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THE POLICE ROLE IN COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORTS*

DAVID G. EPSTEIN

Major David G. Epstein is a member of the staff of the U.S. Army Military Police School, Fort Gordon, Georgia. Major Epstein graduated from Michigan State University School of Police Administration, and served during 1965 and 1966 in Viet-Nam as a military police company commander, operations officer of a military police battalion, and administrative assistant to the Provost Marshal of U.S. Army Viet-Nam.—EDITOR.

Through its ability to shield, supply, finance, and reenforce the insurgent, the population of any given area holds the key to the success of any insurgency movement within that area. This fact has formed the foundation of the insurgent movements guided by (among others) Mao Tse Tung¹, Vo Nguyen Giap², and Che Guevera³.

The first steps then for any insurgent to take are those that will insure him a welcome within the mass of the people. The insurgent will employ a variety of tactics to gain this indispensable support of the population. These tactics generally can be labeled "persuasion," "favors," and "force."

* This article does not necessarily represent an official military point of view, but rather the private view of the author.

¹ "Especially in guerrilla combat, we must rely on the force of the popular masses, for it is only thus that we can have a guarantee of success. The support of the masses offers us great advantages as regards transport, assistance to wounded, intelligence, disruption of the enemy's position. . . . At the same time the enemy can be put into an isolated position thus further increasing our advantages. If, by misfortune, we are defeated it will also be possible to escape or find concealment. Consequently, we must not lightly give battle in places where the masses are not organized and linked to us."

MAO TSE TUNG, *BASIC TACTICS* translated by Stuart R. Schram, (New York, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1966) pp. 57-8.

² "The Viet Nam People's Army has always seen to establishing and maintaining good relations with the people. These are based upon the identity of their aims of struggle, in fact, the people and the Army are together in the fight against the enemy to save the Fatherland and insure the full success of the task of liberating the nation and the working class. The people are to the Army what water is to the fish, as the saying goes. And this saying has a profound significance!"

VO NGUYEN GIAP, *PEOPLE'S WAR PEOPLE'S ARMY* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1962) p. 56.

³ "Popular support is indispensable. Let us consider the example of robber bands that roam a certain region. They possess all the characteristics of a guerrilla band, homogeneity, respect for their leader, familiarity with the terrain, and frequently even thorough understanding of tactics. They lack only one thing: the support of the people. And inevitably, these bands are caught and wiped out by police forces."

CHE GUEVERA, *ON GUERRILLA WARFARE* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1962) pp. 667.

The "persuasion" tactic is nothing new. It is practiced by every political party in existence in our own country, but with the exception of the lunatic fringe extremist groups of both left and right, certainly not with as much fanaticism and fervor. The persuasive act may be a speech, a pamphlet, a poster, a school, and more likely a combination of these aspects and others as well.

The "favor" tactic is also a page out of the political book. The ham on Christmas Day, a job cutting grass in the city park, the paving of the sidewalk in front of the house, all have their counterpart acts perpetrated by insurgents everywhere they are in existence today.

"Force" as a political tactic has not been an unknown quantity on the non-revolutionary political scene either. In an insurgency situation the aspect of force is more blunt, systematic, universal, and terroristic. The insurgent will, as a matter of course, assassinate conspicuous quantities of government officials. These acts serve two purposes. Efficient props of the government administrative system are eliminated thereby weakening the government's local control, and by demonstrating that not even government officials are safe, the support the people were formerly willing to provide the government is eroded. The insurgent also applies pressure directly on the people to enlist active physical, financial, and intelligence support while (at the same time) depriving the government of these assets.

The insurgent in the preparation stage is much more terrorist than warrior. He plots and attempts to carry out murder, extortion, arson, robbery, and kidnapping. This stage of insurgency is one that the police are best suited to combat. Only after the haven within the population is prepared and the government is weakened by small acts of terror will the larger insurgent units emerge.

INTELLIGENCE

The police intelligence system adapted to rooting out the non-political criminal can easily turn its

attention to the political criminal. At least one successful counterinsurgency effort found that the police were uniquely suited to perform the intelligence function. A high ranking British government official active in the Malayan guerrilla "emergency" and later head of the British advisory team to Vietnam stated the following:

"Ideally there should be one single organization responsible for all security intelligence within the country.

"The best organization to be responsible for all internal security intelligence is the special branch of the police force rather than a completely separate organization—The police force is a state organization reaching out into every corner of the country and will have had long experience of close contact with the population."⁴

Just as the criminal often attempts to buy the policeman so will the insurgent attempt to subvert the policeman. The method used to combat internal criminal subversion is the same that combats internal political subversion by insurgents, and such method must become a part of the police intelligence effort.

PATROL

Police patrol remains the axis around which the police operation rotates. A patrol in an insurgent situation retains the same principles as guided the function in a peacetime context. If anything, the function expands. For instance, semi-rural and rural areas may have been at the bottom of the crime frequency spectrum before the insurgency began to develop, but due to the emphasis the insurgent may place on these areas the police presence will have to be dramatically increased therein.

Other items on the patrol checklist will also have to change. Equipment will have to be modified. Items as automatic weapons, armored cars, and light aircraft may have to be added to the inventory. The police will also have to retrain themselves to react to different alarm triggers. The stranger in a village or on a street, the bicycle parked next to a public building (does it contain a bomb?) the small printing shop in a basement, all previously no cause for speculation now may be causes for concern.

Selective enforcement previously dictated a set

of patrol reaction patterns. Selective enforcement guidelines will now have to absorb facts arising from the insurgency situation. The area of the cities containing government buildings may previously have been almost a negligible factor in police patrol problems. In an insurgent atmosphere it becomes an area of prime attention for police patrols. At the same time the police battle against crime must continue or situations such as presently disturbing the Philippines will arise.⁵

RESOURCES AND POPULATION CONTROL

The control of the population and material resources of a nation in order to prevent these assets from being used by the insurgent will be a police responsibility.

Entire populations of a region must be registered and identified by the police. The police must then recheck at irregular intervals and in varying locations the composition and placement of the population. All additions and deletions from this population must be registered with the police.

The government must set controls on acquisition, possession, and disposition of items deemed to be relevant to the insurgent war effort. Antibiotic drugs, chemical components of explosives, and food (as examples) must be strictly controlled. The police, through routine and surprise checks, would enforce these controls. Such controls would permit the apprehension of an individual with four vials of an antibiotic, if proper documentation were not present, and it would legitimately extend police investigative action to the farmer who only presents half of his normal and expected crop for market.

RIOTS

The insurgent will attempt to ignite riots of the utmost severity in an effort to dislodge or discredit the government. Again, the police are the first line of defense. Specially trained riot police with specialized equipment are often completely capable of crushing any disturbance the insurgents can mount. Close liaison must be maintained with regular army or militia units in an area, so that the police can be supplemented by these troops when

⁵ Surging lawlessness has spawned a crime wave that has turned the Philippines into a kind of Dodge City East, where just about everybody packs a pistol and news of muggings and murders, crowds most other stories off the front pages of the newspapers. Not surprisingly in this climate, the far leftists are making more converts. "The Philippines", *TIME MAGAZINE*, June 2, 1967, Vol 89, No. 22, page 24.

⁴ THOMPSON, SIR ROBERT, *DEFEATING COMMUNIST INSURGENCY* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, 1966) p. 85.

necessary. It is up to the police to encourage, and if necessary provide, the proper training for such troops.

The Military Police, who are fully cognizant of both police and military operations, can serve as the connecting link between police and military commands. In deciding when to utilize troops the police should follow a guideline of "too much too soon." Power to be overwhelming without bloodshed, must be applied early in the game.

THE LAW

Laws providing the police with emergency powers must be enacted. The police must never act outside of the law nor should the government allow the police to ignore any portion of the law. Sir Robert Thompson quotes from his experience in Malaya. "There is a very strong temptation in dealing both with terrorism and with guerrilla actions for government forces to act outside the law, the excuses being that the processes of law are too cumbersome, that the normal safeguards in the law for the individual are not designed for an insurgency, and that a terrorist deserves to be treated as an outlaw anyway. Not only is this morally wrong, but, over a period, it will create more practical difficulties for a government than it solves. A government which does not act in accordance with the law forfeits the right to be called a government and cannot expect its people to obey the law."⁶

EXPANSION OF THE POLICE

Very obviously, the police problem in terms of areas of concern alone will multiply. Crime likely will not slacken during an insurgency. Rather, the people must be provided with better police protection from criminal elements than ever before. Military manpower requirements will also increase. The police will be faced with increasing problems and diminishing resources. Very possible then, police recruiting standards will have to be revised downwards to obtain sufficient personnel. This will come at a time when a higher quality policeman will be required, due to the extraordinary powers granted the police, and due to the problems at hand. Should police operations become brutal, dishonest or incompetent, the support of the people will be lost.

The police, then, are faced with a situation that requires a more competent policeman due to con-

tinuing crime and heretofore nonexistent insurgent problems, but because of the manpower demands of these very same problems, the standards of admission to the police ranks must be lowered.

The answer to the problem lies in leadership, training, and discipline. The police leadership corps must be of impeccably high quality. If a basis for this quality has not been laid for many years past in high initial selection standards, then a page from the military, that of lateral entrance of officers, will have to be borrowed. The training program must under all circumstances be thorough. A 50 percent savings in training time can produce a professional cripple for half a decade. Discipline must become almost draconian. All infractions of discipline must be dealt with severely. Violations of a serious nature should be cause for dismissal and possible court actions.

POLICE FIELD UNITS

Provisions must be made for the formation of units designed to track and pursue the insurgent to any refuge he may have within the country. Often enough, this refuge will be in isolated rural locations well protected by natural and man-made obstacles and by armed and determined men. The units that must undertake this task of ferreting out the insurgent should be organized along small unit infantry lines and be trained in infantry tactics. The police must have possession of several such units in each area for which they are responsible so that speed and continuity will be a positive factor of their counter-insurgency operations. There is a further value in making light search and pursuit tasks of an infantry nature at least a partial police responsibility. That is, the police skills inherent to such a unit may often require employment in such tasks.

An example of such requirements can be taken from the Huk revolt in the Philippines where, after an ambush, guerrillas were thought to have taken refuge in a nearby village. A Philippine Army detachment surrounded the village and began to interrogate the villagers. "All those interrogated denied the presence of any guerrillas when the screening began. By chance, as it was not a standard item carried by Armed Forces, the officer (in charge) had a paraffin test kit borrowed from friends in the Manila Police Department. All able bodied males were put through the paraffin test . . . three people out of about seventy-five tested as positive. As the three were being marched off

⁶ THOMPSON *op. cit.*, p. 52.

to the vehicles that would carry them to camp, they suddenly bolted. A guard fired and killed one."⁷

CENTRALIZED CONTROL

A centralized planning and command system which will control the police on a nationwide basis must be instituted where not already present. Problems inherent in decentralized control such as jurisdictional limitations and communications barriers must be eliminated if counterinsurgency actions are to succeed. The right hand must know what the left is doing. The benefits of economy of force and finances where the air is quite, and the concentration of force and finances where the storm rages, can only be realized with a strong central controlling force directly responsive to requirements presented by the insurgency problem as a whole.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations becomes extremely important in insurgent situations. It is a subject to which the police must give increased attention as compared to public relations in a noninsurgent context. The demand for increased emphasis arises from the conscious planned effort made by the insurgent to discredit all agencies of the legal government, particularly the police. The insurgent will make this effort of discreditation both by word and by deed. The words will point out and expand any weakness found in the police structure and any mistake or impropriety committed by individual policemen. The deeds will consist of performing for the population those services not received from, but expected of police and in righting real or imagined wrongs perpetrated by the police. For example, a local gang of hoodlums preying on merchants may be eliminated by insurgents with pointed references to the inefficiency of the police. If there is a corrupt

or tyrannical police agent in the area he may be assassinated by the insurgents as a "public service." Other corrupt police or government officials may be left unharmed as living examples of government perfidy. The police must expand their public service and information service with the view of winning friends and influencing people. If the police must expand into operational areas not traditionally looked upon as police concerns such as social relief, the justification for such a move can easily be found in the objective sought.

The police must be trained to look upon themselves as being of the people and for the people. The sometimes understandable feeling prevalent in policemen that "its them against us" must be avoided at all costs. When the police become alienated from the population and they are treated as enemies, the cause has been lost. During World War II, for example, "when the Germans embarked on stamping out the (Russian guerrilla) bands by terror methods, they only fanned the fire and number of bands multiplied."⁸

A POINT TO REMEMBER

Though the insurgent may be a terrorist and a guerrilla, though he may engage in robbery, kidnapping, and murder, and though many of the methods used to stop him are police methods used to combat criminals, the police must not allow themselves to think of such a man as a common outlaw. He most often is not that. He is a man fighting for what he considers to be an ideal, and he will fight to the death for the ideal. The battle against the insurgent must be fought on this level. The police must meet this revolutionary fervor with a response calculated to show the actual emptiness of the ideal this man fights for. If ever police professionalism will be tested, it will be in such situations.

⁷ VALERIANO, COLONEL NAPOLEAN D., AND BOHANAN, LT. COL. CHARLES T. R., *COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS, THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE*, (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, 1962) p. 165

⁸ DIXON, BRIGADIER C. AUBREY AND HEILBRUM, OTTO, *COMMUNIST GUERRILLA WARFARE* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, 1955) p. 99.