

# *Fourth Generation Warfare & OODA Loop Implications of The Iraqi Insurgency*

*G.I. Wilson  
Greg Wilcox  
Chet Richards*



December 2004

Modified: September 2007

# INTRODUCTION



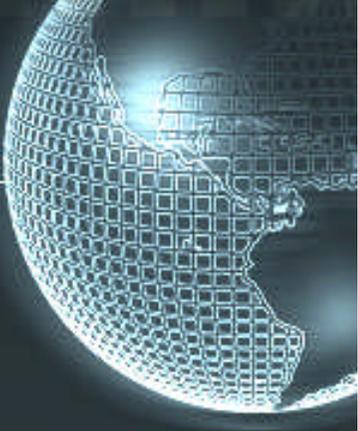
**Machines don't fight wars. People do, and they use their minds.**

- [Col John R. Boyd](#)

**Military action is important to the nation—it is the ground of death and life, the path of survival and destruction, so it is imperative to examine it.**

- Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

# INTRODUCTION



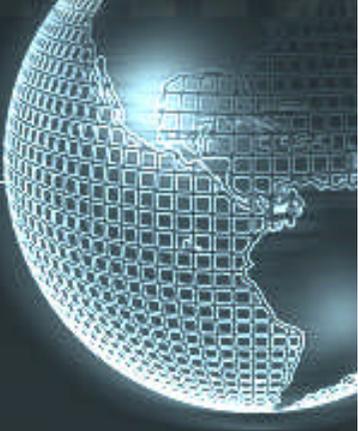
## Fourth Generation warfare

... the threat America faces is not merely terrorism, which is only a technique. **The threat is Fourth Generation warfare**, which is a vastly broader phenomenon. Fourth Generation war marks the greatest dialectically qualitative change in the conduct of war since the Peace of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years War in 1648.

William S. Lind,  
Strategic Defense Initiative,  
*The American Conservative*  
November 22, 2004

[http://www.defense-and-society.org/lind/lind\\_strategic\\_defense.htm](http://www.defense-and-society.org/lind/lind_strategic_defense.htm)

# INTRODUCTION



In a world where unconventional warfare has become the state of the art, firepower no longer ensures victory. By alienating the local population, it provides a growing base of support to the guerrilla, terrorist, or **4th generation** warrior.

John Poole, *Tactics of the Crescent Moon*,  
Posterity Press 2004

The **fourth generation** has arrived. It uses all available networks—political, economic, social and military...

TX Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*,  
Zenith Press 2004

# INTRODUCTION

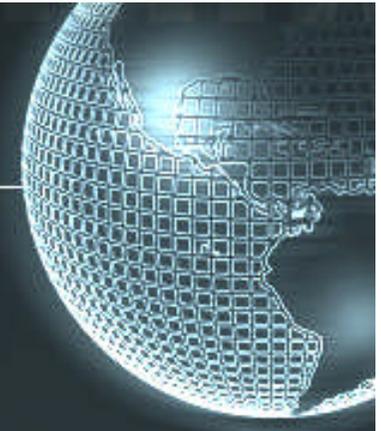


## Characteristics of Fourth Generation Warfare

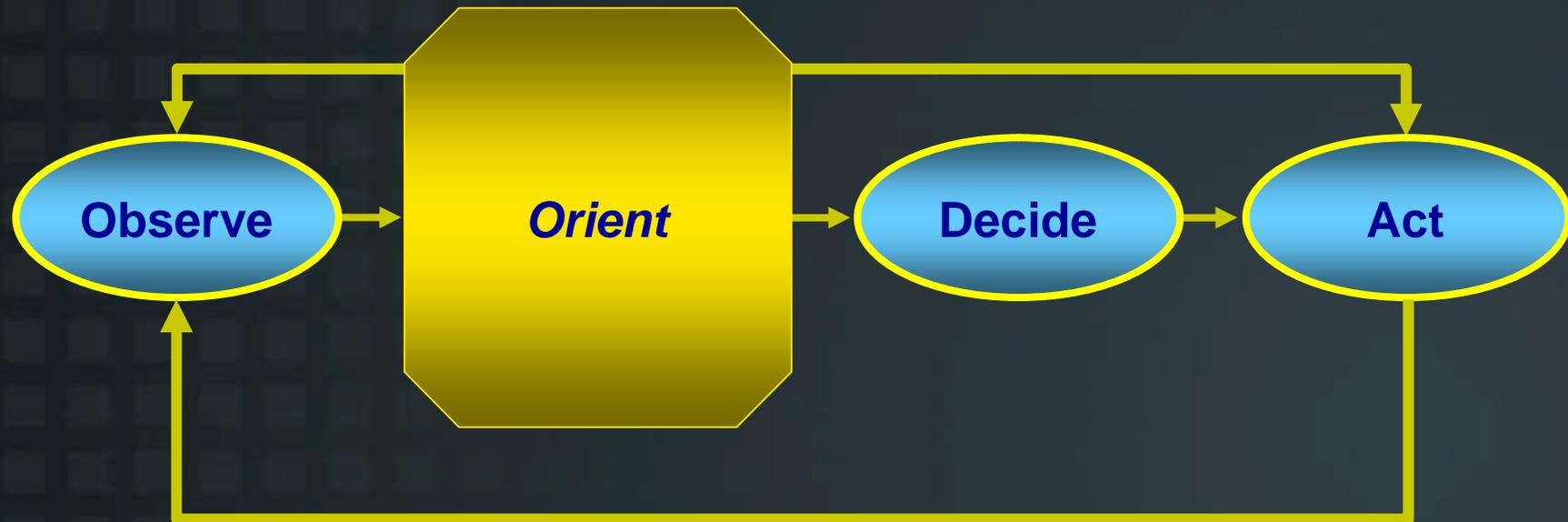
- The **loss of the state's monopoly on war** and on the first loyalty of its citizens and the rise of non-state entities that command people's primary loyalty and that wage war. These entities may be gangs, religions, races and ethnic groups within races, localities, tribes, business enterprises, ideologies—the variety is almost limitless;
- A return to a world of **cultures, not, merely states, in conflict**; and
- The **manifestation of both developments**—the decline of the state and the rise of alternate, often cultural, primary loyalties—**not only “over there” but in America itself.**

William S. Lind,  
Strategic Defense Initiative

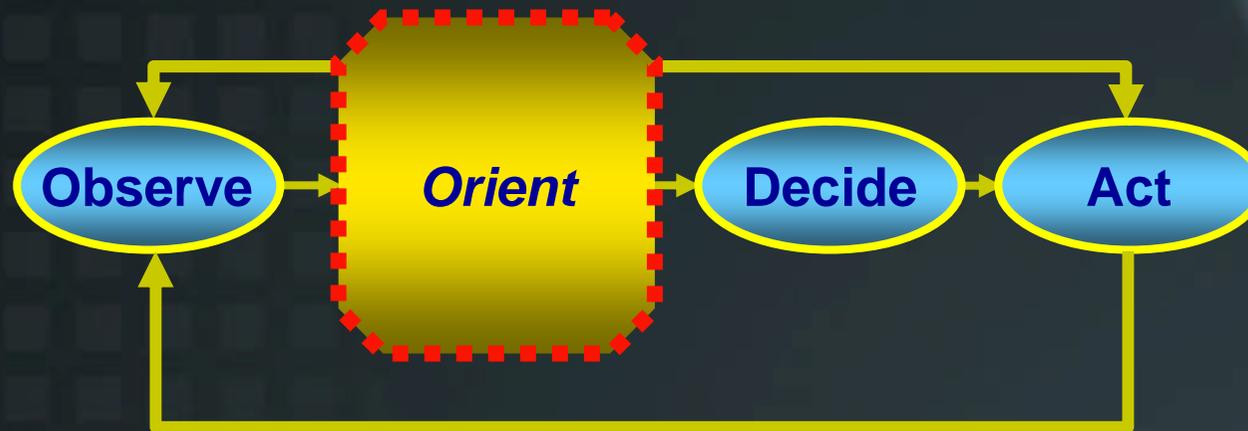
# INTRODUCTION



## Boyd's OODA "Loop"



# Orientation is the Fulcrum of Boyd's OODA "Loop"

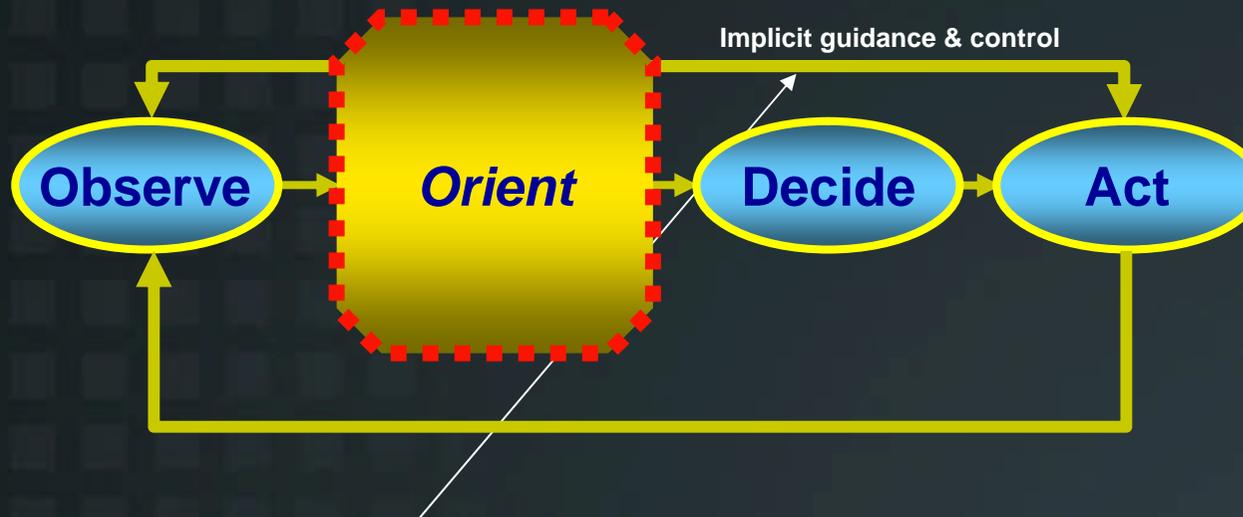


**Orientation is the fulcrum of Boyd's OODA Loop. It shapes the way we interact with the environment—hence the way we observe it, the way we decide, the way we act.**

**Orientation shapes the character of present observe-orient-decide-act loops—while these present loops shape the character of the future orientation.**

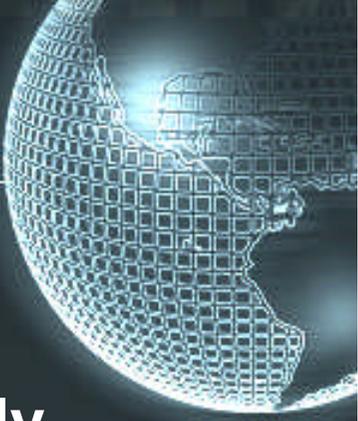
Source: Col John Boyd's Organic Design from "Patterns of Conflict"

# Using the OODA “Loop”



- ... **emphasize implicit over explicit** in order to gain a favorable mismatch in friction and time (ours lower than any adversary) for superiority in shaping and adapting to circumstances. (Organic Design, 22)
- ... we have to make **intuitive within ourselves** those many practices we need to meet the exigencies of the world (Abstract, 1)
- ... we must develop a **fingerspitzengefühl for folding our adversaries back inside themselves** ... (Strategic Game, 45)
- Definition—**agility**: the ability to shift from one OODA/orientation state to another more rapidly than an opponent, in response to changing circumstances

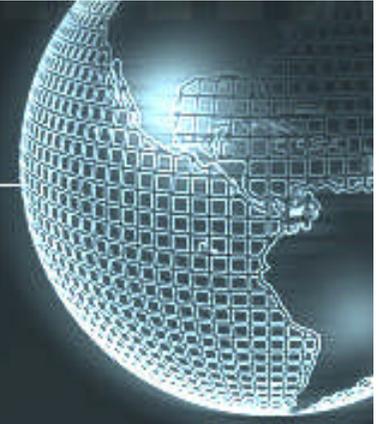
# OBSERVE



In broad terms, fourth generation warfare seems likely to be widely dispersed and largely undefined ... It will be nonlinear, possibly to the point of **having no definable battlefields or fronts. The distinction between “civilian” and “military” may disappear.**

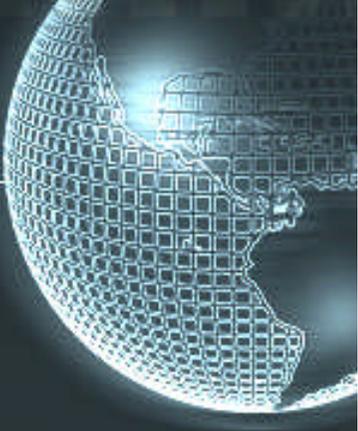
William S. Lind,  
Colonel Keith Nightengale (USA),  
Captain John F. Schmitt (USMC),  
Colonel Joseph W. Sutton (USA),  
and Lieutenant Colonel Gary I. Wilson,  
The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation  
*Marine Corps Gazette*  
October 1989, Pages 22-26

# OBSERVE



The nature of conflict has shifted to where **the division between combatant, criminal opportunist and civilian is blurred**—often to the vanishing point.

# OBSERVE

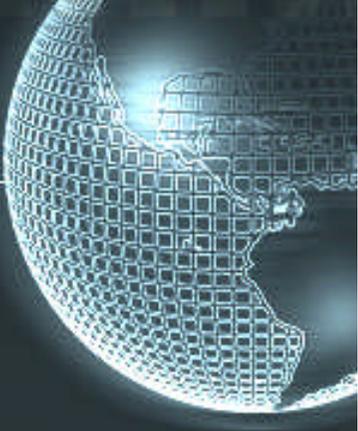


When I read his (T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*) **description of why he thought his outgunned, outmanned, unsophisticated force could prevail**, a chill ran down my spine. His rebellion, he wrote, faced “a sophisticated alien enemy, disposed as an army of occupation in an area greater than could be dominated effectively from fortified posts.” Meanwhile, his side was supported by “a friendly population, of which some two in the hundred were active, and the rest quietly sympathetic to the point of not betraying the movements of the minority.”

... in waging or countering an insurgency, the prize is psychological, not physical. At one point, he notes in an aside, while waiting for reinforcements **“we could do little but think—yet that ... was the essential process.”**

Thomas E. Ricks,  
Lessons of Arabia,  
*Washington Post*  
November 26, 2004

# OBSERVE



## Our Culture

We are **addicted** to technology and technological solutions vice operational solutions.

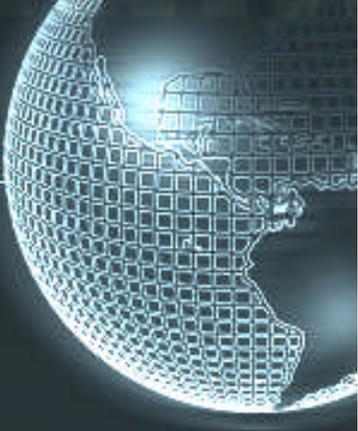
We have lost sight that **people and ideas are the essence of why wars are fought.**

In our traditional western view, the low-tech approaches of fourth generation warfare are the "tactics of the weak."

Because 4GW actors are militarily weak compared to their state opponents, their techniques often include "terrorism" and manifest as an insurgency.

As a result, 4GW is often **successful in circumventing our military's far stronger high-tech-conventional posture.**

# OBSERVE



## Our Culture vs. “Theirs”

**Most men—especially men from non-western cultures** and less developed areas—**take great pleasure in waging war.** (Martin van Creveld, Ralph Peters)

*“Americans tend to think that deep down we all have the same values. Americans believe that all these terrorists, if you scratch beneath the surface, are looking for religious equality and justice.”*

**That's complete and utter nonsense.** *Americans can't face the reality that different people have different values.”*

Ibn Warraq  
*Why I am Not a Muslim*  
Prometheus Books, August 1995

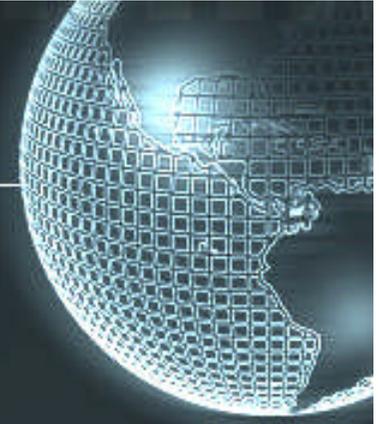
# OBSERVE: IRAQI DILEMMA



Our dilemma in Iraq is reestablishing a sovereign Iraq where any action on our part to do so **can easily contribute to de-legitimizing it** while trying to sustain combat and security operations. The new sovereign Iraq is experiencing violence that is maturing into a well developed insurgency.

The situation is aggravated by the presence of **small numbers of terrorists (foreign interlopers)** enmeshed in a culture of shifting alliances against a backdrop of religious and tribal hierarchies.

# OBSERVE

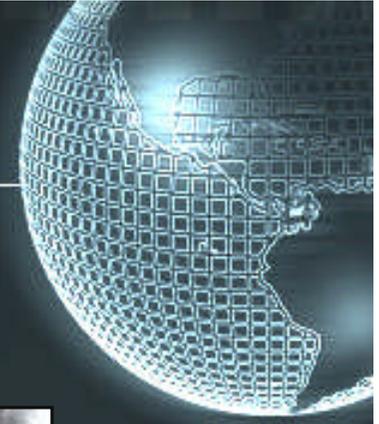


## Over time, the Iraqi Insurgency has Matured:

- Insurgency is becoming long term in perspective with **political and religious goals**.
- Insurgents are adept at using terrorist techniques.
- Insurgents are adept at using IO techniques to manipulate the media and get their message out.
- U.S. actions and missteps unwittingly contribute to the insurgency, which now has momentum.
- Iraqi insurgency is fueled by our quest for a decisive engagement.



# OBSERVE

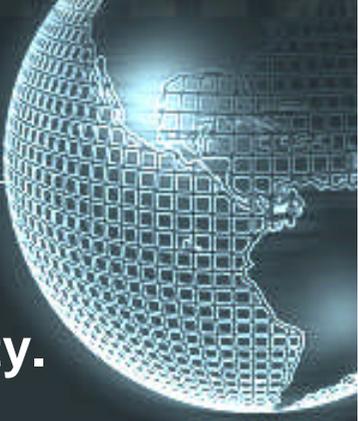


Iraq has become a field laboratory for a class of insurgent-terrorists well schooled in fourth generation warfare and supported by angered Iraqis.

Radical youths from Europe and the Arab world are **being trained in Iraq** according to Europe's anti-terror chief.

Raf Casert,  
EU Official: Iraqi Camps Training Radicals,  
Associated Press, 14 Dec 04 16

# OBSERVE



Insurgent cellular networks maximize operational security.

Iraqi insurgents use terrorists' techniques: i.e assassination and intimidation to manipulate the population. (**Counterpoint: Does killing these insurgents only make more enemies. How does one disable insurgents without killing them? Can they be disenfranchised?**)

Insurgent *modus operandi* (MO) is to attack soft targets.

Iraqi insurgents garner local and popular support, frequently using an intimidation and assassination campaign and tribal influence.

Countering above requires obtaining and keeping confidence and support of the population so that we are able to acquire actionable intelligence on insurgents.

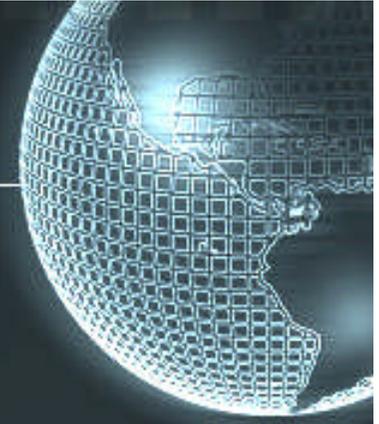
# ORIENT



Guerilla war is the war of the broad masses of an economically backward country **standing up against a powerfully equipped and well trained army of aggression** ... to exhaust the enemy forces little by little by small victories and, at the same time, to maintain and increase our forces.

General Vo Nguyen Giap  
*People's War, People's Army*  
p. 48.

# ORIENT



**Identifying and destroying insurgent infrastructure/organization is problematic.**

**Iraqi insurgents do not have western-like command and control.**

**Instead insurgent C2 is often very cellular, autonomous, diffuse, and self-adapting. Perhaps this is what distinguishes it in a large part from other insurgencies.**

**Insurgents have an intuitive sense of the effects their actions will achieve in the cultural and religious environment in which they operate. We often misread their culture and misjudge the effects.**

# ORIENT



Iraqi insurgents have an affinity for dense urban terrain and populations offering enhanced media opportunities. Areas we must address are:

- Separating insurgents, especially in cyber space via media, from the population that provides passive and active support
- Trumping insurgents' media exposure
- Influencing the population against the insurgents
- Coordinating counterinsurgency actions over a wide area and for a long time

The above require an extremely capable intelligence infrastructure and **strategic communications**. Both are key in getting beyond just kinetics. There must be an investment in human resources, IO, cultural intelligence, and strategic communications.

# ORIENT



Imperative to grasp the socio-political economic intricacies of the “causes” of the insurgents. *(3 types of “insurgents” here: Sunni, Shiite, Kurd)*

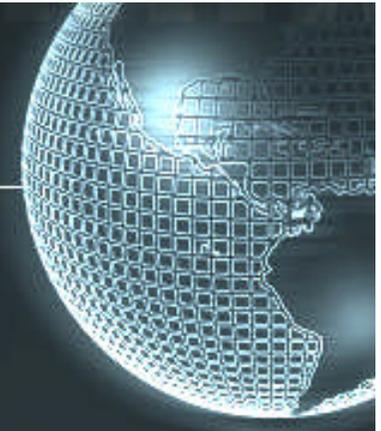
Without a cause, insurgents cannot galvanize the population to support them. *(Yet some people just like to fight ... warrior culture)*

Cause used to mobilize and garner support of the people *(Tribal ties alone may provide significant support of the people)*

Causes are dynamic and often change as the “insurgency” evolves.

To counter, find ways to deny the insurgents a popular cause.

# ORIENT



**Insurgents avoid (militarily) decisive engagements and take advantage of any pauses to adapt, regroup, and develop new TTPs and strategies. Often this is misinterpreted as a victory by many western and Clausewitzian thinkers in their quest for the “decisive battle.”**

# ORIENT



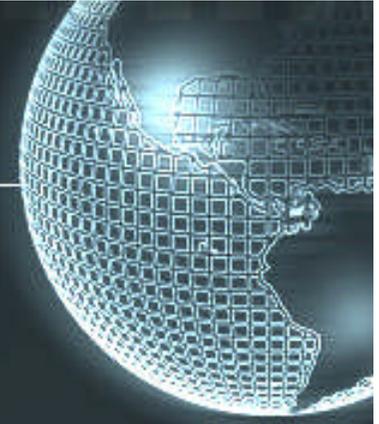
## Lessons of The Algerian War

... democrat leaders should be more farsighted in their decisions to use force, and military commanders should be more aware of the need to adjust their doctrine, tactics, and battlefield standard of behavior to what their society expects (or needs, prescribes). Certain military adventures should be avoided, the objective of others should be limited, and others must be terminated before the cumulative human and political costs will defeat their best battlefield results.

Gil Merom,  
The Social Origins of the French Capitulation in Algeria  
*Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Summer 2004, pp. 601-628

**But is cutting and running a viable option  
once committed?**

# ORIENT



## National Leadership Must be The Keystone (The Glue) in **4GW**

- Leaders must be educated and grasp the value of operational solutions over technological solutions, coupled with a respect for cultural intelligence.
- Leaders must support those in contact and identify with them daily.
- Leaders need to realize this a small unit war a great deal of the time.
- Leaders must be agile in thinking and willing to adapt quickly.
- Leaders must out think the enemy, which means thinking like the enemy in nonwestern ways.
- Leaders must comprehend the “strategic corporal effect,” for often this will determine the outcome in IO connected world.
- Leaders need to be expert at all levels with the “3 Block War” construct.
- Leaders must know when & where to fight **and not to fight.**
- Leaders must know what intelligence is, have realistic expectations of intelligence, and know how to use intelligence.

# ORIENT

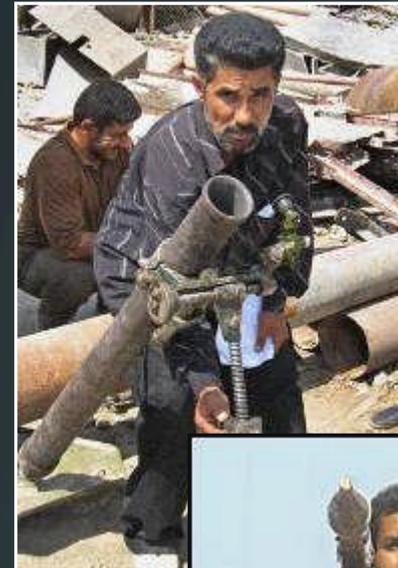


Insurgency includes a diverse collection of bad actors, criminals, “dead enders,” ethno-religious extremists, **“Iraqi freedom fighters,”** and networks who thrive on chaos. Keep in mind **these people are a resourceful and dedicated enemy.**

These cells and networks often have contradictory, diverse or loosely connected political, social, or religious objectives.

All are adept at using information/media as an integral part of their operations.

All are very agile and adaptive in their TTPs.



# ORIENT

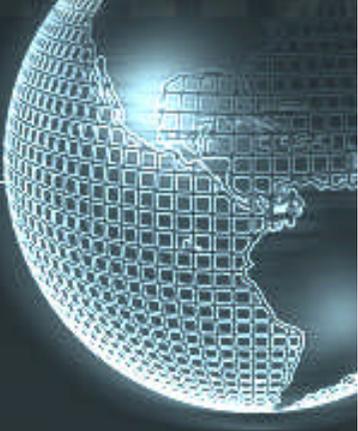


**Question:** What do the Arab/Muslim insurgents believe and what are their motivations for attacking the West?

**Question:** What factors motivate these groups or networks to coordinate their actions?

**Question:** What are the actions that might be employed to either preempt, deter, deny, deceive, and/or disrupt insurgents' support and operational networks?

# ORIENT



## Identity, Personality, and Power:

Who's Who in Iraq ... pre and post elections

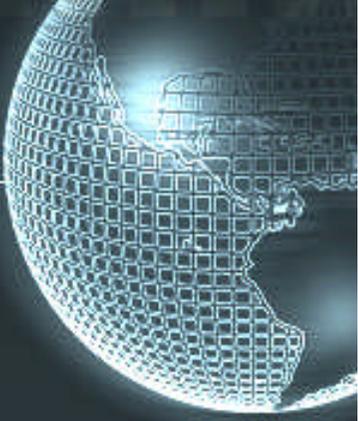
**Concepts of identity are different, reflecting the importance of family, tribal, and religious loyalties that pre-date the Iraqi state.**

Personal relationships drive just about everything in Iraq.

Real power does not always reside in western concept of "city hall."

Effects of Bond Relational Targeting (BRT)

# ORIENT



## Points to Consider

**Despite U.S. military success on the ground in Iraq and initial superiority in the march to Baghdad with a “lite” force, the “decisive” outcome in providing an enduring security environment still hangs in the balance.**

**Swift assault victory with a lite force provided the underpinnings for internal resistance and polarization of many Iraqis.**

- **Unrealistic expectations set by catastrophic conventional military operational success**
- **Power, leadership, and expectation vacuums created**

**Swift ground war was not translated into swift reconstruction and return to a sovereign Iraq.**

# ORIENT

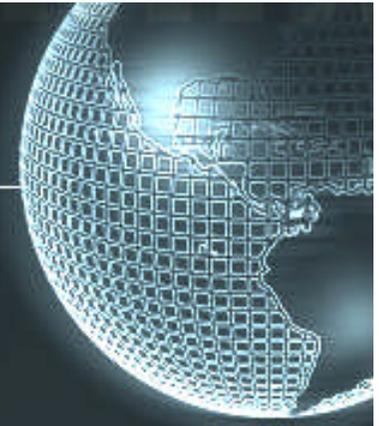


## Points to Consider

When U.S. focus shifted from Saddam/Iraqi Army to Iraqi people and infrastructure, U.S. mistook situation for something other than what it really was: fertile ground for insurgent activity. **Saddam was replaced by an insurgency that is widespread.**

The disbanding of the Iraqi Army, high unemployment, unrealistic expectations of reconstruction, and the lack of Iraqi security forces to provide their own internal security only fueled the insurgency.

# ORIENT

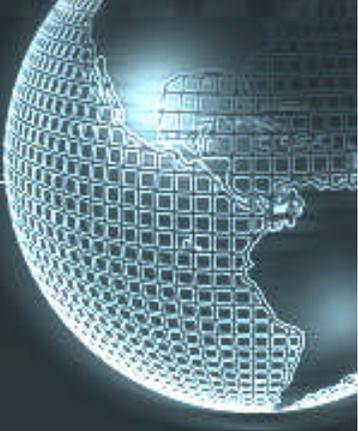


**Kinetics attract attention** ... media centric events

Potential for collateral damage and media exploitation always present, especially in urban areas even with precision strikes.

Kinetic effects compounded by collateral damage or appearance thereof, tends to underwrite and/ or license further violence against “occupying” forces ... kinetics include torture and other abuses.

# ORIENT



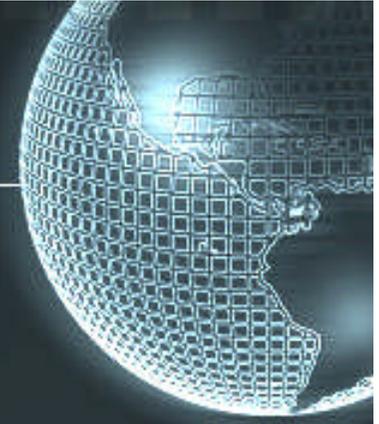
## Information Operations (IO): Moral/Mental Dimensions

- WMD possession questioned
- Intelligence questioned
- Saddam's direct threat to U.S., questioned
- Saddam and AQ connection questioned
- Forces levels questioned
- Repeated use of Guard & Reserve questioned
- Timing of invasion questioned
- Retired Senior officers criticized and questioned
- DOD Contracts awarded in Iraq questioned

**Public questioning continues to erode any moral-mental imperative for operation in Iraq resulting in negative IO which the insurgents are leveraging globally.**

**Bottom Line:** Real or perceived, the moral/mental imperative has not come full circle, thus sowing seeds of unrealistic expectations, causing discontent, and energizing hatred among Iraqis in the general population.

# ORIENT



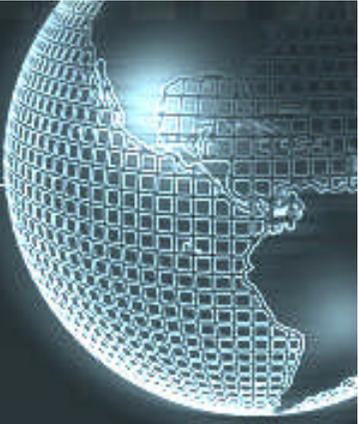
## Moral, Mental, and Physical

While important, there is frequently fixation with the physical or kinetic level of war—to the **virtual exclusion of the more powerful mental & moral levels.**

What we do at the physical or kinetic level **can work against us at the mental & moral levels.**

At the mental level, there needs to be a more effective use of IO. Of the moral level of war, which John Boyd argued is the most powerful level, there remains little appreciation of its power. In Fourth Generation war **what wins at the physical level tends to lead to defeat at the moral level.**

# DECIDE



## Center of Gravity Is The People

The first step must be focused on **security for the people** and the establishment of public safety (local police and military forces.)

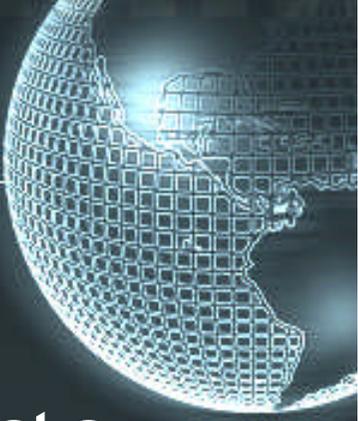
The establishment of an effective intelligence collection system is an imperative. Local police, National Guard, and security forces are good for collecting actionable Intelligence. However, covert US controlled indigenous HUMINT is best.

Establish small, specialized counterinsurgency units, to neutralize or destroy the leadership of the insurgents fighting against the Coalition forces.

Establish disciplined, well-trained and highly mobile, counter-guerrilla forces.

H. Thomas Hayden  
The Road to Success in Iraq Starts with Fallujah,  
MCIA Convention, Reno, Nevada

# DECIDE



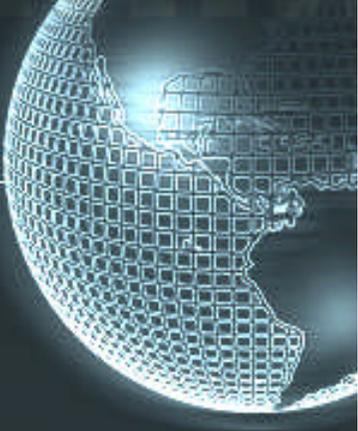
Leverage unconventional capabilities against insurgents. Become cellular like “them.” Defeat a networked threat with a network.

Develop small independent action forces (SIAF).

*“We should be the ones in the village, not the people attacking the village.”*

— John Boyd on winning guerilla warfare.

# DECIDE



## Power Structures

**Determine the prevailing authoritative-social structures (governmental, tribal, and religious) and personalities in various localities. Make a cultural “story board.”**

**Assess continuously the tribal, rivalries, jealousies and ethno-religious fault lines affecting the local communities.**

# DECIDE

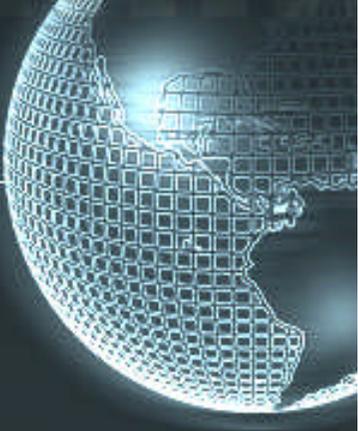
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## Think Influence

**Allies**  
**Media**  
**Resistance**

# DECIDE



## Power of Perception & Influence As “Ammo”

**Money** is ammunition

**Food** is ammunition

**Medicine** is ammunition

**Education** is ammunition

**Fuel** is ammunition

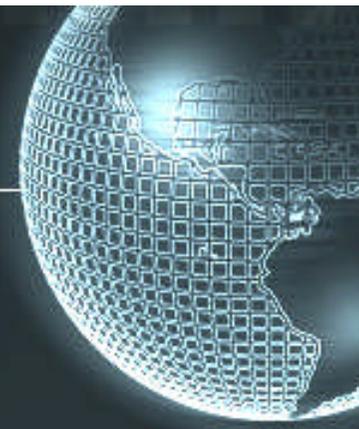
**Employment** is ammunition

**Recognition** is ammunition

**Respect** is ammunition

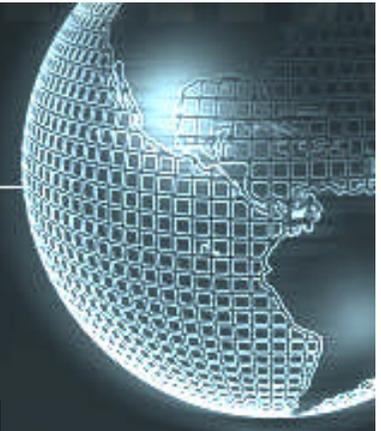
***ABOVE ALL, INFORMATION IS AMMUNITION***

# DECIDE



- Integrate all aspects of political, economic, military power, **to act** (*not react*) intelligently.
- Share combat information and intelligence more effectively.
- IO: War of ideas ... battle for the mind
- Recognize the moral-mental aspects of Iraqi War.
- Integrate kinetics with nonkinetic at all levels.
- **De-escalation vs. escalation** with regards to kinetics
- High tempo of mind numbing actions; force the insurgents to react!

# ACT



- At the lower levels of conflict—tactical, operational & strategic—**agility** (high ops tempo and rapid re-orientation) is paramount.
- A coherent **grand strategy** is needed to ensure that success in combat does not repel the target country population, potential allies, the uncommitted, or even ourselves.
- Because support of these groups is ultimately what determines who wins in 4GW, grand strategy is key. At this level, adherence to the values we claim to espouse is more important than agility.

# ACT



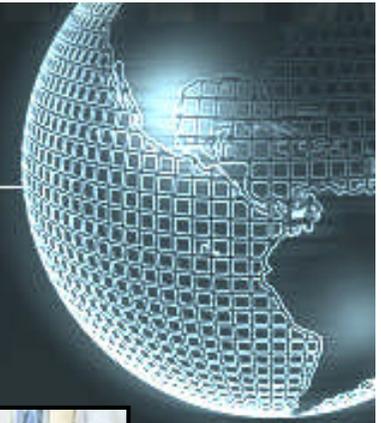
## The Three Block War— Different battle needs: **Fast Transients!**

- Peacekeeping and humanitarian aid, *and*
- Counter-Guerrilla warfare, *and*
- High-intensity warfare against trained, well-equipped enemy



Gen. Charles C. Krulak, USMC,  
The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the  
Three Block War  
*Marines Magazine*, January 1999

# ACT

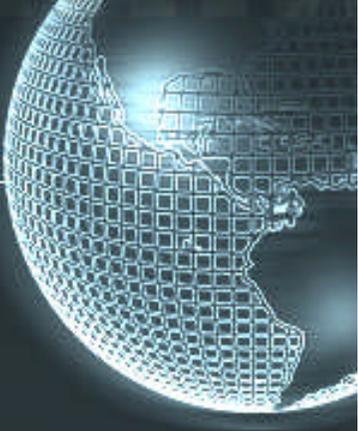


## The Strategic Corporal

- This war will be decided by the strategic corporals and privates **of both sides.**
- The colonels and generals are only supporting actors.



# ACT



**Incorporate psychological operations and information operations into every action.**

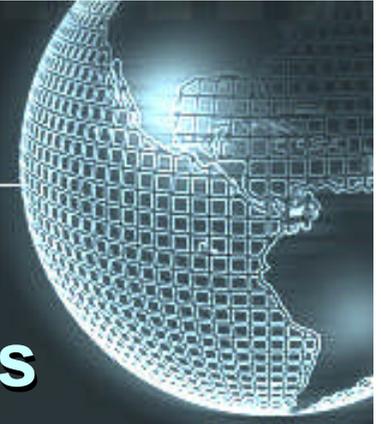
**Redevelopment/development and/or reconstruction of infrastructure must have local indigenous support and participation.**

**Operate within establish international law.**

**Organize police, military and civilian agencies under one Civil-Military Campaign Plan.**

H. Thomas Hayden  
The Road to Success in Iraq Starts with Fallujah,  
MCIA Convention, Reno, Nevada

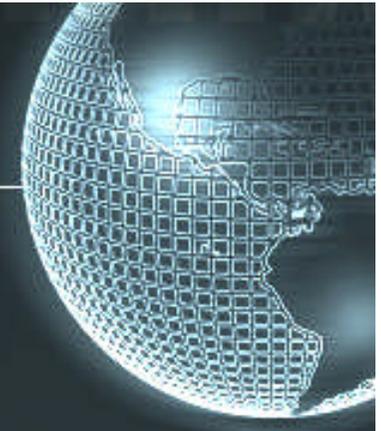
# ACT



## Develop Relationships

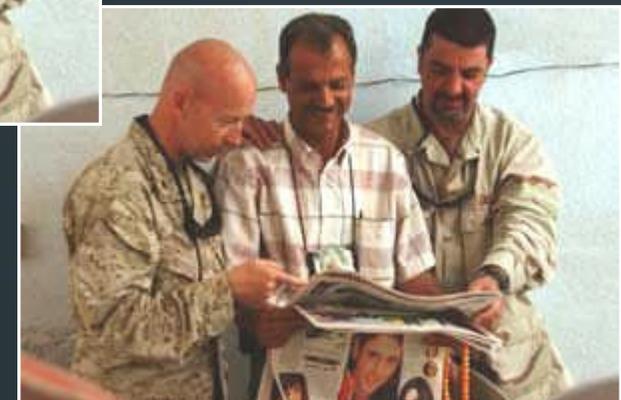
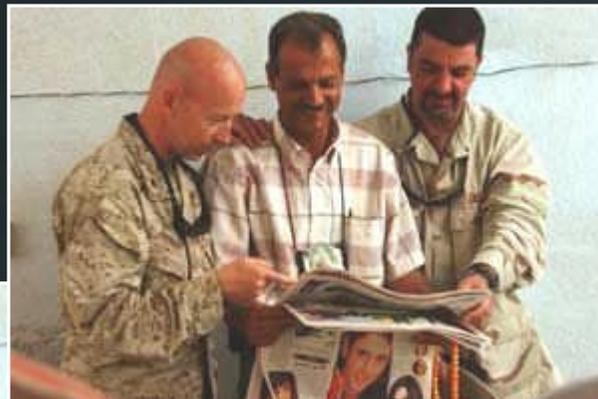


# ACT



## Harvesting Relationships

### Human Networking



### Cultivate

# ACT

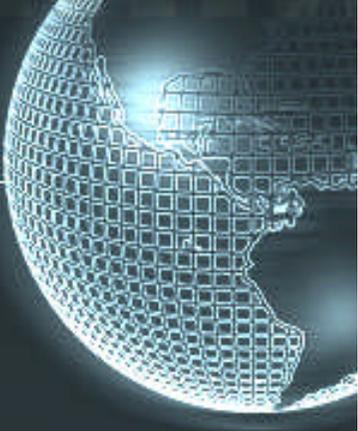


**Show respect to local leaders**

**Counterpoint: How Important is this?  
It can get you killed!**



# ACT



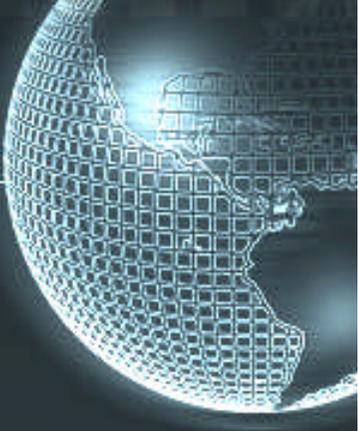
## Fighting Apaches with Apaches

General George Crook taught us that to end the Apache wars, he had to catch some the Indians bring them onto reservations, give them land, teach them how to farm, let them keep their weapons and horses, and **never lie to them.**

When he found he needed skilled scouts, these Indians were all too ready to track Geronimo.

This effort took General Crook 8 years.

# ACT

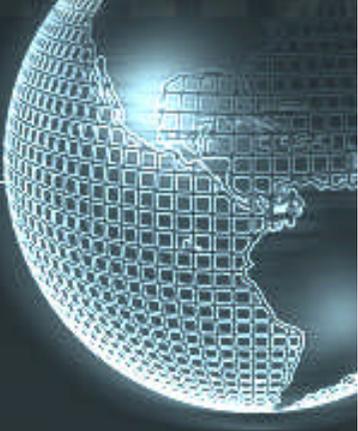


**Need to provide trainers for the new Iraqi Army,  
Navy, AF:**

- **This is a SF mission, but they are stretched too thin.**
- **We are now doing this ad hoc (i.e., with 98th USAR Tng Division).**
- **We have to rebuild an advisory Corps a la Vietnam.**
- **We have to train the trainers.**

***This is critical to any exit strategy.***

# In Closing



## Disconnect Between Orientation and Actions

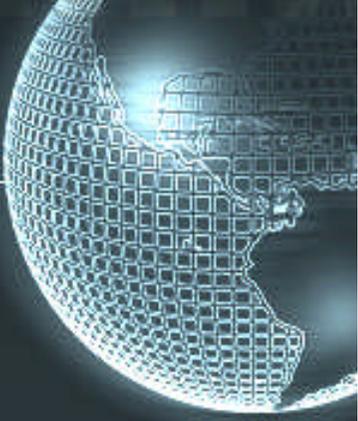
**“Unfortunately, the US effort to rebuild Iraq is out of synch (a full 180 degrees) with what is really needed. If we map U.S. efforts to Maslow's Hierarchy we see something quiet unsettling.”**

- Elections and the establishment of a government/army get the majority share of the U.S. effort. The vast majority of the U.S. effort is focused on building a viable Iraqi government that can provide the country the ability to self-actualize.
- Hearts and minds. Rebuilding schools and hospitals. General clean-up activities. These activities take the second position.
- **Basic services get the least effort.** From the days of mass looting of Iraq just after the invasion, the U.S. has demonstrated that it is uninterested in street level security. Additionally, the vast majority of Iraq's infrastructure is guarded by local or outsourced forces (if at all).

Source: [http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/12/legitimacy\\_101.html](http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2004/12/legitimacy_101.html)

**All the above are essential precursors for an exit strategy.**

# Grand Strategy



## Essence:

- Shape pursuit of our national goals so that we not only amplify our spirit and strength (while undermining and isolating our adversaries') but also influence the uncommitted or potential adversaries [*note - the Iraqi populace*] so that they are **drawn toward our philosophy and are empathetic toward our success.**

## Basis:

- An appreciation for the underlying self-interests, critical differences of opinion, internal contradictions, frictions, obsessions, etc., that we as well as the uncommitted and any potential or real adversaries must contend with.

John Boyd, *Patterns of Conflict*, 140

# Goal: Adapting to Chaos

