

# **Collaboration with Indigenous Irregular Military Forces**

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## **Defence R&D Canada – Toronto**

Contract Report  
DRDC-TORONTO-CR-2012-097  
September 2012

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This report analyzes how the United States has worked with Indigenous Irregular Military Forces (IIMF) during the past 70 years and whether IIMF are a controllable means of long-term influence.

Three IIMF case-studies are analyzed: Philippines during the Second World War, Vietnam and during the Iraq War were analysed to answer the above questions. The case studies show that the utilization of IIMF over the past 70 years contains many similar themes. For example, IIMF were primarily used as auxiliary support to conventional forces or as the primary vehicle of influence for an outside actor in areas where there was little or no presence of conventional forces, for military intelligence gathering and validation, for cultural intelligence and understanding, for influence operations directed at civilians, for direct action and for sabotage against communication and transportation infrastructure. In the Philippines and Iraq case studies, IIMF were also used for destabilization activities and to influence the morale of the opponent.

While the benefits of IIMF deployment are very significant as their engagement can make a notable difference for the security of regular forces, this paper concludes that establishing a necessary, strict control over IIMF contractors is both challenging and resource consuming. However, the deployment of small numbers of IIMF in limited geographical areas can be a manageable and effective tool.

## Résumé

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Dans le présent rapport, on analyse comment les États-Unis ont travaillé avec des forces militaires irrégulières indigènes (FMII) au cours des 70 dernières années et on vérifie si les FMII constituent des véhicules d'influence contrôlables à long terme.

Afin de répondre à ces questions, trois études de cas relatives aux FMII ont été analysées, notamment sur les Philippines pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, sur le Vietnam et sur la guerre en Irak. Les études de cas montrent que l'utilisation des FMII au cours des 70 dernières années comporte des thèmes similaires. À titre d'exemple, les FMII ont d'abord été utilisées comme soutien auxiliaire des forces conventionnelles ou comme principal véhicule d'influence pour un groupe extérieur dans des secteurs où les forces conventionnelles étaient à peu près inexistantes, pour la collecte et la validation de renseignements militaires, pour la compréhension et le renseignement culturels, pour des opérations d'influence sur les civils, pour des mesures directes et pour des opérations de sabotage contre des infrastructures de communications et de transports. Dans les études de cas sur les Philippines et la guerre en Irak, on constate que les FMII ont également été utilisées dans le cadre d'activités de déstabilisation ainsi que pour influencer le moral de l'ennemi.

Alors que le déploiement des FMII comporte des avantages hautement importants, la participation de celle-ci pouvant constituer une différence marquée pour la sécurité des forces régulières, le présent document conclut que le contrôle stricte et nécessaire des entrepreneurs de FMII est exigeant et requiert des ressources. Toutefois, le déploiement de petits nombres de FMII dans des zones géographiques restreintes peut s'avérer pratique et efficace.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Collaboration with Indigenous Irregular Military Forces

**Will Chalmers; James McKay; Anthony Seaboyer; DRDC CR 2012-097; Defence R&D Canada – Toronto.**

This report analyzes how the United States has worked with Indigenous Irregular Military Forces (IIMF) during the past 70 years and whether IIMF are a controllable means of long-term influence.

Three IIMF case-studies are analyzed: Philippines during the Second World War, Vietnam and during the Iraq War were analysed to answer the above questions. The report identifies who engaged the IIMF, why the strategy was chosen, how IIMF were utilized, how the relationship evolved, if the intended goal was achieved, what happened with the former IIMF post-conflict and finally what lessons were learned from the experience. The case studies show that the utilization of IIMF over the past 70 years contains many similar themes. IIMF were primarily used as auxiliary support to conventional forces or as the primary vehicle of influence for an outside actor in areas where there was little or no presence of conventional forces, for military intelligence gathering and validation, for cultural intelligence and understanding, for influence operations directed at civilians, for direct action and for sabotage against communication and transportation infrastructure. In the Philippines and Iraq case studies, IIMF have additionally been used for destabilization activities and to influence the morale of the opponent. Over the time period, the use of IIMF by US has been very consistent.

While the benefits of IIMF deployment are very significant as their engagement can make a notable difference for the security of regular forces, this paper concludes that establishing a necessary, strict control over IIMF contractors is challenging and resource consuming. Particularly in large operating areas with higher numbers of personnel, reliability is a very significant challenge and the long-term effects of deploying IIMF appear so negative, that they question the concept of IIMF deployment. IIMF deployment in smaller numbers and in limited regions appear easier to control and have a less negative impact on the country after the end of deployment. The deployment of small numbers of IIMF in limited geographical areas can be a manageable and effective tool.

# SOMMAIRE

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## Collaboration avec les forces militaires irrégulières indigènes

**Will Chalmers; James McKay; Anthony Seaboyer; RDDC CR 12-097;  
R & D pour la Défense Canada – Toronto.**

Dans le présent rapport, on analyse comment les États-Unis ont travaillé avec les forces militaires irrégulières indigènes (FMII) au cours des 70 dernières années et on vérifie si les FMII constituent des moyens contrôlables d'influence à long terme.

Afin de répondre à ces questions, trois études de cas relatives aux FMII ont été analysées, notamment sur les Philippines pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, sur le Vietnam et sur la guerre en Irak. Le rapport précise qui a engagé des FMII, pourquoi cette stratégie a été choisie, de quelle façon les FMII ont été utilisées, comment les relations ont évolué, si le but visé a été atteint, ce qui est arrivé avec les FMII après un conflit et enfin, quelles leçons ont été tirées de l'expérience. Les études de cas montrent que l'utilisation des FMII au cours des 70 dernières années comporte des thèmes similaires. Les FMII ont d'abord été utilisées comme soutien auxiliaire des forces conventionnelles ou comme principal véhicule d'influence pour un groupe extérieur dans des secteurs où les forces conventionnelles étaient à peu près inexistantes, pour la collecte et la validation de renseignements militaires, pour la compréhension et le renseignement culturels, pour des opérations d'influence sur les civils, pour des mesures directes et pour des opérations de sabotage contre des infrastructures de communications et de transports. Dans les études de cas sur les Philippines et la guerre en Irak, on constate que les FMII ont également été utilisées dans le cadre d'activités de déstabilisation ainsi que pour influencer le moral de l'ennemi. Au cours de cette période, les États-Unis ont régulièrement fait appel aux FMII.

Alors que le déploiement des FMII comporte des avantages hautement importants, la participation de celle-ci pouvant constituer une différence marquée pour la sécurité des forces régulières, le présent document conclut que le contrôle strict et nécessaire des entrepreneurs de FMII est exigeant et requiert des ressources. De façon particulière, dans des zones d'opérations importantes où l'on retrouve un grand nombre de militaires, la fiabilité est un enjeu majeur et les effets à long terme du déploiement de FMII semblent tellement négatifs que le concept du déploiement des FMII est remis en question. Le déploiement de FMII dans un moins grand nombre de régions et dans des régions restreintes semble plus facile à contrôler et comporte moins d'incidences négatives sur le pays à la fin du déploiement. Le déploiement de petits nombres de FMII dans des zones géographiques restreintes peut s'avérer pratique et efficace.

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## REPORT INTRODUCTION

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Engaging members of local communities in conflict zones promises invaluable advantages for today's conflicts that often involve counterinsurgency-type elements. From delivering valuable operational intelligence regarding the location of opponent group leaders, to the latest operational intelligence on IED emplacement, vital information can hardly be gained without cooperation from locals.

If long-term goals like bringing stability to the region and supporting the reconstruction of the local economy are a priority, working with locals is essential. In these cases there appears to be little alternative to close cooperation with community members.

Engaging Indigenous Irregular Military Forces (IIMF) is an institutionalized form of cooperation with locals, in which members of communities are selected, trained, equipped and contracted to support a mission.

This form of institutionalized cooperation offers so many advantages in vital areas to the security of conventional forces deployed, that it seems clear, that the benefits of IIMF deployment outweigh the challenges involved. How else could local intelligence be systematically gained from members of the population in the theatre? Ever more, how could this information reach commanders in a timely fashion, offering the best possible protection in combat zones? How else could long-lasting relationships of trust be built with locals while providing economic means that offer incentives reducing the allure of local extremist groups. How else can locals be identified to trust, in the transition process after an intervention?

While the advantages of collaboration with IIMF are significant, the outcome of past operations suggests that analyzing how well the actions of contractors in the field can actually be controlled is required. Similarly, it seems important to ask what resources are necessary for the implementation of effective control.

This report looks at three case studies in which the US has worked with IIMF during the past 60 years. In each observation the goal is to identify how IIMF have been engaged, how well their activity was controlled and which lessons can be considered for future IIMF engagements. The report will investigate how IIMF have been utilized in each observation and then look at the level of control achieved during deployment and which long-term effects of the engagement are visible.

# PHILLIPPINES

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## INTRODUCTION

The Allied war in the Pacific began with a previously unimaginable series of defeats at the hands of Japanese air, naval and ground forces. The astonishing Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was followed in rapid succession by major victories over Allied forces in Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore. The abrupt ejection of British, Dutch and French forces from long-held colonies was perceived as the end of the age of western empires in the Pacific.

While the United States was on a different geopolitical trajectory, the fall of the Philippines on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1942 swept US forces from the south-west Pacific and bookended the earlier disaster at Pearl Harbor. The core of the once strong US Pacific Fleet lay submerged in the shallow waters off Pearl Harbor's Ford Island. General Douglas MacArthur, in the relative safety of Australia presided over the meager remnants of the US Army's pacific forces. By the summer of 1942 Imperial Japan's superb navy and tough, mobile ground forces controlled a vast swath of the Pacific.

The Japanese began landing troops in the Philippines on December 8<sup>th</sup> 1941. Despite forewarning, the bulk of MacArthur's aircraft were destroyed on the ground by attacking Japanese planes, depriving his troops of desperately needed air support. Facing crack Japanese soldiers with a US and Filipino troops of uneven quality; MacArthur chose to abandon the capital Manila and withdrew his forces into prepared positions on the Bataan peninsula. "From these positions, it was planned that he might be able to hold out up to six months (theoretically) until reinforcements could be made available" (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 63). However, without air support and cut-off from the remaining US bases in the Pacific, the fate of the soldiers in Bataan was unalterable and inevitably grim.

As the US struggled to transform its giant economy to a war footing and generate the massive conventional forces necessary to regain lost territory and defeat the Japanese; smaller unconventional forces were left to take up the battle. A network of coast watchers avoided incessant enemy patrols to furnish tremendously valuable intelligence on Japanese troop and naval movements. Others took a more active approach and sought to resist the Japanese – intent on consolidating their 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere'<sup>1</sup> – using a traditional method of resistance when facing a superior force; irregular warfare.

The chaos of the fall of Bataan sowed the seeds of an irregular war that would torment the Japanese for the duration of their occupation of the Philippines. Soldiers, both US and Filipino who either remained outside of Bataan or managed to escape the cauldron of

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<sup>1</sup> The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was a Japanese concept of melding together Asian nations – under Japanese leadership - to exclude western colonialist powers.

starvation, disease and Japanese forces, evaded capture and fled into the rugged countryside (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 63). All over the Filipino archipelago the nucleus of what would become a substantial guerilla army escaped into the rough interior country.

## **1. WHY DID THE POWERS DECIDE TO ENGAGE IN IRREGULAR WARFARE?**

The US engagement with the Filipino resistance movement was a sensible course of action at the time and provided many benefits – four are identified in this case-study – to the Allies throughout the war.

The first benefit was fighting back at the Japanese who in early-1942 seemed invincible and unstoppable. Decades of colonial rule were shattered in months and western military forces were decisively defeated on land, at sea and in the air. Proving that the Allies could and would fight back and that their opponents were not unbeatable was a critical first step in turning the tide.

The second benefit was tying down Japanese forces in occupation duty on the various islands of the Philippines. Just as Soviet partisans tied down large numbers of German troops on the Eastern front; Filipino guerillas accomplished the same against the Japanese.

The third benefit lay in dispelling the Japanese anti-colonialist narrative surrounding their Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. If the Allies were to eventually retake the Philippines, the support of the local population would be critical.

The fourth benefit identified in this study is the invaluable contribution of the guerrillas in preparing for the conventional amphibious invasions of the Philippines in 1944-45 and assisting US forces once established ashore. Through guerrilla – ambushes, raids and sabotage – attacks, intelligence and ensuring local support, the guerrillas weakened Japanese forces and gave the invasion and liberation the best odds of success.

### **1.1 FIGHTING BACK**

By early-1942 the Allies had been pushed out of the many pre-war military bases in the Pacific. Hawaii and Midway remained in US hands and Australia was a large but lightly defended foothold in the southern Pacific. The immense fleets of warships and legions of Marine and Army combat troops required to violently wrest occupied territories from Japanese hands were still in the planning stages and years away from reality. Until the

vast industrial power of the US could be reoriented to a war-footing, the conflict against the Japanese would have to be fought with the resources available.

Making the task more onerous was the Allied policy of ‘Germany First’ which committed the lion’s share of newly formed units and equipment to the European theatre. Despite strenuous arguments against this policy by several senior US leaders, the Pacific theatre would receive a smaller share of US troops and resources until Germany was defeated (Hastings 2011: 199). As a result of this policy, the fighting in the Pacific was predicted to be a “long war with limited resources...” (Breuer 1994: 65).

Understanding these limitations, early in the war US commanders were careful to husband the invaluable surviving carriers of the Pacific Fleet (Hastings 2011: 254). Largely symbolic operations such as the April 1942 Doolittle Raid regained a small share of the initiative and delivered a dose of victory to a public weary after a string of stinging military defeats (Hastings 2011: 237).

While available conventional forces in the Pacific theatre were committed selectively; the survival of small numbers of US troops and far larger numbers of Filipino soldiers afforded US commanders another tool. The use of irregular guerrilla warfare as an unconventional method to carry the fight to the Japanese until US reinforcements could arrive in theatre.

“Europe first would severely limit any aid to MacArthur’s command, forcing him to make do with what was already on hand, and forcing the Filipinos to look to irregular means after the defeat of the USAFFE<sup>2</sup> in the Philippines.” (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 62)

Aware of the existence of significant numbers of un-surrendered Allied soldiers, US commanders grasped an opportunity to resist the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. MacArthur’s orders – around the time of the fall of Corregidor in May 1942 – to his soldiers to resist capture and initiate irregular warfare operations encouraged and legitimized the formation of small bands of guerillas (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 65). By mid-1942 the Philippines were riddled with guerillas ready to resist the Japanese (Willoughby 1972: 44). Even with scarce resources Filipinos guerillas were a valuable component of MacArthur’s “hit-em-where they ain’t” campaign designed to take the war to the Japanese (Breuer 1994: 65).

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<sup>2</sup> United States Army Forces in the Far East

## **1.2 TIE DOWN**

The second benefit of engagement with the Filipino resistance was that even small bands of lightly equipped guerillas could tie down large numbers of Japanese troops. Reducing the number of troops the Japanese had available to throw into combat against the Allies in the early campaigns on Guadalcanal and Borneo where Allied fortunes were extremely precarious was absolutely essential.

“In such a massive and resource-intense theater as the Pacific, this forced the Japanese to spread thin, and ultimately led to a situation where they could not defend everything that they had taken. This contributed to Allied success throughout the ocean” (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 60).

Tying down Japanese troops and preoccupying their leadership with guerrilla activity in the Philippines also reduced Australia’s vulnerability during the early stages of the war. Many of the best Australian formations were serving with British in the Mediterranean and North Africa and unavailable to come to the defence of their own country rapidly (Hastings 2011: 131). The first new US divisions to arrive in the Pacific theatre did not land in Australia until June of 1942 leaving the country vulnerable for half a year (Breuer 1994: 65). Forcing the Japanese to constantly mount anti-guerrilla campaigns in the Philippines consumed resources desperately needed elsewhere in the Pacific theatre.

## **1.3 DISPEL**

The third advantage a guerilla movement in the Philippines offered the US was to dispel the Japanese narrative surrounding their newly created Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The Japanese had cloaked their conquest of former western colonies – Malaya, Indochina and the Philippines – with anti-colonist rhetoric calculated to appeal to the local population’s legitimate grievances. Replacing western colonial rulers with Japanese, who were more alike ethnically and culturally, was sold as progress. The reality however disproved the Japanese narrative when the brutality of their soldiers towards local civilians left no doubt as to their own perceived superiority (Guardia 2010: 108). Savagery directed against Filipinos by Japanese troops destroyed any chance the Japanese might have had to govern without significant resistance and pushed many to aid or join guerrilla groups supportive of the US cause (Norling 1999: 15).

“Many Filipinos became insurgents—and the population’s support for insurgency grew—because of the Japanese military’s “policy of oppression through violence, massacre, abuse and plunder.” (Hardesty 2009: 3)

## **1.4 PREPARE & ASSIST**

The fourth benefit was in the preparation for the eventual return of US forces. Launching multiple amphibious invasions throughout the Philippines was an undertaking of considerable size and danger. Amphibious operations against strongly-held enemy positions are perhaps the most complicated type of military operation and the extremely long supply lines of the Pacific theatre were an added challenge. Guerilla forces improved the prospect of success by weakening the Japanese forces, providing intelligence to military planners and ensuring local civilian support. “[T]he development of the Philippines guerrilla movement over the years was a calculated prerequisite for MacArthur’s return.” (Willoughby 1972: 39) MacArthur and his staff knew well the contributions the Filipino guerrillas could play in the recapture of the Philippines and took steps to ensure guerilla operations were directed as effectively as possible from headquarters.

## **2. WHO ENGAGED IN IRREGULAR WARFARE?**

By their very nature guerilla groups possess less formal structure than conventional military units. More so than a conventional military, the standard of training varies immensely as individuals bring varied skill-sets to the organization. Guerilla groups conducting irregular warfare – especially those focused on destabilization – are often formed in the aftermath of a catastrophic military defeat.<sup>3</sup> The guerilla groups that formed in the Philippines following the surrender of Corregidor were composed of individuals of many different backgrounds and motivations. Guerilla membership in the Philippines can be divided into two main categories; military and civilian, with Filipinos providing the bulk of the manpower in each. Western – mainly American – soldiers and civilians, while often occupying prominent leadership positions were a minority in both categories.

### **2.1 MILITARY**

The rapid advance of the Japanese after landing in the Philippines left many military units cut-off from the main force and unable to resist in an organized fashion. The geography of the Philippines made command and control exceedingly difficult in the chaotic circumstances of early 1942 leaving many guerrillas to essentially resist the Japanese as they saw fit.

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<sup>3</sup> The Soviet partisans and the French Maquis are other examples of this phenomenon.

“Terrain or geography and the nature of the threat certainly does play a role in the choice of strategy used. This is particularly true throughout the history of Philippine warfare, which has taken place in a region classed as very difficult terrain for any military operation. Thick jungles, mountainous ranges, and the vast island archipelago consisting of over seven thousand islands certainly have had some impact on the military thinking of the Filipino warrior” (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 151).

It is no surprise therefore that that Filipinos fell back on tried and tested irregular warfare techniques after their conventional forces had been defeated.

“By the end of December 1941, at the start of the war, many Filipino units had already been cut off from the main force, which was retreating into the Bataan Peninsula. There were also a significant number of individuals left behind, for various reasons, by units that made it to Bataan. Other individuals and small groups would also escape Bataan, as the Japanese victory became inevitable. Many of these men made it through Japanese lines and moved north to link up with other U.S. and Filipino soldiers still on the loose” (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 65).

Many of those who decided to fight on brought with them very little in the way of military equipment; but rather a desire to continue resistance against the Japanese. The majority of these new guerrillas were Filipino soldiers with far smaller numbers of US soldiers joining the movement. After the war, Robert Lapham, a US soldier who became one of the most successful guerilla leaders stated that.

“...Most Americans have merely assumed that guerrilla activity in wartime Philippines must have been initiated by U.S. escapees like me and that we then coaxed or bullied Filipinos into supporting us. This was not the case at all. Most Americans who managed to evade the Japanese in 1942 wanted to get back to their units some time, some way, or just escape from the Philippines and get to Australia, or China, or somewhere safe. Overwhelmingly, Filipinos came to us and begged us to lead them and help fight their oppressors.” -Robert Lapham, Lt. U.S.A., Luzon Guerrilla Armed Forces (LGAF) (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 59).

Another of these men, Russell Volckmann would go on to become an effective US guerrilla and survived the war when many of his contemporaries did not (Guardia 2010: 38-39). US guerrillas feature prominently in many post-war writings on the guerilla conflict although most are sure to emphasize the larger Filipino role.



## 2.2 CIVILIANS

Despite Japanese proclamations to have liberated the Philippines from the western colonial yoke many Filipinos did not accept the Japanese occupation as legitimate and actively sided with the guerillas (Willoughby 1972: 39). Even in defeat many Filipinos preferred the US to the newly arrived Japanese forces (Guardia 2010: 86). Japanese acts of brutality and general condescension towards Filipinos further destroyed any chance the local population would acquiesce to their new rulers (Ienaga 1978: 171). Large numbers of Filipino civilians gravitated to the guerilla resistance movement as either fighters or more often as supporters, providing supplies and intelligence about Japanese movements, troop dispositions and other information.

Before the war, the Philippines like many colonies had a scattered population of western civilians whose fate was imperiled by the Japanese occupation. Many of these civilians had deep links to the local community and could act as a conduit between western guerrillas and Filipinos. While most of these civilians took a passive role in the guerrilla movement – providing supplies, intelligence, lodging – some went as far as joining the guerrillas. One example is Wendell Fertig, an ex-US Army officer and a miner in the pre-war Philippines went on to become a well-known, if controversial guerrilla leader on Mindanao (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 308; Childress 2003: 22).

## 3. HOW DID RELATIONSHIP EVOLVE OVER TIME?

The guerilla resistance movement in the Philippines was divided into three phases from the perspective of MacArthur's headquarters in Australia.

“The story of guerrilla activities in the Southwest Pacific Campaign can be divided into three phases, Phase One consisting of the initial exploration of the guerrilla movement by the Allied Intelligence Bureau under the operational control of G-2, Phase Two comprising its development under the Philippine Regional Section, and Phase Three composed of the merging of all guerrilla activities with the actual invasion of the Philippine Islands.” (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 298)

For the purposes of this case-study the three phases have been renamed; *Formation*, *Organization* and *Assistance*. These titles provide a more holistic approach. The degree of control exerted from headquarters was never absolute and should not be overestimated (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 320). During the first two phases; *Formation* and *Organization*, the Filipino guerrillas were the primary vehicle of influence for the US in the Philippines



after the surrender of Corregidor. The third phase, *Assistance* saw the increasingly well-equipped and organized guerrillas acting as auxiliary support to the conventional military through the invasion and recapture of the Philippine islands. The shift between the guerrillas as the primary actor to an auxiliary support role was a gradual process and akin to that described in many writings on the trajectory of guerrilla warfare (Griffith 2000: 20).

### 3.1 FORMATION

The *Formation* phase covers the period from the Japanese invasion in early December 1941 until the end of 1942 when MacArthur's headquarters began to exert more – though still quite limited – control over the various guerrillas groups operating throughout the Philippines (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 66). As MacArthur's forces were ground down by Japanese attacks, significant numbers of Filipino and US soldiers found themselves cut-off from. Encouraged by their commanders – including MacArthur himself – some prepared for guerilla-type warfare after what appeared to be the increasingly inevitable collapse of the conventional military effort (Hillsman 2005: 43-44).

Initially seeking to avoid death or capture at the hands of the Japanese, these men took shelter in the rugged countryside of the Philippines. They brought with them a small quantity of weapons, mostly small arms and acute shortages plagued the Filipino guerrillas for much of the war (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 80). Weapons and ammunition were often in such short supply that recovering weapons from the Japanese became a priority (Breuer 1994: 124). Attempting to remedy the shortfall guerillas often sought to manufacture their own ammunition, using time consuming methods because of the scarcity of supplies and equipment (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 79).

Concerned mostly with survival, the escaping soldiers sought sanctuary with friendly Filipinos civilians and in some cases western settlers. Lacking communications equipment, aspiring guerrillas relied on word of mouth to link up with other like-minded men. This period was marked by bitter internal struggles to forge the disparate embryonic guerrilla groups into effective units (Guardia 2010: 101; Breuer 2005: 88-89; GHQ-SWPA 1994: 308). Setting aside personal disputes to fight the Japanese was a challenge throughout the campaign but was especially problematic in the early phase of the war when the guerrillas were particularly vulnerable.

“The different leaders of the groups harbored great jealousies against each other; they bickered and fought for resources, sometimes even clashing in battle. The

problems were described as endemic, as they squabbled over rank, tactics, jurisdiction, objectives, and many other issues.”(Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 71)

Without reliable communications between guerrilla groups and virtually no sustained contact with MacArthur’s headquarters in Australia, the first phase of the guerrilla campaign featured a focus on mere survival interspersed with courageous but incredibly risky attacks on Japanese forces. Before he was killed, Walter Cushing, one of the better known US guerrillas epitomized the reckless methods of resistance in this period (Norling 1999: 82). Gradually the guerillas developed more secure base camps and began to devote considerable effort to putting in place the structure and organization the movement would need to survive the long years until US forces returned in strength to the Philippines.

### **3.2 ORGANIZATION**

The second phase of the guerrilla resistance movement in the Philippines brought substantial change and improvements in organization. US and Filipino soldiers who had avoided Japanese captivity managed to link-up and form more stable guerrilla units. Key to this phase was the beginning of communications between the guerrillas and MacArthur’s headquarters. Aware that some of his men had survived the Japanese invasion and were engaged in guerilla warfare, MacArthur sought to exercise some control and provide desperately needed supplies.

“A single driving force was badly needed to direct the guerrilla potential into channels which could produce maximum results. As soon as the facts concerning Filipino resistance became known in 1942, it was General MacArthur's purpose to provide this direction and to weld the scattered groups into unified and responsible forces through the designation and support of responsible local commanders.” (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 298)

In Australia, the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) was setup to run the guerrilla campaign and act as that ‘single driving force’ directing operations to match the overall campaign plan (Breuer 2005: 37).

“The initial task of contacting the guerrillas and laying the groundwork for an extensive intelligence net in the Philippines was given to the Allied Intelligence Bureau under the operational control of the Theater G-2.”(GHQ-SWPA 1994: 300)

To better organize the guerrillas, MacArthur revived the prewar military territorial divisions and gave distinct areas of operations to different guerilla groups (Willoughby 1972: 45).

“It was considered that the best way to meet this problem would be to reactivate the pre-war Philippine Military Districts. Based on population densities, these territorial entities had been used by the Philippine Army for administrative and mobilization purposes. This device had the advantage of being based on legal precedent and would probably be the most acceptable method of division to the majority of de facto guerrilla leaders.” (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 302)

MacArthur also sent several of his subordinates on clandestine missions to the Philippines to make contact with guerilla groups, establish an appreciation of their strengths, build communication links and ascertain what supplies were urgently needed (Breuer 2005: 48; Willoughby 1972: 46). While some guerillas made contact with MacArthur in 1942, others such as Volckmann were not in reliable contact until 1944 (Wolfert 1945: 139; Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 79). Radio transmitting itself brought grave danger as the Japanese used direction finding equipment to locate signals (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 81). Communications remained sporadic, though improving until the recapture of the Philippines. With these rudimentary links established, heavily-loaded submarines made the long voyage though Japanese held waters to deliver critical supplies – weapons, ammunition and radios - to the guerrillas (Breuer 1994: 129-130).

In this second phase, MacArthur sought to ensure that whenever possible, guerrilla operations were designed to prepare for the eventual return of US forces through amphibious invasions’. Instead of the often reckless attacks against Japanese forces which characterized the first phase, the guerrillas were directed to “lie low” and focus on intelligence gathering to support the conventional military effort.

“By the summer of 1943, MacArthur had issued a “lie low” order to the guerrillas that he was in contact with. They were to stop directly engaging the Japanese and instead focus on gathering and transmitting strategic intelligence, which would be critical to retaking the island.” (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 66)

This change in role for the guerrilla forces marked the beginning of the transition to the third and final phase of their role in the war.

### **3.3 ASSISTANCE**

As Allied victories in the Pacific continued and Japanese losses mounted, the likelihood of a return to the Philippines by US forces rose. While there was considerable debate over the route the US military should take though the Pacific to Japan, pressure from MacArthur to fulfill his “I shall return” promise won the day (Hastings 2011: 439).

The liberation of the Philippines was a massive undertaking and guerrillas played a vital role from planning and preparation through the invasion and defeat of the Japanese forces. Primarily tasked with providing intelligence for the invasion forces, guerrillas delivered reports on Japanese positions allowing military planners to refine the invasion plan (Smith 1963: 31). Of particular importance, Volckmann’s guerrillas scored a major coup after recovering a crashed airplane containing the Japanese commander, General Yamashita’s plan for the defence of Luzon, the main island of the Philippines (Breuer 2005: 193).

Once US forces had landed in the Philippines, guerrillas emerged after years of hiding to offer valuable assistance. Acting as scouts and auxiliaries, guerrillas guided US forces through unfamiliar terrain and tracked down scattered Japanese soldiers.

Now in direct contact with the US military, guerrillas finally began receiving substantial quantities of weapons and supplies enabling a transition into a light infantry-type force which were committed alongside US troops (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 66). Operating in battalion-size units, guerrillas were integral to the recapture of the capital, Manila (Smith 1963: 273). Other sizeable guerilla formations fought alongside US forces in the bloody slogging match to recapture northern Luzon where the bulk of the Japanese forces had withdrawn. The capabilities displayed by these guerrilla units in the liberation of the Philippines were far more advanced than the early days immediately after the Japanese occupation.

### **4. LEGITIMACY**

Throughout the phases of the guerilla campaign against the Japanese, the resistance enjoyed an image of legitimacy from the Filipino population. Their legitimacy stems from four factors; the historic Filipino spirit of guerilla resistance, general opposition to the Japanese occupation, belief and support of American promises and goals and legitimacy derived from recognition, association and integration with US military authorities.

#### **4.1 FILIPINO SPIRIT AND TRADITION OF GUERRILLA RESISTANCE**

The Philippines have a long history of guerrilla-type warfare resulting from the geography – physical and cultural – of the islands which make up the archipelago. The rugged, often virtually impassible terrain of the Philippines made the task of conventional armies facing Filipino guerrillas exceptionally difficult. Faced once more with superior conventional forces Filipinos adopted the traditional way of warfare for those confronted with larger, more powerful opponents.

“The Filipino warrior has consistently either chosen or been forced, by lack of resources and military might, to resort to something that falls within the realm of Delbruck’s second strategy.<sup>4</sup> The more commonly used modern military term for the strategy of the warrior who does not engage in conventional warfare is irregular warfare.”(Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 5)

Prior to the Japanese occupation the Filipinos had fought twice in recent history against conventional armies – the Spanish and Americans - using irregular warfare techniques. Hard lessons were learned in these wars that were further refined against Japanese forces. The previous experience of the Filipinos with irregular warfare cumulated in what Reyeg and Marsh argue was the ‘golden era’ of guerrilla warfare against the Japanese during the Second World War (2011: 59).

#### **4.2 GENERAL DISLIKE OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION**

The second factor which gave legitimacy to the guerilla movement was the Filipino dislike of the Japanese occupation. The Co-Prosperity sphere collapsed rapidly amid a Japanese attitude of superiority and casual brutality towards Filipinos (Wolfert 1945: 89). The anti-western colonial narrative may have found a more receptive audience had the Japanese made a serious effort to include Filipinos in the new regime and refrain from acts of savagery against civilians. The US had previously promised independence to the Philippines in 1935 and had been moving slowly towards that goal before the war (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 61). The Japanese declared the Philippines ‘independent’ in 1943 but this

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<sup>4</sup> “Delbruck suggests that there are two kinds of military strategy: the strategy of annihilation, which seeks to overthrow the enemy’s military power: and the strategy of attrition, exhaustion, or erosion, which is usually employed by a strategist whose means are not great enough to permit pursuit of the direct overthrow of the enemy and who therefore resorts to the indirect approach.” (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 4, from Russell Weigley. (1972) *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*. New York: Macmillan, xxii.

designation was more nominal than real and was transparent to most Filipinos (Ienaga 1978: 153-155).

“The Japanese sought to patronize the already existing Philippine political elite, in a country with sharp class differences and a relatively small political class. The Japanese may have thought this approach to be necessary because the Philippines had already been promised independence from the United States.” (Hardesty 1999: 4)

As the guerilla insurgency gained strength, primitive and brutal Japanese counter-insurgency (COIN) tactics only served to inflame the situation further (Guardia 2010: 91). As found in many studies of insurgencies; guerrilla success led to indiscriminate Japanese retributions which buoyed guerrillas and resulted in further support from the population (Norling 1999: 17).

Throughout the occupation the standard of living for Filipinos plummeted, destroying whatever slivers of support the Japanese might have had (Ienaga 1978: 71). A Filipino policy of non-cooperation with the Japanese resulted in a pool of unemployed civilians who were free to join or assist the guerillas (Wolfert 1945: 87). The Japanese missed or ignored whatever opportunity they may have had to sway Filipinos to their side and as a result the occupation was widely hated and resisted (Guardia 2010: 108).

#### **4.3 GENERAL BELIEF AND SUPPORT OF THE US**

For the duration of the Japanese occupation many Filipinos continued to believe in and support the US cause, eagerly awaiting MacArthur’s promised return (Ienaga 1978: 172). Gen. Charles Willoughby, the head of the MacArthur’s Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) gave the figure that 95% of Filipinos supported the US cause and wished for the return of the exiled President Manuel Quezon (1972: 57).

MacArthur’s communications with Filipino guerrillas groups were quite limited and sporadic – especially in the early years – but messages that did get through helped sustain the resistance movement (Breuer 1994: 146). The US printed MacArthur’s famous slogan “I Shall Return” on a multitude of everyday objects and delivered them to the occupied Philippines throughout the war as a plea for the Filipinos to keep faith. The power of these messages, news and even rumours from the ‘outside’ gave strength and hope during the hard times before liberation (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 77-78).

#### **4.4 ASSOCIATION AND INTERGRATION WITH US MILITARY**

The Filipino guerilla campaign against the Japanese occupation forces further derived a measure of legitimacy from the connection to the US military. MacArthur wisely employed Filipinos who possessed significant stature in their own community to act as his representatives during clandestine intelligence gathering operations (Willoughby 1972: 46). By building the guerrilla organization around the pre-war Filipino military structure, the resistance was able to promote itself as a legitimate expression of national force. Formalizing and adhering to military rank structure further transformed disorganized, ragged and irregular guerrillas groups into cohesive military organizations (Breuer 2005: 48). Pledges by the US to pay guerillas salaries and compensation to civilians for shelter and supplies won loyalty and boosted the aura of legitimacy (Guardia 2010: 107).

#### **5. END STATE**

By the time MacArthur honoured his pledge to return by landing on Leyte, the guerillas in the Philippines were a substantial movement, active on every island of the archipelago. With US forces firmly ensconced on Leyte, supplies flowed rapidly to guerrillas and their size and strength grew immensely (Smith 1963: 26). Post-war studies have placed their numbers at this time as somewhere between 260,000-270,000 active guerillas (Hardesty 2009: 1; Ienaga 1978: 172). From rag-tag survivors of MacArthur's defeated army; by late-1944 the guerillas boasted regimental and division-sized forces which operated effectively alongside the newly arrived US formations (Smith 1963: 407). Volckmann's well-organized guerrillas participated in the climatic battles to capture Gen. Yamashita's last defensive position before the Japanese surrender (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 78).

After the liberation of Manila – in which guerilla forces played an important role – much of the attention of senior US commanders in the Pacific shifted to the next series of 'island hopping' to move their forces closer to the Japanese home islands (Hastings 2011: 435-436). Many Japanese forces however remained scattered throughout the Philippines and routing these hold-outs occupied the Filipinos until the end of the war. Just as the rugged terrain had aided the Filipino guerrillas, the surviving Japanese hid out in the



rough country avoiding patrols sent to locate them. At least one Japanese soldier held-out until 1974 when he was finally persuaded to give up.<sup>5</sup>

For many Filipinos the guerrilla resistance against the Japanese is regarded as a national triumph and many future political leaders first built their reputations as guerillas fighting the Japanese.

“Born from the cultural DNA of the Filipino prehistory/pre-colonial warrior, and building on techniques learned through the hard lessons of the Spanish and American Colonial periods, the Filipino irregular warrior honed his skills in the crucible of World War II occupation. He emerged extremely savvy, confident, armed, and organized for guerrilla warfare.”(Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 61)

Post-war however there was some disappointment that the contribution of Filipinos was not sufficiently recognized by outsiders and the some felt abandoned by the US (Breuer 1994: 228). Despite these feelings, the US and the Phillippines have enjoyed generally positive relations in the decades following the war.

## **6. DID THEY ACHIEVE WHAT THEY INTENDED?**

The Filipino guerrilla resistance against the Japanese during the Second World War is an example of successful indigenous contributions to irregular warfare. Combining the broken and scattered remnants of MacArthur’s defeated army with tens of thousands of Filipino civilians the guerillas grew into a potent force with a presence on every island (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 298).

Ambushes, raids and patrols kept Japanese forces constantly under threat and forced them to resort to counter-productive COIN methods which further alienated the local population. The guerillas tied down large numbers of enemy forces and established many areas which were effectively ‘no-go’ zones for Japanese troops (Wolfert 1945: 228).

As the guerillas became more organized, they were tasked with and delivered a crucial stream of intelligence to US commanders (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 308; Guardia 2010: 109-110). Reports on Japanese troop dispositions and from guerrilla reconnaissance of the invasion landing beaches were forwarded, affording army planners a clearer picture. The

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<sup>5</sup> See The Scotsman. (2003) “Team sets out to find Japanese troops still fighting the war” <http://www.scotsman.com/news/team-sets-out-to-find-japanese-troops-still-fighting-the-war-1-494902>, Accessed: March 10 2012.



development of the Filipino guerrillas had reached a point – pre-invasion – that MacArthur considered their contributions vital to the success of the amphibious assault (Smith 1963: 12). Post-invasion, the increasingly well-equipped guerilla forces transitioned to a role more akin to that of auxiliaries, fighting alongside US divisions clearing Japanese units from their strongly-held defensive positions.

While the introduction of large numbers of US ground forces was necessary for the liberation of the Philippines that should not diminish from the integral role of the guerrillas. Without their support, US would have faced a bloodier and longer operation to secure the Philippines.

## **7. HOW WAS IRREGULAR WARFARE USED ON THE GROUND?**

The Filipino guerilla movement exhibited many features common to irregular warfare. Facing a superior conventional force, Filipinos used traditional guerrilla warfare techniques to resist the Japanese occupation. Small, under-equipped units used irregular tactics to confound their adversaries.

### **7.1 DESTABILIZATION**

The Filipino guerrilla campaign during the Second World War is an example of collaboration between outside power and irregular forces to destabilize a mutual enemy. Guerrilla operations were conducted with the goal of weakening the Japanese forces and undermining whatever limited support they were receiving from Filipino collaborators.

### **7.2 PRIMARY TO AUXILIARY**

For most of the war, the Filipino guerrillas acted as the primary vehicle of influence for the US in the Philippines. Constrained by an initial lack of resources, the US relied on the burgeoning resistance movement to carry the fight to the Japanese. While some US officers were sent by MacArthur to assess the situation in the Philippines and establish rudimentary communications, the guerrillas were not reinforced with US personnel. Instead, the bulk of the guerrilla manpower was provided by Filipinos along with a minority of US soldiers who had avoided Japanese captivity. Some of these US guerrillas became prominent post-war but it should be understood that the resistance was an overwhelmingly Filipino movement.

While the composition of the Filipino guerrillas did not shift, their role gradually evolved from a primary vehicle of influence to that of auxiliary support to conventional US forces as the liberation of the Philippines drew closer. Improving communications with the US command increased the amount of control and direction from MacArthur's headquarters (Willoughby 1972: 41). After the invasions of Leyte and Luzon guerrilla formations were better equipped and used as auxiliaries or light infantry alongside conventional US forces.

“By January of 1945, the invasion of Luzon had begun. Once they had regained physical contact with allied forces, guerrilla units began to be well supplied. Operations were focused on direct support to liberation operations.” (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 66)

One famous example was the support provided by guerrillas during the raid on Cabanatuan (Breuer 1994: 218; McRaven 1996: 246-247). Guerrillas provided intelligence, acted as scouts and blocking forces for the US soldiers who conducted the daring attack on the prisoner of war camp (Breuer 1994: 168). While the Cabanatuan raid stands out, during the course of the liberation of the Philippines guerrilla units provided invaluable support to conventional forces and became increasingly formalized themselves.

### **7.3 INTELLIGENCE**

With conventional forces left in the Philippines it became a priority of MacArthur's headquarters to forge links with guerrilla groups in order direct their intelligence gathering operations. During the course of the Japanese occupation one of the primary roles of the guerrilla forces was that of intelligence gathering (Breuer 2005: 47). Establishing a more accurate picture of the guerrilla situation by debriefing US soldiers who had escaped the Philippines was the first step before contact could be established.

“...escaped personnel brought in more detailed information concerning numerous guerrilla groups in operation on central Luzon, Leyte, Samar, Cebu, Negros, and Panay. During this same period, radio contact was re-established, and intercepted calls from guerrilla commanders on northern Luzon and Panay added to the picture.” (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 300)

Successful contact with guerrillas contributed to the flow of intelligence from the Philippines to the US military. Throughout the years of Japanese occupation a torrent of intelligence reached MacArthur's headquarters in Australia (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 324). As the guerrillas were predominantly Filipino, they were often better able to establish

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connections with local Filipinos than US guerrillas who lacked cultural understanding (Guardia 2010: 92).

As the liberation of the Philippines approached, guerrilla groups were given specific intelligence taskings' to prepare for the invasion. Guerrillas scouted the invasion beaches and reported on Japanese positions allowing US military planners to adjust their invasion plans (Smith 1963: 31). Once US forces were ashore, Filipino guerrillas continued to provide military intelligence on Japanese forces. Intelligence related activities were one of the most important contributions of the Filipino guerrillas from the chaotic days after the surrender of Corregidor to the liberation.

### 7.4 INFLUENCE OPERATIONS

Another primary role of the guerrillas was influence operations; directed towards both the Japanese and the local civilian population. Incessant guerrilla operations against the Japanese military served to weaken morale and drive a wedge between Filipinos and the Japanese. Well organized, ruthless guerrillas were labelled 'bandits' by the Japanese in an attempt to downplay their effect on morale (Breuer 2005: 48). Their effect however was significant as "Japanese forces were desperate, cut off from supplies and surrounded by an unfriendly population." (Ienaga 1978: 172)

Building civilian support is essential to successful guerilla warfare and has been identified as such by many prominent 'small wars' thinkers (Galula 1964: 49-50; Taber 2002: 10). The Filipino guerrillas recognized this fact and directed tremendous energy towards gaining the support of the local population. Civilian support was built through various positive means including information operations such as guerrilla newspapers and radio stations (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 77). Threatening or killing any Filipino who collaborated with the Japanese was also common and undertaken extensively. (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 60).

Guerrilla attacks against the Japanese served to influence local support. For the guerrillas to be seen as actively resisting the Japanese occupation was critical throughout the war. Wendell Fertig is quoted as saying "...I am trying to make clear that any guerrilla has to keep the pressure on, everywhere and all the time, killing Japanese. Otherwise, no public support. The public wants to see dead Japs" (Childress 2003: 10). Disseminating news of guerrilla successes was a useful tool in the information war which raged between the guerrillas and the Japanese military propaganda machine (Guardia 2010: 107).

## 7.5 MILITARY OPERATIONS

From the relatively unsophisticated attacks of mid-1942 to the large guerrilla units that fought directly against Japanese forces during the liberation, military operations were central to the guerilla movement. Staples of irregular warfare; raids and ambushes against the Japanese became a favoured tactic of the Filipino guerrillas (Reyeg & Marsh 2011: 60). Relying on the rough terrain and civilian support, guerrillas attacked isolated Japanese forces, withdrew and hoped to tempt the Japanese into pursuit. Ambushes were prepared along these routes in the hope of destroying small Japanese elements. The Japanese were militarily weakened – and diminished in the eyes of the population – by these types of guerrilla operations for years (Norling 1999: 17).

The Filipino guerrillas also conducted a campaign of sabotage against the Japanese occupation and any infrastructure that supported it. Targeting the logistics and communications of the Japanese forces was the main focus of these sabotage operations (Smith 1963: 91). The availability of demolition equipment was a limiting factor for guerrilla sabotage operations. There are however numerous reports of Filipino guerillas destroying bridges and Japanese supply depots which demonstrate that sabotage operations had an effect (Hardesty 2009: 2). Measuring the effective of these operations is not easy and like other resistance movements – the French Maquis for example – are disputed and hard to quantify (Smith 1963: 53).<sup>6</sup> Once US conventional forces were ashore, guerrilla attacks on supply lines frequently made the resupply of beleaguered Japanese forces impossible (Smith 1963: 478).

Throughout the campaign to liberate the Philippines, guerrillas were contributing intelligence, support and increasingly frontline combat capable units. On Leyte, Filipino guerrillas directed traffic on the main roads to reduce congestion and allow military traffic to move as efficiently as possible (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 378). As the US focus shifted on to the next series of islands on the path to the Japanese home islands, Filipino guerrilla units took on the difficult task of rooting out the thousands of Japanese soldiers who remained scattered through the archipelago.

## CONCLUSION

The guerrilla campaign in the Philippines during the Second World War is an important example of the successful use of irregular warfare against an occupying army. As the

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Willoughby argues that the Filipino guerrillas ran greater risks than their French counterparts (Willoughby 1972: 39)

guerrilla movement grew, US commanders were able to exert more control and ultimately benefited from the addition of these additional light infantry units into the Allied army. Recruited mainly from Filipinos, the guerrillas accepted American supplies and collaborated with the US military towards the ultimate goal of liberation.

From the dark days after the surrender of Corregidor as US and Filipino military forces marched into captivity, guerrilla bands began to form all over the Filipino archipelago. Lacking weapons, supplies and organization the early guerrillas managed to spark a spirit of resistance which sustained hope and pride amongst Filipinos and US military leaders. Employing classic irregular warfare tactics, Filipino guerrillas created a standard that civilians could rally to and support with information, shelter and supplies.

By the end of the war, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos had joined the guerrillas receiving support from the vast majority of the population and were seen as a legitimate expression of Filipino resistance and national pride. The legitimacy of the guerrillas in the eyes of their fellow Filipinos would ease the transition from occupation to peace as the war drew to a close. Many future leaders of the Philippines built their reputations as guerrilla fighters in what was later looked back on as the 'golden age' of Filipino irregular warfare.

For the US, the collaboration with the Filipino guerrillas offered many benefits. Desperate for good news after their military defeat the fragmentary reports of resistance against the Japanese stirred MacArthur and his staff. Emissaries from the US military were sent into the occupied Philippines to determine the extent of the guerrilla movement and establish communication and supply links. As weapons and supplies began to be delivered to the guerrillas, the flow of intelligence out increased. Guerrilla attacks destabilized the Japanese military forces in the Philippines and tied down scarce resources which could not be employed against the US elsewhere. Valuable intelligence on Japanese military units and positions allowed US military planners to alter and enhance the plan for the amphibious invasions that began liberation.

The US soldiers who had remained in the Philippines during the Japanese occupation as guerrillas emerged from hiding to attach their forces to the newly arrived US Army. The Filipino guerrillas were supplied with weapons and equipment and added to the US order of battle. It is argued by some that these US guerrillas paved the way for the rise of irregular warfare and the formation of the US Special Forces (Guardia 2010: 9).

The success and contributions of the Filipino guerrilla movement was acknowledged at the time by US military leaders who well knew their contributions and tremendous value as a means of influence in the occupied Philippines.

“The gallant Filipino forces, despite tremendous difficulty and with very limited means at their disposal, rendered invaluable support to our operations. Their accomplishments are worthy of high praise.” - Gen. Kreuger (GHQ-SWPA 1994: 323)

# VIETNAM

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## **The Civilian Irregular Defense Group**

The Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) began in 1962 and lasted until the American commitment to South Vietnam ended in early 1973. While the CIDG evolved from a CIA-inspired experiment, the concept was driven by the awareness that there was a significant ethnic divide between the Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese peoples of South Vietnam. This divide was seen as something the Vietnamese Communists could exploit to their advantage (Kelly 1972, Piasecki 2009: 2 & Stewart 2012: 60). The non-Vietnamese peoples in question lived in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam; this border area was sparsely populated and represented both a series of terminal points for the Communist lines of communication between north and south as well as terrain from which a conventional force could cut the country in two. The ‘Montagnards’, a French term for mountaineer, described a number of non-Vietnamese people resident in the area (Ahern, 2001: 43-46, Kelly 1972 & Prados 1999: 48).

Due to the importance of the region and the animosity between the Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese peoples, it became necessary to find ways to prevent Communist infiltration and subversion there. Medical outreach programs conducted by special operations forces in the region in 1961-1962 led the CIA to conclude a ‘Village Defense Program’, involving elements of civic action with the organization of village militias, would make inroads with the Montagnards as well as assist in securing the Central Highlands (Ahern 2001: 46-58, Kelly 1999, Piasecki 2009: 5 & Prados 1999: 48). The experiment was seen as successful and it began to expand in size and geographic scale shortly thereafter. With the expansion came the need to provide greater support and other events led the Department of Defense to direct that special operations forces no longer act under the control of the CIA. The change of command structure also led to an inexorable transition from a village defense program in 1962 to missions dedicated to surveillance and direct action by 1966.

While the aim of this brief report is not to offer a history of the CIDG program, it provides a cautionary tale about the effects of changes to the purpose of irregular forces due to the nature of their command and control.

## **Influence**

The CIDG came into existence due to an experiment involving civilian outreach in 1961-1962. At the outset, this was a means to an end; this was the denial of an opportunity to the Vietnamese Communists. The experiment saw the deployment of U.S. Army Special Forces 'A' teams deploy into Montagnard communities to engage in civic action as well as the establishment of village militias that would patrol and react to enemy activities in the surrounding countryside (Giampetri & Stone 2004: 38 & Stewart 2012: 66). The early emphasis on civic action had positive results and directly contributed to the pacification of a province. The situation began to change by mid-1963 and the CIDG's tasks began to transition from the defence of their communities to border surveillance (Giampetri & Stone 2004: 39-40). This contributed to the movement of CIDG camps away from the villages from which they drew their recruits to the militarily significant areas (Kelly 1972). When the primary task became border surveillance, the civic outreach became a means to recruit future CIDG members as opposed to a means to engage with the local community (Kelly 1972). This did not appear to adversely affect recruiting, but it was noted that this led a number of communities in the Central Highlands to abandon their efforts (Giampetri & Stone 2004: 40). Simply put, the CIDG became less influential among the Montagnards and more of a paramilitary force for use by MACV.

There were no direct attempts to influence enemy-decision making, but the development and growth of CIDG forces influenced Communist military actions. There were attempts by Communist agents to infiltrate the program on a number of occasions under the guise of defections (Kelly 1972). This, however, was not a phenomenon exclusive to the CIDG; other South Vietnamese military organizations experienced similar attempts. CIDG camps were also targeted by the Communists for attack; this suggests that either they were seen as weaker forces or the presence of the camps in border areas hindered Communist freedom of movement (Kelly 1972). The latter is more plausible as it is consistent with the creation of CIDG camps along the border.

## **Intelligence**

The development of greater cultural intelligence about the Montagnards was never an end to itself for the CIDG. The facilitation of links between the inhabitants of the Central Highlands and the military was the result of an experiment involving civic outreach in 1961-1962 (Lopez 2005: 11). It is important to note however, that the degree of acceptance and recognition by the local inhabitants of a military presence in their



community governed the degree of success experienced by the CIDG program (Lopez 2005: 16-17). Yet this became more difficult as CIDG expanded into other geographic areas and different ethnic groups (Ahern 2001: 104-105). This meant the number of cultures that CIDG included increased beyond the initial experiment; the term 'Montagnard' is somewhat misleading as it erroneously describes all non-Vietnamese peoples resident in the Central Highlands as a homogenous group.

Over time, the importance of the intelligence gathering and validation functions increased. This coincided with the transition to MACV control from November 1962 to July 1963. While not under the control of Military Assistance Advisory Group Vietnam (MAAG V), the CIDG were transferred into military control shortly after the establishment of Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). There are a number of explanations for the conduct of what came to be known as Operation SWITCHBACK (Piasecki 1999: 6-7 & Stewart 2012: 71-72). First, expansion of the initial project led to a greater resource commitment on the part of the CIA as well as the military. The scale of the commitment created a situation where the sustainment of the CIDG would begin to jeopardize the CIA's sustainment of international operations (Ahern 2001: 97). In addition, the American military concern over the CIA's control over its SOF increased (Krepinevich 1986: 71-74). Third, President Kennedy directed that the Department of Defense was to be the primary agency overseeing the conduct of 'paramilitary operations' in National Security Action Memorandum 57 (National Security Action Memorandum 1961). Last, it was thought that the strained relations between the Government of South Vietnam and the non-Vietnamese people populating the CIDG could be improved through different command arrangements (Ahern 2001: 109-113). The net effect was the transfer of responsibility to exercise command over CIDG as well as the need to sustain it to the military, in this case, MACV. While the transfer of command responsibility was not of itself an issue, CIDG now had to compete with every other organization for sustainment matters. The record suggests that the new arrangements were considered far from optimal and MACV was described as inefficient or less than willing to provide the support CIDG had enjoyed under CIA control (Ahern 2001: 102 & Stewart 2012: 73). Yet the change in command arrangements set the conditions for a change to the mission.

CIDG became increasingly subordinate to the broader military effort. In the early months and years of its existence, its function was primarily defensive in nature. If the Montagnards were defending their own communities, South Vietnamese forces could be employed elsewhere (Collins 1991).<sup>7</sup> What followed as expansion occurred was a

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<sup>7</sup> Some argue that this was the most effective use of the CIDG. See Lopez, 18.

transition from a primarily defensive function associated with counterinsurgency efforts through civic outreach and the organization of village militias to one of unconventional warfare, where the external advisory effort were intended to organize part or guerillas for use against enemy conventional forces (Krepinevich 1986: 69-70 & Stewart 2012: 63-65). The expansion, concomitant with the deployment and creation of a U.S. Army Special Force Group to oversee the CIDG effort, set the conditions for further changes to the function of the CIDG (Kelly 1972 & Prados 1999: 57).

One of the consequences of that change of control was the assignment of intelligence gathering tasks to CIDG forces and the requirement to provide information back to MACV HQ. It began with a program of surveillance of cross-border ingress routes (Kelly 1972). The intelligence provided on Communist infiltration came to be more useful to MACV than the local intelligence gleaned from the communities where CIDG operated (Giampetri & Stone 2004: 38). The utility of the information can be explained through MACV's perpetual need to be aware, and capable, of dealing with Communist incursions. Detailed understandings of smaller Montagnard communities paled by comparison (Kelly 1972). One of the other effects of the transition was the consolidation of a number of other related programs into CIDG. The 'trailwatcher' program that began in 1961 by the U.S. Mission in Saigon was absorbed and contributed in no small part to the change of CIDG's primary focus (Kelly 1972). In essence, it had become part of MACV's intelligence system to deal with the problem posed by the Ho Chi Minh trail.

### **Direct Military Action**

The CIDG elements that deployed along the border beginning in mid-1963 were increasingly effective at operations at the sub-unit level and higher. There was always the possibility that the CIDG could be developed into something greater than a series of village militias with small regional reaction forces called 'mobile strike forces' (Krepinevich 1986: 70). By 1964, the CIDG camps also became locations from which to stage low level offensive operations (Kelly 1972, Krepinevich 1986: 70 & Stewart 2012: 74-75). By 1965, the Mobile Strike Forces came to be known as 'Mike Forces' and were one of several types of SOF related units used for surveillance and raids (Collins 1991 & Kelly 1972). The growing emphasis on offensive operations came at a price; the more the force focused on offensive tasks, the less they focused on the defence of the local area (Stewart 2012: 87). It would be wrong, however, to portray offensive operations as the exclusive activity after 1965. Much of CIDG's work was related to border surveillance

and patrolling the remote regions of the Central Highlands and border areas (Collins 1991). What is interesting about this was the opinion expressed by General William C. Westmoreland, the Commander MACV from 1964 to 1968. In his memoirs, he noted that the CIDG provided the infrastructure for reactions to Communist actions gleaned by patrolling activities (Westmoreland 1976: 147). This suggests that he saw the CIDG as something that could be used for intelligence gathering as well as direct action. What this meant, however, is that the CIDG came to be used more and more like conventional infantry battalions than a force to defend communities in the Central Highlands. Yet there is evidence of the CIDG being used to harass and interdict Communist lines of communication as early as 1966 under U.S. Army Special Forces control and tutelage (Kelly 1972). This further changed the nature of the CIDG's employment; by 1967, they were largely used for offensive actions along the entirety of the South Vietnamese border (Kelly 1972). This, however, had the effect of transforming them into something analogous to conventional forces.

## **Conclusion**

The CIDG experience was one of constant change. From a civic outreach program that led to the development of village militias and quick reaction forces, it became a means to maintain surveillance on remote border areas and act if necessary. The literature suggests that it was ultimately a failure, but if one looks at its initial aim, it represents a qualified success. Despite the tensions between the Montagnards and the South Vietnamese government, the Central Highlands were not as significant an infiltration route as they could have been. Furthermore, the CIDG increased the number of units available to MACV and the South Vietnamese with which to fight.

## SONS OF IRAQ

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In 2007 at the peak of hostilities against allied forces in Iraq, US forces decided to engage locals to support Coalition Forces (CF). In al Anbar province, where the attacks against US forces were the most intensive, the choice was to work with local leaders to stop the attacks (McCary 2009: 49). Between early 2007 and the transition of power over SOI to Iraqi security forces (ISF), 99,374 Iraqis were under contract (Dale 2009: 117).

### **Why were IIMF engaged?**

In dire need for a strategy change as attacks on allied forces had increased dramatically, multiple advantages were intended with IIMF engagement. In these times of heaviest resistance, the primary goal was to improve security of the Coalition Forces (CF) by benefitting from both the knowledge of locals as well as their direct support in the form of checkpoints in areas where CF were not present.

Only local members of the community could easily identify who was a part of the community and who might have come with an intention to attack (SIGIR 2011: 6). Locals were also likely to know which community members supported insurgent activities and where they were located. Potentially this information could be provided in a more timely fashion and therefore actionable if cooperation was institutionalized (Koloski 2009: 43). By attaching human intelligence collection teams to local contractors, the goal was to develop and mature these sources in order to generate a more accurate image of insurgent and criminal activities (Koloski 2009: 43).

Economic considerations also played a significant role in contracted cooperation with community members (Gaskin 2009: 215). The local economy was strongly impacted by the years of conflict. Almost no income and thus future was available for the population (Wilbanks & Karsh 2010: 67). This led to ideal recruiting conditions for radical and criminal groups. Offering locals an income for cooperating and providing their contribution to security in their neighborhood would not only help the local economy but also offer an alternative to joining insurgent groups (Koloski 2009: 43). The cash injection would lead to additional local spending which would increase overall living conditions. Besides the effect on local living conditions, the intent was

to limit the recruiting pool for insurgent and criminal groups (SIGIR 2011: 6). The concept was also referred to as ‘out-hiring’ the enemy (Burke 2009: 2).

Another goal was to establish a sense of pride in the community members derived from positive actions and reducing violence in their neighborhoods by making locals part of the solution. The hope was also to make significant progress in the contest for popular support of CF engagement, a key factor in counterinsurgency operations (Koloski 2009: 41). Finally, regarding direct operational support, the aim was to use local contractors to set up checkpoints where the CF had no presence (Koloski 2009: 47).

### **Who engaged the Sons of Iraq?**

Originating out of the Anbar Awakening Movement, a Sunni tribal revolt against al-Qaeda in Iraq, following the assassination of the leader of the Zawba tribe in 2006, the tribes decided to work with CF in order to fight against the al-Qaeda (Saraswat 2010: 2).

The initial contacts were not comfortable as many of the same men that were selected for contracts had fought against CF forces just days before (Wilbanks & Karsh 2010: 57). The initiative for initial cooperation came mostly from local leaders. “On most occasions, the tribes made the first offers to cooperate” (Wilbanks & Karsh 2010: 60). In order to achieve the previously mentioned positive effects, local groups were first contracted on the squadron level. These were called ‘Iraqi Police Volunteers’, ‘Concerned Citizens’ and ‘Concerned Local Citizens’. These groups were formed around already established contacts in the area. Troop commanders had full authority over who was engaged and also whose contracts were extended (Koloski 2009: 48). With expansion of the program, the deployment of IIMF moved from a grass-roots initiative to formalized strategy.

The program ended with termination of the contracts and the handing over of the control of the SOI to Iraqi security authorities (Dale 2009: 117).

## **How were the Sons of Iraq used?**

SOI were appointed to many different tasks. This obviously also depended on the abilities of local contractors. In many areas, the SOI became the main employer, leading to different levels of expertise offered (Burke 2009: 2).

After a selection process in which each contractor was cleared and entered into a biometric database (Ahmed 2008: 13), members were trained and provided with the necessary equipment to set up checkpoints and control areas with little or no CF presence (Koloski 2009: 44). Establishing checkpoints and controlling areas in cooperation with CF was a primary task provided by the SOI. The goal was to fill in the gap, where ISF presence was low (Dale 2009: 119). Additionally, IIMF were used to support local counterinsurgency missions (Wilbanks & Karsh 2010: 61).

The SOI also played a significant role in clearing roads of IEDs (Gaskin 2009: 217). The process often included IIMF clearing the roads with forward elements and then having trailing elements establishing SOI checkpoints that secured the ground gained (Koloski 2009: 46). The risk of clearing streets from IED was therefore outsourced to SOI.

Another strong focus was on gaining actionable intelligence of local extremist and criminal groups (McCallister 2008: 1). Extensive local intelligence was gathered primarily on Shi'a extremists that led to the detention of several key leaders. Local cells constructing IED's were also more effectively targeted with the specific local intelligence gained. Particularly in the fight against al-Qaeda in Iraq, the SOI were helpful (ICG 2010: 25). "The Sunnis knew where al-Qaeda fighters lived and worked because they had harbored them initially, and they had no qualms about using the same brutal methods in fighting back" (Wilbanks & Karsh 2010: 62).

## **Was the use of IIMF legitimate?**

If legitimacy is understood as actions being in line with US government regulations, then a very mixed picture evolves regarding the legitimacy of IIMF actions.

On the one hand, it was intended to only work with IIMF where they were likely to make a significant difference. Every deployment is reported to have had to pass the 'New York Times Test' relating to what the impact would be if the specific contract was to appear on the front page of the paper (Koloski 2009: 44). However, it seems as

if this test was often not taken very seriously. Documentation of who received financial support and for which tasks and to which degree the tasks were fulfilled, was lacking in 41% of cases analyzed by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR 2011: 14). This was completely in violation of government guidelines – a fact that was known to staff that were trained properly. Given that severe questions relating to performance control have to be asked, it must be concluded that not all uses of IIMF were legitimate in the case of the SOI. In fact, there are many reports suggesting illegal payments that were made without proof of task completion (SIGIR 2011). Particularly when control was even less possible as the program expanded faster than the infrastructure necessary to control actions allowed for, question regarding the legitimate use of resources must be raised.

### **How did the relationship with the contractors evolve over time?**

The relationship with the SOI went through at least three phases. IIMF engagement started as a grass-roots movement on a very small level and was extended to further regions after initial successes. In the second phase, demand for implementing the model increased in various parts of Iraq. The demand increased both from commanders that wanted to benefit similarly as well as from the side of local leaders that saw the contracts as a source of income and an opportunity to gain further influence in their communities. In this phase, the program was extended very quickly over large geographical areas.

A third phase of the relationship began after the IIMF cooperation was ended and contracts were not extended. Here the relationship changed significantly, as contractors who previously were in positions of influence, actively contributing to achieving security in their neighborhoods, were suddenly out no longer receiving income. While they were promised jobs in the government or with Iraqi security forces the reality was that most former contractors found themselves out of work with limited prospects. The Iraqi government was very hesitant to provide job opportunities. If jobs were offered, they were less prestigious positions that many former contractors did not want to take (ICG 2010: 25). Having recently occupied SOI-related positions that provided security in their communities, they felt underappreciated when offered positions as drivers or garbage collectors. Often sectarian agendas were identified as the reason why so many former SOI were not given adequate jobs or even contracts at all. To date, only about half of the former SOI have been integrated into the ISF (Katzman 2012: 17). This has clearly led to conflict and a fragmentation of society.



### **Did the IIMF achieve the intended goals?**

Clearly, many reports describe direct positive impacts on local security. On the direct operational level, many successes were achieved. Valuable, actionable intelligence was provided by IIMF that led to the prevention of attacks and the arrest of leaders and other members of insurgent groups. On this level many successes are undeniable.

The many positive economic effects for the contractors and the local communities were significant. Also more effective local structures were initially achieved as the authority of cooperating local leaders benefitted from the collaboration (Koloski 2009: 47). The level of IED attacks was reduced in areas in which locals were contracted (Dale 2009: 119).

Overall, the short-term initial impact was clearly visible and led to increased reporting of extremist and criminal activity, fewer kidnappings and car-jackings and also a clearly positive effect on the local economy (Koloski 2009: 47). From a short-term perspective, the IIMF deployment was a clear success.

With the expansion of the program problems with control of SOI activities proliferated. In this phase of IIMF deployment, the lack of documentation of SOI activities as well as reports of a frequent lack of control of contractor activities make an assessment challenging. Clearly, long-term goals of achieving a stabilizing influence through the program post-conflict have not been a success. The long-term effect has been rather negative, as a further fragmentation of society has evolved and may conflicts have emerged as consequences of the contractor selection bias.

Due to the lack of sufficient documentation it is very difficult to put the reports of success into perspective with the actual tasks that were given to IIMF. Therefore, while at least significant initial success is obvious, it is very difficult to bring the larger perspective of significantly reduced numbers of attacks during the time of IIMF deployment into the equation. Significantly increased numbers of CF as part of the 'Surge', play a role as well as the success of specific parts of the CF (Allen 2009: 229). The lack of clear documentation does not allow for a more positive picture.

### **What is the end state?**

The issue of integration of the former SOI into Iraqi society dominates the perception of the SOI success. Instead of preparing entities that could offer stability to Iraq, the



deployment of IIMF has led to the emerging of new parties and therefore, a further fragmentation of Iraqi society. There were initially “repeated reports of former SOI that had been dropped from payrolls, harassed, arrested, or sidelined...” (Katzman 2012: 17). This outcome goes back to the selection process of contractors. Not all segments of society had been integrated in the SOI program, leading to the perception of favoritism towards certain groups. This led to the perception that the SOI primarily consisted of Sunni and often followed a sectarian agenda. The primarily Shia-led government hesitated to integrate the SOI because they were seen as a threat to Shia’ influence (McCallister 2008: 1). The Sunni Arab political party, viewed the SOI as organized potential competition support (Dale 2009:121).

At the very least, long-term goals in the form of an increase in security and stabilization of the country or a further strengthening of the Iraqi society have not been reached through SOI engagement. It appears that for the benefit of short-term security for CF – longer-term disadvantages have been accepted. The selection process enabled a strong Sunni SOI dominance and led to a further fragmentation of society, giving the impression that the CF, in the case of the SOI, took sides in the struggle between Sunni and Shia over power in Iraq. This imbalance led to further challenges in the form of conflicts between former-SOI Sunnis and government institutions and has complicated the reintegration of the former SOI into the Iraqi workforce. Overall, the relationship between the SOI and the Iraqi government has been problematic (ICG 2010: 25).

The book cannot be fully closed on the assessment of SOI engagement in Iraq as the situation in Iraq is far from stabilized. Sectarian violence is still a frequent occurrence and has lately increased (Arango 2012, Adnan & Arango 2012).

### **Were the SOI a tool of influence?**

The SOI were clearly a tool of influence in counterinsurgency missions. Direct operational intelligence gained enabled success in a time when new approaches were urgently necessary (Ahmed 2008: 2). Undoubtedly, IIMF have been a tool to significantly influence the environment. Though, over time and with less established control, the influence became less controlled. Therefore, the desired influence decreased and other agendas were at least partially followed by members of the SOI. From this case study, it cannot be concluded, that the management of large IIMF contingencies can be effectively controlled over large geographical areas.

## **Were the SOI controllable?**

Initially, as the number of contractors was small and IIMF were only deployed in limited areas implementing effective control was a priority that appears to have been taken seriously. Specifically, as the program was new and experience with local contractors was minimal, all measures were taken to ensure proper selection, training and conduct of the contractors. In early stages local leaders played a very important role in the selection of potential contractors. However a strong reliance on local leaders led to other agendas gaining influence, including a Sunni preference in the selection process that was not intended by US forces.

This example shows, that even from the initial stages, the challenges of IIMF control became visible. A balance had to be found between close control of activities and demonstrated trust in local leaders that supported the missions and preselected potential SOI. Too much emphasis on control of local leaders would have potentially decreased the motivation for their cooperation. It would have also undermined their authority in recruiting locals and in providing leadership. Implementing control also proved to be a challenging task. How could checkpoints in remote locations be regularly monitored - independently from local SOI leadership? This was not only logistically challenging due to the distances to cover, but also posed a substantial risk to security when travel had to be made for the sole purpose of controlling contractual agreements. Naturally, when the situation became worse, the benefits of implementing control were weighed against the risk of being attacked on the way.

The larger the program became, the larger the challenge to closely monitor actions at each checkpoint. This is specifically the case as each SOI group was individually different in their composition requiring special attention (Ahmed 2008: 11). By August 2008, 779 individual agreements were in place for the almost 100.000 SOI (SIGIR 2011: 6).

The rapid growth of contracts also led to different criteria for selection and reliance on less established local leaders in assisting recruitment and local leadership of SOI. The expansion of the program happened quickly, because there were so many requests for local support that the control infrastructure was unable to cope. It appears that a lot of short-cuts were taken in this phase. For example little emphasis was put on how goals were achieved leading to a completely result-oriented approach, which raises questions about methods employed by SOI (Wilbanks & Karsh 2010: 68). Proper bookkeeping

of expenses as well as tasks requested and goals achieved became a lesser priority. Also, control over so many contractors in such a wide area was very difficult to establish, specifically because the control needed to be established in a war-zone. There were very limited options to implement control beyond requesting reports. What actually happened at the checkpoints – specifically in remote areas – was far from the reach of HQ control.

These challenges led to more SOI being paid and contracts extended without proper evidence of successful service. Often salaries were not even paid to the contractor directly but to local leaders (Dale 2009: 119). These leaders at times redistributed the salary unfairly and not without keeping funds for themselves. Corruption became a large and frequent challenge. Oversight not only became more difficult but was also less of a priority. It appears that from the experience with the SOI, the larger the program became the more difficult it was to establish effective control.

Options to affect any kind of control on how former IIMF contractors are integrated into society, as well as what role they could play in stabilizing the country after deployment, are minimal at best. It could not even be sure that they would abide to the new system (Shin 2009: 34). This has led to the promises of integration in regular Iraqi security forces being largely unfulfilled. Consequently, not only discontent on the sides of the former SOI emerged, but also a fragmentation of society and further conflict evolved (Ahmed 2008: 12). The effect – at least until June 2012 - is rather contrary to a long-term stabilizing effect.

It must be concluded that establishing control was a challenge from the beginning but became increasingly difficult with the growth in contractor numbers, as well as the more widespread deployment of SOI in Iraq. Based on reports and literature analyzed for this report, there is not enough evidence to conclude that full control was established over IIMF in the case of SOI – or even, that the ‘New York Times Test’ would have been passed in many cases where contracts were offered. The remaining impression is that implementing effective control over IIMF is very difficult for many reasons – not least of which is the security of those implementing the control on the practical level. In any case, implementing control, especially over a large number of contractors, is very cost, time and personnel intensive – all of which are limited resources in a combat zone. Against this background – especially given the almost complete lack of control over the contractors after the end of their service – the intensive costs must be set against the short-term gains of IIMF deployment. In the case of the SOI it is questionable to which extent the deployment really was a success.

Short-term successes are undeniable, but the long-term effects on the society in Iraq are not positive. Depending on priorities, from the perspective of long-term stability, deploying IIMF – at least if performed as was the case in Iraq 2007 – may not be the best overall option.

### **What were the benefits of working with IIMF?**

The benefits of working with IIMF in Iraq are very clear. At the time of the most resistance against CF in years, the number of attacks was reduced significantly (Dale 2009: 1). Although, many other factors, like the introduction of the a new strategy as was the case in early 2007 with the “New Way Forward” contributed to this outcome as well. Local intelligence led to many arrests of high-level insurgents. Many large areas were covered with SOI checkpoints that could have otherwise not been achieved by limited CF personnel. Finally the effect on the local economy as well as the families of the contractors and the population in general was positive and significant ground was gained in winning over the population. A lot of these goals would have been very difficult to achieve without the contracting process and the close cooperation with local leaders.

### **What were the costs and vulnerabilities of working with IIMF?**

The costs were larger than expected. It proved to be very difficult to recruit contractors without supporting agendas of local leaders that were offering help to find suitable men and that were needed as allies in creating a secure and stable environment. Implementing a tight control regime was resource intensive. For a tool that was supposed to save time and money, a lot of training, equipment and money for salaries had to be invested. To control what was done with these resources turned out to be a challenge. Corruption and hidden agendas became a common problem. The challenge was to make sure that the money reached those that actually performed the service and ensure that the tasks were actually fulfilled. The complete lack of documentation in many cases raises strong doubts about the costs in relation to the vulnerabilities accepted and the final outcome visible today.

There are other critical aspects that need to be considered when employing IIMF. Form an ethical perspective – but also regarding the support of the local communities – is it fair to outsource the most dangerous tasks, like clearing roads from IED, to locals? What message is sent with this tasking? Also, if establishing the rule of law in

a country is a goal, allowing non-governmental actors to use violence may undermine the effort (Shin 2009: 34). Another vulnerability is the fact that working with locals always offers a way in for those playing both sides. Trust was a severe issue in working with SOI (Dale 2009: 118).

### **What are the lessons learned from IIMF deployment?**

IIMF deployment in the case of the SOI offers at least four very important lessons regarding the initial selection process, the expansion of the program in case of success, the implementation of control and the post-deployment strategy.

#### Unbiased contactor selection process

As much as it may be a challenge, relying on local leaders will always be necessary. It is essential to achieve an unbiased selection process that establishes legitimacy of the institution by creating a representative mix of parties in the local societies in the IIMF. Otherwise the engagement of IIMF only furthers the divide between parties in the theatre. An unbiased representative selection contributes to diminishing the influence of sectarian agendas, as well as conflict within the IIMF. It also enables stronger integration into local societies, more local support and higher legitimacy for the mission.

#### Strict implementation of control

From a variety of perspectives it is essential that strict control is implemented during the selection process, training, provision of equipment, payment of salaries and goal achievement inspection. While cooperation with local leaders will have to include a demonstration of some level of trust, the experience shows that any lack of sufficient control is often used for pursuing agendas of local leaders.

#### Slow expansion of a program

Expansion of a successful program has to follow the pace in which the necessary control infrastructure can follow. Otherwise the strict control cannot be implemented and the use of IIMF can turn out to be counterproductive. If effective control can no longer be maintained, alternative agendas are likely to be followed by significant numbers of contractors.

## Effective post-deployment strategy for former IIMF

While it is very difficult to exert control over what former IIMF do with their training, experience and weapons, it is essential to have effective plans in place to prevent misuse of the resources provided. Otherwise a trained, equipped and experienced military force is left without leadership and salaries. This situation can easily be used by third parties to follow local agendas (ICG 2010: 28). Creating a large number of trained men, equipped with weapons, without prospects of income for the future is not a positive contribution to stability in the region. What is needed are realistic plans for future employment. Limited influence of the contracting authorities post-deployment raises questions of the extent to which it is possible to effectively implement a successful post-deployment strategy. This challenge questions the concept of deploying IIMF as it is not clear if long-term positive effects can be achieved or if the outcome is actually negative. The larger the program, the more complex the challenge will be to implement effective control and to enable a successful post-conflict integration into society.

## CONCLUSION

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In all case studies the IIMF were largely utilized for similar tasks. IIMF were used as auxiliary support to conventional forces, as the primary vehicle of influence (in areas with little or no conventional force presence), for intelligence gathering and validation, cultural intelligence and understanding, for influence operations directed at civilians, for direct military action and for sabotage against communication and transportation infrastructure. In the Philippines and in the Iraq case studies, IIMF have additionally been used for destabilization activities and influencing enemy moral. Therefore, over the more than 70-year time period that is covered by the three case studies in this report, the use of IIMF by the US has been fairly consistent.

Independent Variables:	Indicators:	PHL	VN	IRQ
Auxiliary Support to Conventional Army	a. Controlled through military command	x	x	x
	b. Subordinate to conventional effort	x	x	x
Primary Vehicle of Influence for Outside Actor	a. Minimal foreign military presence	x	x <sup>8</sup>	x <sup>9</sup>
	b. Main effort	x		
Destabilization	a. Undermining adversaries leadership	x		x
	b. Focused on adversary	x		x
Stabilization	a. Political Goals			
	b. Linked to larger political campaign			
Military Intelligence (Gathering)	a. Reports to military HQ	x	x	x
	b. Modification of military plans	x	x	x
	c. HQ tasking	x	x	x
Military Intelligence (Validation)	a. Prove/Disprove Mil Int.	x	x	x

<sup>8</sup> In rural mountain villages.

<sup>9</sup> In some areas the CF forces footprint was minimal and the idea was to have SOI checkpoints make CF presence unnecessary.

Cultural Intelligence/Understanding	a. Facilitate linkages between local population and conventional military	x	x	x
Influence Operations/Morale (Enemy)	a. Adversary surrendering/defecting b. Poor morale	x		x
Influence Operations/Morale (Civilian)	a. Civilian assistance (intelligence & logistics)	x	x	x
Direct Military Action	a. Ambushes b. Raids c. Patrolling	x x x	x x x	x x x
Sabotage (Communications/Transportation)	a. Destroyed Infrastructure b. Adversary C&C problems	x x	x x	x x
Targeting Enemy Leadership	a. Assassinations b. Reduced operational effectiveness			

### **Benefits of IIMF deployment**

The benefits of working with IIMF have been to add personnel to perform the tasks listed above, access local ‘insiders’ knowledge and to benefit from their location in the communities. Many tasks could not have been performed with the limited conventional forces in the theatre at the time. This is the case, due to the size of the areas to cover as well as the lack of local knowledge and connections into the communities. IIMF operations have in many cases clearly improved the security of conventional forces. It has also made access to knowledge available that would have otherwise been inaccessible. Attempts to ‘win over’ the local population benefitted significantly from institutionalized engagement of locals – coming among other reasons, from the economic effects of collaboration. These goals would have been very difficult to achieve - if possible at all - without the close cooperation with local leaders.

### **Costs and vulnerabilities of IIMF deployment**

The costs of IIMF deployment are larger than they initially appear to be. Not only



because tasks given need to actually be accomplished but also because the security of regular forces can be negatively affected if they cannot rely on tasks being completed.

The selection process is crucial and very challenging. Avoiding unintentionally supporting local leaders' agendas while relying on their offer to help identify suitable men is an obstacle, particularly as the same local leaders are needed as allies to create a secure and stable local environment. While crucial for success, implementing a tight control regiment is very cost, personnel and time intensive. Therefore, a significant investment in resources for infrastructure, training and equipment, as well as funds for salaries, is necessary. Controlling the actions of IIMF is the primary challenge. If strict control is missing, corruption and hidden agendas became a common issue in working with IIMF.

### **Lessons learned**

Four major lessons appear from IIMF operations relating to the initial selection process, program expansion, the control implementation and the post-deployment strategy.

#### Unbiased contactor selection process

Relying on local leaders in recruitment of IIMF will always be necessary. However, it is essential to achieve an unbiased selection process that establishes legitimacy of the institution. It is necessary to create a representative composition of parties in the local societies in the IIMF, otherwise the engagement of IIMF only furthers the divide between local groups. An unbiased representative selection process contributes to preventing the influence of sectarian agendas. It also enables stronger integration into local societies, more local support and more legitimacy.

#### Strict implementation of control

From a variety of perspectives it is essential that strict control is implemented from the selection process, training and provision of equipment to the payment of salaries and actual inspection of goal achievement. While cooperation with local leaders will have to include a demonstration of some level of trust, experience shows that a lack of control is often used to pursue agendas of local leaders. Optimized communication is also necessary to ensure that orders are known in time and are actually understood as intended.

## Slow expansion of a program

Expansion of a successful program has to occur at a pace in which the necessary control infrastructure can follow. Otherwise the essential strict control cannot be implemented and the deployment can turn out to be counterproductive. If effective control can no longer be established, alternative agendas are likely to be followed by significant numbers of IIMF actors.

## Effective IIMF post-deployment strategy

While it is very difficult to exert any control over former IIMF post-conflict, effective plans for the short-term future of the IIMF personnel are essential. Otherwise a well-trained, equipped and experienced military force is left without leadership, goals and salaries – a situation easy to abuse by those with alternative agendas. Creating a large number of highly trained men equipped with weapons that have no prospects of income for the future does not contribute to stability in the region. The very limited influence in the country of the contracting authorities raises questions of the extent to which it is possible to effectively implement a successful post-conflict strategy. The effects of an ineffective post-deployment strategy can be so negative that this challenge questions the concept of deploying IIMF. The larger the program, the more complex the challenge will be to implement effective control and to enable a successful post-conflict integration into society.

The three case studies have shown that IIMF can be a very effective tool in military operations. In each of the three observed cases significant success was initially achieved and many intended outcomes materialized. However, when considering the post-conflict phase and what role former personnel actually play in society, along with how they use their training, weapons and experience – especially when not properly integrated into adequate positions – the picture is less bright. Without strict control and clear agendas, goals of other actors become a priority, which may not be in the interest of those collaborating with IIMF.

In conclusion, yes, IIMF can be an effective tool of influence. However, IIMF are a means that is difficult to control, especially when large numbers of contractors are deployed covering remote areas and once the contracting period has ended. However, in smaller numbers of contractors, IIMF can be an effective and controllable means of influence that offers many benefits to conventional forces and the local communities.

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