find themselves without an advocate and without hope and in many cases would dispatch of their immediate commanding officers.

This scenario is of course the extreme and the soldiers have not, to our current knowledge of the war in Iraq, found it necessary to dispatch of their leaders. In a lot of cases the self-unaware leader usually finds himself in trouble in other ways. The soldiers either let him fail out of malice or more likely because there is no established feedback system within that unit to allow this transfer of information. So in the end the self-unaware officer is brought down by his own established systems.

F.   SUMMARY

Being an Army officer is a profession and as such the members of this profession abide by codes of conduct and guiding principles. This idealism currently is what drives the Army today and has produced many of the outstanding officers that the Army has seen in its history. However, in today's combat environment where casualties have dropped and technology has become king new factors have come into play. Officers are not required to operate by these principles in order to succeed because their failures are no longer revealed by high losses or complete eradication of their units, and therefore the problem of poor command climates are not as readily apparent.

For information to flow in the Army, the officers have to request to know what the problems are underneath them. For this to occur, the officer has to want to know that a problem exists. In many cases these ideals and principles provide this desire but in an overwhelmingly large number of instances career survival and the need to please their own commanders override these decisions. This is further exacerbated if the command climate emphasizes that an officer who cannot solve his own problems is lazy and is not living up to the ideals of the Army.

At the end of the day every officer makes decisions to ensure his survival within the Army organization as any other individual operating within a large organization

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[44] While specific corroboration or evidence of situations such as these cannot be cited anecdotal information interviewees and Army soldiers suggest that incidences such as these have occurred.

would. If this officer only has to satisfy his two commanders above him then it follows rationally that it will be his main objective. Officers can, and often times do, request to know what the problems on the ground are but if there is a single break in this transfer of information at the command level then everyone below that commander is out of the loop. Only by holding leader's careers at least partially responsible to their subordinates will there be any guarantee that solutions that generate from the bottom make it to the top.

III. EXPERIENCES IN IRAQ

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a case study of officers' experiences in Iraq. While the previous chapter cited some particular incidences faced by company men operating in Iraq this chapter will go into detail. It will highlight some incidences in Iraq that show just how much these officers were able to lead as well as innovate in Iraq. Most of the scenarios set forth are from the point of view of the interviewees but may sound familiar because similar incidences have been reported in the news or written about elsewhere.

The interview questions were written in such a way to try and evoke more than single sentence responses, especially from email respondents. The interviewees consisted of Army and Marine leaders ranging in rank anywhere from sergeant first class (SFC) or E-7 to major (MAJ) or O-4. The one requirement is that their job description required them to be outside the wire nearly every day conducting operations in a role that had them in a leadership position over the group of soldiers that they were leading on the ground in Iraq. This would range anywhere from standard combat units to those in charge of training Iraqi troops and border control guards. In addition to that, there will also be many observations made to how the respondents answered the questions.

Interviews were conducted with 31 Company Men not including my own experiences. A further 24 questionnaires were conducted to try and hammer down some hard answers. This is a far cry from the many thousands of interviews and questionnaires conducted by the Army in the studies referred to by Stephen Jones in his work but it will still help to point out certain trends. Most important will be the stories that are told in the interviews and how they describe the current operational climate that existed in Iraq from the ground war to the beginning of 2006.

B. THE PRE-DEPLOYMENT TRAINING

Pre-deployment training was important because it showed what the Army had institutionalized in terms of training. The majority of emphasis on training going into OIF

II and OIF III was that of mid-intensity conflict. Examples of mid-intensity conflict included room clearing procedures, quick reaction fire drills and training on crew served weapons on HMMWVs. One of the mindsets that pervaded a brigade combat team heading Taji, north of Baghdad, was the mindset of fighting another Battle of Fallujah. Many leaders and soldiers were expecting ambushes and IEDs everyday and wanted to be able to fight back with effectiveness.[45]

The responses to the question of whether or not pre-deployment training was adequate in preparation for Iraq varied but there were some major trends. When asked if the pre-deployment train-up adequately prepare them for going to Iraq there were only three strong yes answers (0.093) while the rest were qualified (0.562) or no (0.344). The yes respondents were all senior company commanders in Iraq while all, except for one, of the no respondents were platoon leaders, FSO's, or worked training the Iraqi Security Forces. There was a pretty even spread between the qualified answers.

The qualified answers had a consistent theme stating that much of the high intensity and mid intensity conflict training was very good. It was agreed upon that the cultural training and civil military operations training was severely lacking. There was little to no language training at all, what little there was consisted of CIA fact book and little book of words written in Iraqi dialect.[46] Lastly, there was an extreme focus in a lot of units on high intensity urban operations especially in those training for OIF III.

All this training was of course in preparation for Iraq. The idea was that leaders as well as soldiers would have to go through training that was geared towards preparing them for the mission they were about to undertake. In the Army a lot of this training was mandated from higher under the guidance given by Chief of Staff of the Army General Peter Schoomaker. His famous line is that "every soldier is a rifleman first" and as such, units began undertaking training that was unusual for their military occupation specialty or MOS. In the case of one unit, an armor battalion, the training was to focus much more on tasks such as quick reaction fire, room clearing procedures, searching procedures on

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[45] Personal experience in the 1-13 Armor Battalion 3rd Brigade Combat Team 1st Armor Division based out of Fort Riley Kansas preparing in 2004 to deploy to Iraq in 2005 for OIF III.

[46] The CIA fact book was helpful but some facts were a little skewed, like telling the difference between the different headscarves in Iraq when it seemed as if the Iraqis just wore whatever color they felt like putting on that morning.

individuals, traffic control point search procedures, as well as individual weapons training and a myriad of other techniques, tasks and procedures more traditionally associated with the role of an infantrymen or a military policeman.[47]

1.   Cultural Training

The U.S. military soon realized after the initial invasion that they would have to do the mission of nation building in Iraq and therefore recognized the need for cultural training.[48] As such the Army quickly ramped up a program where soldiers would receive briefings on what they might encounter while in Iraq. By the end of OIF II and beginning of OIF III (2004 and on) it was usually a standard in Army training for soldiers to attend battalion sized briefings. These briefings would cover issues such as what and what not to do when the soldiers were in Iraq in terms of cultural awareness.

The briefings suggested many things like pretending the soldiers were married and they had kids so that they would be more respected by the people within the Islamic and Arab culture in Iraq. The "experts" briefing often suggested placing a picture of a random baby boy to put in their wallets so the soldiers could show the Iraqis that they "had kids." This in and of itself was not particularly helpful in my experience in Iraq or in anyone else's experience that was interviewed.[49] There were useful tips though, like not showing the bottoms of one's feet or the back of one's hand that did save the troops some unneeded headaches that could have occurred. Overall, the briefings were helpful in some situations while in others they focused on trivial things, such as buying a fake wedding ring, which would not really help the overall mission and seemed dishonest anyway. These briefings were indicative of the lack of a coherent picture and understanding of the current situational needs that faced the military members.

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[47] This was the case with the case of my organic battalion, 1-13 Armor Battalion out of Fort Riley, Kansas. Only one company out of three in the battalions was told that they would be only on tanks in Iraq, the rest of the companies including my own were to extensively train on these procedures.

[48] "Coaching US Troops on Iraqi Culture." *BBC News*. (July 19, 2007) http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/americas/6904842.stm (accessed February 12, 2008).

[49] In all the interviews that the issue of battalion sized briefings were brought up in it was consensus that the telling fictitious things to the Iraqis was best avoided and therefore was not a useful tip.

Some respondents indicated that they had little or no cultural training at all before deploying to the Middle East. However, there was mandatory training once everyone arrived in Kuwait but it was very similar in regards to the briefings soldiers received stateside. The experiences were pretty much exactly the same for the leaders who trained for OIF III. Basically, it was preparing for another Battle of Fallujah type scenario should it arise while the units were in Iraq. While this training was good for its intended purposes, the information presented served to offer little in the way of day to day operations. One interviewee described this inevitable conundrum of low intensity conflict by stating "how do you train to be uncomfortable, hot and tired."[50]

On a positive note, there were even some attempts at cultural training specifically aimed at leaders, platoon leader and above, that put them in scenarios at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California. In these situations leaders had to negotiate with an Iraqi-American citizen speaking Arabic through means of an interpreter. Coincidentally enough often times the leader was given nothing with which to negotiate so as to teach a leader how to bargain when they had nothing to offer. Little did many leaders realize at the time how useful the bargaining exercise using "nothing" for leverage would be. However, not all units participated in these training sessions.

2. Language Training

The issue of using interpreters was an important one and led to a consistent topic in the interviews of language training. This then led to the recommendation that many of the interviewed leaders would make; a desire for more language skills among American military personnel. Often times one or two non-commissioned officers would be sent to receive some training in an Iraqi dialect of Arabic. The training was usually very short and was intended for them to come back and train the rest of the company. This was usually unrealistic given the difficulty of the Arabic language to learn to expect someone with a few hours of training to train others. Usually the second step of the NCOs teaching the rest of the company did not happen because the company was busy training other

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[50] This was in an interview with CPT Michael Gretz and artillery officer who served as an infantry platoon leader who conducted operations in northwestern Iraq outside of Mosul during OIF III.

situations. Also, having soldiers learn one hundred words of Arabic was not a requirement for training handed down from above.

Language skills were an issue that almost unanimously Company Men across the board agreed upon. Even while this issue was being slightly addressed there has been no real change in the Army's approach to teaching languages to the units. In 2006 an effort was made to teach more languages to the military and learning a language is now a requirement at the Naval Academy but fails to be one at the United States Military Academy where arguably the Army could be putting out young officers with a workable use of Arabic within two years. This is another area where the Army could enhance its ability to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi population.

Communication was often a problem that was faced in Iraq and interpreters of any useful quality were in short supply. Many officers, due to the lack of interpreters, learned about 500 words in a month's time, while fulfilling their job requirements, which made their time in Iraq a whole lot easier.[51] Simple interview questions used while searching homes and cars give units much of the demographic information needed in regards to their respective areas of operation. The Iraqis also appreciated it because Americans spoke directly to them instead of through an interpreter. Many of the interviewers expressed that they had a lot more success with good interpreters while those with weak ones suffered many more setbacks, thus reinforcing the need for good language skills.

Some leaders who served in Iraq did have the mindset that it was not important to learn a language. These commanders were more of the types that were into high intensity offensive minded operations and therefore were not as interested in conducting counterinsurgency operations. This, however, was more of an observation by the interviewed Company Men regarding other leaders rather than their own personal beliefs. The only interviewees that really held this mindset were those that had spent most of the tour on a tank guarding a road and having little to no interaction with the local populous during a year's time of serving there.

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[51] Personal experience as part of B Company, 1-13 Armor Battalion operarting around Taji, Iraq in 2005. Other officers that were interviewed had the same experience such as CPT Dennis Faulkner who served as a infantry company commander in 1-87th Infantry Battalion in and around Baghdad, to include Abu Ghraib, in 2005.

3.   Low Intensity Conflict/Counterinsurgency Training

Another problem among the more junior leaders, was the complete lack of training in both investigation and interrogation procedures for leaders in Iraq. There was absolutely no training given to these leaders regarding investigation procedures and the SOPs were usually something that was made up as a unit proceeded in Iraq. The S2, the intelligence shop in a battalion, would usually say to collect as much evidence as possible but there was very little knowledge as to what was useful to collect or to note about searching a particular house.

Additionally, there were no set ways of how to accomplish the process of gathering and evaluation information and evidence. For instance, there is the story of one commander who got very excited that there were empty grain bags in a house. This was because during the morning briefing he had learned that the insurgents were using these empty grain bags to carry the IEDs to their intended target sites. He completely failed to realize he was searching a farm where they used grain to feed the animals. The integration of information with knowledge was something that was not always achieved with these leaders.

The above scenario spoke directly to a large problem that was faced by many leaders is that the person who was the best at evaluating the information on hand was usually not the individual in charge of the unit and therefore was not the individual allowed to determine what the evidence meant. There were particular individuals good at negotiation but it was not as if they were called upon for their special skills let alone were promoted because of their ability to accomplish a task. Many times leaders and soldiers would have an understanding of how something was actually occurring only to be told by someone higher up in the chain of command that they were in fact wrong and that leader would arbitrarily stop that particular subordinate.[52] These particular incidences highlight some of the major problems within the Army's structure and rating system today because leaders can do this and suffer no repercussions while forcing their subordinates to work in spite of their leaders instead of with their leaders.

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[52] Personal experience in Iraq as well observations of other company grade officers interacting with field grade officers in their chain of command.

In terms of interrogation, the procedures were predominantly just as poorly set out for leaders. It was to a point sometimes where some interviewed leaders did not want to share information they had gathered in Iraq with others in their units because they were concerned that they would mishandle the information and therefore lose it. This is a common problem within a bureaucracy. Interestingly enough information like this was withheld by these leaders not as a desire to advance individually but rather help them accomplish the organization's long term goals. Many of the interviewed Company Men were often chastised after trying to protect an informants' anonymity as being soft and not willing to understand the harsh realities of war.

If an individual leader were to acquire a contact that was willing to help the Coalition Forces on a condition of relative anonymity another platoon leader or company commander, sometimes after receiving this information, would go out into sector and ask every Iraqi he ran into where this person was in the most blatantly open way possible. This obviously ruined the informant's desire for relative anonymity. In one instance, one of these leaders even found a contact this way who naturally refused to talk to them and denied having said anything to Coalition Forces in the first place. This ultimately led to the company commander or platoon leader returning to base and declaring that this informant was obviously working for the enemy because the informant refused to give out any information.[53] However, understanding the condition that the informant was placed in, with the encounter being in broad daylight in front of a large crowd that in high probability had individuals not sympathetic to the American cause, it is not difficult to realize why the informant acted in such a way.

Another story told by a young armor platoon leader highlights almost the same incompetence when it came to interrogation of informants. The incident described below is similar to other stories described by other interviewees and shows why it is hard to gather human intelligence, even disregarding the hurdle posed by a lack of language skills.

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[53] Personal experience as an armor platoon leader with B Company, 1-13 Armor north of Baghdad during 2005.

The incident that made me the most upset illustrated why we had failed to get any decent intelligence up to that point in the deployment. A few local citizens had come to the battalion we shared our FOB (Forward Operating Base) with to share info. The information they had concerned our AO (area of operations) so the intelligence guys from the other BN brought them over. I sat in on the meeting and watched as our battalion S2, the tactical HUMINT team and my company commander managed to alienate these men to the point that they basically walked out. The complete lack of any skill by all of the people charged with collecting and analyzing intelligence absolutely boggled my mind and left me really pissed off.[54]

This story is typical of the way in which a large number of leaders handled informants and indigenous peoples. The story also highlights how the intelligence officers themselves had very little training in accomplishing proper human intelligence collection as their previous tasks, especially in maneuver battalions, was primarily to analyze graphical intelligence and not interrogate humans.

The problem also remained that leaders were overall in charge of what came out of interrogations. In the case of the story told by the platoon leader, his company commander was present at the interrogation and was actually participating in the process. The problem with a hierarchical organization is that usually everyone else feeds off of the dominant leader in the room, usually determined by rank and not necessarily by level of competence in dealing with the situation. In this case, when the interview started to go bad everyone else went bad with the leader. It was only when the platoon leader jumped in and stopped the direction of the interview that it was it turned around, useful information was extracted, and the informants were not alienated beyond working with the Americans again in the future.

Officers did have professional journals to read before heading over that were branch specific and many times would read other branches' journals as well, especially the ones put out by those in infantry because everyone understood that they would most likely have to perform that role no matter what their own branch was. However, this was all a personal endeavor and in almost all cases was never required and even if it was it

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[54] This was an interview with CPT Dominic Clemente who served with 2-34 Armor in Baghdad during OIF III.

was never really enforced.   These journals did offer useful insight into what would be happening in Iraq but in 2004 they still focused on Battle of Fallujah type scenarios where it would be mid to high intensity urban operations everyday while serving in Iraq. There was very little at that time that dealt specifically with the issue of a counterinsurgency.

One of the most important tools that were used by commanders was shared experiences by others. Journals did a little towards this end but it was the face to face interaction with other soldiers and leaders who had served in Iraq that was crucial. In an armor battalion that had served in Iraq during OIF I their experiences were not in how to clear buildings but in how to meet people and build relationships. The experiences faced by this battalion during OIF III were much more inline with those than they were with the Fallujah urban warfare mindset that seemingly dominated the scholarly journals.

Also of great importance was the left seat/right seat rides conducted by new units with the units they were replacing in Iraq. While all the training had been geared towards Iraq, the only way to understand one's sector completely was to learn from those that had been their immediately before them. Again with the armor battalion they had a bad experience during OIF I of the battalion replacing them completely ignoring them and in many of their views contributing to the rise of the Mehdi and militia and the situation in Sadr City that ended up extending the tours of many in Iraq that were headed for home.

In that light, many Company Men learned as much as they could about the area from the units that they were replacing because there was a general understanding that is where the best information would come from. In one case the previous platoon had written up SOPs based on all their experiences in Iraq during OIF II and the follow on platoon just adopted those SOPs and saw their time in Iraq as casualty free.[55]

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[55] This was my personal experience as an armor platoon leader in 1-13 Armor Battalion replacing a cavalry platoon from the 39th Brigade on Taji, Iraq in 2005.

C. WHAT DID LEADERS PERCEIVE AS THEIR METRICS FOR SUCCESS?

The Metrics for Success are specifically what tasks did leaders have to accomplish for their own leaders to consider their roles in Iraq to be a success. For instance in Vietnam there was the issue of enemy killed and ammunition expended that was used as a gauge for success. Asking this question was mean to garner different responses then those but hopefully elicit some sort of set answer for what leaders thought they had to do to be successful.

In asking this question the intent was to garner information in regards to what junior leaders actually thought that they had to accomplish in an objective way in order for their missions in Iraq to be a success. However, the responses of this question were varied. There were the originally intended answers which were expressed by an armor platoon leader who stated "if I were in my tank going down the road and saw an insurgent on the side of the road putting in an IED and I killed that insurgent with my rifle from the top of my tank, the impression I had was that would be crowning achievement and I would receive a 'gold star' on my report."[56] However, the answers were more varied and many times people were allowed to choose their mission as long as they would just leave their area of operations better than they found it.

Since the most objective answer was the one with regards to the "gold star" the discussion will start there. While there was never a set list of tasks to be completed to be sent back up through the chain of command to the leadership in Washington D.C. to be evaluated as success or failure there still was a vastly predominant notion in Iraq that a high enemy body count was a desired end-state. While it was only about half the leaders that had this experience it still ran through the organization as a whole, because somewhere in the chain of command there was usually a leader with this mentality. This

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[56] This was an interview with CPT Robert Gregory, an armor platoon leader with 2-70th Armor Battalion who operated our Taji, Iraq. As an armor platoon leader he conducted most of his operations with tanks on the main supply routes. IED refers to an improvised explosive device, usually an artillery round or some type of explosive hooked up to an initiating device that could be set off remotely through the use of walkie-talkies or even a long wire and a battery. Also, "gold star" is an expression, similar to what a child would receive in elementary school for doing well; it is not a military term or award.

is not entirely unusual because most people when they signed up for the Army in a combat arms branch, or any Marine for that matter, they signed up under the premise that they might in fact have to kill people at some point in their careers.

Insurgent body counts were always something that was a highly valued commodity among leaders. There was never a leader in any of the interviews that had the idea that their commanders thought that dead insurgents were a bad thing. What varied was when it was appropriate to kill an insurgent. Even in 2007 and 2008, one could hardly turn on the news without hearing about how many insurgents were killed. This is even in light of General Petraeus attempting to restructure the strategy in Iraq supporting the view in counterinsurgency that often times for every one enemy that is killed two take their place. According to Field Manual 3-24, "However, killing every insurgent is normally impossible. Attempting to do so can also be counterproductive in some cases; it risks generating popular resentment, creating martyrs that motivate new recruits, and producing cycles of revenge." [57]

This notion of having to kill the enemy in many units was key but accomplishing the act was very confusing for soldiers. There was what seemed like a constant effort to draw the enemy out to fight so that we could kill them, but there really was not a clue as to how to accomplish this task. If there were ever any doubt about a kill a soldier would be questioned over and over again as to why he shot someone. By contrast, one of the biggest successes that a brigade commander noted from his unit's tour during OIF III when he was able to kill approximately ten armed insurgents by surrounding them with ground forces and then killing the main group with an F-16 strike and letting the Apache Helicopters pick off the rest of the insurgents. No matter how many civil projects were completed or even more military goals like detaining insurgents with very useful intelligence or finding weapons caches with thousands of rounds in them this brigade

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[57] Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, Headquarters Department of the Army and Marine Corps, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1-23.

commander would constantly regale this tale as one of his brigade's most outstanding achievements and in many instances completely ignore that any of those other metrics had been accomplished.[58]

There were many times that objective metrics were needed for day to day operations. In many cases platoons' experiences were made a whole lot smoother and given direction and guidelines that could easily be met. By having a set list of things that had to be accomplished, the platoon had a set of tasks and standards instead of just being out there to patrol for the sake of patrolling and ending up as one platoon sergeant stated that he ended up "…feeling like we were just the little toy ducks in the shooting gallery going back and forth, providing targets of opportunity to the insurgents."[59] This really depended on battalion leadership. On the one hand, if the battalion commander wanted to direct things then missions were very rarely allowed to deviate from the standard "patrolling for the sake of patrolling."[60] On the other hand, if the decisions were pushed down to the company commanders then the missions became more focused on completing tasks and less so about being in sector just to have troops in sector.

Therefore, when the platoons had set metrics, instead of being told to patrol for eight hours and conduct "counterinsurgency operations," the platoons were instead given lists of things that had to be done the interviewees felt that they had more of a sense of purpose and direction. This created a sense of accomplishment and boundaries when the list was completed, the mission was done. The tasks would consist of stopping and searching a set number of cars, a set number of houses, and talking to various people to gain information. This information would range from insurgency operations to talking about what was needed in the area to improve it regarding to area improvement with consideration to civil projects and the like. This means of gathering information very

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[58] This was COL David Bishop, commander of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armor Division. 3rd BCT was attached to 3rd Infantry Division during OIF III and was based out of FOB Taji.

[59] This was an interview with an SFC Darren Shepherd an armor platoon sergeant that had the mission of driving up and down a road constantly for 24 hours until they were replaced by another unit who would do the same thing. The only reason that people were out there patrolling for 24 hours is because the road had to be protected to bring the supplies out for the people patrolling. It was a very circular justification for a mission.

[60] A common statement made by many junior officers and soldiers operating in Iraq. It also came up in numerous interviews with platoon leaders discussing their units in Iraq not having a defined end state so they just had platoons out in sector conducting route security or preventing IEDs from being emplaced.

rarely led to anything of military use in finding insurgents and therefore loss favor with the more high intensity driven chain of command.[61]

It was in light of these relatively unsuccessful yields that this way of doing missions quickly met its demise because the units were never in one place for long enough to develop the relationships that were needed to create trust and respect so valuable information and contacts were more easily attainable. On top of that, platoons would often time accomplish the missions in less than an hour and consider their patrol finished which, as they would find out later, was not the intent. The fact that units would rarely ever give platoon leaders anything with which to bargain with the locals did not help either. Therefore meaningful engagement with the population was very limited.

Many of the Company Men interviewed also had a sense of what was most important to their leaders in terms of metrics, even though it was not explicitly stated. Alternately, with this, there were many discussions with Company Men that had good relations with their superior officers and therefore did not feel the need to accomplish certain goals but were entrusted to secure their areas relatively free of micromanagement. These individual Company Men really decided what was important and what was not in their own units. In one battalion digging up caches of bombs that were being used for IEDs was of great importance but not as much so as watching the road to make sure no IEDs were buried along side of the road to be set off against a convoy.

For many battalion commanders there was this overarching need and desire to stop IED attacks. This was a common theme among most of those interviewed.[62] The success and failure of the battalion in these commander's eyes was the number of attacks on American patrols. In certain cases a bomb going off even resulted in whoever was patrolling at the time to receive a lecture from their superiors that they were not patrolling enough, regardless of the situation. This was particularly frustrating for many leaders

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[61] Both of these means of interrogation had little measure of success. Information usually came from being able to create a relationship with the local populace and since there was such a turnover in our sector there was never the time to form these relationships. On top of that the units that I worked with often did little to help in sector and we were often told to tell the Iraqis that this was the job of the Iraqi government, not ours. The Iraqis would argue that their government was corrupt and would not do anything for them but I had nothing to offer.

[62] Unanimously this was an understood goal for all units operating in Iraq. There were varying methods, however, on how to accomplish this end state.

because the battalion would rarely have any intelligence, especially when first arriving in their sector, about who was conducting these attacks, where they were coming from and why were they so adamant about attacking Americans. Without this information, patrolling was generally ineffective.

One instance particularly highlights the breakdown of communication that occurred between Company Men and their superiors. A grain bag filled with an artillery round, a blasting cap and a wire were found fifty feet away from the road on the other side of a dirt berm from the road. This was a common practice for insurgents to pre-position these bags full of rounds so that they could drive back at a later time and then place alongside the road connect it to a detonator. This way if they were searched travelling to or from the site they would have nothing suspicious on them and be allowed through.

When this prepositioned IED was found it was called up as a prepositioned IED and the battalion in question had a fit from the S3 to the battalion commander. They demanded to know why an IED had been placed alongside the road while a platoon had been securing the route all day and night for the past week. The platoon sergeant and platoon leader called back numerous times stating that it was a prepositioned bag and had not yet been hooked up to a detonator and was not anywhere near enough to the road to cause damage to anyone especially since it was on the other side of a ten foot high and twenty foot wide dirt berm. They also informed them if they looked at the satellite imagery and the ten digit grid location that had been sent up they would see that it was not "on" or "by" the road.[63]

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[63] Personal experience operating with 1-320 Field Artillery Battalion on the eastern edge of the Anbar province in 2005. I had to explain five times to different officers in my chain of command and various operations officers that it was not an IED on the side of the road. Instead it was one all prepared to be moved up to the side of the road for an attack. This was actually valuable insight for us on how the insurgents were moving the IEDs in stages to the attack site without being discovered. This information, however, was lost on my chain of command that was too busy trying to blame someone for something that never happened.

This occasion highlights the complete breakdown in communication that would often happen between the Company Men and their superiors. It also highlights how in a large number of incidences battalion leadership often made decisions with almost no knowledge of the situation or even understanding of how the enemy would attack. However, they were still in charge and had the ultimate control of how to respond. These broken feedback loops left many Company Men feeling like they were spinning their wheels trying to explain situations to their bosses. The senior leaders seemed to care little about the situation and more about keywords like IEDs, insurgents, captured, and killed.

The worst thing to do in one particular battalion was to fire one's weapon, whether it was a warning shot, testing the weapons, an accident, or at the enemy. At least half of the incidents of firing one's weapon involved the Company Man seeing the battalion commander and explaining why, with carrying a standard load of 210 .556 rounds for their M4 Assault Rifle and 30 9mm rounds for their Pistols, the soldiers believed they had any right to shoot at anything.[64] This was typified by the previous example of negligent discharges which many interviewees collaborated.

With the change of leadership came a change in views and goals. Another battalion commander had a more typical view in Iraq of "we're going to take the fight to the enemy." If one fired their weapon he wanted to know why there were no dead bodies. The obsession for watching the road got pushed to the backburner replaced by raids and cordon and searches until his battalion lost six soldiers in two weeks to IEDs, then there was a massive emphasis put on this mission. This speaks to the only feedback that leaders are still measured by and that is high intensity conflict metrics. This battalion's commander had no incentive to change his actions until he lost all those men and by the time he "got it" he was understandably moved by his own leaders to a less dangerous FOB security mission.[65]

This ability by company commanders to still be able to innovate somewhat speaks to the ability to have some fraction of the decision-making on the company level. On the

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[64] Personal experience in Iraq during 2005 revealed that many companies and platoons lowered the amount of required ammunition. The sentiment was commonly that if they are not going to fire their weapons then why carry around the extra ammunition.

[65] This was personal experience working with 1-320 Field Artillery Battalion in 2005 in the eastern Anbar province. The battalion prided itself on "taking the fight to the enemy."

whole though, there was generally a shared sentiment among platoon leaders that there was not nearly as much room for innovation or recommendations at the platoon level. This innovation was generally stifled no matter what kind of leader they were, instead it was basically agreed upon by most leaders that lieutenants should not be involved too much in innovative non-doctrinal procedures because of their rank. Even the interviewed company commanders that seemed to have relatively successful tours with very few casualties still all seem to be agreed upon the fact that platoon leaders were young and inexperienced and therefore should not be given a lot of leeway.

It was in light of one of these discussions with an armor company commander that the notion of a "1st lieutenant who knew everything" came up and he quickly explained that lieutenants did not understand the intricacies involved in the decision-making process. He would explain that leaders higher up had more information, with more assets, and so they had a better understanding of what was happening in the big picture in Iraq.[66] This assertion was made not only by this interviewee but also by others referring to their leaders who had almost word for word had the same things to say about them. One of the interviewees who was a platoon leader heard about these "1st lieutenants who knew everything" and said that he had been told the same exact thing in Iraq.

The interesting thing about this notion is why it was such a common occurrence and referenced by so many company commanders and above. The same interviewee proffered the notion that lieutenants in Iraq did not know any better. The role of a lieutenant when he first shows up to unit, whether in peace time or at war, is to figure the ins and outs of his job quickly. In Iraq when things start to go bad and attacks increase, these lieutenants lacking the years of experience that their own leaders have within the Army immediately turn from anything doctrinal towards whatever works. This is not to say that the lieutenant did not know anything about his job but rather to point out the fact that they did not find themselves bound by the same bureaucratic culture that even the company commanders, only one position higher than them in the chain of command, found themselves bound to.

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[66] Personal experience revealed that these concerns did have some validity as sectarian violence spiraled out of control in 2006 despite our warnings. A situation that a few of us know-it-alls pointed out to our leaders when it was beginning to happen but was not treated with any amount of urgency.

This same phenomenon was noticed when talking to the fire support officers (FSO). In a traditional high intensity conflict these officers would be with their team traveling with the unit or scouting out ahead and calling back grids for where they wanted artillery fired. In the new low intensity conflict, these leaders were some of the first to lose their jobs. In Iraq they would end up filling all sorts of rolls from platoon leaders and company commanders for maneuver elements, a role usually filled by infantry or armor personnel, to a myriad of others to include training the Iraqi Army, civil affairs, and interrogation teams.

Almost all of these leaders agreed that they had to relinquish any previous notions about what they thought their jobs might be or what they thought it might entail. They were also very used to operating on their own without very specific guidance. An FSO who was tasked with training Iraqi forces summed it up perfectly when he said "we're FSO's and we're kind of used to doing our own thing anyway," when he was asked about training the Iraqi Army without any particular guidance from his chain of command except to make them better than they were.[67]

There was a lack of cohesion among the different Iraqi units. If an officer had been give complete leeway to conduct operations as he saw fit when it came to integrating into the larger structure, everything that they had worked on was almost for naught because it did not translate into working with other units. Many times the official trainers that the Army would send to Iraq would have to start from scratch because there was not any sharing of how things were being done from unit to unit.

In general, company commanders were satisfied with the amount of autonomy that they received. There was one exception—a company commander who had his battalion commander dictate to him every move that he made in regards to any mission. If the company commander believed that other things had to be done, it was to be without the battalion commander knowing about it. In light of this situation this commander was

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[67] CPT Matthew Wehri who served as an FSO as well as Iraqi Army trainer with 1-21 Field Artillery in Baghdad during 2004.

still able to affect a lot of change within his company. When he took over he reduced their casualties to zero for the second half of that company's tour, which led many of his men to say that they would follow him to the bitter end.

One thing that was constantly addressed in the interviews was that of what is referred to as a SWEAT (Sewage, Water, Electricity, Academics and Trash) analysis. This was a mission given out to various platoons to analyze the SWEAT capabilities of any given area. While nearly everyone interviewed dealt with this mission, almost unanimously this mission was seen as one of the least important tasks. This feeling was not only felt in the analysis itself but in the desire by the interviewees' respective battalions to do anything about improving these respective areas within their sectors. Often times these missions were handed over to the various civil affairs units attached to the brigades and left for them to develop. Almost unanimously the respondents all said in hindsight that they probably should have made this their primary mission while they were in Iraq with reduced attacks being viewed as one way of measuring their improvement within this framework but not the primary way of viewing it.

This would almost suggest that information does flow up the chain of command because eventually General Petraeus would be put in charge of Iraq and would emphasize that things like SWEAT were at least equal to if not more important tasks than those of raids and offensive operations.[68] However, most of these Company Men stated this after studying counterinsurgency operations in various Army schools and almost all of them admitted that they knew very little about it before they had done this, that they had only known that whatever was happening in Iraq, in terms of mid intensity offensive minded operations, was not working.

The last issue with the metrics of success was that of reporting progress. It is pretty typical in the United States Military that when something is sent down from higher as requirement to be done and is expected to be reported back up the chain of command, that short of not having a physical item needed to fulfill that requirement regardless of

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[68] Lt. Gen David H. Petraeus, "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq, *Military Review* 4 (January-February 2006), 10.

cost, that issue will not be reported back up to higher as anything less than completed and that everything is good to go. The general sense was and always has been "just do it" and any reason why a Company Man could not accomplish a mission was not to do with a problem with the situation or the mission, but because they were an ineffective leader.

This general sense shared by most of the interviewed Company Men obviously has a huge impact on feedback loops and information. Tasks like this would occur in Iraq in regards to safety training and the like. Most people would do this required training in whatever small amount of time they had, sometimes in the middle of patrolling out in sector by pulling into a secluded area setting up security and conducting training. There was a sizeable minority though that just reported up the chain of command tasks like these as being completed even though they were not. Even if there were those junior leaders that reported it up to higher command that there was no time and this absolutely could not happen without more time and resources, it was a lot of time glossed over at the next level as being completed and the report was sent up as completed at that level.

In summary, leaders would find weird ways of accomplishing the mission or would just plain lie. If leaders were not as much concerned about how they were viewed by their commanders then someone further up the chain of command or in the line of the transmission of information would usually just lie for them. This particular situation most grossly manifested itself in the training of Iraqi security forces. In an interview with a Marine in charge of the training of border security regarding the altering of reports the answer to the question of whether it happened was very blatantly "yes, reports were altered all the time."[69] This interviewee pointed out that he would often report that these units were not at all ready in many regards and were not progressing no matter how much effort was put towards them but when he reported it up his chain of command the reports were altered as they continued up the chain so as to show that the Iraqi units were progressing in their readiness to operate on their own. Again this shows a fear of repercussion within the hierarchy. Problems were not being proffered up for resolution but rather to be solved at the lowest level possible.

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[69] This was in an interview with MAJ Andrew Merz, a Marine field artillery officer whose job as a captain was to train the Iraq border control from spring 2005 to spring 2006. While Andrew was not in the Army the superiors that he reported to were.

D. DID METRICS HAMPER WHAT LEADERS BELIEVED NEED TO BE DONE?

Many leaders did not want to think of their tour in Iraq as unproductive. They wanted to feel good about what was accomplished. Nevertheless, people learn more from failure than success. As one company commander noted when faced with the question of whether or not these metrics hampered mission accomplishment:

> Yes, now my higher chain of command had a certain way of doing things. And there was no middle road. You had to follow to the letter on what had to be done. I mean whenever I did a company cordon and search the battalion commander wanted me to have a plan to position each and every squad vehicle. To me that is micromanagement. It totally cut out the platoon leaders. But to counter that I did the plan and showed it to the platoon leader's to see if it would work. And if it worked then I would bring it to the battalion commander. But once he saw it, he would change it. I felt like why was I here? Why don't you run the company!!![70]

In fact there were more than a few of micromanaging battalion commanders in the United States Military in Iraq. This micromanagement and unwillingness to listen was a common, especially in regards to feedback from their subordinates. The Army "works" when feedback loops are working, when the plan is disseminated, and when junior leaders report to their superiors with recommendations based on their own capabilities. When these loops are completely closed there is no sharing of information. Often, feedback stopped at the lowest levels of leadership in the Army. One lieutenant describes how his feedback was received during his interactions with many of his superiors:

> Yes, at the lowest levels not so much although there were definitely thoroughly guided plans disseminated in order to conduct missions, but the problem was there was no chance of feedback or adding to decision-

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[70] Interview with a company commander regarding the planning of company sized raids on targets. He insisted on anonymity when conducting this interview because he was still concerned about repercussions from above.

making process in order to diversify and benefit the mission. It was the "this is how we will do it, and if you don't like it get promoted," persona although not said in so many words.[71]

This lieutenant was saying that one needed to stay within their role and to follow superior officers without question. The only time that one would be able to change this system is when they were to obtain a promotion and effect the change themselves. This lack of feedback going up the chain of command due to rank hindered the effectiveness of the Army in achieving its goals in Iraq.

Another theme that emerged in the interviews was that platoon and company commanders stated that the battalion level operations that they conducted were almost entirely useless. Very rarely did they gather anything useful and if they did, it was something that could have been done with a platoon size element or at most a company sized element. Respondents spoke many times of losing the element of surprise because all the Iraqis within their sectors knew what was happening when the entire battalion launched an operation.

In some instances, there was a need to conduct these operations so that the battalion commander could fulfill a requirement to conduct these operations whether or not they were needed. These kinds of operations undermined friendly relations with the local population, which were needed for success. The battalion commanders would be so obsessed with trying to prove to their own commanders that they were following orders that they cut all feedback from below that did not support this objective.

In one instance, an infantry company commander pointed out that he could accomplish a mission by using one platoon instead of an entire battalion, thereby allowing his company and all the other companies in the battalion to continue their missions. The battalion commander would have none of it and the company commander stopped asking for permission to do this once he finally realized that the battalion commander was actually tracking all these battalion size missions as accomplishments for his battalion.

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[71] Interview with CPT Christian Colby, a fire support officer who also doubled as platoon leader in 1-13 Armor Battalion north of Baghdad during 2005.

Aside from complaining about the stifling situations that many Company Men found themselves in there were some other valuable patterns and insights in answers to this question. One was that a large number of interviewees really did not even know what exactly they were trying to accomplish and what the overall end state was supposed to be so they were unsure of how to answer the question. Even when terms of platoon leaders' missions and patrols were not dictated to them they often found themselves with their platoons patrolling for the sake of patrolling and having no goal. There was some confusion as to what patrolling was actually supposed to accomplish. This led to a frustrating sense of just driving around and accomplishing nothing towards a larger goal. Again, if someone complained to their leaders that they were accomplishing nothing, the commander would usually regard that individual as being lazy for not coming up with something to do on their own. Even if this did not occur the fear of it happening was a common theme among respondents that effectively stifled most feedback.[72]

The company commanders that were allowed great flexibility also experienced frustration but on a less immediate scale and a much deeper long term scale. For the most part when the interviewed company commanders regaled their stories they said that they were able to bring about a relative calm in their area and in some cases see a turnaround in the city in terms of decreasing violence and increasing areas such as the economy, education and overall improvement of the neighborhood. This all would inevitably be lost to the follow on unit, who much to the chagrin of the interviewees, would immediately adopt their own way of doing things and lose everything that was gained.

The issue of the follow on unit is a very important because it is where continuity is lost. Continuity is a very important requirement for low intensity conflicts because it allows leaders to interact with the populations within their sectors without having to rebuild all their relations. In almost every scenario the new units would come and immediately start conducting operations in the manner that they saw fit to do so. This was an issue from platoon to platoon all the way up to division to division.

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[72] This is common in most bureaucracies and the Army in Iraq was no exception. My own personal experience in Iraq in 2005 verified this as well as many of the interviews conducted with the platoon leaders and company commanders.

Though there are particular stories about this happening that were unsettling there is one that stands out in the interviews as being particularly poignant. A company commander had received an email from another company commander who was currently serving over in Iraq. This company commander said that he had obtained his name from the local Iraqis in his sector that said that this company commander was really a good guy to work with. This company commander then asked the interviewee whether or not he had any information regarding this sector and the indigenous population. The interviewed company commander replied with all the knowledge he knew from his memory but other than that, he had very little to offer the new company commander because no military personnel serving in Iraq are allowed to bring any official military information home with them regarding Iraq and Coalition Forces' operations there. Even more frustrating for the interviewed commander is apparently the ten plus pounds of paperwork and over two gigabytes of information they had collected on the sector regarding the people who lived there, intelligence that had been gathered, status of projects and various contacts and informants had all been lost or discarded.[73]

There are a myriad of different explanations for this. In the Army there is a desire to be viewed as go getter, innovative, and offensive in their mindset and following what the previous unit did does not make a leader stand out. Also, there are a large number of occasions were the previous unit was not that successful and one would be an idiot to follow in their footsteps. The main problem existed when the previous unit had evolved into a counterinsurgency operation only to have it all be ended by the follow on unit who was going to "take the fight to the enemy." The biggest problem though is probably the lack of coherent ideas prior to late 2006 on what do in Iraq.

All interviewees noted that they lacked a doctrinally set way of gathering and transferring information to the next units that would follow on after them. As pointed out in the answers to the question regarding pre-deployment training, the U.S. military did not have a set way of collecting information that could be transferred on to other people

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[73] CPT Dennis Faulkner who served as a infantry company commander in 1-87th Infantry Battalion in and around Baghdad, to include Abu Ghraib, in 2005.

and units. This meant that many times while information would be transferred it would often times end up being viewed as entirely useless because the receiving unit did not know how to interpret it or use it.

E.   HOW MUCH AUTHORITY WERE LEADERS ABLE TO EXERCISE?

As seen earlier there were already many restrictions placed on quite a few of these leaders. As on interviewee aptly put it "it seemed as if all the leadership was completely risk averse, where is the ability to show audacity and take risks, of course thinking about it first."[74] He acknowledged that it was important to go through risk mitigation procedures but theatre wide there were rules of engagement (ROEs) as well as theatre wide standard operating procedures (SOPs) which were very stifling to operations. For example in the sector where the aforementioned interviewee was working there were no IEDs at all since the war began. His unit would have to travel over vast tracts of land. They would have to take up-armored HMMWVs with fuelers and make a giant convoy out of the whole operation whenever they went to check on some of the far outlying posts. The British troops, however, that drove on the same 100 mile stretch of road were allowed to downgrade their vehicles to unarmored ones that could make the entire trek without refilling and go twice as fast. There was no credence given to the practicality of the specific issue, just to the adherence of the SOPs.

In a counterinsurgency these SOPs were unbending and unalterable. There was no room for discussion because of the lack of feedback loops. The main reason for this was that no one wanted to be responsible for anything going wrong. If a unit decided that they want to change an SOP and something were to go wrong then all the leaders would be held accountable because they had not followed standard procedures. Again, everything was all about perceptions and what Company Men thought their leaders would blame them for if they took initiative.

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[74] This was an interview with MAJ Andrew Merz, a Marine field artillery officer whose job as a captain was to train the Iraq border control from spring 2005 to spring 2006.

There was a lot of this worrying about protection and it is evident as being an Army wide phenomenon. While this is not inherently a bad thing, consideration should be given to specific instances where standard procedures may not be applicable. When one of the company commanders saw the picture in Figure 1 of soldiers in Iraq, he reacted nearly the same exact way as many other company commanders who saw the same picture. It shows a tank sitting in a field, one soldier was sitting on top looking one way while sitting behind the M2 .50 caliber machine gun and had a set of binoculars next to him, the radio microphones as well as his M16 Assault Rifle. The two other soldiers were sitting in lawn chairs next to the tank with their weapons connected to them and drinking Gatorade. This interviewee immediately commented that everyone should be inside of the tank and no one should be sky-lining himself on the top of the tank. He was saying that these soldiers were totally vulnerable to sniper fire. It could also just as easily be viewed as all the soldiers having their weapons on hand, their uniforms on (except for the one with his chin strap undone on his helmet) and all were alert and at their posts even though the soldier on the tank was the only one who was supposed to be on guard duty. On top of all of this it was about 115° Fahrenheit out and approximately 10° to 20° hotter than that inside the tank.

Figure 1.   This is a typical mission of a static guard duty on a road to ensure there were no IEDs emplaced along side the road. The soldiers have been on this mission for approximately 8 hours at this time and it is approximately 115° Fahrenheit outside.

There would be many times when the battalion commander of these soldiers at the time would come out and immediately start criticizing everything about similar scenarios like this one, much like the interviewed company commander. This particular battalion commander was an extreme form of a trait that a lot of leaders exhibited over in Iraq, experienced by both myself personally and a majority of the interviewees in one form or another. There was an extreme sense of fear in these leaders. They would lose a soldier and being unable to grasp at why that had happened would instead resort to their old high-intensity combat training of how to secure a road a site in order to ensure that no one got killed. This meant 24 hours presence on the roads so as to ensure that no bombs would be emplaced.

This was yet another example of a breakdown in feedback loops because if any Company Man mentioned something like sleep deprivation to his leaders his fortitude and that of his soldiers would be questioned. The issue of sleep deprivation was a huge problem in Iraq but one that was almost unanimously disregarded among battalion, if not company, and higher leadership in Iraq. The old mindset still pervaded that soldiers had to stay awake through the night if they were to guard anything. This mindset could not be changed no matter what evidence was presented to the leaders.

This fear of losing soldiers or vehicles was something that was inherent throughout Iraq when talking with many of these leaders. Keeping people alive is always a good thing but at the point that you are taking unnecessary measures to do so is where one has to be careful, especially when these measures lower the overall mission effectiveness and put more soldiers' lives at risk in the long run. For instance, there was the public backlash of soldiers' in Iraq not having up-armored HMMWVs to conduct operations with. There was a substantial loss of life because of this too. However, the backlash was such that one had to have up-armored vehicles for all missions no matter what. So, as with the story above regarding HMMWVs, countless dollars and time was lost because of this absolute requirement that was placed upon them.

These requirements also lent themselves to a risk adverse posture. If anyone were to suggest that using an un-armored vehicle was better in any given situation, they would be immediately crucified by superiors and peers alike if he were to suffer any sort of injury or damage that may have been prevented by an armored vehicle. This would even occur if the leader had taken all the appropriate risk mitigation procedures required and had determined the risk was low.

In terms of risk, no one below brigade commander was allowed to make any significant changes to the SOPs regarding the minimum size of a patrol or the amount protection any soldier would be wearing at any given time outside of the wire. In many respects this was expected because there were instances that people would think they were safe and drive out into sector with only one HMMWV and end up being killed. However, in other instances, there would in often cases end up being so many restrictive SOPs that the soldiers would end up feeling overwhelmed and just ignore some SOPs

altogether. This was the case with the standard load of ammunition that each soldier was supposed to have on themselves at all times.

The standard load of ammunition that most units usually adopted was that of at least 210 rounds of .556 for the assault rifles. The only problem with this scenario is that it did not apply across the board to all situations. For instance soldiers on tanks could not wear all of that on their vest or they might find themselves stuck in the hatch of the tank. This was a much more dangerous scenario since a soldier would more likely have to duck inside in case of being shot at, rolling over or in the case an explosion. Immediately leaders, both those questioned, and those discussed in the interviews, would offer up a myriad of solutions so that the SOP could be met instead of discussing the SOP itself. For instance such solutions as putting all one's ammunition on a vest that one would wear over their armor were recommended to meet the SOP. Therefore, the importance of SOPs was a significant factor in how missions were accomplished.

Whether or not a leader agrees with the above scenario the pattern that arises out of all the interviews is an inherent sense of wanting to justify these SOPs as being useful instead of questioning them for their own merits. Many would argue that this is because the military is an inherently SOP driven organization. However, the effectiveness of these SOPs is called into question in a low intensity conflict environment. This is because of the need for adaptability and the understanding that different areas of operations call for different ways of dealing with the problems in the areas. The above scenario may be justifiable to most leaders but others like removing your helmet when interviewing locals so one does not look a like a six foot four inch agent of destruction would just as easily send others into immediately questioning the sanity of such an act. Some would say it is okay if you do it inside, others if you do outside but under relative concealment, and still others would say that any time an individual makes an assessment of an area he or she should base their decision off of that.

F.   WHO DEVELOPED THE METRICS FOR SUCCESS?

This was a very difficult question for many people to answer. The Army in general works by a subordinate being evaluated by the leader above the subordinate and

then that evaluation is confirmed by the next higher on the chain of command. For the most part in Iraq, Company Men said that they were pretty much given free reign to do what they wanted, short of killing people for no reason. However, there were instances that the battalion commander did reach down and dictate how operations were going to occur to the very lowest levels.

In 1-13 Armor Battalion and 3rd Brigade Combat Team almost everything that was determined to be a success were the expectations set forth by the battalion and brigade commanders. Whatever was important to these individuals was what was important to everyone below them. There were occasions that Company Men were able to change their minds especially if what they were doing was more glorious than what the unit was currently accomplishing. In terms of the overall Coalition Forces mission in Iraq a lot of the interviewees had the same goals. Those were basically to ensure freedom of movement of Coalition Forces, to kill or capture Anti-Iraqi Forces (AIF) and provide the framework for democracy in Iraq.

Interestingly enough when missions that had an actual end-state in mind the Coalition Forces responded extremely well. For instance both the elections that occurred in 2005 to ratify the constitution and then to elect the new permanent government under that constitution went extremely well with no major attacks in all of Iraq. For both of these days there was an expectation of a huge battle in nearly all the operations orders handed out throughout Iraq and yet when the day came the Coalition Forces had locked down all vehicular traffic and were guarding all the roads, while the Iraqi Army was charged with guarding the polling sites. This led one soldier to comment during the second election that he wished every day in Iraq was Election Day.

G.   SUMMARY

One can see from the interviews the many resistances that are inherent within the Army system as a whole. To summarize a few consistent themes there is almost a complete breakdown in feedback loops, especially those coming up from below. There is still a traditional mindset of having to conduct high intensity offensive operations in Iraq and doing such for many leaders, both company and higher, is the only way of effectively

advancing their careers. There is also a fear of repercussion that stifles the system at almost any level. The Company Men also agreed for the most part that complaining or pointing out was wrong in the Army was not a good way to advance, in spite of this, most of them complained anyway because they thought it was the right thing to do. In the next Chapter there will be a closer look at what exactly all this means and see where the Army is a learning organization and where it has essentially stifled this innovation.

IV.   ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

A.   CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This thesis explained the decision-making processes at company level combat units operating within Iraq. It also showed the level of effectiveness of feedback loops as they exist in the Army today. Based on this level of operations, has the Army become a learning organization capable of adapting to the nonconventional environment of counterinsurgency operations? It has been the goal of the Army to become a more effective and adaptive force since the perceived loss in Vietnam. Improvements have been made not only in technology and tactics but also in the incentives structure of soldiers and officers operating in the Army. It is in this last area of incentives, however, that has all but hampered the Army from becoming an effective learning organization.

B.   COMMAND CLIMATE

It became apparent about the decision-making process in the Army that individual leaders had a lot of control over what happened under their leadership. An intelligent and well intentioned officer could for the most part filter out information and directives that did not make sense and give leaders under him a positive and open environment. Relatively straightforward missions, however, could be misinterpreted by leaders who were more intent on such notions as "taking the fight to the enemy" instead of counterinsurgency operations and this could make the environment under them more ineffective in operating in Iraq.

The system of rewards created a series of incentives that led commanders to act similarly. OERs that say an officer had a good understanding of counterinsurgency tactics, techniques and procedures are not nearly as desirable as those that say an officer was responsible for the killing of a number of "insurgents" or "terrorists." Similarly, officers were all afraid of losing their jobs for a plethora of reasons described in earlier chapters and therefore felt compelled to micromanage to protect their own careers.

Commanders' decisions, therefore, are as much a response to the system of rewards and punishments setup in the Army as they are a product of organizational culture.

Leaders could be relatively autonomous in their decision-making but still believed that they had to produce outputs acceptable to their superiors. The first cases to be examined were the negative ones that showed leaders micromanaging or seek glory for themselves. These leaders were the type that left most of the interviewees scratching their heads when they were in Iraq in wonderment about what was actually going on in that particular leader's head. There are many stories that helped to make this point clearer and the most prominent one follows.

One of the first interviewees had multiple battalion commanders. This was a common situation for many of the interviewees because their platoons or companies were often attached to different battalions. The most outlandish battalion commander was one that stood on top of a building calling everyone "pussies" and telling the insurgents to come out and fight. The ironic part was that they did come out and fight just not in the way that this battalion commander wanted them to.[75] This was the contradiction of counterinsurgency that this leader did not grasp.

The question still remains though, as to whether or not these interviews shed any particular light on the decision-making process? Individuals could and did have tremendous amounts of control at their decision-making levels. However, these individuals were only part of a larger bureaucratic system and in many respects had similar behaviors, presumably based on training and the cultural environment. In addition, these individuals were constantly trying to meet the demands of their superiors as they perceived them. This suggests that Model I and Model II have the most sway over this process. In counter to that, there is still the need to take a look at the chess game example given by Alison and Zelikow when describing the various different models.[76]

The most prevalent factors that came through the interviews seemed to be one of overwhelming adherence to SOPs and ROEs. On top of this was a general attitude of

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[75] This was in an interview with CPT Michael Gretz and artillery officer who served as an infantry platoon leader with 1-25 Infantry who conducted operations in northwestern Iraq outside of Mosul during 2005. He was describing another battalion commander in his brigade who was famous within the brigade for doing this.

[76] Alison and Zelikow, 6.

fear, a fear that many leaders experienced over in Iraq and in the Army in general. This was not one of the enemy but one of the hierarchies. There are numerous stories of commanders being unwilling to support troops if they stepped outside of these lines. One of these problems was if shots were fired. There were often incidences of where these soldiers were questioned to why they were firing their weapons as warning shots or even at an enemy who fired at them.

In Iraq there seemed to be in the majority of cases a fear of the hierarchy and what it would do. There were times when a Company Man in Iraq would jump up and down and scream at their men "that you will fire your weapons if you feel at all in danger, that is a direct order, I am a superior officer and it will be all my fault if something negative happens because of your actions."[77] This would help somewhat but most soldiers would still be more afraid of their hierarchy than anything a Company Man, especially a platoon leader, could do for or against them.

What was interesting about the ROE, is that they were not as restrictive as they were often interpreted to be. When it comes down to it, the ROE states that a soldier is only allowed to fire at a positively identified enemy or when they believed their life is in danger. That seems entirely reasonable based on the fact that the United States military is not at war with every single Iraqi in Iraq. However, the ways in which it was enforced left many people blaming the ROE itself instead of the people who enforced. In most battalions there were dialogues that occurred regarding the appropriateness of when, where and against whom it was okay to shoot weapons, however, soldiers still felt as if they were going to be court-martialed if they did so.

This fear went up the chain of command too. As many interviewees pointed out, their commanders would not even float ideas that were initiated from the bottom. Ideas were often stopped before they got started in a sense. The commanders would often act as just "no" men without even giving any consideration to the idea and handing it up to the higher to be decided upon. There was also no room for alterations at the lowest command

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[77] Personal experience as an armor platoon leader in 1-13 Armor Battalion operating around Taji, Iraq in 2005.

level possible. Commanders were not left to do their own risk matrices to determine the risk of certain courses of action. They were just left to implement the missions dictated to them from above. Commanders then could only live in fear that they might violate the micromanagement coming from above.

The idea of offensive high-intensity conflict has not left the cultural mindset of the U.S. military in Iraq. Whether there are those who are complaining about the gung ho attitude or those that are touting its effectiveness and claiming to this day "that we need to take the fight to the enemy" this mindset still pervades everything that is done in Iraq. There is a large amount of consideration given to high-intensity operations as part of a mid-intensity conflict but almost no training given to young Company Men on how to conduct basic policing and investigative procedures. However, there are some that innovate and realize that if they create relationships with the local populations they might receive help in dealing with the insurgents. For example they apologize for waking the Iraqis up at 3:00 AM in the morning for some poorly planned raid so that they will not be blamed for the hardships faced and in fact be protected by popular sentiment when the insurgents do plan their attacks. Without the training in counterinsurgency tactics the junior leader can find it hard to innovate. This results in the reinforcement of kinetic operations and tactics because they are what the leaders know and the system reinforces.

Organizational culture is doing much for the detriment of the U.S. military in Iraq. Leaders high up are not doing enough to ensure that those on the ground are supported and have the ability and the right to take the initiative when they believe it is necessary given their experience with the local population. Sometimes leaders encourage audacity but it is the wrong kind for this situation. An environment for risk taking needs to be created that allows lower level leaders to take initiative but also requires them to think in order to mitigate catastrophic risks, like the loss of U.S. soldiers or Iraqi citizens. Only when this environment of empowering the lower level leadership in such a way that is conducive to a low intensity environment can the situation become better. However, all situations will evolve and therefore leaders will have to monitor the information that is being sent to them and make sure the requested assets are on the ground for those requesting them.

C.   CONCLUSION

Unless the incentive structure for the military undergoes some relatively drastic change, the Army as an organization will continue to see many of the problems that it faced in Iraq in future counterinsurgency environments. By the end of 2007 the situation in Iraq seems to have taken a turn for the better. This is in large part due to the arrival of General Petraeus and the surge of troops in Iraq. Other influential events, such as the fact that Sunni Tribes in the Al Anbar province are now working directly with the United States Army, also have had a positive impact.

There was a wealth of information that was constantly being produced by the lower levels. In conducting the interviews it was plain to see that many of the Company Men had quickly abandoned any notion of glorious high intensity battlefield and had instead begun to focus on what worked. As this feedback went higher up the chain of command, there was more of a focus on high intensity operations. This wealth of information never really worked its way from the bottom up to become an integrated part of the strategy or tactics. The real change came from the top when Petraeus pointed out that within his own division during OIF I he had to force the battalion commanders to change their ways.[78] These self unaware officers essentially block any change coming up from the bottom because they are trying to preserve the system, even if it means losing a war.

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[78] Lt. General David H. Petraeus, "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq, *Military Review* 4 (January-February 2006), 10.

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