



A platoon sergeant from 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, leads his men during a raid on an abandoned school in Saqlawiyah, Iraq. Small unit leaders have been key to our successes in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). See the MCCLL report on [Ground Combat Element Lessons from OIF](#).

Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL)

Inside this issue:

Featured Articles

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Requesting Assistance from Our Readers: Although we like to think that the MCCLL databases have information on every conceivable topic, we are continually reminded that this is not the case. Your assistance is solicited in a number of areas.

Ground Combat Element (GCE) Lessons from Iraq: Two MCCLL-sponsored GCE conferences in 2008 have provided a wealth of lessons and observations on the successful prosecution of counterinsurgency operations in Iraq.

The First 100 Days in Afghanistan: The experiences of 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines (3/8) during its first 100 days fighting the Taliban and other insurgents in southern Afghanistan provide invaluable lessons for those who will soon follow them into this increasingly kinetic theater of operations.

MV-22 Combat Operations in Iraq: After the MV-22 Osprey had been in service in Iraq for fourteen months, MCCLL conducted a second collection to document the experiences of those who operate and maintain this state-of-the-art aircraft.

First-Hand Experiences of an Infantry Battalion in Afghanistan: Task Force 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines (TF 2/7), which preceded 3/8 in Afghanistan, has prepared an excellent briefing on the operational environments in Helmand and Farah Provinces.

Afghanistan Is Very Different from Iraq: A study from the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) documents many of the differences between these two theaters of operation that may not be obvious to many readers.

Human Terrain Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan: A handbook from the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) provides guidance for commanders on how to successfully exploit the capabilities of the Human Terrain Teams (HTT).

What Do the People of Iraq and Afghanistan Think? The results of two ABC News polls highlight dramatic differences in the perceptions of the local populace on the directions in which these two countries are headed.

News

Three topics are highlighted this month: (1) [improving electrical safety in Iraq](#), (2) [lessons from Lebanon and Gaza](#), and (3) [lessons from inside al-Qa'ida in Iraq](#).

Reading Lists and Book Review: This month, two books are featured: (1) the classic reference book, *The Face of Battle* by John Keegan from the Commandant's List (along with a study guide from the Marine Corps University) and (2) another national bestseller, *The Bin Ladens*, by Steve Coll, a recent guest speaker at the Quantico PME series on Afghanistan, whose earlier book, *Ghost Wars*, was featured last month.

Roster of MCCLL Representatives: This roster provides points of contact information for MCCLL representatives assigned at major Marine Corps and Joint commands and organizations.

The Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) newsletter, like other MCCLL products addressing a variety of topics, is an "initial impressions" summary that identifies key observations and potential lessons from collection efforts. These observations highlight potential shortfalls, risks or issues experienced by units that may suggest a need for change. **The observations are not service level decisions.**

In addition, some information in this newsletter has been compiled from publicly available sources and is not official USMC policy. Although the information has been gathered from reliable sources, the currency and completeness of the information is subject to change and cannot be guaranteed. Your comments on any topics addressed in this newsletter (or on our website) are welcome. Questions can be directed to:

MCCLL_Ops@usmc.mil Telephone: 703.432.1279 DSN: 312-378-1279

From the Director

This is my first "From The Director" letter in the MCCLL monthly newsletter since taking "the wheel" two weeks ago. A former boss and now a mentor and friend once told me that, "the spoken word is as thin as air and the written word is always there". After letting that sink in, I came to realize how true it is. (I'll bet he wishes he had royalty rights on that saying since I've used it repeatedly, in and out of uniform.)

This newsletter is yours. It is directly derived from material you've submitted, either as part of a formal after action report or participating in a conference. This newsletter continues to be a work in progress. More often than not, we get it right. There are times we don't get it as right as we'd like or to be of any value to you. And quite candidly, there are times when we just "punt 'em into the stands". That's where you come in. You are our feedback loop telling us how we're doing and if the material we're publishing is either in the "V" ring or barely a "deuce". Each month we'll be publishing your comments, good or bad, in this newsletter. Through your feedback, we'll be better able to refine our material and enhance its value to you. We'll also be starting online discussion boards in our MCCLL Communities of Practice in the not too distant future. We'll tackle relevant and perhaps contentious issues confronting the Operating Forces and "get 'em out in the open". It's all for naught if we don't get involved and make a linkage to DOTMLPF (Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership and Education, Personnel and Facilities) if we're going to make changes.

One area in which we won't make any concessions is in Operational Security. It's a balancing act between maintaining sound OpSec and getting viable lessons learned disseminated in a timely basis and to as wide an audience as possible. Despite the majority of MCCLL material being classified FOUO and being encrypted, it sometimes is downloaded and distributed, many times with the best of intentions. The result, regardless of intentions, is the same. We put our friends and Marines and sailors at risk because the bad guys can read "our mail". I'm certain no one wants that to happen. In the balancing act between OpSec and readership, I'll cast my vote for OpSec and defer to Marine Corps leaders throughout our Corps to disseminate the lessons learned.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Semper Fidelis,

C.H. Sonntag

Comments on any of the topics in this newsletter can be addressed to the MCCLL Director, Mr. C. H. Sonntag at MCCLL_Ops@usmc.mil

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Requesting Assistance from Our Readers

Although here at MCCLL, we like to think that our repositories have information on every conceivable topic, we are continually reminded that this is not the case. Many of the users of our website already know this, since they have submitted requests for information (RFIs), and we have either come up empty or provided only limited or cursory information. Our databases, like those of the other Centers throughout the lessons learned community are necessarily limited to information that has either been submitted to us on an unsolicited basis for entry into our system, gathered by one of our collection teams, obtained by coordinating with experts throughout the community, or gathered by perusing other websites and repositories. Although we do our best to stay current on every conceivable topic of interest to Marines, our resources are necessarily limited, as is our expertise.

In an effort to try something new to help us gather information on topics for which we know our existing repositories are deficient, we are soliciting help from our very knowledgeable readers, who we are convinced are an untapped resource. This month, two specific topics have been identified for which we need additional information:

- ⇒ **Route repair procedures for roads in Iraq or Afghanistan.** We need standing operating procedures (SOPs) or other documents that have been developed to identify route repair procedures in either of these theaters.
- ⇒ **First-hand experiences with indigenous dogs in Afghanistan (i.e., Koochee dogs).** Specifically, we solicit information on any incidents in which military working dogs (MWDs) have been attacked or had other "interactions" with Koochee dogs.

In addition to these specific topics, we are always interested in obtaining information in such general areas as: ■ **safety tips and/or examples of specific safety-related incidents**, particularly those involving operational safety issues in theater, ■ **specific tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) that are proving to be effective in Afghanistan**, and ■ as always, **after action reports (AARs)** that have been prepared by units based on their pre-deployment training, participation in exercises, or their operational deployments. If you have any information or relevant documents for submission to MCCLL, please send them to MCCLL_Ops@usmc.mil if they are unclassified or to MCCLL_Ops@mccdc.usmc.smil.mil on the SIPRnet if they are classified.

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Ground Combat Element Lessons and Observations from Iraq

In mid-July 2008, the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) hosted two ground combat element conferences (GCE), one on the west coast with fifteen GCE Marines from the 1st Marine Division and one on the east coast with 57 GCE Marines from the 2nd Marine Division. All of the attendees had recently completed tours in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), either as members of infantry battalions or of supporting units. They had all deployed between August 2007 and May 2008 in support of OIF 06-08 or OIF 08. In addition to discussing their combat experiences during the give-and-take of the conferences, a majority of the participants also completed an online survey that solicited their feedback on such topics as census operations, information operations, tactical site exploitation, and the employment of military working dogs (MWDs).



A squad leader from 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, provides guidance to his squad prior to a raid on an abandoned school in Saqlawiyah during Operation Street Sweeper II. Effective small unit leaders have proven to be key in combating the insurgency.

The results of the discussions and the online survey have been documented in a MCCLL topical paper, entitled [Ground Combat Element Lessons and Observations from OIF 06-08 and OIF 08](#). It should be emphasized that the comments of the participants concerning their training and operational experiences were based on their own specific deployments, with some of the shortfalls that they identified having been corrected in subsequent training evolutions and OIF deployments. In a number of instances, the report documents the improvements that have already been made in training, equipping and manning the OIF force. However, other shortfalls continue to be areas of concern that Marines should be aware of during GCE counterinsurgency operations in OIF, Afghanistan or elsewhere. Among the overriding themes expressed throughout the conferences was the rapidly changing situation on the ground in Iraq. This required great flexibility, especially in terms of being able to reorganize as the mission evolved. One of the "bottom line" comments was that in order to be able to adapt to the changing environment, it was critical that Marine fire teams and platoons be competent in the infantry basics.

Capt Kevin A. Shea, Weapons Company Commander, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines:

"The key for us was having basically trained Marines, trained in the correct skills, and small unit leaders trained to operate independently. . . Get junior leaders to formal schools. There is a big difference between those that went to Squad Leader school and those that didn't. They were able to spend time with peers at school, and dedicate time to that level of training"

Among the numerous observations made by participants in the conferences were:

⇒ The widely dispersed and independent operations of units place considerable responsibilities on the decision making, training and experiences of junior leaders at the squad and fire team levels. Commanders emphasized that these junior leaders continually rose to the challenge.

Maj Fred G. Courtney, Commander, 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion:

"We collected detailed information on every house, knocked on every door and collected a lot of baseline information. 'Knock and talk' worked well. Every day we'd take that information and analyze it and build a picture of the activity in a neighborhood."

⇒ Pre-deployment training should incorporate the equipment and systems that will be employed in theater.

⇒ In order to support the transition, governance, and economic development lines of operation, outside expertise is needed in such areas as commerce, education, human services, transportation, and infrastructure.

⇒ The importance of census

operations in "mapping the human terrain," was emphasized by many participants, not only as a means of pinpointing operations against specific individuals, but also as a way to become more familiar with the area of operations. In this respect, the Biometric Automated Toolset (BATS) was a valuable tool.

⇒ The importance of identifying and dealing with local Iraq leaders was a major theme of the conference attendees.

⇒ The deployment of Law Enforcement Professional (LEP) officers with battalions had a positive impact on the effectiveness of tactical site exploitation (TSE) efforts.

⇒ Word-of-mouth was the most effective approach in information operations campaigns. Newspapers produced by local citizens were also effective. However, coalition force leaflets sometimes had the opposite effect of what was intended.

⇒ Marines who were required to perform non-traditional missions (such as detainee operations and other military police functions) were concerned that their long-term military occupational specialty (MOS) proficiency would be negatively affected.



A team leader with Company L, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, questions a store owner in Zuwayya, Iraq, during a census patrol to document the locations and owners of stores in the town.

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The First 100 Days in Afghanistan

Preparations are well under way for 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2nd MEB) to deploy to Afghanistan this spring, with a full complement of ground combat element (GCE), air combat element (ACE), and logistics combat element (LCE) units, to conduct counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in the southern and western provinces of the country. The GCE Marines will be following their predecessors from 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines (2/7) and 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines (3/8) into Helmand and Farah Provinces to continue the fight against the Taliban and other insurgents intent on destabilizing the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) and local governments. Since the operational environments in Afghanistan and the enemy are significantly different from the ones that many Marines have faced recently in Iraq, it is essential



Marines from Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines, conduct a patrol from a forward operating base to Golestan, a town in Farah Province, southern Afghanistan.

that the lessons learned by those who have gone before be promulgated as widely as possible. One of the best (and most timely) products designed for this purpose is an after action report (AAR) from 3/8 documenting its first 100 days of deployment. This AAR is now available on the MCCLL SIPR website at <http://www.mccll.usmc.smil.mil>. Please go to **Recent Products** on the left-hand side of the home page and scroll down to view this AAR, along with a number of other recently available AARs.

This reinforced battalion deployed in November 2008 as the replacement for Task Force 2/7 to conduct COIN operations in support of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The operational environment required the battalion to develop close relationships with all of the joint, interagency and multinational forces on the ground in its area of operations (AO). These relationships were considered to be critical since the AO is currently headed by our alliance partners. Another major factor in battalion operations was the widely dispersed nature of the AO. As noted previously in this newsletter, the ability of small unit leaders to “think outside the box” independently has proven to be one of the keys to successful operations.

LtCol David L. Odom, USMC, Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines

“The first 100 days of our OEF deployment as the ground combat element of Special MAGTF—Afghanistan (SPMAGTF-A) is provided in order to enable other OEF-bound infantry battalions to learn with us as we conduct the COIN fight across the warfighting functions and the lines of operation here in Farah/Helmand Provinces.”

Among the many other insightful observations contained in the AAR are:

- ⇒ The battalion leadership should meet as many key local leaders as possible to develop and understand the issues of the local populace. Also, every meeting should be considered as an opportunity to obtain intelligence about the battlespace.
- ⇒ All personnel need to be familiar with the ISAF rules of engagement and standing operational procedures (SOPs), especially those that are used on a daily basis.
- ⇒ Marines who have previous experience as members of transition teams working with foreign military forces should mentor those who have not.
- ⇒ Training on the Biometric Automated Toolset (BATS) should include instruction on all of the individual components, not just the handheld interagency identity detection equipment (HIIDE) client.
- ⇒ During the pre-deployment training program, units should focus on off-road driving as much as possible. Marines should be exposed to all vehicle variants and should operate under the most difficult terrain conditions available to facilitate safe driving procedures and vehicle recovery practices once they arrive in theater.
- ⇒ The terrain also has had a significant impact on the maintenance of vehicles. Specific examples are highlighted of maintenance issues associated with the mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles when operating under the off-road conditions that are prevalent in southern Afghanistan.
- ⇒ The Blue Force Tracker (BFT) is an effective communications asset in Afghanistan, as are satellite communications (SATCOM) and the high performance workstation (HPW).

As noted in last month’s newsletter, one of the best ways to ensure that your unit’s AAR makes its way into the MCCLL system is to work with the MCCLL liaison officer (LnO) in your local area and/or attached to your higher headquarters. Our LnOs can also assist units in the preparation of their AARs. Please review the list of [MCCLL LnOs located at the end of this newsletter](#).



Marines from 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines fire 120mm mortars from a combat outpost during Operation Gateway III in Farah Province, southern Afghanistan.

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MV-22 Combat Operations in Iraq

As of December 2008, the MV-22 Osprey had been in service for about fourteen months in Operation Iraq Freedom (OIF), with three different squadrons having employed the aircraft in support of various combat missions. At that time, it had also been almost a year since the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) had conducted a focused collection to solicit feedback on the training and operation of the Osprey. This previous MCCLL collection had been conducted at Al Asad Air Base in the January/February 2008 timeframe and had included extensive interviews with key personnel from Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 263, the first squadron to deploy with the MV-22 in OIF. The results of this collection were published in May 2008 in a topical paper, entitled [MV-22 Tiltrotor Operations in Iraq: Lessons and Observations from VMM-263](#).



Currently, the third squadron to employ the aircraft in OIF (the Fighting Griffins of VMM-266) is completing its deployment to Al Asad and is the subject of the follow-on collection by MCCLL. The objective of this second collection was to determine whether the observations of squadron personnel had changed after a year of combat operations, whether previous concerns had been alleviated, and whether new issues had surfaced. In December 2008, MCCLL interviewed VMM-266 personnel at Al Asad, as well as personnel from supporting units, and administered survey questionnaires to selected squadron personnel. Of note is the fact that the participants in this collection continued to emphasize (as did personnel during the initial collection) that the range and speed of the Osprey have demonstrated over and over again its ability to shrink the battlefield, with

this capability generating much of the positive feedback from the squadron. However, Osprey operators also expressed the view that the tiltrotor capability has not been fully explored or exploited in OIF due to the lack of opportunities to participate in assault support missions at the tactical level. The current low level of insurgent activity has contributed to the lack of rigorous testing of the aircraft's assault support role. These comments, together with the complete set of observations and recommendations from the VMM-266 interviews and the survey responses, are contained in the MCCLL "Quick Look" report: [MV-22 Combat Operations in Iraq: Lessons and Observations from VMM-266](#).



Maj Lawrence A. Washington, USMC, S-4 Officer, VMM-266:

"The MV-22 is a very computer-centric airplane that's essentially a computer with wings on it . . ."

Among the many insightful comments from the squadron staff were:

- ⇒ The VMM-263 originally deployed with ten aircraft. Later, two more aircraft were deployed to bring the squadron up to its full compliment of twelve. The VMM-266 commander indicated that this was the appropriate number to accomplish the assigned OIF mission.
- ⇒ The squadron's overall assessment of the Desert Talon training exercise was very favorable, with the training provided in the Yuma desert environment considered to be valuable for the aircrew, including reduced visibility landing practice. The aircraft system that aids landing under these conditions received a generally favorable rating.
- ⇒ However, infantrymen suggested that they needed additional practice deploying on and off the aircraft during periods of brownout caused by the aircraft rotor downwash.
- ⇒ There is a need for additional avionics technicians in the maintenance department, due to the technical complexity of the aircraft compared with the legacy CH-46.
- ⇒ Not only was the speed and range of the aircraft praised, but also its ability to maintain communications with controlling agencies at greater ranges than lower flying helicopters. The ability to maintain line of sight communications facilitated the command and control capabilities of the controlling agency.
- ⇒ However, the use of satellite communications in this aircraft is a necessity due to the increased operational range of the MV-22.
- ⇒ Several squadron leaders indicated that injured Marines could receive quicker medical care if the MV-22 were to be assigned a casualty evacuation mission (in addition to its assigned mission of standby tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel).
- ⇒ It was recommended that the timeline for rotation of deployed aircraft not exceed twelve months. If this rotation timeline is not possible, the maintenance officer recommended that a depot-level type maintenance capability be established in theater.



Training in desert environments, including flying in sand and dust, both night and day, provided valuable aircrew experiences of conditions that would likely be encountered in OIF.

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First-Hand Experiences of an Infantry Battalion in Afghanistan

Our [February 2009 newsletter](#) included an article on a collection effort that the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) had conducted in Afghanistan in November 2008 with Task Force 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines (TF 2/7). The objective was to solicit observations and recommendations from the battalion staff concerning their operations in Helmand and Farah Provinces in southern and western Afghanistan that could then be passed on to follow-on forces. Since its re-deployment, the battalion's first-hand experiences have proven to be crucial sources of lessons learned for those who will deploy into this increasingly kinetic region of Afghanistan. A recent product that has been added to our repositories is an excellent briefing from 2/7 that provides much invaluable information on the environment in which the battalion operated and which many follow-on Marine units will soon be experiencing. The briefing is available on the MCCLL SIPR website at: <http://www.mccll.usmc.smil.mil>. Please go to [Recent Products](#) on the left-hand side of the home page and scroll down to view this AAR, along with a number of other recently available AARs.



A Marine with Company F, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, demonstrates firing positions with the AMD-65 to Afghanistan National Police (ANP) recruits at Lashkar Gah, Afghanistan.

Task Force 2/7:

“Conducting COIN was our major function:

- ⇒ *People must be receptive to what we have to offer.*
- ⇒ *Must willingly accept the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) and “Rule of Law”*
- ⇒ **How:**
 - *By our example and actions — respectable actions*
— *Marines have “infectious personalities.”*
 - *Through our training*
 - *Through enhanced security*
 - *Through information operations (message) and civil military operations (action).”*

Although the original mission of TF 2/7 was to provide security for Afghanistan National Police (ANP) mentors and to assist in training the ANP (within the battalion's capabilities and assigned boundaries), the mission quickly evolved into one of counterinsurgency operations (COIN) with a focus on ANP training and mentoring. In addition to its COIN mission, the battalion executed over 65 civil military operations projects totaling over \$600K (and coordinated a contract for road construction worth over \$13M). The battalion also conducted over 100 engagements with key Afghanistan leaders in the area. Economic development efforts focused on creating cash for work projects and initiating viable alternatives to poppy production.

Of particular value in this briefing are the many photographs included that show the types of terrain features that Marines will face in this region, with much of the topography remarkably similar to portions of the U.S. southwestern desert. The briefing also highlights some of the characteristics of the Afghanistan people, including their family orientation, strong work ethic, willingness to stand and fight, desire for peace, and pragmatism (more so than many Iraqi citizens) which makes them easier to relate to and work with. On the other hand, the briefing highlights the fact that the members of the Taliban are not the zealous, Islamic ideologues of the past, but instead include many criminals, narco-terrorists, and drug runners.

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... with Afghanistan Being Very Different from Iraq

The accomplishments of the Marine Corps in establishing a dramatically improved security environment in Al Anbar Province (together with the critical support provided by the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy) is one of the great success stories of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). As the emphasis now shifts to Afghanistan, many studies are attempting to document whether these successes in Iraq can be applied to Afghanistan. A recent study from the Center for Naval Analyses, entitled [How is Afghanistan Different from Al Anbar?](#), seeks to highlight the striking differences between these two theaters that must be taken into consideration in planning an overall strategy in OEF. As noted in this study:

“Factors that loom large in any counterinsurgency campaign — politics, society, the policies of the insurgents, economics, and outside support for the insurgency — bear only passing resemblances to Al Anbar or Iraq. Politically, Iraq has been defined by its civil war. Staunching it has been an imperative for U.S. forces. In contrast, sectarian (and ethnic) divides are muted in Afghanistan . . . The basis of the turnaround in Al Anbar was a social movement — the alliance of tribes, who together threw out Al Qaeda in Iraq. In Afghanistan, tribes are highly de-centralized, broken into small bits and averse to coming together. Nor does the insurgency itself look the same. Insurgents pay closer attention to keeping the support of tribes and the population. There is no obvious analogy to Al Anbar's rift between the tribes and Al Qaeda. Tribes may have disagreements with the Taliban or Al Qaeda, but as of yet no major rifts have formed that unite the majority of the tribes behind the government.”

“The two most obvious differences between Afghanistan and Al Anbar:

- (1) *The poppy trade, which pumps money into the insurgency and*
- (2) *The insurgent safe haven in Pakistan, which dwarfs anything Syria, Saudi Arabia, or Jordan ever afforded to the Sunni insurgents.”*

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Human Terrain Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan

During both Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), it has become increasingly clear that the ability of military forces to understand the motivations and value systems of the local populace is of paramount importance in planning successful operations. The environments in which Marines and other military services operate are often made up of diverse groups of people (who may even speak different languages) with differing ideas and belief systems. Understanding these cultures has proven to be critical in planning focused programs that assist in the development of cohesive and stable communities and governments.

A U.S. Army initiative to help provide this understanding is the proof-of-concept Human Terrain System (HTS), which is comprised of deployed teams (with members from academia) that are referred to as Human Terrain Teams (HTT). The Marine Corps regimental combat teams (RCTs) in Al Anbar Province have been among the recipients of these teams, as have the U.S. Army brigade combat teams (BCTs). An HTT generally consists of five to nine personnel with social science and operational backgrounds who are deployed with military units to increase their knowledge of the local population and enable them to make better-informed decisions and reduce the chances of their actions having a negative impact upon the local populace. Each team is recruited and trained for a specific region and then integrated into the unit staff to conduct field research in order to provide focused and operationally-relevant human terrain information in support of the planning, preparation, execution, and assessment of operations.



A professor of anthropology, working as a cultural analyst on a Human Terrain Team in Iraq, instructs a class during a visit to a school in Baghdad's Sadr City.

Mission Statement of the Human Terrain System:

“ Conduct operationally-relevant social science research and provide commanders and staffs with an embedded knowledge capability to establish a coherent, analytic socio-cultural framework for operational planning, preparation, execution, and assessment.”

As an aide to military leaders, the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) has published a handbook, entitled [Commander's Guide: Employing a Human Terrain Team in OIF and OEF](#), with the objective of providing commanders with information on the capabilities that the HTTs can bring to their units and assisting them in better utilizing these capabilities.

Although the feedback from the RCTs and BCTs on these teams has generally been positive, many readers may have read an alternative viewpoint on the utility of these teams that appeared recently in *Military Review*, entitled [All Our Eggs in a Broken Basket: How the Human Terrain System is Undermining Sustainable Military Cultural Competence](#). This article calls for a comprehensive change in military cultural training, education and intelligence in order to achieve long-term knowledge and cultural terrain analysis programs, rather than relying on immediate solutions like the HTS that uses non-organic personnel (in this case, individuals from academia).

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What Do the People of Iraq and Afghanistan Think?

Dramatically different results have been obtained in ABC polls that were administered recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. They reinforce the perception that the majority of the people of Iraq believe their country is headed in the right direction, while the opposite is true in Afghanistan. As noted in the [poll of Iraqi citizens](#):



“The gains in the latest ABC News/BBC/NHK poll represent a stunning reversal of the spiral of despair caused by Iraq's sectarian violence in 2006 and 2007. The sweeping rebound, extending initial improvements first seen a year ago, marks no less than the opportunity for a new future for Iraq and its people. While deep difficulties remain, the advances are remarkable. Eighty-four percent of Iraqis now rate security in their own area positively, nearly double its August 2007 level. Seventy-eight percent say their protection from crime is good, more than double its low. Three-quarters say they can go where they want safely – triple what it's been. . . .” Although a large majority of Iraqis still favor a withdrawal of all U.S. forces on schedule by 2011, most now accept the fact that democracy is the preferred form of government for their country.

The results of the [poll of Afghanistan citizens](#) could not have been more different. Less than a third of respondents believe that the U.S. is performing well in their country. Only fifty-five percent have a positive view of the security in their local area. This drops to only fourteen percent for the citizens of Helmand Province where Marine Corps forces are currently concentrated. Perhaps most troubling is the fact that more of the respondents blame the U.S. for the violence in their country than blame the Taliban (36% versus 27%).

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News

Improving Electrical Safety in Iraq

The featured topic of the [first Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned \(MCCLL\) Safety Corner](#) in August 2006 was electrical safety in Iraq. Since then, there has been extensive publicity in the mainstream media concerning non-combat casualties resulting from electrical problems at U.S. facilities in Iraq, with the topic being highlighted again in Safety Corners published in [February 2007](#) and [July 2008](#). In response to this acknowledged problem, Multi-National Forces - Iraqi (MNF-I) created Task Force for Safety Actions for

Fire and Electricity (TF SAFE) and awarded a contract to begin an extensive inspection program of facilities in Iraq. Additional information on this initiative is contained in an [article from the Transatlantic Programs Center](#): “The focus of the inspections is on grounding and bonding within the facilities to ensure they meet the electrical code and minimize the risks of injury, death and fires. [According to Major General Timothy McHale, the Commander, TF SAFE], “[many] fires are caused by overloading circuits, constantly running electrical equipment, ballasts burning out, putting clothes on top of wires, or

running wires underneath beds.” In other cases, shocks and electrocutions have been traced to improper wiring of temporary facilities. Early inspection results by the 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power) found some bonding problems that could be fixed quickly, while in other cases, electrical work was not in compliance with any code. . . . When electrical faults are identified at the military installations, they are reported to the . . . unit commander, and then the unit passes the repair work to a contractor. . . .”

Lessons from Lebanon and Gaza

The latest issue of *Colloquium* from the U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency (COIN) Center includes a very timely article, entitled [From Lebanon to Gaza: A New Kind of War](#), by Ariel Siegelman. The article analyzes the failures of the Second Lebanon War and the successes of the Gaza campaign, with the objective of drawing lessons that can be applied to other COIN campaigns, including current U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Siegelman notes that: “After the Second Lebanon War, we learned some very valuable lessons. We

learned that we had been living in an imaginary world and that the most dangerous type of war is the one that you call peace. We learned that we are not in fact in a “peace process” at all. We are at war. On their own accord, many reservists began formidable fitness programs. The army invested in state-of-the-art equipment for us. We began planning for possible wars and attacks that might occur at any or all of our borders. And the whole army became much more serious about training again. The debacle of Lebanon set the stage for the success of Gaza. If there is one thing that Israelis are good at, it is taking lessons from their losses and being

creative on the battlefield. . . . The difference between Lebanon and Gaza is simply how Israel adapted to the enemy. Lebanon reminded each individual soldier that he has to be a warrior. It reminded the army that good intelligence and well thought-out plans with realistic goals are key elements to the solution. It reminded the home front that we are still in a “war process” and it reminded the government that ego has no place in war and that politicians who are incompetent at military actions should step aside and allow those who know to take charge. . . .”

Lessons from Inside Al Qa’ida in Iraq

Recent MCCLL monthly newsletters have highlighted a number of excellent products from the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point. One of the latest CTC products offers a very comprehensive discussion of the mistakes made by Al Qa’ida in Iraq (AQI) that have contributed to U.S. successes there. [Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside Al Qa’ida in Iraq](#), by Brian Fishman, notes that among the important lessons to learn from the decline of AQI are: (1) the need to target the indoctrination capacity of al-Qa’ida in combat environments, (2) the

value of recognizing rivalries between the organization’s leaders, (3) the need to set realistic expectations among political parties, and (4) the utility of assessing the enemies’ goals objectively. Despite AQI setbacks, its confrontation with U.S. forces in Iraq has greatly benefited the overall jihadist movement, providing it with tactical expertise and distracting U.S. attention from Afghanistan.

The article also emphasizes the fact that the lessons learned from AQI are only partially applicable to Afghanistan. For example in Afghanistan, al-Qa’ida “has a

relatively secure haven in parts of Pakistan, which both makes it more difficult to target directly, but also allows al-Qa’ida to build systems that are more resistant to disruption even when leadership strikes are effective. Second, al-Qa’da in Afghanistan and Pakistan has subtly infiltrated tribal groups over twenty years and generally eschews the imperious leadership style that turned so many Iraqis against AQI. Third, al-Qa’ida in Afghanistan and Pakistan has used far fewer large-scale attacks on civilians. . . .”

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Reading Lists and Book Reviews

The books and articles included in the reading lists of the [Commandant](#) and the [Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Central Command \(COMUSMARCENT\)](#) provide Marines with a wealth of resources to support their own professional and career development efforts, as well as featuring many books and articles that are as entertaining as they are instructive. In addition, the MARCENT list has become increasingly practical for Marines deploying to the CENTCOM region, not only because the list has been paired down to only six books, but also because five of the books are available free of charge on the internet. (The sixth book (*From Beirut to Jerusalem*) must still be purchased, borrowed, or checked out of your local library.) The six books on the MARCENT list are: (1) the [Small Wars Manual, FMFRP 12-15](#), (2) [A Tentative Manual for Countering Irregular Threats](#), (3) the [Counterinsurgency Field Manual, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5](#), (4) [The Twenty-Eight Articles](#), (5) [The Bear Went Over the Mountain](#), and (6) *From Beirut to Jerusalem*.

This month, we feature the Marine Corps University study guide for the classic reference book, *The Face of Battle* by John Keegan, from the Commandant's list for Staff Sergeants, plus the latest national bestseller from Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens*. An earlier book by Mr. Coll, *The Ghost Wars*, was highlighted in [last month's newsletter](#). His credentials as an expert on the region are evidenced by his selection as a speaker at the Quantico professional military education (PME) series on Afghanistan sponsored by the Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command.

[The Bin Ladens: Oil, Money, Terrorism and the Secret Saudi World](#) by Steve Coll

Reviewed by Christopher Caldwell, *The New York Times* Book Review

"Is Osama bin Laden a rebel against the Saudi Arabian ruling class or a model member of it? That question lurks behind [The Bin Ladens](#), by the Pulitzer Prize-winning New Yorker writer, Steve Coll. The world's most famous terrorist owes his fortune and his standing to a family business that Coll calls "the kingdom's Halliburton." Like Halliburton, the Saudi Binladin Group specializes in gigantic infrastructure projects. Government connections are the key to the family's wealth. So you would assume they would react with unmixed horror to a radical son . . . But Saudi Arabia, Coll shows, is a place where the interests of rulers and revolutionaries are less easy to distinguish.

Muhammad bin Laden, Osama's father, emigrated from the canyons of the Hadhramawt, in present-day Yemen, in the 1920s. He arrived in Jidda, one-eyed and semiliterate, at a time when Saudi Arabia had hardly any paved roads and the king kept his treasury in a tin trunk. Muhammad was charismatic. His workers, with whom he prayed and sang at job sites, revered him. He was scrupulously honest, as Arabian lore holds Hadhramis to be, and his company keeps this reputation still. Most important, Muhammad would serve the greedy and capricious Saudi princes in ways that Bechtel and other foreign contractors balked at doing, humiliating jobs from digging gardens to fixing air conditioners. The grateful royals made him their main palace- and highway-builder in the boom years after the war. By the time Muhammad died in a plane crash in September 1967, his company was worth an estimated \$150 million, and he had fathered 54 children by about 22 wives.

Those children, Osama included, grew up in the shadow of a court society. Royal favor was all. Since the Saud family sent its sons to Princeton and Georgetown, Muhammad educated many of his own sons in the West, too, starting with Salem, his impious and ribald successor. Coll's account of Salem is dotting. . . Hedonism and consumerism became for Salem what piety had been for his father. . ." Read the [complete review from *The New York Times Online*](#).

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[The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and Somme](#) by John Keegan

Study Guide from Marine Corps University:

Background: This book had far-ranging impact upon the military history academic community when it was published in 1976. Since then, more effort has been made in research to uncover participant letters, diaries, and other first-person primary source material to cross-check with official reports and to gain impressions of how battles are perceived by those participating in it. While never having participated in a battle himself, Keegan provides a convincing way to study this phenomenon.

1. What is the author's mission (task and purpose) and central thesis in writing this book?

The discussion group should be struck by the very different style of battle history that Keegan provides versus what they may be used to. *"What I mean to attempt here. . . is to tackle again the concept of the 'battle piece' and to suggest ways in which it might be wrenched out of the stereotype into which it has been set for so long by custom and unreflective imitation."* The discussion leader—despite this—should guide conversation towards why Keegan felt such a change was necessary, and why past descriptions fell short. The practical aspects of such treatment are thus: *"to suggest how and why the men who have had (and do have) to face these weapons control their fears, staunch their wounds, go to their deaths."*

2. What part of the book was the most effective in accomplishing the author's mission? What part of the book was the least effective?

Discussion Question: Does Keegan make a good case that previous efforts in describing battle fall short? Where does he do well in arguing this? Where does he do less-well?

The group should summarize Chapter 1 ideas regarding how battles have come to be described, analyzed, and studied. . . [Continued on next page.](#)

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Reading Lists and Book Review (continued)

The Face of Battle: Discussion Guide (continued)

(continued from previous page) The discussion leader may have some success drawing analogies between academic treatments of battle before Keegan's book and older war movies and how battles were filmed using a "bird's eye" view. This can be contrasted to how contemporary movies have since communicated the essence of battle—from slow motion sequences such as Peckinpah's *Cross of Iron* to the "first person hand-held camera" view in films like Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* and its imitators. The group will no doubt wrestle with philosophical issues such as "which treatment is more true?" and "which treatment is more useful?"

Resonating with discussion group members will be Keegan's concerns regarding the possibility of offering practical advice to military cadets and others who will have to face the prospect of battle in their futures—and who must master it. The section entitled "*Killing, No Murder?*" is also engrossing, particularly given the relevance to today's headlines coming out of hearings and trials of Marines accused of war crimes or excessive force in Iraq and Afghanistan. Certainly Keegan appears to be asking the right questions, questions that military members ask themselves and (sometimes) each other.

At this point, group members may point out that Keegan doesn't provide any practical answers in his first chapter but merely shows how inadequate military history is in answering them using the narrative tradition and the "legal"--accusatorial, inquisitorial--approach. Of course, the expectations are set regarding the next mission of the author and what will follow in the subsequent chapters.

Discussion Question: Does Keegan answer his own questions regarding what makes men face their fears, treat their wounds, and face their deaths? Where do we think he provides those answers? Where in the work are those answers less than satisfying?

The discussion group will come to the concept of "psychological trickery" in getting men to "stand" in battle; it will be difficult for them to discern "rules" or "principles" as much of what Keegan offers is anecdotal in nature. He does well in summarizing the difficulties and outlining some generalities. But it will be hard for many to swallow Keegan's assertion that "battle has already abolished itself" in the last sentence of the last page of the book, even given a trend worldwide of increases in guerrilla warfare and "clandestine methods." The group will likely praise Keegan's treatment but lament that he provides little in terms of practical advice that they do not know—or at least sense—already.

It's worth pointing out that Keegan's treatment of the Somme battle will seem most relevant to us today; his discussion of infantry sociology is far better than that for Agincourt and Waterloo (no doubt, as he points out early in the work, due to the greater literacy of the soldiery in capturing their emotions). Early in the last chapter Keegan does address issues some might have on the relevance of the Somme battle to modern-day fighting; discussion participants can talk about whether these are convincing enough.

3. What does the author assume to be true in order to accomplish the mission? Does the author validate these assumptions in the book?

Expect the lion's share of the discussion to revolve around this question. Keegan is basically arguing for more and far deeper attention paid to "eye-witnesses" who participated in battle. Discussion group participants may have some perspectives that call this into question, particularly the notoriously unreliable accounts that eyewitnesses often provide. Should this particular line of inquiry arise, the discussion leader may wish to talk about the task of the historian, which is not unlike that of a lawyer, in assembling a truthful story out of the often contradictory testimony of many witnesses.

Regarding Agincourt, while Keegan does depend on "the chroniclers," he does appear to be "walking to dog" from action to decision to action, using imagination and common sense on what would be possible and what would not be, so that the force of his assumptions carry the argument he makes. This may not be wholly satisfactory for the group, but lacking any other means, it does suffice to explain the conduct and outcome of the battle as seen by an individual (or several individual) participants, particularly in the loss of momentum in the French charge.

More striking in the treatment of Waterloo is Keegan's "personal angle of vision" and the consequences it brings in local tactical reactions of combatants to battlefield events near and far. The discussion should focus quickly on one of the more remarkable examples, the French reaction to British defenses that successfully stand—the rear of the attacking column flees first, even though it is not directly engaged. Participants will want to contrast this with the close-in fighting that occurred in Hougomont, and the discussion leader should address the concepts Keegan proposes regarding "critical distance" and "flight distance" and how such can be manipulated by tactical leaders as part of that "psychological trickery" mentioned earlier. Expect some healthy skepticism by some in the group regarding the concept.

Please review the remainder of the discussion guide from the [Marine Corps University](#).

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Roster of MCCLL Representatives

The latest roster of Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) representatives at major Marine Corps and joint commands and organizations is provided below. Maj Dan Fields, the previous MCCLL representative at Al Taqaddum, has now redeployed; his replacement, Maj Carlos Ybarra, has not yet arrived in theater. In the interim, LtCol Bannach will serve as the MCCLL point of contact on all MLG (Fwd) matters. (Note that individuals from commands and organizations that do not have a MCCLL representative may contact Maj Joseph Novario, the MCCLL Assistant Operations Officer; his contact information is also listed below.)

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