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Parallel Lives in the Indo-Pacific

Edward Lansdale, Donald Wurster, and the Irregular Warfare Mind-set

Maj Joseph R. Tomczak, USAF

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Foreword

The Kenney Papers series from Air University Press provides a forum for topics related to the Indo-Pacific region, which covers everything from the western shores of the Americas to the eastern coast of Africa and from Antarctica to the Arctic. Named for General George Churchill Kenney, Allied air commander in the Southwest Pacific during World War II and subsequently commander of Strategic Air Command and then Air University, this series seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the region, the geopolitics and geoeconomics that shape the theater, and the roles played by the US military in providing for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

DR. ERNEST GUNASEKARA-ROCKWELL
Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs
Editor in Chief

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This work is the culmination of an intellectual journey that began at Air University in the fall of 2020. I am grateful to have been one of Dr. Bill Dean's students at the Air Command and Staff College, where he first introduced me to the story of Major General Edward Lansdale. During that academic year, I also attended Lieutenant General Donald Wurster's lecture on Joint Task Force-510. I was fascinated by the lives and work of both Lansdale and Wurster—but the idea to examine them in parallel came from the professor who would later become my thesis advisor at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Dr. James Kiras. I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to Dr. Kiras, along with my reader Dr. Rob Hutchinson, for their expertise, patience, and mentorship throughout this effort.

Lieutenant General (Ret.) Donald Wurster, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Christopher Kaufman, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Michael Lugo, Commander (Ret.) James Marvin, and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Rieka Stroh all agreed to be interviewed for this project, and I am immensely grateful for their first-hand accounts of leading and serving in the Philippines. I especially wish to thank Lieutenant General Wurster for providing an array of valuable primary source documents that I have referenced throughout. Additionally, Colonels Patrick Dierig, Nick Dipoma, and Kaveri Crum contributed their helpful advice and insight as experienced special operations practitioners. My study of the Edward G. Lansdale Papers at the Air University Library would not have been as thorough without the assistance of Lexie Aldridge from the office of Archives and Special Collections. Additionally, Dr. Forrest Marion at the Air Force Historical Research Agency assisted me in learning more about the history of Joint Task Force-510. Of note, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented even further research of collections at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and the National Archives in Washington, DC.

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This work is dedicated to the many thousands of American military men and women who served in the Republic of the Philippines.

About The Author

Maj Joseph R. Tomczak, USAF

Major Tomczak is an Air Force special operations pilot. He graduated from the US Air Force Academy in 2009, where he majored in political science and studied on exchange at the US Military Academy at West Point. During his 14-year career, Major Tomczak has flown 3,300 hours in trainer, tactical reconnaissance, and special operations strike aircraft. His operational experience includes five combat deployments and more than 320 missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. In 2019, he commanded an expeditionary special operations squadron during the final AC-130U gunship deployment of the war in Afghanistan. Major Tomczak is a distinguished graduate of the Air Command and Staff College, a graduate of the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, and holds a Master of International Policy and Practice from the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs.

Abstract

The 2020 Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy acknowledges that the US military historically repeats a "boom-and-bust" cycle in its institutional competency for irregular warfare. The annex charges special operations forces to avoid the mistakes of the past by embracing and institutionalizing the mindset of irregular warfare—but does so without explicitly defining or describing it. To understand the attributes of the irregular warfare mind-set, particularly within the context of strategic competition, this work analyzes two American military leaders and influencers who developed an approach to irregular warfare within a complex international security environment. Two Airmen, Major General Edward G. Lansdale and Lieutenant General Donald C. Wurster, successfully navigated the intricacies of supporting a partner nation to achieve American political objectives in the Philippines during two different eras in that country's history. First, then–Lieutenant Colonel Lansdale significantly aided the government of the Philippines in suppressing the Hukbalahap Insurrection in two separate tours of duty between 1946 and 1953. A half-century later, then–Brigadier General Donald Wurster led a joint task force in the initial US effort to counter the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Southern Philippines from 2001 to 2002. Both Lansdale and Wurster employed effective information operations, civic actions, and partner force capacity-building to achieve their military objectives and further American interests in the Indo-Pacific. In comparing the approaches of both leaders, five key attributes stand out: communicating a vision and controlling a narrative; relationship building and networking for effect; strategic listening, empathy, and respect; willingness to question assumptions and reevaluate approaches; and a bias for understanding. By comparing and contrasting the performance of these two leaders, this paper spotlights implications for the modern military: orienting organizations on problems instead of platforms, valuing preaccession and mid-career diversity of experience, and prioritizing media training and strategic communications.

Introduction

There are Americans who study the history of warfare in order to prepare themselves for leadership roles in future armed conflict. It is not that they have an unhealthy love of war. Rather, it is their awareness of the world we live in and of man's proclivity for war that makes them study, if the United States gets into shooting trouble in the future, they want to be ready to serve our country expertly and professionally.

—Major General Edward G. Lansdale, USAF (Ret.)
"The Opposite Number," 1972

In June 2014, when the Islamic State swept across the desert between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and captured the Iraqi city of Mosul, the international community was caught unprepared for the emerging threat—so too, it seemed, were some senior Air Force leaders. When the head of US Central Command, Army General Lloyd J. Austin, asked Air Force Lieutenant General John Hesterman to lead Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF–OIR), he reportedly declined.[1] Although Hesterman undoubtedly had many competing responsibilities as the commander of US Air Forces Central, his decision marked a missed opportunity. The Air Force abdicated the lead in solving difficult problems for the joint force in the context of modern irregular war, and CJTF–OIR's command section lacked an air representative for its first year of operations.[2]

In Iraq and Syria, the United States and its broad international coalition employed a military strategy reliant on indigenous ground forces and the use of airpower to address the rise of the Islamic State.[3] Once the operation against the insurgents of the so-called caliphate was underway, Russia perceived an opportunity to intervene, turning Syria into a geopolitical tinderbox and a proving ground for strategic competition with the United States. Thus, while the United States was engaged in an ongoing irregular warfare effort to accomplish its national security goals, a strategic competitor disrupted US

1. Becca Wasser, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jeffrey Martini, Alexandra T. Evans, Karl P. Mueller, Nathaniel Edenfield, Gabrielle Tarini, Ryan Haberman, and Jalen Zeman, *The Air War Against the Islamic State: The Role of Airpower in Operation Inherent Resolve* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2021), 50.

2. For more information on the issues resulting from a lack of senior air representation at CJTF-OIR during the initial phases of the conflict, see Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Airpower in the War Against ISIS* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2021).

3. For a further discussion on the so-called Afghan model articulated a decade earlier, see Richard B. Andres, Craig Wills, and Thomas E. Griffith, "Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model," *International Security* 30, no. 3 (Winter 2005/2006): 124–60.

operations with an intervention designed to challenge American influence in the Middle East.[4]

The American military experience in Iraq and Syria is an example of a broader phenomenon, where interactions between strategic competitors are likely to play out in two ways. First, recognizing the advantage the United States enjoys as a result of close relationships with an array of allies and partners, a strategic competitor could take action to threaten the internal stability of a nation friendly to the United States, requiring an American response. Second, a competitor could choose to intervene, either directly or through proxy forces, in an irregular conflict in which the United States is already engaged. In both cases, if left unchecked, strategic competitors will capitalize on the violence and uncertainty inherent in irregular warfare to undermine American regional influence, pursue advantages, and create dilemmas for the United States. Iraq and Syria serve as a harbinger for the future of strategic competition, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, where the United States must be prepared to compete for influence against the People's Republic of China (PRC), which seeks to challenge the rules-based international order and may exploit irregular conflicts for its own benefit.

The geographically, economically, and culturally diverse nations in the Indo-Pacific present a host of potential points of friction for competition between the PRC and the United States. For example, President Joe Biden's administration in early 2023 announced a basing agreement with the Republic of the Philippines in an effort to strengthen the relationship between the two countries in light of Chinese aggression toward Taiwan and Beijing's malign activities in the South China Sea.[5] This agreement was met with skepticism among the Filipino public, and with strong objection by the PRC, resulting in competing strategic narratives. The alignment of the Philippine government will therefore have a direct impact on the access and disposition of American forces in the region. The Philippines, given its geostrategic significance, will continue to be a critical partner for the United States in this new era of strategic competition—requiring a delicate approach that acknowledges the political sensitivities of its colonial history.

Strategic competition may ultimately manifest below the threshold of traditional armed conflict. The PRC's "Three Warfares" doctrine calls for the manipulation of the psychological, media, and legal systems of an adversary with the goal of influencing outcomes in other countries more aligned with

4. Wasser, et al., *The Air War Against the Islamic State*, 70–71.

5. Sui-Lee Wee, "U.S. to Boost Military Role in the Philippines in Push to Counter China," *New York Times*, 1 February 2023.

the interests of the Chinese Communist Party.[6] It is not difficult to imagine a scenario in which the PRC would stoke anti-American sentiment or exploit fault lines within a population of a US partner in the Indo-Pacific simply to undermine American influence in the region. Some of these situations may require the application of American military capability and expertise at the invitation of the partner country. How will the United States address these scenarios where direct confrontation with the PRC could lead to undesired escalation?

Irregular warfare (IW) activities can provide options to policymakers in these situations. In its most comprehensive definition, irregular warfare is a sociopolitical phenomenon that, according to author Stathis Kalyvas, "takes place when the weaker actor refuses to face the stronger one directly and, instead, fights by deception."[7] Due to a "fundamental weakness in resources or capabilities," groups use indirect applications of force in pursuit of their political objectives.[8] In the case of the United States, indirect approaches using purposefully limited resources can mitigate the risk of quagmire as the United States seeks to achieve its political objectives.

The Department of Defense (DOD) recognizes that traditional and irregular warfare are fundamentally distinct in purpose and conduct.[9] Conventional force-on-force engagements between two states' militaries in a given domain characterize traditional armed conflict. Joint doctrine defines irregular warfare as "a violent struggle" among state and nonstate actors for "legitimacy and influence" over a given population.[10] The population thus becomes the center of gravity in an irregular conflict—not necessarily a prize to be won, but a body politic with its own agency that is still nonetheless susceptible to influence or coercion. The DOD's Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept adds, "IW favors indirect and asymmetric approaches" for the purposes of eroding an adversary's "power, influence, and will."[11] Therefore IW's hallmark

6. For information on Chinese military doctrine, see M. Taylor Fravel, *Active Defense: China's Military Strategy Since 1949* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 231.

7. Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 67.

8. James D. Kiras, "Irregular Warfare" in David Jordan, et al. *Understanding Modern Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 232.

9. The DOD's doctrinal distinction between traditional and irregular warfare is useful for highlighting that the execution of IW often requires a different mind-set. It is important to note, however, that the differing categorization does not mean that the two forms of warfare are mutually exclusive. For example, the concept of "hybrid warfare" blurs the line between traditional and irregular distinction, in addition to involving other instruments of national power. Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, March 25, 2013, Change 1, 12 July 2017), I-5.

10. Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, I-6.

11. Department of Defense, "Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept" (Washington, DC: The Pentagon, 11 September 2007), 6.

feature is the dual imperative to both gain the trust and support of a population while undermining the attempted influence of an adversary force.

Unlike "regular" warfare, where governments retain an exclusive monopoly on the use of armed force and seek decisive engagements using roughly synonymous forces, IW is typically fought for control of a population through various political, economic, and information tools. DOD policy states the military must be equally capable in both forms of warfare, and that IW can be "conducted independently of, or in combination with, traditional warfare."[12] As indicated by the 2020 Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy, irregular warfare "can proactively shape conditions to the United States' advantage in great power competition."[13] The United States can use IW activities, such as building partner capacity, to maintain a presence in an array of countries as it competes with People's Republic of China in the Indo-Pacific, without assuming the risk associated with a large conventional troop presence.

This paper applies the term "irregular warfare" to the operations examined in the following sections, as each campaign employed a range of activities that went beyond counterinsurgency (COIN) alone. The use of the term also allows for analysis within the framework of current DOD terminology. As a warfighting organization, the US military is principally concerned with how IW can be utilized to either support a friendly state against irregular forces, or support an insurgency or resistance movement for the purposes of undermining a government hostile to the United States.[14]

This study will focus on those activities that support a partner government to gain a population's support and defeat an internal resistance movement. The core DOD missions in IW in support of a friendly nation are foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and stability operations (see Figure 1).[15] In addition to these activities, DOD policy stipulates that a range of activities may be used to "shape the environment" before, during, and after irregular warfare operations, such as security cooperation, military information support to operations (MISO), strategic communication, and civil-military operations.[16] The cases examined in this paper utilized a combination of these activities to support the Republic of the Philippines against an insurgency at two different points in its postcolonial history. Understanding

12. Department of Defense Directive 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 28 August 2014, Change 1, 12 May 2017), 1.

13. Department of Defense, "Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy" (Washington, DC: The Pentagon, 2 October 2020), 2, 4.

14. Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Joint Doctrine for Special Operations* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 22 September 2020), II-3.

15. Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*, II-3.

16. Department of Defense Directive 3000.07, *Irregular Warfare*, 2.

the challenges of IW requires not only a survey of the contours of the IW landscape, but also a complementary mental frame of reference to operate within it.

Capturing the Irregular Warfare Mind-set

The execution of irregular warfare activities requires leadership and strategic thinking that emphasizes cognitive, interpersonal, and managerial factors.[17] When sensitive geopolitical situations occur, will the US military have the right leaders with creative strategies to accomplish American political objectives through indirect methods? American military leaders must be prepared for strategic competition to play out in the "gray zone" between peace and general war. Despite the common misperception that irregular warfare was only applicable to the prior conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the 2020 Irregular Warfare Annex states, "the requirement for mastery of irregular warfare persists."[18]

The Irregular Warfare Annex acknowledges that the US military historically repeats a "boom and bust" cycle in its institutional competency for irregular warfare.[19] To avoid the mistakes of the past, the Annex charges the department with making "permanent the mindset and capabilities necessary to succeed in its current irregular warfare mission sets" as well as leveraging the capabilities of "interagency and foreign partners."[20] The IW Annex calls for special operations forces (SOF) personnel, as well as the entire DOD enterprise, to "embrace the mindset" of IW—but does so without explicitly defining or even framing it as a concept. This omission invites the inquiry: what qualities and attributes should the DOD seek in their leaders to "institutionalize" irregular warfare in the joint force?[21]

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17. Barak A. Salmoni, Jessica Hart, Renny McPherson, and Aidan Kirby Winn, "Growing Strategic Leaders for Future Conflict." *Parameters* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 72–88.

18. Department of Defense, "Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy," 2, 4.

19. Department of Defense, "Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy," 4. For a further discussion on the historical "boom and bust" cycle of institutional competency, see Larry E. Cable, *Conflicts of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1986). Additionally, for an analysis of how the US Air Force did not effectively account for the realities of protracted insurgent conflict in the post-Vietnam era, see Dennis M. Drew, "US Airpower Theory and the Insurgent Challenge: A Short Journey to Confusion," *Journal of Military History* 62, no. 4 (October 1998): 809–832.

20. Department of Defense, "Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy," 4.

21. Department of Defense, "Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy," 9.

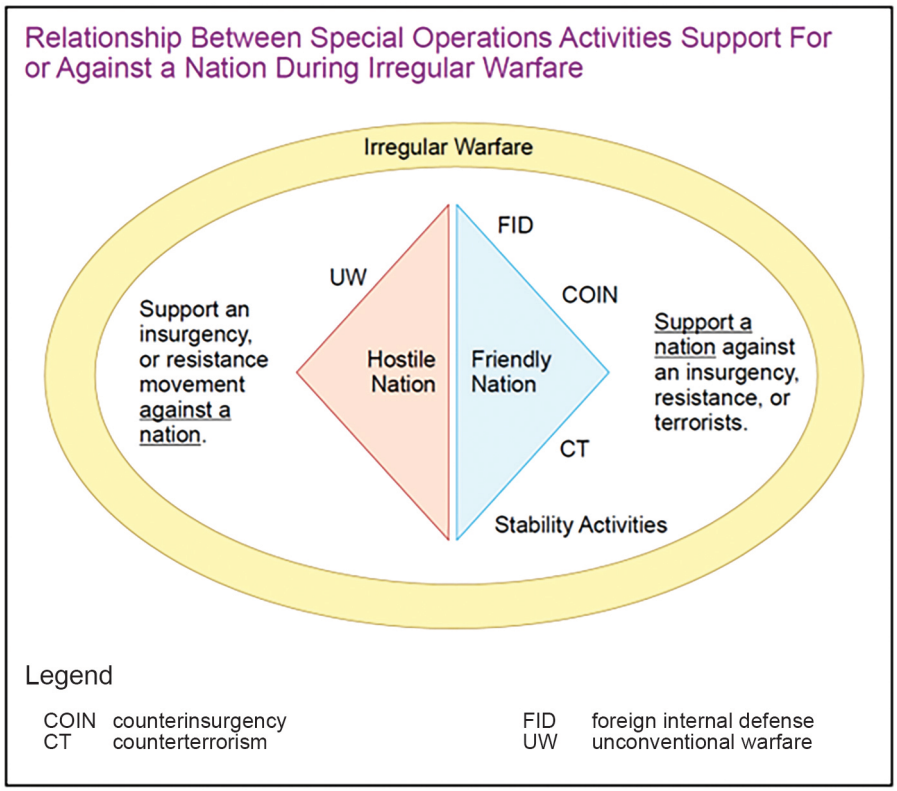

Figure 1. Relationship between special operations activities support for or against a nation during irregular warfare. (Source: Joint Publication 3-05, Joint Doctrine for Special Operations, II-3.)

Helping to avert the "boom and bust" cycle referenced in the IW Annex entails capturing and codifying the positive and constructive attributes of the mind-set that contribute to mission accomplishment in irregular warfare. Approaches to problem-solving, relationship building, and communicating narrative are important aspects of this mentality. In the future, Airmen in dynamic leadership roles outside of the cockpit may be called upon to marshal joint, interagency, and multinational resources while balancing the requirements of an array of stakeholders. The fundamental assumption of this work is that the future geopolitical situation will present new opportunities for an Airman to leverage his or her unique background, training, education, and experience to advance American political objectives. While not aspiring to define the IW mind-set outright, this paper seeks to further the discussion

of the leadership and strategic thinking needed to accomplish objectives in complex and unstructured IW environments.

Considering the importance of irregular warfare within the context of strategic competition, this paper analyzes two American military leaders and influencers who developed a strategic approach to irregular warfare within a broader, complex international security environment. Two Airmen, Major General Edward G. Lansdale and Lieutenant General Donald C. Wurster, successfully navigated the intricacies of supporting a partner nation to achieve American political objectives in the Philippines during two different eras in that country's history. First, then–Lieutenant Colonel Lansdale significantly aided the government of the Philippines in quelling the Hukbalahap Insurrection in two separate tours of duty between 1946 and 1953. A half-century later, then–Brigadier General Donald Wurster led a joint task force in the initial US effort to counter the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Southern Philippines from 2001 to 2002. Both Airmen employed effective information operations, interagency coordination, and security force assistance to achieve their military objectives and further American interests in the Indo-Pacific. While neither case study involved an indirect confrontation with a peer competitor, the success of both irregular warfare efforts ensured American influence and access in the region. Similar efforts may be required in the future as the United States' desire to maintain access and placement in a particular region to counter Chinese influence may force it to become involved in localized conflicts. By comparing and contrasting the performance of these two leaders this paper seeks to spotlight implications for modern strategists.

Specifically, this paper seeks to answer the question: *What factors influenced the strategic approaches to irregular warfare employed by both Edward Lansdale and Donald Wurster in the Philippines?* An array of political, economic, and cultural forces impacted conditions in the Philippines during both the Hukbalahap Insurrection and the Abu Sayyaf insurgency. Through this lens, the ensuing comparative analysis seeks to determine how Lansdale and Wurster succeeded in developing their approaches to irregular warfare. In the course of the analysis, we also ask: How did each officer's education, early experiences, and personality shape their approaches to problem-solving? Additionally, how did each officer's strategic approaches support US political objectives? What were the specific leadership and character traits that enabled each officer to successfully execute their assigned mission? Finally, how was each approach similar and where do they differ?

Lansdale and Wurster were not the only Airmen to have led an irregular warfare effort in history. In 1922, Sir John Maitland Salmond, an Air Marshall in the Royal Air Force, led both ground and air forces to halt a Turkish invasion

and put down a Kurdish uprising in northern Iraq.[22] Additionally, in 1959, French Air Force General Maurice Challe successfully led a majority ground force during counterinsurgency operations in the Algerian War.[23] In the modern American military, there is a perception that Airmen are not as suited to lead in the broader joint environment as their counterparts from other services, to say nothing of commanding an irregular warfare effort.[24] Despite the misperception, this paper will highlight how Airmen bring a unique perspective to leading in the joint environment and that air-minded men and women can produce successful outcomes in an irregular warfare effort.

The study's singular focus on the Republic of the Philippines is a deliberate one. By isolating this comparison to the same partner country, common themes regarding Lansdale and Wurster's strategy and leadership style become more apparent. Beyond the obvious geographical and cultural similarities, both Lansdale and Wurster were relegated to grappling with irregular warfare in the political periphery as necessity dictated that other, competing priorities received greater attention in Washington. Lansdale advised Philippine President Ramón Magsaysay during the early years of the Cold War, when the outbreak of war in Korea and containing the Soviet Union preoccupied decision makers in Washington.[25] Similarly, the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent launch of the Global War on Terror meant that Wurster led Joint Task Force-510 and competed for resources while much of the government's political and military attention was turned to Southwest Asia and Afghanistan in particular.[26] In an era of strategic competition with China and Russia, military leaders may face similar challenges in conducting economy of force operations in support of a partner nation while geographically separated from a primary effort.[27]

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22. Salmond's command of British forces involved employing aircraft in innovative ways, such as intelligence gathering, psychological operations, medical evacuation, and logistics. For more information on John Maitland Salmond, see John Laffin, *Swifter Than Eagles: The Biography of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Maitland Salmond* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1964).

23. Challe's leadership of French forces in Algeria was characterized by his penchant for centralized direct control, decentralized execution, and empowering his subordinate commanders to take initiative in the field. Additionally, he used rapid exploitation of intelligence, adroit use of the media, and the employment of indigenous forces to achieve operational success. François-Marie Gougeon, "The Challe Plan: Vain Yet Indispensable Victory," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 16, no. 3 (December 2005): 293–316. For further information on Challe and the French campaign in Algeria, see Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954–1962* (2nd ed. 1977, reprint: New York: NY Review of Books, 2006.)

24. Rebecca Grant, "Why Airmen Don't Command," *Air Force Magazine*, 1 March 2008.

25. Lawrence M. Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines, 1946–1955* (Washington, DC: Analysis Branch, United States Army Center of Military History, 1986), v–iv, 148–49.

26. Barry M. Stentiford, *Success in the Shadows: Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines and the Global War on Terror, 2002–2015* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2018), 1.

27. This paper uses the doctrinal definition of economy of force found in Joint Publication 3-0: "Economy of force is the judicious employment and distribution of forces. It is the measured allocation of available com-

Plan for the Paper

This paper proceeds in three parts. The second section (Edward Lansdale and "Total Immersion") examines the factors that influenced the strategic approach then–Lieutenant Colonel Edward Lansdale deployed to counter the Hukbalahap Insurrection. Lansdale's experience in the advertising business marked an unconventional path to prominence as a military advisor and intelligence operative in the Philippines. While not in command of a military unit, Lansdale was nevertheless highly influential at the highest levels of the Philippine government. In advising Philippine Defense Secretary Magsaysay, Lansdale's efforts concentrated on strategic relationship building, foreign internal defense, civil-military institution building, psychological operations, and information operations. His efforts culminated in the election of President Magsaysay in 1953. This section also discusses the more controversial aspects of Lansdale's approaches to psychological warfare and information operations. Its conclusion identifies the most salient leadership and personality traits that contributed to Lansdale's success and the accomplishment of his assigned mission in Manila.

The third section (Donald Wurster and "Setting the Conditions to Win") examines the factors which affected the strategic approach then–Brigadier General Donald Wurster used as the commander of Joint Task Force (JTF)-510. Wurster led American special operations forces in an advise, train, and assist role while countering an Islamic extremist group on the island of Basilian. In establishing the task force, Wurster both marshaled appropriate resources for the effort and navigated political sensitivities in his relations with the Philippine government and military. Wurster's efforts at the helm of JTF-510 focused on a combination of civil-military operations, information operations, and capacity-building to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Philippine Armed Forces (AFP). This section identifies the most important leadership qualities and character traits that enabled Wurster to not only implement an effective counterinsurgency strategy but also operate within a sensitive diplomatic environment.

Lastly, the fourth section (Analysis: The Irregular Warfare Mind-set) parallels the experiences of Lansdale and Wurster and examines their distinct leadership styles to assess if any commonalities can be considered part of the Irregular Warfare mind-set described by the IW Annex to the National Defense Strategy. Five common attributes stand out: communicating a vision and controlling a

bat power to such tasks as limited attacks, defense, delays, deception, or even retrograde operations to achieve mass elsewhere at the decisive point and time." Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 17 January 2017, Change 1, 22 October 2018), A-2.

narrative; relationship building and networking for effect; strategic listening, empathy, and respect; a willingness to question assumptions and reevaluate approaches; and a bias for understanding. This section compares and contrasts both approaches to irregular warfare used by Lansdale and Wurster and assesses how successfully their approaches supported the accomplishment of US political objectives. Finally, the conclusion offers implications for leadership in irregular warfare within the context of strategic competition.

Edward Lansdale and "Total Immersion"

> *It is inconceivable to me that the Philippine situation would be as favorable as it is without Colonel Lansdale's superb performance. He has lived day and night with Magsaysay at very real risk to himself. He has guided and advised him. He has provided a driving power and when necessary a restraining one.*
>
> —Ambassador Myron M. Cowen
> State Department memorandum, 1951

> *They were ingenious, adaptable, rather unscrupulous bastards, and the one, the senior, was a master salesman.*
>
> —Major Charles T. R. Bohannon, US Army
> Unpublished report, 1964

Edward Geary Lansdale did not come from a wealthy family or boast an Ivy League education, prerequisites for influential men of his time, yet he would have an outsized impact on American foreign policy. The background that set him apart from his peers informed Lansdale's unconventional approach to problem-solving, which included building trust and consensus among stakeholders, a knowledge of history, and a healthy aversion to formal authority and regimentation. Personal qualities such as curiosity for other cultures and racial tolerance were also prominent throughout Lansdale's life. Historical accounts of Lansdale vary widely, from a dedicated Cold Warrior who sought to promote democratic values to a "shape-shifting" opportunist who operated in postcolonial countries to advance his own agenda.[28] His talent for advertising, unconventional tactics in counterinsurgency, and often missionary-like zeal garnered the trust of foreign politicians and American anticommunist liberals alike.[29]

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28. Jonathan Nashel, *Edward Lansdale's Cold War* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 21.

29. So ubiquitous was Lansdale's celebrity that he purportedly was the model for a character in Graham Greene's 1955 novel *The Quiet American*, a work critiquing American naivety in foreign policy, as well as

In the Philippines, Lansdale employed patience, empathy, and strategic listening throughout both of his tours of duty. Lansdale advised a key Philippine government leader during the Hukbalahap Insurrection, where he built trust and consensus among stakeholders, sought an honest appraisal of the enemy's motivations, and prioritized the indirect application of military force. Ultimately, what made Lansdale's strategic approach so successful was his ability to discern which situations called for the application of direct military force, and which did not. Understanding Lansdale's role during the Huk Insurrection requires a survey of the geopolitical context that existed in the Philippines at the time.

Origins of the Hukbalahap Insurrection

Discontent among the mainly agrarian society on Luzon, the Philippines' largest and most populous island, began in the early 1900s (see Figure 2).[30] Between 1903 and 1939, the population of the Philippines grew from just 7 million to 16 million inhabitants, with Luzon's populace increasing from 700,000 to 1.3 million on an island roughly the size of Kentucky.[31] The previous Spanish occupation left a legacy—a political economy where cultivated land was in short supply and a burgeoning poor laborer class became increasingly dependent on a small number of landowners for their livelihood.[32] The American colonialism that followed the Spanish occupation also reinforced these existing power structures and shaped the islands' culture and economy leading up to World War II.[33] The socioeconomic conditions in Luzon continued to deteriorate for a majority of Filipinos as wealth was consolidated among a small number of landowners, leaving underprivileged agrarian families scraping to survive. The Philippine Constabulary (PC) did nothing to repair the worsening inequity, and often contributed to it through their indiscriminate and predatory actions. To working farmers, the government appeared complicit in the new economic order and blind to the suffering of the larger populace.[34]

William Lederer and Eugene Burdick's 1958 novel *The Ugly American*, a cautionary tale of American arrogance and ethnocentrism during the Cold War. Additionally, the mystique surrounding Lansdale's career in clandestine service, much of which has only been declassified and researched since his death, appears in the form of Oliver Stone's shadowy "General Y" character in the conspiracy film *JFK*. Nashel, 149–50, 201.

30. Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 27.

31. Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (1977, reprint: New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 17.

32. Kerkvliet, 18.

33. H. W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 39–181.

34. Kerkvliet, 53.

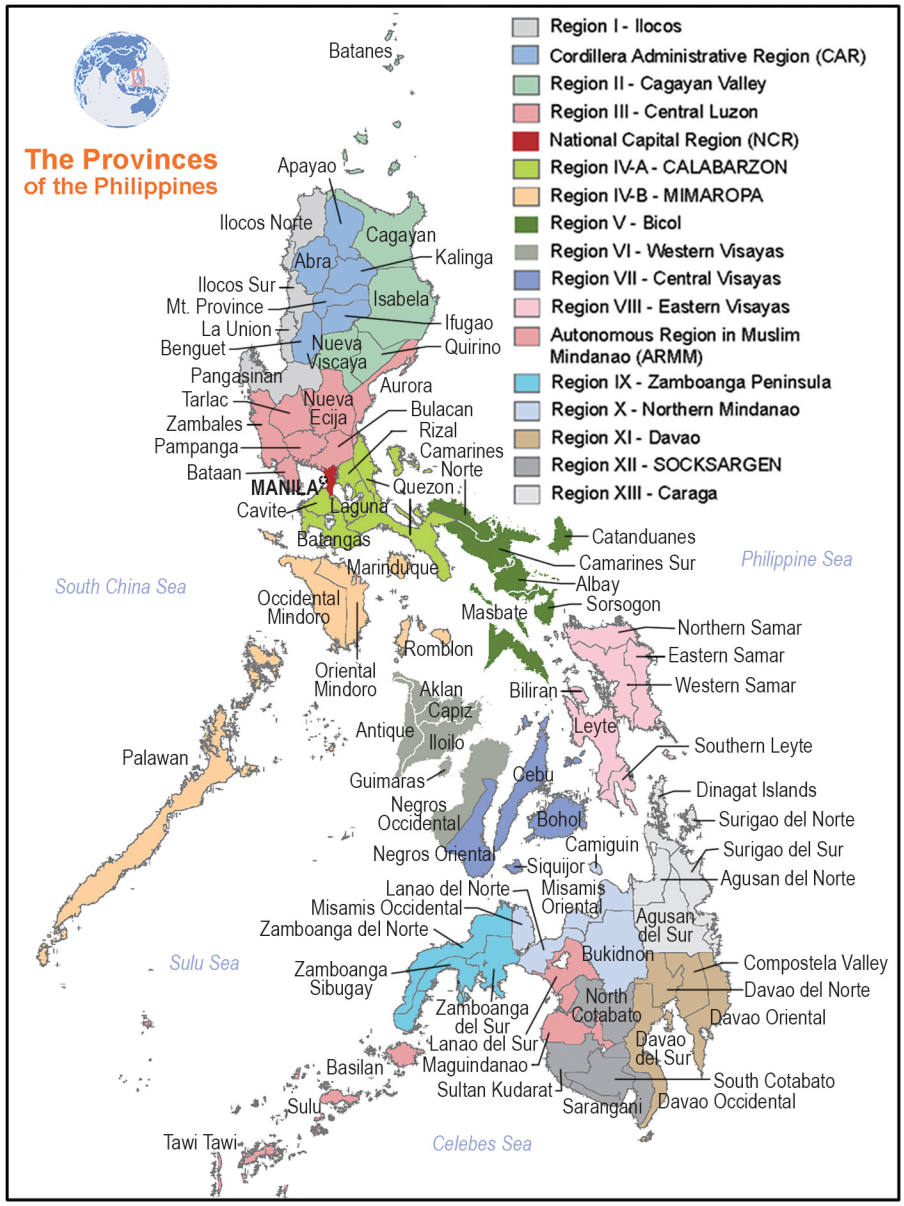

Figure 2. Map of the Philippine Islands. (Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Philippines.)

The resistance movement originally known as the *Hukbo ng Bayan laban sa Hapon*, or the People's Anti-Japanese Army, emerged as a labor-fueled resistance to Japanese occupation in 1941.[35] Commonly referred to as the Hukbalahap, the group was a natural outgrowth of a long-standing communist movement in the Philippines where it mobilized about 10,000 guerrillas against the Japanese by 1943.[36] Civilians in Japanese-occupied Luzon joined the Hukbalahap for a myriad of reasons, but revenge for the death and destruction wrought on Filipinos during the occupation was a unifying motivator throughout the ranks of the movement.[37] The Hukbalahap welcomed American troops in the newly liberated villages of Luzon and initially cooperated with those establishing a transitional government.[38]

It was only after the American and Filipino forces expelled Imperial Japan from the Philippines that the Hukbalahap rebranded themselves as the *Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan*, or the People's Liberation Army.[39] The "Huks" (pronounced "hooks") then attempted to translate success on the battlefield into political gains to remedy the grievances of the poor, agrarian class. In the first Philippine national elections since gaining independence from the United States in 1946, the Huks won six seats in the Philippine Congress as part of the communist-aligned Democratic Alliance political party, only to see the newly elected president, Manuel Roxas, refuse to seat the new members.[40] One of those members was Luis Taruc, the Huk leader who had gained notoriety in the struggle against the Japanese occupiers.[41] Ultimately, political disenfranchisement, fueled by underlying socioeconomic grievances, distrust in the government, and attempts by the United States to demobilize them after World War II created ideal conditions for the Huks to launch a violent

35. Brands, 198; Kerkvliet, 66.

36. "Hukbalahap" was the shorthand Tagalog pronunciation of the group's acronym. Lawrence M. Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines, 1946–1955*, Washington, DC: Analysis Branch, United States Army Center of Military History, 1986 (Released 27 August 2001); see also Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill and Molly Dunigan, "Philippines (Huk Rebellion), 1946–1956 Case Outcome: COIN Win" in *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 32; Edward G. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991), 7.

37. Brands, 198; Kerkvliet, 69.

38. Kerkvliet, 108.

39. The complex economic, security, and political conditions under which the Huks mobilized in post–World War II Luzon is documented in Robert Aura Smith, *Philippine Freedom, 1946–1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 115–70.

40. James S. Corum and Wray Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 116.

41. Cecil B. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 38.

insurgency.[42] Author Benedict Kerkvliet characterizes Central Luzon in the late 1940s as a "steam boiler without a safety valve."[43]

The Huks were led by Marxist idealists like Luis Taruc whose long-term objective was to transform fundamentally the Philippine political economy over time by reducing the power of the land-owning class.[44] The organization itself, however, retained little ideological connection to the broader international communist movement, instead choosing to focus the efforts of the rebellion upon achieving measurable gains for the country's working poor.[45] Even the *Partido Komunistang Pilipina* (PKP), the Philippine Communist Party, in postwar Luzon was initially split into two camps—one that focused on a Leninist-style urban labor movement in Manila and another that supported a Maoist agrarian rebellion.[46] In fact, until 1948, the majority of the PKP leadership in Manila opposed armed communist rebellion in favor of "legal, parliamentary struggle."[47] In the eyes of PKP leaders, the time was not yet right for revolution because the labor movement, which would be at the forefront of real social change, was not mature enough.[48]

The motivation of individual Huk guerrillas had more to do with socioeconomic disenfranchisement than alignment with a transnational communist movement. The Huks had little sponsorship from Chinese or Soviet supporters, and there is no evidence that the Huks received any external weapons shipments.[49] Kerkvliet summarized the internal drive of the agrarian fighters by noting, "People in the barrios, the nonintellectual type of Huk, joined because they had causes—like agrarian reform, government reform, anti-repression, recognition of the Hukbalahap—and, frequently, because they simply had to defend themselves, their very lives against repression."[50] While Kerkvliet's portrayal furthers an understanding of Huk motivations, he has been criticized for a distinct bias that characterizes the movement as wholly separate from the PKP and its leadership.[51] In reality, PKP leaders and Huk fighters still found ways to align their goals post-1948. For the PKP and Huks alike, the new Filipino government and its constabulary simply replaced the Imperial Japanese as the oppressor in Central Luzon.

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42. Brands, 238.
43. Kerkvliet, 110.
44. Brands, 237.
45. Brands, 237.
46. Greenberg, 65; Kerkvliet, 184.
47. Kerkvliet, 186.
48. Kerkvliet, 186.
49. Greenberg, 50.
50. Kerkvliet, 170.
51. J. Eliseo Rocamora, review of *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* by Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *Journal of Asian Studies* 37, no. 2 (February 1978): 402–405.

By 1946, after Lansdale arrived in Manila for his first of two tours of duty in the Philippines, Huk fighters routinely engaged forces of the newly independent Republic of the Philippines using guerrilla warfare tactics.[52] In the initial phases of the post–World War II insurgency, the Huks conducted mostly hit-and-run attacks against government and commercial infrastructure targets such as banks, payroll offices, and trains.[53] The Huks avoided direct battle with government forces by launching raids of this type that, along with employing a robust network of local support they enjoyed among the barrios (villages), obviated the need to seize and hold territory.

The tactics employed by the Philippine government between 1946 and 1948 further alienated the underprivileged agrarian population and exacerbated the underlying drivers of conflict. The Philippine Constabulary was known for predictable encirclement and sweep tactics which only served to galvanize popular support for the insurgency.[54] These tactics consisted of cordoning off large areas of land and treating anyone remaining inside as an insurgent.[55] Abuses by PC units during such operations, such as the beating or killing of innocent farmers in the outlying areas of Luzon, began to undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the government forces.[56] These coercive tactics reminded many in Luzon's poor farmer population of the reign of terror experienced under Japanese occupation.[57] Furthermore, actions by Philippine soldiers such as the arbitrary slaughter of livestock, uninvited entry into the homes of rural villages, and brutal interrogation ultimately undermined the government's narrative of preserving law and order in Luzon.[58]

The Americans on Luzon closely monitored the communist-led Huks as the United States consolidated its forces at Clark Air Field and Subic Bay Naval Station following the signing of the Military Assistance Pact in March 1947.[59] The pact established the Joint United States Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG), a noncombat unit that would eventually grow to 58 personnel responsible for training and equipping the fledgling Filipino armed forces.[60] In March 1948,

52. Paul, et al., 32.

53. Brands, 240; Kerkvliet, 210–213.

54. Paul, et al., 33. "Sweeping" of enemy-held territory by conventional forces, like those conducted by the French in Algeria or later by the Americans in Vietnam, has proven ineffective in population-centric counterinsurgency efforts. For more discussion on these tactics, see Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare* (1964, reprint: Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 47.

55. For more information on how these counterinsurgency tactics perpetuate the cycle of violence, see David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956–1958* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006).

56. Kerkvliet, 196.

57. Kerkvliet, 196.

58. Walter C. Ladwig III, *The Forgotten Front: Patron-Client Relationships in Counterinsurgency* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 93; Kerkvliet, 197.

59. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 37.

60. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 37; McClintock, 108.

President Roxas's government officially declared the Hukbalahap illegal and doubled down on a "mailed fist" policy backed by heavy-handed military tactics.[61] Despite substantial security assistance from the United States, the Roxas government and its heavy-handed approach to countering the Huk insurgency failed to put an end to the violence.[62] American involvement in the Philippines post–World War II displays the challenges of maintaining access and placement in a particular region. A desire on the part of the United States to sustain basing and military-to-military engagements may carry with it a potential to become involved in localized conflicts.

In April 1948, Roxas unexpectedly died of a heart attack, opening up an opportunity for his more moderate successor, Elpido Quirino, to reach a negotiated settlement with the Huks.[63] By mid-1948, however, the Huks and their leader, Luis Taruc, had made substantial gains on the battlefield against Philippine security forces and expanded their support among the population.[64] This situation provided the Huks no incentive to negotiate, and the security condition continued to deteriorate in 1949. The entrenched corruption of the Quirino government was so widely known that even the Huks supported his election campaign in 1949, hoping to benefit from the growing disillusionment and discontent a continued Quirino administration would cause among the population.[65] The belief that the election process would nevertheless be undermined hardened the Huks' perception that insurgency was their only recourse.[66]

US Political Considerations in the Philippines

As the Huk insurrection gained momentum, decision makers in Washington grew increasingly concerned about the threat to Philippine stability, particularly in light of developments in the Cold War.[67] The concern among the Joint Chiefs and the State Department in 1950 was that the Quirino government could fold under pressure from a communist-led insurgency, just as Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist movement had been defeated by Mao Tse-tung's communist movement in China.[68] A memo drafted by senior State Department

61. Greenberg, 70.
62. Kerkvliet, 194.
63. Greenberg, 60–61.
64. For more information on Luis Taruc's rise to prominence as a guerrilla, see Luis Taruc, *He Who Rides the Tiger: The Story of an Asian Guerrilla Leader* (New York: Praeger, 1967); Greenberg, 61.
65. Joes, 27.
66. Joes, 27.
67. Michael McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: US Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism, 1940–1990* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 104.
68. Ladwig, 99.

officials in April 1950 stated bluntly, "If the present situation continues the country can rapidly be reduced to chaos, opening the way for the eventual victory of the communist-led and -dominated Huks."[69] The memo also observed that the "primary obstacle in the solution of the Philippine problem is President Quirino himself."[70] As American confidence in Quirino waned, the State Department offered three possible courses of action: pressure Quirino into badly-needed reform, affect a change in the presidency by influencing the Filipino people, or explore the option of increased US military involvement.[71] In fact, Vinton Chapin, a senior diplomat in Manila, formally recommended that "moderate-sized" US Army units be deployed to Clark Field "should actual military intervention sometime become necessary."[72] Furthermore, in May 1950, the Joint Chiefs expressed concern to Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson that the security situation could lead to the "early collapse" of the Philippine government.[73]

The prospect of deploying a substantial number of American troops to the Philippines disappeared after North Korea crossed the border into South Korea on June 25, 1950. With more than 300,000 soldiers deployed to Korea at the height of the war, the US government lacked the ability to embark on another military commitment in the Indo-Pacific and acknowledged the unique sensitivities surrounding Philippine sovereignty as a newly-independent nation.[74] Instead of sending troops to help suppress the Huk insurrection, the US government instead embarked on a strategy that involved a light footprint of American advisors along with large amounts of foreign aid conditional to internal reforms within the Quirino government.[75] In its recommendations to the State Department, the American Embassy in Manila made an additional request in early 1950:

> That there be assigned to the JUSMAG a substantial number of officers having actual experience in guerrilla and anti-guerrilla operations, and particularly in operations involving Communist-led forces. Officers

69. John F. Melby, "Draft Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President, April 20, 1950," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific*, Volume VI, 896.00/4–1450.

70. Melby memo, 20 April 1950.

71. Melby memo, 20 April 1950.

72. Vinton Chapin, "The Chargé in the Philippines (Chapin) to the Secretary of State, April 7, 1950," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific*, Volume VI, 796.5 MAP/4–750.

73. McClintock, 104.

74. United States General Accounting Office, "US Personnel in the Pacific Theater," GAO Report to Congress, August 1991.

75. For additional information on how the US government developed and implemented a foreign aid plan based on conditionality, and specifically the Bell Report that recommended the first infusion of conditional foreign aid in 1950, see Ladwig, 85–143.

> having intimate acquaintance with Chinese Communist tactics and discipline might be particularly helpful—in view of the circumstances explained earlier in this despatch—in aiding the Philippine armed forces to improve their own anti-guerrilla tactics and—still more important—to remedy the defects of discipline and behavior which are turning the populace against them.[76]

While there is no evidence that the embassy personnel were explicitly referring to Lansdale, the skill set described in the memo is precisely what the Air Force intelligence officer on loan to the secretive Office of Policy Coordination could offer.

Lansdale's Early Experiences

Born in 1908, Edward Lansdale was in many respects an archetypal product of the American middle class. Lansdale's father, Harry, was an ambitious executive in the bourgeoning American automobile industry.[77] Harry Lansdale moved from one automotive firm to the next, creating an often-unpredictable home life for the young Lansdale family. Lansdale and his three brothers grew accustomed to being outsiders as the family relocated from Detroit to Westchester County, New York, to Los Angeles.[78]

The Lansdale family's religious affiliation presented yet another barrier to belonging. Even though Lansdale's father was raised a Catholic, and his mother a Protestant, their family converted to Christian Science while the Lansdale boys were still young.[79] Lansdale, along with his brothers, attended Christian Science Sunday school, where they believed they had found the sense of community that had long eluded them. Here, Lansdale internalized the lessons of a world battling between good and evil. As members of a relatively new faith, Christian Scientists were often ridiculed for their beliefs' departure from mainstream Christianity. Lansdale was no exception, but the experience enabled him to identify with the underdog, a lesson that would endure long after the taunts had faded from the schoolyard. Lansdale translated this formative experience as an outsider into a deep sense of empathy for minority groups and perceived underdogs that he carried with him for the rest of his life.[80]

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76. Chapin memo, 7 April 1950.
77. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 4.
78. Max Boot, *The Road Not Taken: Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2018) 8–9.
79. Boot, 13.
80. Boot, 14.

For an individual who had such a significant influence on American foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Lansdale's family was not a military one.[81] Instead, his family had a tradition of business endeavors. All three of Lansdale's brothers were business owners or managers in some capacity. As his biographer notes, Lansdale's decision to pursue public service after the start of World War II indicates his indifference to moneymaking.[82] Lansdale's commitment to public service, however, did not preclude his ability to employ merciless tactics familiar to the business world in pursuit of objectives later in life.

Lansdale's first civic participation occurred in 1923 when he joined the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps as a student at Los Angeles High School.[83] He quickly showed an aptitude for the military, rising to the highest cadet rank and also training with the Citizens Military Training Corps during his summer breaks. In 1927, Lansdale entered the University of California at Los Angeles to become a journalist.[84] At UCLA, Lansdale became an editor of a student-run lampoon, which allowed him to supplement the meager wages he earned while working at a restaurant in the evenings. In 1930, Lansdale expanded from simply influencing his classmates through print media to politics when he ran successfully for president of his fraternity, earning him a reputation for "ingenious charm."[85] Driven, but at times undisciplined, Lansdale rose to the highest cadet rank in the ROTC program at UCLA despite his lack of enthusiasm for regimentation and army traditions.[86] Working to pay tuition and participating in extra-curricular activities, however, left little time for studying. In particular, Lansdale showed a remarkable disinterest in completing a language course, a UCLA graduation requirement.[87] He dropped out of UCLA during his final year, but not before earning a reserve commission as a second lieutenant in 1931.[88]

Lansdale arrived in New York at the outset of the Great Depression (1929–1933) to work for a family friend and Christian Scientist who ran the Official Classification Committee, an organization that set freight rates for railcars—a vocation far removed from the newspaper work Lansdale had hoped to do.[89] Living in New York's West Village, Lansdale met Helen Batcheller, a secretary

81. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 3.
82. Boot, 6–7.
83. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 5.
84. Boot, 18.
85. Boot, 19.
86. Boot, 20.
87. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 5.
88. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 8.
89. Boot, 22.

for a hardware company. Lansdale and Helen married and returned to the West Coast, where Lansdale's brother Phil had an advertising position waiting for him at a department store in Los Angeles.[90] After tiring of working for his brother, Lansdale left for San Francisco, where he continued his foray into advertising. Lansdale's commitment to his new profession forced him to set aside his hopes of becoming a journalist or a playwright, but the move would prove an invaluable lesson in the art of influence. The role of adman was a perfect fit for his skills and temperament. By 1941, Lansdale's portfolio included a range of clients such as candy manufacturers, food processors, and even political campaigns.[91] He eventually worked his way up to positions in larger firms in San Francisco, taking on major banks and companies as clients.

Lansdale was thirty-three years old when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and he felt compelled to search for ways to "get into the fight."[92] His employer, however, was less enthusiastic about the idea of Lansdale leaving for service overseas. He fired Lansdale on the spot for expressing his intent to join up as soon as possible.[93] His boss at the advertising firm would later regret that decision, remarking that Lansdale was the "most original thinker" he had ever employed.[94] Out of a job and acutely aware of the need to provide for his young family, Lansdale reached out to a former business contact with ties to a new secretive organization with a branch in San Francisco. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) placed Lansdale under contract to work in their intelligence office starting in July 1942.[95] In March 1943, the Army reinstated his commission as a military intelligence officer, providing the flexibility to work for both the military and the OSS. Having a foot in the military and intelligence worlds would come to define much of his service in the Indo-Pacific.

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90. Boot, 28–29.

91. Boot, 31.

92. Rejoining the army was not as easy as it might have been for Lansdale. An enlarged thyroid gland had forced him to resign his Army commission in 1937 and he and his wife had just welcomed their second child. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 16.

93. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 16–17.

94. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 17.

95. The OSS traces its origin to the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI), established by the Roosevelt administration five months before America's entry into World War II. Founded by William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan, the COI set out to rival the successful subversion, sabotage, and intelligence collection activities in Europe and the Balkans, also known as "fifth column" operations. Soon after the start of the war, the COI's propaganda arm was reorganized under the Office of War Information, and the OSS was formed, reporting directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. While Lansdale was not assigned to the operational aspects of the OSS, he fit in well with the organization's unconventional culture and rejection of traditional hierarchy. His stateside contributions would introduce him to what was possible with the American intelligence community's resources, authorities, and mind-set. Richard Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2005), 1–31.

Lansdale spent the entirety of World War II shuttling back and forth between San Francisco and New York, collecting intelligence for OSS's directorate of Research and Analysis.[96] It was in this capacity that Lansdale excelled at interviewing foreign-born students about the intricacies of their native homelands and cultures.[97] Since the United States lacked a central intelligence agency leading up to World War II, this valuable information made up for shortfalls in intelligence about faraway lands. Impressed with Lansdale's work, his superiors in the OSS and military intelligence secured a place for him even during the postwar drawdown. In 1945, he would have his first opportunity to apply his skills against the threat of communist expansion in the Indo-Pacific.

Lansdale's First Tour in the Philippines

Assigned as an intelligence officer to Army Forces Western Pacific (AFWESPAC) in October 1945, Lansdale arrived in Manila, a city devastated by recent battles between American forces and Japanese occupiers.[98] His first tasks involved improving the capabilities of Philippine institutions, such as training an intelligence division for the national army and resolving imported labor disputes.[99] Lansdale seized the opportunity to absorb as much as possible about his new surroundings. His enthusiasm was also communicated through the considerable output of his staff, who completed 27 major studies on the socioeconomic conditions of the population.[100] Lansdale sought and gained permission to share these reports with the Philippine president and his cabinet, who faced difficulties restoring public services in the wake of the Japanese occupation.[101] Lansdale's emphasis on monitoring social conditions marked a departure from the traditional role of military intelligence, which focused almost exclusively on matters of immediate military concern, such as geographic terrain or an adversary's capabilities and order of battle.

Lansdale was invigorated by the work of rebuilding the postwar Philippines in late 1945 and early 1946. He witnessed how American resources could improve the lives of ordinary Filipinos, such as a US-funded nationwide public school system.[102] But the soon-to-be independent government of

96. The organizations and functions of Research and Analysis, or R&A, are summarized in the OSS official history. Kermit Roosevelt, *War Report of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services)* (New York, NY: Walker and Company, 1976), 48–60.

97. Boot, 40.

98. United States Air Force, "Major General Edward G. Lansdale," official biography; Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 27.

99. Boot, 55.

100. Boot, 55.

101. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 5.

102. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 4.

the Philippines faced a growing internal security threat from a communist-inspired Huk rebel movement.[103] The Huk movement organized efforts in postwar Luzon along both political and military lines, and their increasing aggressiveness prompted attention from AFWESPAC and Lansdale's military intelligence office.[104] Little was known about the group's motivations, and Lansdale took it upon himself to understand why the Huk's demands for socio-economic reforms resonated with Luzon's poor, agrarian population.[105] In Lansdale's view, those in Manila perceived the civil conflict in Luzon differently than those in the countryside—the perennial "center and periphery" phenomenon.[106] Lansdale believed that to best achieve an accurate understanding of the Huks, he must "go out and eyeball" the situation and "talk to people" rather than "take the word of other people" who were a step removed from the circumstances at hand.[107]

American forces maintained an often contentious relationship with the Huks and had previously disarmed several of their units at gunpoint after the end of Japanese occupation.[108] Yet, Lansdale enjoyed a remarkable degree of freedom of movement throughout the Luzon countryside.[109] The low-lying agricultural area of central Luzon, bracketed between eastern and western mountain ranges, was known as "Huklandia" since the Huks enjoyed freedom of movement.[110] Lansdale used his access to Philippine Army intelligence to estimate what routes Huk fighters would be using and would deliberately hike the same trails in an attempt to make contact.[111] Often traveling alone or occasionally with a Filipino guide, Lansdale described himself as a "neutral observer" who wanted to understand the Huk narratives.[112] After several encounters at gunpoint, Lansdale quickly realized the need for contacts who could enable closer access to the Huk insurgent leadership. This blend of courage and foolhardiness would come to define much of Lansdale's encounters with the Huks.

In early 1946, a friend in the office of the president introduced Lansdale to Patrocinio Yapcinco Kelly, known as "Pat," a correspondent for a local news-

103. Kerkvliet, 157.
104. Greenberg, 35.
105. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 39.
106. For a discussion on understanding civil conflicts through the "center and periphery" phenomenon, see Kalyvas, 365–376.
107. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 39.
108. Brands, 238.
109. Greenberg, 33.
110. Kerkvliet, 212.
111. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 39.
112. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 9.

paper who extensively reported on the Huk rebels.[113] Pat was a former schoolmate of the Huk leader Luis Taruc, which granted her a level of trust and access unobtainable to other reporters. She offered to accompany Lansdale to the Zambales mountains, where he formed bonds with the people of the Negrito tribe, some of whom would later serve the government as scouts and provide valuable intelligence on Huk movements and disposition.[114] Throughout these encounters with the local population, Lansdale prided himself on communicating without relying on a translator by gifting items, playing games, and using nonverbal communication to signal his interest in the stories of the people he met.[115] His immersive relationship building in Huklandia, enabled by Pat Kelly, reaped significant intelligence benefits at a time when the US government was unsure of the next steps in addressing the growing insurgency.

In May 1946, as he gained a reputation for quality reporting and analysis, AFWESPAC (later renamed Philippines-Ryukyus Command, or PHILRYCOM) tasked Lansdale and a small team to survey several remote islands in the Ryukyus where the United States had not yet established a functioning government.[116] On one particularly remote island named Amami-O-Shima, Lansdale's natural curiosity paid dividends for the American forces in the Indo-Pacific. Lansdale and his team were puzzled by the malnourishment of the island's civilian population despite the fact that the island received regular shipments of rice, and decided to conduct an investigation to expose the root cause. They discovered a Japanese official had been selling the rice on the black market and subsequently arrested him in front of a gathering of civilians in a dramatic exchange in which both men threatened to use their pistols.[117] After peaceably resolving the standoff, Lansdale admitted he had never even learned how to fire his service pistol.[118] Military records indicate Lansdale took marksmanship more seriously after that event; however, he continued to demonstrate a preference for solutions that did not involve direct force.[119]

Back in Manila, the Republic of the Philippines officially gained independence on July 4, 1946.[120] Despite turmoil in his personal life, Lansdale was undeterred from his work in understanding the Huk rebel movement and the

113. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 39–40; Boot, 6–67.
114. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 41.
115. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 42.
116. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 28.
117. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 29.
118. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 29.
119. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 29.
120. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 10.

Philippine government's response to it.[121] In March 1947, the government invited Major Lansdale to visit a Philippine Army outpost on Mount Arayat, the lone peak on the central Luzon plain, where Major Napoleon Valeriano commanded an elite force of commandos tasked with finding and striking Huk rebels.[122] Valeriano's unit was infamous for the ruthless tactic of beheading their enemies and was nicknamed the "skull squadron" by rebels.[123] Lansdale witnessed these brutal tactics firsthand on Mount Arayat and, with the knowledge gained from his interactions with Huk rebels, came to the conclusion that heavy-handed measures on both sides seemed to perpetuate the conflict.[124] This formative experience would prove instrumental to Lansdale's strategic approach when he returned to the Philippines in 1950.

Major Lansdale enjoyed widespread influence and popularity in the Philippines in 1947 and 1948. So much so, that when General MacArthur's chief of staff needed a new public relations officer in Manila, he requested Major Lansdale because every prominent member of the Philippine government, press, and society knew Lansdale by name.[125] After months of negative press surrounding the conduct of American forces under PHILRYCOM, such as traffic accidents and accusations of racism, an irritated MacArthur demanded action from Tokyo and Lansdale was brought in for the job.[126] A reluctant Lansdale, who viewed public affairs as the "lowest form of life" in the Army, soon realized the influence gained by becoming a single point of contact for every reporter and editor in Manila.[127] Once established, the temporarily-promoted Lieutenant Colonel Lansdale took an aggressive approach to US public relations in the Philippines, which included flooding local reporting with positive news stories specifically curated to emphasize the shared interests and friendship between Filipino citizens and US forces. These early experiences in the Philippines made it evident to Lansdale that simply killing Huks

121. While on leave in the United States in the summer and early fall of 1946, Lansdale informed his wife Helen of his intent to return to the Philippines and seek a regular commission in the US Army to continue his work there. This decision was the source of tremendous strain in Lansdale's marriage at a time when most of the country continued to demobilize in the wake of World War II. The family relocation to Manila in August of 1947 did little to alleviate the deteriorating relationship between the two, as Helen detested the living conditions and began to suspect Lansdale was having an extramarital affair with Pat Kelly—a suspicion he eventually confirmed. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American*, 32; Boot, 79–80, 89.

122. For more information on Napoleon Valeriano's counterinsurgency tactics, see Napoleon D. Valeriano and Charles T. Bohannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience* (New York: Praeger, 1962); Boot, 78.

123. Kerkvliet, 159.

124. Boot, 79.

125. Boot, 82.

126. US Air Force, "Major General Edward G. Lansdale," official biography; Boot, 82.

127. Boot, 83.

was not a viable way to address the insurgency in Luzon—the United States could enable an aggressive information campaign while at the same time discouraging the brutal military tactics of the Philippine government.

Given Lansdale's efforts to understand the motivations of Huk fighters, there was an inconsistency between his knowledge of the situation and what he reported back to Washington. Lansdale used hyperbole when describing the ideological motivations of the Huk insurgency in his reports, such as labeling Huk leaders as "true disciples of Karl Marx" in a 1946 cable.[128] In a separate official correspondence, Lansdale described the methods of the Huk communist leadership as "ironclad" rule by fear and that the "peasants dare not oppose them."[129] In his personal journal, however, Lansdale acknowledged that most of the Huks were "youngsters" who genuinely believe in the "rightness" of their cause.[130] Furthermore, he remarked that "armed complaint is a natural enough thing" considering the lack of progress on agrarian reforms in Central Luzon.[131] In light of this evidence, it is possible that Lansdale allowed his unwavering belief in democratic ideals to influence how he described the Huks to those in Washington interested in confronting all forms of communism.[132] Ever an opportunist, Lansdale sought to create an adversary that would spook his superiors into paying more attention to the situation as he completed his tour of duty in Manila.

Recognizing an opportunity in the newly-established US Air Force, Lansdale transferred to the new service and completed his first overseas tour of duty in November 1948. Lansdale explained his reasoning for cross-commissioning into the Air Force in his autobiography: "The world was entering the air age. I had concluded that there would be more elbow room for fresh ideas in the air force than older military services."[133] Upon his departure from Manila, he had so endeared himself to the Philippine people that he received an unprecedented send-off complete with a Philippine Army marching band.[134] He and his family relocated to the United States, with Helen and his two sons returning to California while Lansdale proceeded to his next assignment unaccompanied.[135] The Air Force assigned him to instruct at the Air

128. Edward G. Lansdale, "Philippine Presidential Campaign II," Headquarters AFWESPAC report, 14 March 1946, 10, as quoted in McClintock, 103.

129. Kerkvliet, 147.

130. Edward G. Lansdale, Journal no. 17, 24 August 1947, Manila. Lansdale Papers, Hoover Institute Archives, as quoted in McClintock, 104.

131. McClintock, 104.

132. Nashel, 39.

133. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 5.

134. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 11.

135. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 51.

Intelligence Center at Lowry Air Force Base near Denver in the hopes that he would pass on the skills he had learned in the field, but Lansdale tactfully sought opportunities to reenter the intelligence community and make his way back to the Philippines.[136]

While in Colorado, Lansdale leveraged a key relationship he maintained with a former superior at PHILRYCOM to connect with a new organization aligned for Cold War activities.[137] The Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) was established by National Security Council Directive 10/2 on 18 June 1948, and would eventually merge with the newly created Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1952.[138] The OPC was granted broad authority to conduct covert operations such as "propaganda, economic warfare . . . subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and support of indigenous anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world."[139] Lansdale saw the OPC as his ticket back to the Philippines, and he lobbied his former boss to receive an assignment to OPC in Washington. In 1950, Lansdale finally received approval for transfer to OPC's Far East Division as the US government grew increasingly concerned over the Huk movement.[140] Lansdale's transfers between various job titles and organizations reveal an individualist who did not have much use for bureaucracy beyond the authorities that the organization afforded him to pursue what he believed to be the right course of action.

Lansdale's early life and his actions in the Philippines leading up to his direct involvement in the Huk Insurrection are critical to understanding his motivations for eventually returning to Manila in 1950. Whether it was collecting intelligence or conducting public relations, Lansdale witnessed the impact his work could have on the Philippine people. As a mid-level military officer, he had an outsized influence on Philippine society based largely on his ability to listen, display empathy, and observe the root causes of the problems facing the country. These qualities are even more remarkable in the context of the time and were rare among officials charged with aiding in the administra-

136. US Air Force, "Major General Edward G. Lansdale," official biography; Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 51.

137. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 53.

138. The original name for the OPC was the "Office of Special Projects," which is the name that appears in the text of the document. The name of the organization was changed shortly after the implementation of the directive. National Security Council, "National Security Council Directive on Office of Special Projects, NSC 10/2," Washington, DC, 18 June 1948; Boot, 98.

139. National Security Council, "National Security Council Directive on Office of Special Projects, NSC 10/2."

140. Boot, 103.

tion of countries devastated by World War II.[141] The next time Lansdale returned to the Philippines in 1950, he would do so with the authorities and resources of both the military and the OPC.

Lansdale Returns to Manila

In March 1950, Lieutenant Colonel Lansdale worked in the Far East Division of OPC headquarters at the Pentagon. It was in this role that Lansdale had a chance encounter with a Philippine delegation sent to lobby Congress for increased foreign aid.[142] One member of the delegation was Ramón Magsaysay, a Philippine congressman and chairman of the National Defense Committee who had first come to prominence as the commander of 10,000 guerrilla fighters at the height of the insurgency against the Japanese in Zambales province.[143] At a dinner in Washington, Magsaysay expressed to Lansdale his dismay at the current state of the Philippine armed forces and articulated his ideas for how best to turn the tide in the government's fight against the Huks.[144]

Realizing he found his ticket back to the Philippines, Lansdale immediately befriended Magsaysay. It is possible Lansdale saw something of himself in his new friend—Magsaysay was an indifferent student and lacked a college degree, leading to the perception among the Philippine elite that he was an outsider who had risen to prominence purely on his war record and charisma. Beyond the personal, Lansdale saw an opportunity to align Magsaysay's goals with those of the OPC. Lansdale recounted later that he took Magsaysay back to his residence after dinner and typed up a plan that would help Magsaysay articulate his vision to gain the support of the American government.[145] Two days later, Lansdale arranged for an introduction between Magsaysay and his superiors, notably Colonel Richard Stilwell, head of OPC's Far East Division, Livingston T. Merchant, assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, and

141. Lansdale describes how relations between Americans and Filipinos deteriorated after World War II. During the war, Americans treated their Filipino counterparts as respected equals, united against the Japanese in a spirit of "brotherhood" and "trust." After the war, however, Filipinos felt that American advisors were "self-righteous," and exhibited "narrowmindedness" in attempting to achieve short-term results. According to Lansdale, Americans typically did not take the time to understand the long history of US-Filipino relations, and therefore were responsible for derailing cooperation between the two countries. Edward G. Lansdale, "The 'True American,'" mimeographed letter containing comments on the deterioration of Philippine-American relations, 3 June 1960.

142. McClintock, 106.

143. Boot, 110–11; for more information on Ramón Magsaysay's ascent to power in the Philippines, see Robert Aura Smith, *Philippine Freedom, 1946–1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958) 36–195.

144. Boot, 109.

145. Boot, 109–10.

General Nathan Twining, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force.[146] At the meeting, Magsaysay briefed the plan that Lansdale had helped him prepare, impressing the American officials and instilling confidence that the United States had found a trusted player in the tenuous Philippine crisis. Lansdale's ability to bring these stakeholders from multiple agencies and departments together for this introduction sparked an effort by the OPC to pressure President Quirino to elevate Magsaysay's position within the Philippine government.[147] The OPC's pressure, combined with urging from US Ambassador to the Philippines Myron M. Cowen and Major General Leland S. Hobbs, chief of JUSMAG, ultimately compelled Quirino to appoint Magsaysay as Secretary of National Defense in August 1950.[148]

For Lansdale, the meeting had another important outcome: he was again assigned to Manila as Magsaysay's personal advisor, operating under OPC authorities, with the cover as an intelligence officer assigned to the G-2 at JUSMAG.[149] Lansdale, as the head of a small advisory team, would implement a strategic approach designed to restore the legitimacy of the Philippine government and security forces while discrediting the "land for the landless" narrative presented by the Huk movement.[150] Lansdale arrived in Manila in September 1950. By early 1951, only a few short months after implementing his new plan, the Huk movement was on the defensive.

Strategic Relationship Building

Lansdale sought to build personal trust with Magsaysay before attempting to influence the counterinsurgency campaign against the Huks. Magsaysay invited Lansdale and his assistant, Army Major T. R. Charles Bohannan, to his residence shortly after they arrived in Manila.[151] When Lansdale observed that Magsaysay's neighborhood lacked armed security and even street lights, Magsaysay explained he had no desire to jump the line for better housing simply because of his new status as Defense Secretary.[152] Acknowledging this humility, Lansdale proposed that Magsaysay stay with him on the American compound until more suitable preparations were ready, an offer that Magsaysay

146. Boot, 113.
147. Boot, 113.
148. Additionally, conditional military aid also played a role in convincing Quirino to elevate Magsaysay to the role of Secretary of National Defense. Ladwig, 114–15.
149. United States Air Force, "Major General Edward G. Lansdale," official biography; Boot, 114; Greenberg, 96–97.
150. McClintock, 108.
151. Greenberg, 96.
152. Boot, 120.

accepted.[153] Lansdale's deliberate gesture is one example of his approach to relationship building which was infused by his fundamental belief that the Philippine government was an equal partner in a broader anti-communist effort.[154] Lansdale repeatedly made a deliberate effort, informed by his own study of the country, to help Philippine government officials arrive at solutions to their own problems, instead of imposing those solutions from the top-down.

Magsaysay's new living arrangements gave Lansdale and Bohannon unfettered access to information about the current state of the Philippine Army and the social conditions which continued to foster the Huk insurrection. Philippine army staff officers and commanders who came to visit the Lansdale residence would often freely chat with the Americans while waiting for meetings with Magsaysay. In what amounted to cognitive access and placement, these encounters proved valuable in determining the ground truth as to which measures were having an impact in the field and which were not. These informal conversations served as the catalyst for follow-on ones with Magsaysay about the revitalization of the military, the elimination of corruption, and the steps necessary to earn back the trust of the population.[155]

Before Lansdale could implement a strategy to counter the Huks or build rapport with stakeholders in the Philippine government, he first worked to reacquaint himself with his former host nation, observing both how it had developed in nascent nationhood and how the challenges facing the government had evolved in his absence. Lansdale's small advisory team consisted of Bohannan, a guerrilla warfare specialist with experience in the Pacific and Latin America, and Army Captain A. C. "Ace" Ellis, a communications specialist.[156] Author Michael McClintock describes the team's "operational method" as "total immersion," where Lansdale would spend up to 20 hours a day with Magsaysay and other Filipino officials listening and learning.[157] Lansdale and Bohannon were the only JUSMAG personnel who spent any

153. Greenberg, 96.

154. Greenberg, 98.

155. Lansdale and his team dubbed these informal gatherings "coffee klatches," where casual discussions with AFP officers would often turn into an incubator for fresh ideas for the counterinsurgency against the Huks. Eventually, Lansdale's team invited journalists, government officials, and community leaders to join in on the conversations. Lansdale credits the coffee klatches with originating the ideas for the Scout Rangers, the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR), and a program in which citizens could send Magsaysay a 10-cent telegram describing the good and bad things they witnessed government forces doing in the field. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 46–47; Greenberg, 97.

156. McClintock, 108–09. Of note, Bohannon would later cowrite a book in 1962 with Napoleon Valeriano, the aggressive AFP commander, describing their lessons learned from counterguerrilla operations against the Huks.

157. McClintock, 109–10.

considerable time outside Manila and the entire team operated with virtual autonomy to collect intelligence and implement reforms through Magsaysay, sending up major decisions for higher approval through Ambassador Cowen.[158]

A comprehensive understanding of the Philippines and its leaders required commensurate effort, often involving long hours of listening and tireless immersion. Biographer Cecil Curry recounted an interview with Emma Valeriano, a Filipina who knew Lansdale and had observed him during meetings like those that took place among army officers, in which she described Lansdale's modus operandi. She noted that Lansdale would "sit quietly… [and] listen to you talk."[159] After listening to whoever was speaking, sometimes for hours on end, Lansdale would then summarize the speaker's thoughts, adding his own emphasis to further the discussion. Valeriano remarked that Lansdale's technique allowed Filipinos to feel heard and arrive at certain revelations on their own.[160] This behavior stood in stark contrast to the paternalism endemic between the Americans, the former colonizers, and Filipinos, the former colonists. Many Americans assigned to the islands patronized their Filipino counterparts, giving orders instead of engaging in meaningful and respectful dialogue.

Lansdale would later write that the "most endearing quality" in the relationship between Americans and Filipinos was trust.[161] He recounted learning that among Filipinos, the way President Franklin D. Roosevelt and General MacArthur trusted the Philippine people to make their own decisions during the heaviest fighting of World War II instilled a collective memory of brotherhood between the two peoples. During the war, the Americans had not ordered or compelled Filipinos to fight against the Japanese, but instead left the question open and trusted Philippine President Quezon to make the decision he determined was best for his people. According to Lansdale, Americans maintained that trust and sense of "brotherhood" through a combination of integrity, courage, competence, devotion, and affection.[162] At the same time, Americans could quickly lose that trust since Filipinos were adept at detecting "hidden attitudes of superiority" or behavior that placed Filipinos on anything less

158. McClintock, 110.

159. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 87.

160. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American,* 87.

161. Lansdale, "The 'True American,'" 3.

162. Lansdale, "The 'True American,'" 4. Lansdale's interpretation of events at the outset of World War II benefits from the knowledge that the United States forces, under General MacArthur, eventually fought their way back after the Japanese invasion of the Philippines and fulfilled a promise to the Filipino people. A more nuanced examination of the relationship between President Quezon and President Roosevelt in early 1942 reveals that Quezon lobbied hard for a separate peace with the Japanese. Ultimately, the United States maintained that it trusted the Philippine government in policy, but in practice, it more often treated Filipinos as the junior partner. Brands, 190–98.

than "equal footing."[163] Through his words and actions, Lansdale demonstrated the capacity to trust and respect his counterparts in the Philippine government and military, and obtained their trust in return. Notably, in Lansdale's writing and speeches, he did not distinguish between progovernment and insurgency Filipinos when discussing the culture and characteristics of the people as a whole. Lansdale's success stemmed from both an understanding of his partner, and his partner's enemy.

In subsequent historical analysis, Lansdale's courtship of Magsaysay has not escaped criticism. Lansdale and his team have been accused of describing their interactions with Magsaysay in off-the-record discussions after the war in less than altruistic terms. McClintock sums up the team's work as "buddy-buddy camaraderie and cold-blooded manipulation."[164] Further still, one scholar paints Lansdale's special relationship with Magsaysay as a "late imperial romance," where US government officials prioritized expedient political advantage and short-term interests at the expense of long-term political stability and development.[165] What is clear, however, is that Lansdale saw in Magsaysay a potential champion for democratic values. In the course of ensuring Magsaysay received the support he needed to institute reforms, the two men developed a genuinely personal relationship which also served to be mutually beneficial for their respective governments.

Civil-Military Institution Building

One of the first principles to emerge from the conversations between Lansdale and Magsaysay was the military and security forces needed to be more responsive and accountable to the Philippine people. As the American Embassy assessed earlier in 1950, "The Philippine Constabulary, instead of winning popular support, has in general so behaved that it has alienated the rural populace."[166] The PC had recently come under the control of the military and Magsaysay now had the opportunity to reorganize and exert greater control over his troops.

In light of disciplinary issues with the state's security forces, Lansdale advocated for measures that improved the accountability and transparency of the Philippine Army. Accompanied by Lansdale, Magsaysay flew in for unannounced spot checks and inspections, visiting military units unaccustomed to

163. Lansdale, "The 'True American,'" 2–3.

164. McClintock, 109.

165. Eva-Lotta E. Hedman, "Late Imperial Romance: Magsaysay, Lansdale and the Philippine-American 'Special Relationship,'" *Intelligence and National Security* 14, no. 4 (1999): 184, 192.

166. Vinton Chapin, "The Chargé in the Philippines (Chapin) to the Secretary of State, April 7, 1950," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI, 796.5 MAP/4–750.

seeing leadership out in the field.[167] Magsaysay sought and was granted permission to conduct field promotions for commanders and soldiers identified as possessing the discipline necessary for the revitalization of the army.[168] Morale in the ranks skyrocketed once soldiers understood their senior leadership was willing to visit them in their remote jungle positions and hold local leaders accountable. Furthermore, in an effort to minimize civilian deaths and maintain accurate enemy casualty data, Lansdale disseminated Japanese-made cameras to Philippine army units. Soldiers were ordered to photograph any enemy fatalities they inflicted, thereby infusing a level of accountability into the reporting process.[169] Lansdale later characterized his role during these visits to AFP units as an advisor who helped Magsaysay "exercise his leadership" as the secretary of defense.[170]

Regardless of the progress gained through ensuring internal accountability and transparency within the military, Lansdale and Magsaysay agreed the Huk guerrilla movement was symptomatic of larger issues threatening the country. Economic inequality still gripped swaths of the population, and the corruption that plagued the central government eroded its legitimacy in the eyes of the people.[171] The military's interaction with the population would be paramount to gaining popular support and eventually turning the tide against the Huks. In his stateside assignments, Lansdale was highly influenced by the writing of Mao Tse-tung, who espoused three "great disciplinary measures:" to act in accordance with orders, to not take anything from the people, and to prevent self-interest from injuring public interest.[172] Mao also named "eight noteworthy points" for China's protracted warfare against Japan in World War II, which included prohibitions against robbing the personal belongings of captives, and returning everything borrowed.[173] By familiarizing himself with what became known as Mao's "Three Rules and Eight Remarks," Lansdale supplemented his firsthand knowledge of the enemy with an understanding

167. Magsaysay and Lansdale often traveled around Luzon in a pair of US-made L-5 light observer aircraft flown by the Philippine Air Force, each with seats for one pilot and one passenger. Lansdale, "A Case History of Insurgency – The Philippines," 12; Smith, 156–57.

168. Charles L. Garrettson III, "Colonel Landslide, An Un-Ugly American Uses a Unique Strategy to Tip the Scales for Justice in the Philippines." *Foreign Service Journal* (January 1988): 39.

169. Lansdale, "A Case History of Insurgency – The Philippines," 20; Smith, 156.

170. Regarding the trips to Central Luzon with Magsaysay, Lansdale would also later write in his signature understating manner: "I am not too certain, looking back, on who was leading whom on this thing. I suspect at times that, since I was in uniform and he was usually in a Hawaiian sport shirt, I might have been along just to give some authenticity that this guy was really the Secretary of Defense." Lansdale, "A Case History of Insurgency – The Philippines," 11.

171. Greenberg, 146.

172. Boot, 127; Garrettson, 40.

173. Garrettson, 40.

of their motivations through their own writings.[174] In a speech in 1962, Lansdale described the plan of revitalizing the military's interaction with the population as one in which "the soldier citizen became the brotherly protector of the civilian citizen."[175] If Lansdale and Magsaysay could rebuild the bond between the people of Central Luzon and the government, then they could isolate the Huk guerrillas and gain the initiative.

As an overall approach for Luzon, Magsaysay settled on a two-pronged method, which included revamped military operations targeting the Huks, but also encompassed a campaign of "civic action" designed to foster improved relations between the population and a more professional fighting force.[176] First, the army would no longer collect illicit payments at road checkpoints scattered throughout the countryside. Next, Magsaysay forbade the theft of livestock by troops. In rural villages, he ordered army engineers to dig wells and authorized army lawyers to settle disputes among landowners. Lastly, any civilians hurt during military operations would be treated in Philippine army hospitals.[177] To enforce these policies, a civil affairs officer was installed in each army battalion, mimicking the Huk political officers embedded in guerrilla units to educate poor, often illiterate fighters.[178] Furthermore, Lansdale and Magsaysay established a program in which any civilian could send Magsaysay a 10-centavo telegram on any issue—a complaint about the conduct of AFP soldiers, or information on the disposition of Huk fighters.[179] This transparency not only built trust with population, but also infused accountability into the reforms Magsaysay instituted within the military ranks.

Building Partner Capacity

While civic action improved relations between the Philippine military and the population, Lansdale and Magsaysay forged ahead with the operational aspects of their strategy. Together, they turned the army into a force optimized to hunt down and kill Huk insurgents. While these less-publicized measures were necessary and displayed creative thinking in the face of a determined enemy, they also show the difficulties of balancing the use of force with a desire to show restraint in population-centric counterinsurgency.

174. For a translation and further description of Mao's "Three Rules and Eight Remarks," see Mao Tse-Tung, *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, 1937, translated by Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Praeger, 1961), 92.

175. Lansdale, "The Insurgent Battlefield," 3.

176. Smith, 158.

177. Garrettson, 40.

178. Boot, 127.

179. Lansdale, "A Case History of Insurgency – The Philippines," 16; Garrettson, 40; Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 46–47.

In late 1950, several changes helped enable the operational side of the Lansdale-inspired strategy. With the infusion of foreign aid from the United States, Magsaysay increased the size of the Philippine army to 53,000 troops, and completed a structural reorganization of its units into infantry-focused battalion combat teams (BCTs).[180] Previously, company-sized units defended cities and main roads, but these new units were large enough to go on the offensive against the Huks and deny the insurgents freedom of movement in central Luzon. Additionally, the informal coffee meetings between Lansdale and Philippine officers produced an idea for offensive action from an enterprising captain named Rafael "Rocky" Ilito, a Filipino officer and graduate of West Point who advocated for the creation of small teams to penetrate deep into Huklandia and report on enemy movements.[181] These five-member teams consisting of one officer and four soldiers would train in jungle warfare and harass the Huks where they had previously enjoyed unopposed movement far from large Philippine army units.

Lansdale and Bohannon also added a deliberate targeting component to the Philippine army's mission set in Luzon, one specifically focused on pursuing Huk leaders. Lansdale pushed his team to develop creative ideas that undermined the Huk movement via indirect methods. In one such case, the two officers hatched a plot to kidnap several high-value Huk leaders by convincing them a Soviet submarine was to surface off the coast with the intent to resupply the Huks. The submarine, an American one, would have Lansdale and Bohannon waiting below to capture the insurgent leaders as they came aboard.[182] Even though the plan was scrapped when the US Navy refused to loan a submarine for the operation, the plan was indicative of the innovative thinking Lansdale encouraged within his small advisory team.

In place of the submarine plot, Magsaysay directed a roundup of all the known members of the PKP politburo in October 1950.[183] The Philippine Military Intelligence Service led 21 simultaneous raids and arrested 105 suspects across Manila, leading to the capture of six high-ranking politburo members.[184] The raid "essentially decapitated the urban wing of the insurgency," and also produced almost five tons of documents from the communist party, detailing meetings and plans.[185] Although the trove of intelligence proved valuable, the communist leadership in Manila had little influence over

180. Boot, 130; Garrettson, 39.
181. Lansdale, "A Case History of Insurgency – The Philippines," 23; Garrettson, 39.
182. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 62.
183. Smith, 159; Brands, 251; Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 63.
184. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 63.
185. Brands, 251; Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 63.

the operations of the Huk movement in central Luzon, and the raids ultimately revealed that the Huks were far better organized and equipped than previously believed.[186] Still, late 1950 marked the beginning of a slow decline in the influence and capability of the Huks, as Magsaysay followed up the successful raid with redoubled efforts to track down Huk units in central Luzon with a more competent and professional fighting force.[187]

As he helped to build the Philippine partner capacity, Lansdale studied the enemy to determine the next course of action for the campaign against the Huks. He poured over the intelligence collected from the politburo and gained insight into the decision-making processes of the enemy's leadership.[188] He also studied Luis Taruc, the Huk leader who had evaded Lansdale since his first tour of duty in Manila. Lansdale later remarked, "I could have written a biography of Luis Taruc which I feel his family would have recognized as being really authoritative."[189] This familiarity informed the way he advised Magsaysay and ultimately shaped the course of the entire approach to the irregular warfare strategy. Lansdale later confirmed this point in a 1964 speech by saying, "You have to know what makes people tick on the other side and know this thoroughly. As you work tactics, work on strategy against them, you must know how they are going to react and what they are up to next."[190] Lansdale placed this concept at the center of his strategy and prioritized it over the use of force or the promise of technology-centric solutions.

Lansdale's attempts at empathy and understanding toward the enemy, and particularly Taruc, perhaps came from a recognition that both men were in a ruthless public relations competition for the trust and allegiance of Luzon's population. In this sense, Lansdale only sought to understand the motives of Taruc, the Huks, and the populace writ large, through an exclusively American lens. This perspective led him to concentrate on the military and civic actions which would build trust with the people and ensure the Huk insurgency's defeat, while at times failing to consider the agency of Luzon's population. Author Johnathan Nashel characterizes this inconsistency:

> It is not that he and other Americans were blind to the economic privation and political corruption that were rampant in the Philippines—on the contrary, Lansdale was often outraged at the chasm that existed between the haves and have-nots—but he simply could not understand

186. Kerkvliet, 186; Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 64.
187. Brands, 251.
188. Lansdale, "A Case History of Insurgency – The Philippines," 18.
189. Lansdale, "A Case History of Insurgency – The Philippines," 18.
190. Edward G. Lansdale, "The Opposite Number," *Air University Review* (July/August 1972), 18.

why American ideals were not embraced by all parties and then implemented in a reform-minded spirit. He could therefore glide over the more unsavory qualities that marked American-Filipino relations and instead concentrate on second-guessing Taruc.[191]

In Nashel's assessment, throughout his time in the Philippines, Lansdale was never able to resolve a key contradiction. Lansdale thought democracy and capitalism could triumph over communism, but at the same time, he never acknowledged that market forces in the developing world were responsible for producing some of the very economic inequality that produced popular grievances in the first place.[192] Lansdale may have indeed been guilty of what Nashel calls "well-intentioned short-sightedness" as he publicly vilified the Huks while there were also real structural issues to blame for Central Luzon's problems.[193] While understanding the mind of the enemy is an important aspect of counterinsurgency, building partner capacity requires an examination of all institutions of a nation's government, not simply the military or security forces. While the reforms and civic action projects undertaken by Lansdale and Magsaysay were impactful, it is significant that Lansdale's approach still faced limitations based on his own beliefs and perspective.

Information Operations

In a 1972 article, Lansdale reflected on the lessons learned during his time managing irregular warfare campaigns. He noted that a communist enemy who seeks to highlight the contradictions in the West's political and economic systems is "the essence of the strategy the United States will encounter in people's wars."[194] Specifically, he quoted Lê Duẩn, the Vietnamese communist politician, who employed the strategy of "exploiting the internal contradictions in the enemy camp" when fighting the Americans in the 1960s and 1970s.[195] Lansdale argued that the best defense against this strategy was to remedy any weakness that a government may have that could be exploited as an inconsistency. By reforming the military, Lansdale and Magsaysay sought to reduce any opportunity for the Huks to highlight incongruities between the government's words and its actions. Lansdale's work in the Philippines also shows an early example of his ability to employ the same exploitive

191. Nashel, 43.
192. According to Nashel, "[Lansdale] simply saw no inherent contradiction between the fruits of capitalism and of democracy, between the rhetoric. . . and the reality it accompanied." 5.
193. Nashel, 148.
194. Lansdale, "The Opposite Number," 17.
195. Lansdale, "The Opposite Number," 17.

strategy against an insurgent enemy by undermining that narrative fueling the Huk movement.

Lansdale understood the imperative in counterinsurgency to weaken the enemy's narrative used to motivate their insurgents. His time spent engaging with Huk fighters during his first tour of duty gave him a unique awareness of the antigovernment narratives used by the Huk leadership, a knowledge that helped generate and provide counternarratives. At Lansdale's prompting, Magsaysay tasked the AFP Civil Affairs Office with establishing a resettlement program for surrendering Huks named the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) in February 1951.[196] Surrendering Huk fighters screened and vetted by Army intelligence would be reeducated and given a plot of land on the southern island of Mindanao, situated in a closely monitored community specially prepared for the program.[197] Fifty-six former Huk fighters and their families participated in the first pilot program.[198] As with any policy aimed at undermining insurgents, the key to its effectiveness was publicizing it. Former Huks were photographed laying down their weapons and were subsequently taken on tours in Luzon to highlight the government's benevolence and goodwill.[199] Lansdale later admitted, "While EDCOR was really a US plan, the Filipinos were led into thinking of it and developing it for themselves; thus, as something of their own, they carried it out with great spirit and were given all the credit afterwards; the American concerned had a 'passion for anonymity.'"[200] He understood that for the Philippine government to reap the full benefits of a counternarrative, the perceived reality of the program's results had to match with how the program was being advertised to Huk insurgents.

EDCOR signaled to the Huks that the Philippine government was serious about improving the lives of poor farmers in Central Luzon. The impacts of the program and the government's counternarrative were mostly psychological, as intended. The public showcasing of defecting Huk fighters achieving their dream of owning a family farm undercut the Huk rallying cry of "land for the landless."[201] In reality, EDCOR only resettled 950 families on Mindanao, and only 250 of those were former Huk fighters.[202] But the perception is what mattered—the message echoed through the Huk ranks, and Lansdale's

196. Greenberg, 89.
197. Greenberg, 89–90.
198. McClintock, 114.
199. Nashel, 44; McClintock, 114.
200. Nashel, 44–45.
201. Brands, 243; Kerkvliet, 239.
202. Kerkvliet, 239.

team estimated that at least 3,000 Huk fighters surrendered as a result of the program.[203] By the end of the war, the influence campaign surrounding EDCOR was so effective that poor farmers admitted to joining the dwindling Huk movement only as a means to later surrender, ensuring they could participate in the program.[204]

Psychological Operations

While the wide audience for information operations encompassed the Philippine army, civilians, Huk insurgents, and their sympathizers, psychological operations had only one target—the enemy. Lansdale recalled learning about operations in World War II in which loudspeakers on observation aircraft were used in conjunction with ground maneuver units to create uncertainty within the enemy ranks.[205] He anticipated the need for bullhorns and acquired several from the Navy before departing Washington.[206] Central Luzon's difficult jungle terrain meant that ground units could have a major advantage if they used observation aircraft to broadcast messages while in pursuit of enemy units. In one such pursuit, an infantry officer observed a Huk unit in retreat from his forces on the ground. The quick-thinking officer remembered intelligence from an enemy order of battle briefing and proceeded to broadcast it using Lansdale's bullhorn, noting the names and family details of specific Huk fighters. When he was finished, the infantry officer thanked a "friend" in the Huk ranks, and then flew off, setting off an internal hunt for the informant among the insurgents.[207] As Luis Taruc noted in his account of leading the Huk guerrilla movement, it was common for Huk fighters to be shot by their comrades if suspected of a lack of discipline or divulging information to Philippine government troops.[208] Through the use of good intelligence, technology, and creativity, government forces inflicted as many casualties on the Huk unit as they might have expected in a firefight, at minimal risk to their own forces.

Although undeniably effective, some of Lansdale's psychological operations methods raise doubt as to whether or not he considered the long-term implications of terror-like tactics. Specifically, in a story Lansdale would later

203. McClintock, 114.
204. Greenberg, 139.
205. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 73.
206. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 73.
207. The more control that Huk leadership attempted to exert control over their fighters and instill discipline in the ranks, the more the organization risked compromising its operational security. This tradeoff between security and control is discussed in Jacob N. Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 26–62, 71–73.
208. Taruc, 151–52.

recount with slight variations in detail, he constructed an operation that played on local superstitious fears of a fictional *asuang*, or vampire. He wrote, "When a Huk patrol came along the trail, the ambushers silently snatched the last man of the patrol, their move unseen in the dark night. They punctured his neck with two holes, vampire-fashion, held the body up by the heels, drained it of blood, and put the corpse back on the trail."[209] Lansdale claimed the tactic had the immediate impact of convincing the Huks guerrillas to vacate the area, allowing a BCT to move in and protect the surrounding area without a fight. Unanalyzed in Lansdale's memoirs is the potential unintended impacts such psychological operations may have had on the civilian population. Some scholars have suggested that Lansdale's tactics reflect a "deeply condescending assumption of the target populations' simple mindedness."[210] While these critiques invite valid interrogation, all evidence indicates the intended target of Lansdale's psychological operations was always the Huk insurgent.

Conclusion

Lansdale's early life and his experience in the Philippines reveal an unconventional approach to problem-solving founded upon trust and consensus-building among stakeholders, a knowledge of history, and a healthy aversion to formal authority and regimentation. Lansdale expertly applied his talent for finding common ground among disparate parties—a legacy from the business and advertising world—in both Manila and Washington to achieve collective goals for himself, the United States, and the Philippine government. Lansdale's ability to employ patience, empathy, and strategic listening distinguished him from other American officials assigned to the Philippines who employed more direct approaches in their dealings with foreign counterparts. Likewise, Lansdale's desire to leave Manila and engage with Luzon's population allowed him to assess the motivations and predict the next moves of Huk leadership, as well as rank-and-file insurgents with accuracy. At the same time, Lansdale navigated complex bureaucracies by communicating the urgency of the fight against communist-aligned insurgents to his superiors back in Washington. Lansdale also advocated for a necessarily low-footprint approach coupled with military and social reforms he knew would resonate with the Philippine population.

Ultimately, what made Lansdale's strategic approach so successful was his ability to discern which situations called for the application of direct military

209. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 72.
210. McClintock, 117.

force, and which did not. This quality is especially salient considering the fact that in his position, he wielded OPC authorities and had the ear of the Ambassador, the chief of JUSMAG, and his superiors in Washington who trusted his knowledge and judgment. When presented with an opportunity to advocate for more American military power, Lansdale's background and leadership style instead drove him to advise an indirect application of American power. Despite the social, economic, and military reforms set in motion at mid-century, the Philippines would continue to struggle with internal security challenges. By the turn of the century, Islamic extremist organizations in the southern islands caught the attention of decision makers in Washington, sparking yet another American military mission in the country.

Donald Wurster and "Setting the Conditions to Win"

[Special Operations Command-Pacific] was moving forward from our offices, where we competed for resources and against bureaucracy, to the field, where JTF-510 fought a terrorist network. The stakes became life and death. For the Commanding General, this means leadership over management and an explosion of complexity. General Wurster did this brilliantly with his typical effortless élan.

—Lieutenant Colonel Christopher J. Kaufman, USAF (Ret.)
Interview, 2022

Brigadier General Wurster was a master of leading his staff to push ourselves to think differently and to work under constantly changing situations. . . . [His] dynamic personality shaped how we not only planned operations but also how we conducted them.

—Lieutenant Colonel Rieka M. Stroh, US Army (Ret.)
Interview, 2022

Inspired to serve by family tradition, Donald C. Wurster became a pragmatic helicopter pilot who valued trust, discipline, and communication throughout his time flying and in command. In the Indo-Pacific, Wurster was charged with waging an irregular warfare campaign within the context of the opening salvos of America's post-9/11 reaction to international terrorism. This section argues that during his command of a joint task force, Wurster demonstrated an ability to develop a strategy, manage an array of political and military stakeholders, and communicate his vision for a light-footprint approach while honoring the realities and sensitivities on the ground. Five de-

cades after Lansdale departed the Philippines, Wurster faced an insurgency in the southern island chain of the country with roots tracing back to Spanish conquest and American colonialism.

Origins of Islamic Extremism in the Southern Philippines

Prior to the Spanish conquest of the Philippines in the 1500s, the Islamic faith took hold in the Sulu archipelago, a stretch of islands spanning 200 miles from the coast of Malaysia to southern Mindanao.[211] Spanish colonizers in the 1500s called the Philippine islands' Muslim population "Moros," a name derived from the Islamic Moors who fought the Spanish in Europe.[212] Throughout Spanish rule, the Muslim inhabitants resisted their potentates, combating efforts to introduce Catholicism to the southern islands as their colonizers had elsewhere in the Philippines.[213] When American occupation began at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War in 1898, the newest colonial government did not seek to alter the religious affiliation of the Moros, but instead clashed with the Muslim population over the ongoing practices of slavery and polygamy.[214] For the first 25 years of American rule, US forces waged an often brutal campaign known as the "Moro Wars" in an effort to suppress the tribes in the Sulu island chain.[215] The US effort culminated in the Battle of Bud Bagsak on the island of Jolo in 1913, where Captain John J. Pershing laid siege to the last remaining holdout of 10,000 Moros.[216] The encounter resulted in an American victory in which a US expeditionary force killed between 200 and 300 Moros.[217]

Despite adverse beginnings, the Moros experienced a degree of autonomy under American occupation and hoped the Americans would eventually grant their islands independence rather than be subject to the rule of Christian-majority Tagalogs who dominated the northern islands of the Philippines. When the territory became a Commonwealth in 1935 and ultimately gained independence in 1946, the Tagalog-controlled Philippine government

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211. Luis H. Francia, *A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos* (New York: Overlook Press, 2010), 82–84, 90–95.

212. Robert A. Fulton, *Moroland: A History of Uncle Sam and the Moros, 1899–1920,* revised version (Bend, OR: Tumalo Creek Press, 2016), 32.

213. Fulton, 32.

214. H. W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 124; Fulton, 80.

215. For more information on the Moro Wars, see Fulton, 97–434. For a complete account of American military action following the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, see Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2000).

216. For a complete account of the Battle of Bagsak, see Fulton, 415–433.

217. Fulton, 431. For more information regarding the history of the Moro inhabitants of the Southern Philippines and US counterinsurgency operations in the Sulu island chain, see Fulton, 25–42.

in Luzon sought to retain control over every Philippine island, denying the Moros the possibility of self-rule.[218] The Moros even fought alongside American forces against the Imperial Japanese during the liberation of the islands between 1944 and 1945, creating temporary goodwill between the Americans and the majority Muslim population.[219]

Philippine independence resulted in the Tagalog government's systemic neglect of the Moros in Mindanao and throughout the Sulu archipelago, a population of roughly seven million. The resettlement of Catholic Filipinos on Mindanao in the 1940s, due to programs such as Lansdale's EDCOR, resulted in a decreased land available for the native Muslim majority.[220] In the 1970s, Filipino Muslims' resentments swelled into outright revolt.[221] Disparate Muslim groups organized under the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and fought the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for autonomy in a protracted campaign, resulting in an estimated 120,000 fatalities in the first decade of the conflict.[222] After the Philippine government negotiated with the MNLF and reached an initial cease-fire in 1976, many of its fighters demobilized and joined the local government or security forces.[223] In the late 1970s, however, a more radical offshoot formed under the banner of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) with the goal of founding an independent Islamic state.[224] The Philippine government established the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 1989 and signed a peace accord with the MNLF in 1996. The MILF, unappeased by the agreement, fought on for several years until reaching a separate cease-fire with the government in 1997 which collapsed in 2001.[225] The government's relations with the militants remained tenuous, undermined by extremism in the southern Philippines. The region's persistent instability highlights the challenges facing the inhabitants

218. Barry M. Stentiford, *Success in the Shadows: Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines and the Global War on Terror, 2002–2015* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2018), 23.

219. Stentiford, 23–24.

220. Larry Niksch, *Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine-US Anti-Terrorism Cooperation*, CRS Report (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007), 5.

221. Niksch, 5.

222. Niksch, 5. For a comprehensive examination of the motivations, grievances and internal dynamics of the MNLF and MILF, see Marites Dañguilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, 2000), 106–35.

223. Max Boot and Richard Bennet, "Treading Softly in the Philippines," *Weekly Standard*, 5 January 2009, 23.

224. Linda Robinson, Patrick B. Johnston, and Gillian S. Oak, *US Special Operations Forces in the Philippines 2001–2014*, RAND Report 1236 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 10; Vitug, 121; Niksch, 5.

225. Francia, 299–300. Andrew T. H. Tan, *Security Strategies in the Asia Pacific: The United States' "Second Front" in Southeast Asia* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 62–65.

of the Sulu archipelago as they lived along a historical dividing line between two cultural and religious tectonic plates, one Christian and the other Muslim. In the ensuing "fault line" conflicts since the end of Spanish rule, moderate groups with limited goals such as the MNLF were continually replaced with more extremist groups such as the MILF.[226] Whether it was communist insurgents or Muslim extremists, each new generation in the Philippines seemingly had its own rebellion. Just as long-standing socioeconomic grievances and the exacerbation of existing inequality by the central government led to the Huk rebellion in Luzon, lingering resentment of the Muslim population in the Sulu island chain would give rise to extremism.

The Abu Sayyaf Group

During these decades of political turmoil, the undergoverned islands of the Sulu archipelago, and Basilan specifically, proved fertile ground for burgeoning extremist groups. In the early 1990s, former MNLF fighters and Filipino Muslims who had fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan formed the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).[227] By 1995, ASG had achieved a level of notoriety through its practice of targeted kidnappings, which financed the activity of its 600 members.[228] While ransom money for kidnapping Westerners filled the terror group's coffers, the island of Basilan provided an insulated sanctuary for training bases and attack planning.

Abu Sayyaf, meaning "Bearer of the Sword" in Arabic, maintained well-documented connections to international terrorist groups and organizers in the mid-1990s. Among them, Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, funneled money to ASG through Islamic charities in the southern Philippines.[229] Additionally, al-Qaeda operative Ramzi Yousef, one planner of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, trained ASG fighters and established an al-Qaeda cell in Manila.[230] While in Manila during the mid-1990s, Ramzi Yousef and his uncle, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, hatched ultimately unfulfilled plans against American airliners and the CIA headquarters in Virginia,

226. One JTF-510 staff officer recounted that the task force's understanding of the cultural and religious situation in the Southern Philippines was shaped by Samuel P. Huntington's 1996 characterization of the Moro-Philippine conflict as a "fault line" war that follows action-reaction patterns in which moderates tend to lose out to extremists. Samuel P. Huntington *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 266–267; Christopher Kaufman, (former SOCPAC staff officer and J3 operations officer for Joint Task Force-510) interviewed by author, 19 February 2022.

227. Stentiford, 28.

228. Niksch, 6.

229. Niksch, 7.

230. Stentiford, 29.

as well as an assassination plot against Pope John Paul II.[231] After Filipino police uncovered the scheme targeting the pontiff in 1995, al-Qaeda's leadership decided to strangle funding and limit training assistance to ASG, signaling a loss of confidence in the organization.[232] With its connection to al-Qaeda reduced to a handful of operatives training at MILF camps, ASG grew increasingly isolated from international support.[233] By 2000, cut off from al-Qaeda's revenue stream, ASG stepped up its kidnapping-for-ransom efforts to fund its operations, making the group more criminal in nature than an internationally connected jihadist organization.[234] These criminal aspects of ASG's activities distinguished it from prior movements in the Philippines such as the Huk Insurrection. Nevertheless, ASG established links with Indonesian-based jihadist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which also sent trainers to ASG camps on the island of Basilan.[235]

In Basilan and elsewhere in the south, ASG maintained a base for criminal activities by capitalizing on the Muslim population's discontent. In a country of 90 million people, the Philippines had a total of just five million Muslims in the early 2000s, mostly concentrated in Mindanao.[236] Filipino Muslims were twice as likely to live below the poverty line as other groups in the country.[237] At the time, nominal GDP per capita in the Philippines was estimated at USD 1,600, while in Mindanao it was less than USD 700.[238] In 2002, the population on Basilan numbered 332,828 inhabitants, approximately 70 percent of whom were Muslims, yet Christians owned 75 percent of the land.[239] Furthermore,

231. Khalid Sheikh Mohammad evaded capture in the Philippines and later became the mastermind behind the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. Robinson, et al., 12; Vitug, 230–231.

232. Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: The Crucible of Terror* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003), 110. Al Qaeda's cutting of financial support for ASG is indicative of a breakdown in the principal-agent relationship. Al Qaeda's need to monitor ASG's activities as an affiliate created security vulnerabilities that increased the likelihood of disruptions, such as the break-up of the 1995 Manila plot. Once al-Qaeda had withdrawn funding, enough "preference divergence" over tactics existed between al-Qaeda and ASG that it decreased the likelihood of collaboration between the two organizations. For more on the principal-agent problem as it relates to terrorist organizations, see Jacob N. Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 26–62.

233. Abuza, 110–11.

234. Abuza, 111.

235. JI later carried out an October 2002 attack on a tourist district in Bali, Indonesia, killing more than 200 people. Niksch, 9; Boot and Bennet, 23. For more information of the links between Jemaah Islamiyah, ASG, and al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia, see Maria A. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center* (New York: Free Press, 2011).

236. Boot and Bennet, 23.

237. Stentiford, 26.

238. Boot and Bennet, 24.

239. George Baylon Radics, "Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Balikatan Exercises in the Philippines and the US War Against Terrorism," *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 4, no. 2 (May 2004): 123. Of note, Colonel Fridovich's assessments on Basilan placed the percentage of Muslims on the island at a much higher 93 percent. David P. Fridovich (former commander, 1st Special Forces Group) interview with Mike Bosco of the Global SOF Foundation, April 1, 2021.

while the life expectancy of the average Filipino was 70 years, life expectancy on the larger island of Mindanao was just 52 years.[240] Combined with dissatisfaction over decades of Catholic resettlement in the south, these indicators of systemic neglect by the Philippine government made conditions ripe for exploitation by ASG. In 2000, an AFP estimate placed the number of ASG members on Basilan at 1,270; the US government evaluated the group's strength at approximately 2,000 insurgents.[241]

Emboldened by its training base in Basilan and growing influence across the Sulu island chain, ASG launched a series of kidnappings aimed at Westerners in 2000, for which it received ransom payments estimated between USD 10 and USD 25 million.[242] These kidnappings increased in frequency as the group exploited its targets' deep pockets and desperation, using the ransoms to fuel the purchases of upgraded military equipment and speedboats to navigate the vast distances between islands. The first kidnapping of an American citizen took place on August 29, 2000 when ASG militants took Jeffrey Schilling hostage on the island of Jolo, releasing him seven months later.[243] On May 27, 2001, ASG fighters used their newly acquired speedboats to travel 300 miles across the Sulu Sea to a tourist resort on the island of Palawan, a striking demonstration of the organization's operational reach.[244] The raid was led by Aldam Tilao, ASG's Basilan-based militant leader who was known commonly by the alias "Abu Sabaya."[245] ASG militants kidnapped 20 people there, including three Americans and brought them to Basilan.[246] In June 2001, Abu Sabaya announced he had killed one of the Americans, Guillermo Sobero of California, to intimidate the Philippine government. ASG demanded a ransom of USD 2 million for the remaining two Americans, Martin and Gracia Burnham of Kansas.[247] The sophistication of the raid and the high-profile nature of the kidnappings made boosting the AFP's counterterrorism capabilities a higher priority for the American government.[248]

240. Stentiford, 25.
241. Robinson, et al., 11.
242. Niksch, 6.
243. Robinson, et al., 12.
244. Mark Bowden, "Jihadists in Paradise," *The Atlantic*, 1 March 2007, 54–75.
245. Bowden, 56.
246. For a detailed firsthand account of the Burnhams' kidnapping and recovery, see Gracia Burnham and Dean Merrill, *In the Presence of My Enemies* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2003).
247. Niksch, 6.
248. Robinson, et al., 13.

Philippine Government and SOCPAC Response to Abu Sayyaf

Despite the danger posed by the Islamic extremist groups in the south, the only immediate and direct threat to the Philippine government remained the communist-inspired New People's Army (NPA), a resistance group primarily active in the north.[249] The AFP, mirroring the NPA disposition, concentrated its assets in the north throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, leaving AFP units and resources in the south spread thin. The AFP faced compound challenges operating in the southern islands, including difficult mountainous terrain and the local population's general support for ASG. Additionally, the AFP suffered from shortages in military equipment needed to patrol effectively in the archipelago, such as helicopters, patrol boats, night-vision goggles, and even jungle boots.[250] In September 2000, Philippine President Joseph Estrada sent 1,500 troops to Jolo in response to kidnappings by ASG.[251] After Estrada resigned in early 2001, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo ordered 4,500 AFP troops to Basilan on orders to "crush" Abu Sayyaf following the kidnapping of the Burnhams.[252]

AFP deployments to the Sulu island chain leading up to the fall of 2001 failed to produce the desired results. Plagued by manpower and equipment shortages that undermined the ability to mount a successful effort in the south, the AFP also suffered from accusations of excessive civilian casualties, rampant corruption, and inadequate funding. An AFP offensive in 2000 on Jolo island caused significant civilian casualties and displaced many of the island's 600,000 inhabitants.[253] In June 2001, 160 Philippine soldiers and police surrounded 30 to 50 Abu Sayyaf fighters holding the Burnhams in the Basilan town of Lamitan. Before an assault on the ASG camp began, several AFP units fell back from their blocking positions, allowing the fighters to escape with their captives.[254] While officially attributed to a lapse in tactical judgment, the blunder also raised suspicions that AFP commanders were colluding with Abu Sayyaf and lining their pockets with a cut of the kidnappers' ransom payments.[255] AFP's legitimate funding sources were woefully inadequate for the tasks at hand, due in part to the 1992 closure of Clark Air Base and Naval Station Subic Bay.[256] The US government paid rent for the facilities

249. Stentiford, 33; Robinson, et al., 11.
250. Niksch, 11.
251. Niksch, 10.
252. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Rebels' Escape Draws Scrutiny," *Washington Post*, 1 September 2001, A18; Niksch, 11.
253. Niksch, 12.
254. Chandrasekaran, A18.
255. Chandrasekaran, A18.
256. Stentiford, 26, 35.

directly to the AFP when the bases were open, serving as a significant source of funding which subsequently evaporated just as the Philippines faced multiple security threats to its internal stability.

Even before the kidnapping of the Burnhams, planners at Special Operations Command-Pacific (SOCPAC) identified Abu Sayyaf as a threat to US interests in the region.[257] In response to the Philippine government's request for US assistance in training the AFP in counterterrorism tactics, SOCPAC deployed a Mobile Training Team (MTT) from the 1st Special Forces Group (SFG) to Fort Magsaysay in Luzon.[258] From March until July 2001, US Special Forces soldiers worked to establish a single Philippine Light Reaction Company (LRC), which deployed to Basilan in July. The intent of the company was to augment the existing AFP forces on the island, but AFP commanders who were unfamiliar with how to effectively employ the new unit tasked the LRC with noncombat duties.[259] Instead of using the LRC as a raiding or hostage rescue force, AFP commanders instead relegated the LRC to perimeter security during raids executed by other units.[260] US Special Forces soldiers from the 1st SFG who trained the LRC requested to be sent to Basilan to accompany the new unit, but the request was denied.[261] Lieutenant Colonel David Maxwell, the commander of 1st Battalion, 1st SFG flew to Mindanao to meet with LRC and AFP leadership to reevaluate the requirements of the US training mission—a meeting originally scheduled for 11 September 2001.[262] The events of 9/11, in addition to sending shockwaves through the United States and the international community, would also infuse a renewed sense of urgency and purpose to all of those tasked with responding to Islamic extremism and building the capacity of the AFP. SOCPAC's commander on 9/11, Brigadier General Donald Wurster, was an Air Force officer whose background and career prepared him to lead in the Philippines during the early days of what became known as the Global War on Terror.

Wurster's Early Experiences

Donald C. Wurster came from a family steeped in a tradition of military service spanning from the Revolutionary War to Normandy.[263] His grandfather

257. David S. Maxwell, "Operation Enduring Freedom–Philippines: What Would Sun Tzu Say?" *Military Review*, May/June 2004, 20; Kaufman, interview, 19 February 2022.
258. Maxwell, 20; Stentiford, 33–34.
259. Robinson, et al., 15.
260. Maxwell, 20; Robinson, et al., 15.
261. Maxwell, 20; Robinson, et al., 15.
262. Robinson, et al., 15.
263. Amy Cooper, "Six Stars Keep Family 'Business' Running 200 Years Strong," *Air Force News*, 28 December 2007.

was an Army brigadier general who earned a Silver Star during the Second World War. Wurster's father Charles was an Air Force fighter pilot who flew the F-80 and F-51, among other aircraft.[264] Then–First Lieutenant Charles Wurster became one of only three American pilots to score multiple aerial victories during the first year of the Korean War when he shot down two North Korean Yak-9s in the summer of 1950.[265] Later in the war, Charles Wurster survived an F-51 crash and spent six months recovering in the United States.

Donald Wurster was born in 1951 in Washington, DC, the youngest of two sons. He grew up on military posts while his father, who continued serving in the Air Force, taught mathematics at the US Military Academy at West Point and the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Wurster's parents instilled firm standards of personal discipline in him and his brother, which would later become a hallmark of Wurster's command philosophy. Wurster's parents imprinted the tenets of the Christian faith during his upbringing and emphasized the mantra, "Always tell the truth, do your best, and think of other people first."[266] High standards for ethics and performance aligned well with those taught at the Air Force Academy, where the family lived while Wurster attended middle school and high school. Sights of jet aircraft banking low over the family housing inspired Wurster to apply for admission to the Academy, where he entered basic military training in the summer of 1969.[267] Cadet Wurster focused his studies on physics and was determined to become a fighter pilot.

During his third year at the Academy, Cadet Wurster contemplated his future as an Air Force officer in light of the ongoing Vietnam War. Stories of pilots flying dangerous search and rescue missions in Vietnam intrigued and inspired Wurster more than any other type of flying. Specifically, pilots of the HH-3E Joint Green Giant helicopters developed a reputation for saving the lives of downed American aircrew. Moreover, Cadet Wurster perceived flying helicopters as the "fastest way to combat" as the United States gradually reduced its military footprint in Vietnam.[268] The commandant of the Academy, Brigadier General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Jr., considered it unusual for cadets to desire a helicopter training slot instead of traditional fixed-wing training, and

264. Donald C. Wurster, (former commander, Special Operations Command-Pacific) interviewed by author, 12 February 2022.

265. Robert F. Dorr, Jon Lake, and Warren Thompson, *Korean War Aces* (London, UK: Osprey Aerospace Publishing, 1995), 12.

266. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

267. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

268. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

required every cadet applying for such an assignment to interview with him. When General Vandenberg challenged Cadet Wurster on why he preferred a helicopter assignment, Wurster said he thought highly of the rescue mission. He later recalled that, at the time, he had no intention of serving a decades-long career in the Air Force.[269]

After graduating from helicopter training in 1975, Wurster flew the HH-3E in Korea and Alaska.[270] In Alaska, Captain Wurster found the search and rescue mission to be uniquely fulfilling, since missions to pick up injured or stranded civilians and soldiers in austere environments pushed the limits of his aircraft and his crews' ingenuity. On one occasion, Wurster piloted his helicopter through hazardous winter weather, mountainous terrain, and severely limited visibility to rescue a child badly injured in a car accident. While en route to the rescue, Wurster employed an unconventional method of overcoming the poor visibility and lack of navigation equipment by flying low enough to follow an 18-wheel truck along a highway. After successfully rescuing the child and returning to base, Wurster pushed back when some at his higher headquarters confronted him over flying in conditions worse than published minimums for his aircraft. Instead of punishment, Wurster and his crew were each awarded an Air Medal for their peacetime aerial accomplishment.[271]

Flying in Korea and Alaska exposed Wurster not only to creative solutions to urgent problems, but afforded him experience managing risk at the tactical level. As a helicopter pilot and aircraft commander, Wurster learned to make critical decisions based on his own judgment and input from his crewmembers. Those decisions were often made far from his home base and out of range of the available communications equipment, which meant Wurster adapted to calculating risk in a distributed environment. Wurster's formative experiences in search and rescue engendered a high degree of trust in his subordinates which would inform how he delegated to those who executed missions under his command throughout his career. He would later relate, "The guy on the other end knows what to do, and if you don't trust him, then you shouldn't have sent him."[272]

Perceiving that he would not have another assignment in the Air Force that could offer the same level of professional fulfillment, Wurster separated from the active-duty Air Force in July 1979 and entered the inactive reserve.[273] He moved to Colorado and began taking courses to earn a mathematics teaching

269. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022..
270. United States Air Force, "Lieutenant General Donald C. Wurster," official biography.
271. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.
272. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.
273. US Air Force, "Lieutenant General Donald C. Wurster," official biography.

certificate. But in November 1980, the failed American military mission to rescue hostages held at the US embassy in Iran motivated Wurster to return to active duty. The Air Force suffered from poor retention of highly skilled personnel in the early 1980s, a consequence of the Vietnam War, and Wurster received his assignment of choice instructing new pilots in the HH-3.[274]

Between two subsequent assignments in acquisition-related staff positions, Wurster attended professional military education and qualified in the MH-60G Pave Hawk. In 1991, Lieutenant Colonel Wurster assumed command of an MH-53J Pave Low III squadron at Royal Air Force Alconbury, England, leading the unit during operations in Bosnia and Northern Iraq.[275] At the time, Air Force flying squadrons included both aircrew and maintenance personnel, requiring a leadership style that emphasized cohesion among personnel with different skill sets. Leading large numbers of maintainers highlighted to Wurster the need to communicate his concept of operations down to the tactical level to ensure unity of effort. Later in his career, after aircrew and maintenance personnel were once again split into different units, Colonel Wurster was known to brief maintenance personnel on the details of missions during large-scale exercises.[276] Such briefings generated buy-in within the ranks and ensured support troops, not just the aircrew, knew how their efforts fit into the larger plan.

An officer who served under Wurster's command described his leadership approach as "non-parochial," inviting anyone who could add value to an effort to get involved.[277] Wurster's experience as a special operator and a helicopter pilot resided outside the traditional Air Force leadership hierarchy dominated by conventional, fixed-wing pilots. This perspective led Wurster to define team members not by the aircraft they flew or supported, but by the value they could bring to his team. The same subordinate also recounted that Wurster "never failed" to listen intently to the people who worked for him.[278]

While in command at the squadron, group, and wing levels throughout the 1990s, Wurster emphasized high expectations of discipline in the formations he led. This core tenet of his leadership style ensured that negative behavior or conduct among his troops did not distract from the mission at hand. One example of this emphasis on discipline came from his time commanding in garrison, where Wurster would announce that any Airman under his com-

274. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

275. US Air Force, "Lieutenant General Donald C. Wurster," official biography; Guy Martin, "The Architect of Unconventional War," *Men's Journal*, May 2003, 106–08.

276. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

277. Kaufman, interview, 19 February 2022.

278. Kaufman, interview, 19 February 2022.

mand involved in an alcohol-related incident would be promptly enrolled in the Air Force's substance abuse program. Dramatic policies such as this one successfully deterred discipline issues and allowed Wurster's units to concentrate on their assigned missions.

Newly promoted to brigadier general, Wurster was assigned to Camp Smith, Hawaii, in October 2000 to take command of Special Operations Command-Pacific. As a theater special operations command (TSOC), SOCPAC was a joint component and subordinate unified command of United States Pacific Command. In this role, Wurster was responsible for special operations forces from all four service branches conducting exercises, planning, and operations in the Indo-Pacific region. SOCPAC also served as a standing JTF designate, meaning that if the PACOM commander needed to deploy a joint force quickly, SOCPAC had the resident capability to command and control those forces—a capability that would soon be activated. Wurster oversaw exchange training in Australia and security cooperation in India before SOCPAC's entire weight of effort shifted to the Philippines due to ASG's kidnappings and the 11 September 2001 terror attacks on the United States.[279]

Joint Task Force-510

The 9/11 attacks galvanized the US military into action, and the approximately 120 personnel at SOCPAC headquarters were no exception. Staff officers stationed at Camp Smith at the time described a chaotic scene on Oahu, with security and traffic at the main gate so heavy that some officers could not report for work until days later.[280] For Wurster, it quickly became apparent there would be a window of opportunity to take action against the al-Qaeda–aligned Abu Sayyaf Group, enabled by newfound political will in both Manila and Washington.[281] By the end of the week, Wurster and his staff were briefing the commander of US Pacific Command, Admiral Dennis Blair, on a range of options for special operations activity.[282] It was clear to Wurster that a larger American operation, however, would require more knowledge about the situation on the ground in Basilan.

Prior to 9/11, a SOCPAC team was scheduled to conduct a planning survey in late 2001 for an upcoming annual training exercise. The Balikatan exercise, meaning "shoulder-to-shoulder" in Tagalog, was scheduled to begin in January

279. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

280. James A. Marvin (former SOCPAC J5 future plans officer and JTF-510 Deputy J3 operations officer) interviewed by author, 4 May 2022.

281. Kaufman, interview, 19 February 2022.

282. Kaufman, interview, 19 February 2022.

2002. The training marked a continuation of a series of military-to-military coordination efforts authorized by the 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement to improve relations, build capacity among the two nations' armed forces, and hedge against encroachment by the People's Republic of China.[283] In light of the events of 9/11, Wurster consulted Army Colonel David P. Fridovich, an Army Special Forces officer and commander of the 1st SFG at Fort Lewis, Washington, and the two leaders agreed to add a terrorism coordination and assistance visit (TCAV) to the previously arranged planning survey.[284] Wurster described Fridovich as a "brilliant unconventional warfare specialist," and relied on him to develop options for how Special Forces soldiers in 12-person Operational Detachment-Alpha (ODA) teams could potentially build the capacity of the AFP to defeat ASG on Basilan.[285]

Between October and November 2001, the TCAV assessed that AFP units deployed to Basilan generally had poor relations with the island's population, and did not have access to ASG-held areas without using excessive force.[286] Fridovich's team also discovered that the Philippine government was unresponsive to the needs of the local population, highlighting an opportunity to win over the population through humanitarian assistance.[287] Follow-on assessments later produced a vast amount of data on local demographics, infrastructure, and socioeconomic conditions ranging from infant mortality rates to the number of unhoused people living in a village.[288] Eventually, the ODAs could map out areas of active and passive support among the population (see Figure 3). This information was then depicted graphically to identify areas where the government was failing to meet the basic needs of its citizens, which directly translated into the population's willingness to support the ASG.[289] The terror group exploited the lack of government security and basic services on the island and maintained its power through fear.

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283. Maria Ryan, *Full Spectrum Dominance: Irregular Warfare and the War on Terror* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 59; Maxwell, 20; Stentiford, 35.

284. Robinson, et al., 16.

285. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.

286. Robinson, et al., 21.

287. Fridovich's approach drew heavily from his experiences in Haiti and Bosnia, as well as a highly influential 1997 article in *Special Warfare* magazine in which Dr. Kalev Sepp advocated for the use of Special Forces (SF), civil affairs (CA), and military support to operations (MISO) units to navigate ambiguous environments while fighting irregular wars. Robinson, et al., 21–22. See also Kalev I. Sepp, "Preparing for 2010: Thinking Outside the Box," *Special Warfare* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 2–6.

288. C. H. Briscoe, "Balikatan Exercises Spearheaded ARSOF Operations in the Philippines," *Special Warfare* 17, no. 1 (September 2004): 20; Gregory Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and the Indirect Approach," *Military Review* 86 (November/December 2006): 6.

289. One Special Forces officer, Eric Wendt, described this graphical depiction as a "map of disappointment." For more information on the survey and assessment process, see Eric P. Wendt, "Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling," *Special Warfare* 18, no. 2 (September 2005): 2–13.

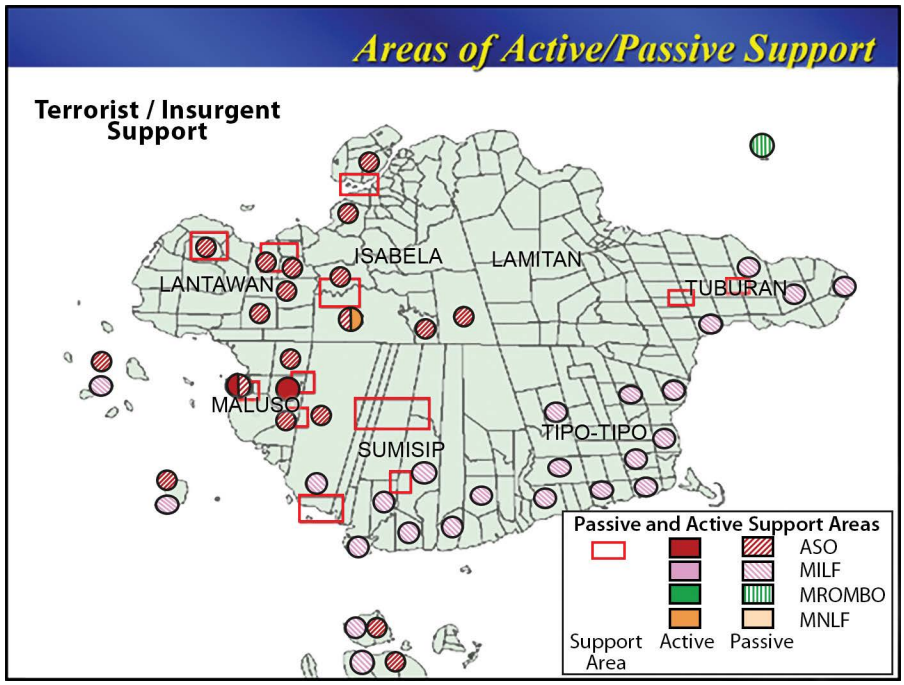

Figure 3. Example of demographic assessment of Basilan, 2002. (Source: Donald C. Wurster, "JTF-510 Enduring Freedom-RP," unpublished PowerPoint briefing.)

With an initial plan for ODAs on Basilan underway, Wurster could assess the larger strategic picture in the region. His perception of ASG's disposition in 2001 was that the group primarily consisted of "thugs" who "did not meet al Qaeda's standards" of organization and ideology and who used the rhetoric of Islam to justify their criminal actions.[290] Still, ASG had known financial ties to al-Qaeda in the mid-1990s that made them a target in line with the Bush administration's desire to pursue known al-Qaeda affiliates around the world. Furthermore, the group's kidnapping of Americans demonstrated that ASG had the capacity and willingness to threaten American interests in the region. These facts distinguished the group from other extremists in the US Pacific Command area of responsibility and, in the eyes of the administration, warranted a careful counterterrorism response that would honor the sovereignty of the Philippines while protecting American interests. Specifically, as the ODAs

290. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

simultaneously conducted capacity-building and humanitarian assistance, the Burnhams' recovery would be a concurrent, but subordinate, objective.[291]

When Admiral Blair received the TCAV's initial findings in November, he sent a tentative plan to Washington. The plan would be Pacific Command's answer to US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's call for geographic combatant commands to draft counterterrorism plans for "global activity to counter al Qaeda" in the immediate wake of 9/11.[292] Of all the campaign plans submitted by the combatant commanders, the Pacific Command proposal created by SOCPAC was the only one to receive strong approval from the secretary.[293]

An opportunity for the United States to support existing Philippine government counterinsurgency operations in the Sulu islands represented a convergence of interests for the two countries. In November 2001, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo pledged her support for the Bush administration's global counterterrorism efforts, citing her country's own battle with Islamic extremists.[294] On a visit to Washington, President Arroyo secured USD 93 million in security assistance funding for the ill-equipped Philippine army, which in turn boosted her domestic political standing as she sought to consolidate support for an upcoming election in 2004.[295] The pending American deployment to Basilan, however, drew harsh domestic criticism as many political rivals claimed that any counterterrorism mission against the Abu Sayyaf Group violated the Philippine constitution.[296]

Ratified in 1987, the constitution states explicitly that no foreign troops be allowed to enter the Philippines except under treaty, a provision inspired by the country's experience with colonialism.[297] President Arroyo and the US government claimed the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951 and the Visiting Forces Agreement of 1998 provided the legal justification needed for the de-

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291. C. H. Briscoe, "Rescuing the Burnhams: The Unspoken SOCPAC Mission," *Special Warfare* 17, no. 1 (September 2004): 46–51.

292. Donald C. Wurster (former commander, Special Operations Command-Pacific and Joint Task Force-510) interview with Mike Bosco of the Global SOF Foundation, 1 April 2021.

293. Thomas E. Ricks, "Pacific Plan Seeks Clues To Al Qaeda Contacts," *Washington Post*, 4 November 2001.

294. Lander, 5.

295. Walden Bello, "A 'Second Front' in the Philippines," *The Nation*, 18 March 2002, 20; Niksch, 13.

296. Bello, 18.

297. Article XVIII, Section 25 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution states, "After the expiration in 1991 of the Agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning Military Bases, foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate and, when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting State." Republic of the Philippines, "Philippine's Constitution of 1987," The Constitute Project, 60.

ployment of US troops to Basilan.[298] While the Mutual Defense Treaty affirms the Cold War–era commitment to aid in the "collective capacity to resist armed attack" and the Visiting Forces Agreement stipulates the conduct of US forces on exercises, neither document specifically refers to quelling internal insurgencies.[299] This ambiguity muddied the waters of a clear, legitimate legal mandate, heightening the domestic political skepticism in the Philippines.[300] Even Philippine Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. eventually resigned his post in mid-2002 because he believed any American troop presence violated the constitution.[301] Some Filipinos believed the United States sought any reason to reestablish a permanent military presence in the nation after abandoning Clark Air Base and Subic Bay in the early 1990s.[302]

In addition to concerns in the Philippines, the potential joint venture also provoked criticism in the United States. Members of the American press expressed doubts as to what American military force could achieve by supporting a majority Catholic government in a fight against Islamic extremists.[303] While the ASG, JI, MNLF, and MILF all maintained a presence in the southern islands and all coordinated with each other to varying degrees, they each advocated for differing political aims which ultimately kept their efforts segregated. Skeptical voices in Washington expressed that the introduction of American troops may have a unifying effect on the otherwise disparate groups under a common cause of ousting American forces.[304] American troops had not operated in the Sulu archipelago since World War II, increasing the level of uncertainty surrounding what would happen upon their return. Wurster, along with his staff and his superiors, weighed these potential risks of military action.

Within this sensitive political context, Wurster recognized the need to generate buy-in among Philippine government officials. Before JTF-510 mobilized, Wurster and several of his staff traveled to Manila to brief a select group of decision makers in the Philippine government, including a counselor to President Arroyo, the Philippine national security advisor, the secretary of

298. Maxwell, 22; Stentiford, 7.

299. See Department of State, "Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines; August 30, 1951," *American Foreign Policy 1950–1955*, Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1957, Article II; see also Department of State, "Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines Regarding the Treatment of United States Armed Forces Visiting the Philippines; February 10, 1998," Treaties and Other International Acts Series 12931; Bello, 18–19.

300. Norman Bordadora, "Wolfowitz Dangles Aid Carrot," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 5 June 2002.

301. Marichu A. Villanueva, "GMA to relinquish DFA post tomorrow," *The Philippine Star*, 29 July 2002.

302. Bello, 20.

303. Bello, 20.

304. Bello, 21.

national defense, and the AFP's most senior military officer on a proposed plan to provide military assistance on Basilan. The five-slide PowerPoint presentation Wurster used to articulate his vision for the operation clearly displayed to the political and military leaders how the United States could build up forces to advise and train the AFP, and then redeploy from the island when the training was complete (see fig. 4).[305]

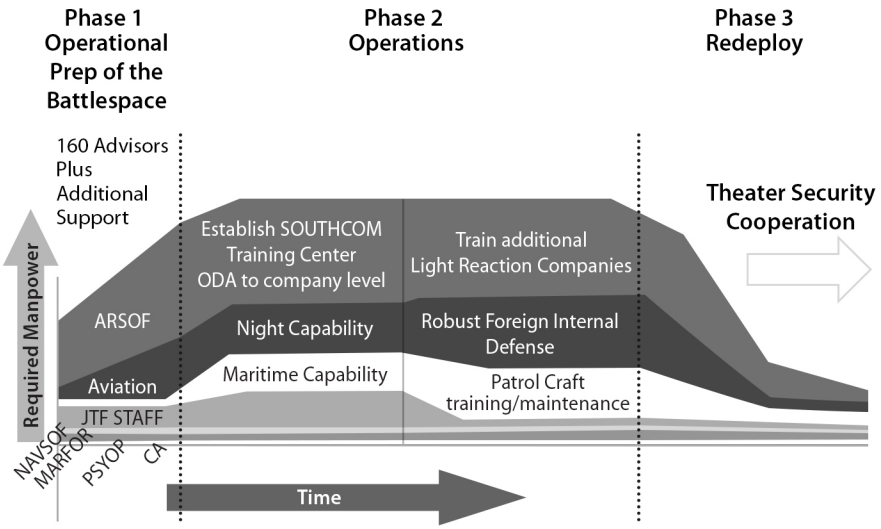

Figure 4. Graphic used by Brigadier General Wurster to brief Philippine government officials, 2002. (Source: Special Operations Command-Pacific, "Implementation Plan: RP-US Counterpart Concept," unpublished PowerPoint briefing.)

The complex political dynamics were on display when Wurster and the Philippine officials held a press conference. The Philippine Secretary of National Defense, Angelo Reyes, quietly listened to Wurster's presentation, then proceeded to berate Wurster in front of reporters for conspiring to reestablish a permanent US military presence in the country.[306] A staff officer accompanying Wurster described the general as "unruffled" and "calm" in the meeting as he addressed Secretary Reyes's concerns in front of the media.[307] Afterward, Secretary Reyes privately admitted to Wurster that his public scolding had

305. Special Operations Command-Pacific, "Implementation Plan: RP-US Counterpart Concept," unpublished PowerPoint briefing, January 2002, slide 2.
306. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.
307. Kaufman, interview, 19 February 2022.

been a performance meant to reassure a skeptical Philippine public the United States would not be exerting its influence unchecked.[308] At the time, reporters in Manila reflected the country's cross-sectional discontent over the American troop deployment to Basilan. Government officials, human rights activists, and environmentalists expressed doubt that American involvement could have a positive impact.[309] While protests occurred at the American embassy in Manila, the plan for Balikatan 02-01 enjoyed wide public support in the southern city of Zamboanga, where JTF-510 would establish its headquarters.[310]

Vocal critics of reintroducing US troops into the Southern Philippines prompted the Philippine Senate to stipulate terms of reference—strict guidelines for JTF-510's conduct during the operation.[311] The document prohibited US forces from conducting unilateral operations, barred US troops from engaging in direct combat with ASG, and detailed how AFP and US forces would follow their respective chains of command. Additionally, the document allowed for just 600 American troops to operate in the southern Philippines, including 160 Special Forces soldiers on Basilan specifically.[312] Once the terms of reference had been codified into Philippine law, Admiral Blair sent Wurster another set of instructions that included the admiral's expectations for how JTF-510 would advise, train, and assist the AFP.[313] The guidance dictated that JTF-510 would develop a security assistance program to build the capacity of the AFP and also conduct civil-military operations on Basilan with the goal of defeating ASG's ability to capitalize on local malcontent.[314] Recognizing that this second set of instructions may be interpreted as a second, "secret" Terms of Reference document, Wurster recommended to Blair that the instructions be labeled "Commander's Guidance" and made public.[315] This push for transparency was a confidence-building measure to generate trust between Wurster and the AFP leadership. Wurster would not be operating under a second set of instructions, but instead following the guidance of Admiral Blair, congruent with the terms of reference approved by the Philippine Senate.

Wurster's relationship with his AFP counterparts proved an additional challenge prior to the commencement of JTF-510's operation on Basilan.

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308. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

309. Marites, Sison, "Philippine Reaction to the Return of US Troops: 'Welcome Back, GI Joe,'" *Newsbreak*, 19 February 2002.

310. Sison 2–3.

311. Robinson, et al., 23–24.

312. Robinson, et al., 28, Appendix A, 133–36.

313. Dennis C. Blair, "Commander's Guidance for Operation Freedom Eagle," email message to Brig Gen Donald Wurster, 2 February 2002.

314. Blair, email to Wurster, 2 February 2002.

315. Donald C. Wurster, "JTF-510 Commander's Guidance," email message to Dennis Blair, 2 February 2002.

Wurster assessed that one fundamental concern of AFP leadership was that a joint operation against ASG on Basilan had the potential to expose rampant corruption within the ranks of the AFP in the southern part of the country.[316] In addition to conducting an effort to bolster the capability of the AFP, he would have to strike a delicate balance between respecting the sovereignty of the Philippine government without exposing corruption in a way that could undermine the credibility of the AFP.

Establishing the "Second Front"

The American media labeled US military operations in the Philippines as a second front of what became known as the Global War on Terror.[317] In October 2001, the Bush administration responded to the 9/11 attacks by launching Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) to pursue al-Qaeda and topple the Taliban in Afghanistan. Due to ASG's known links to al-Qaeda, the media situated US military operations in the Philippines as part of the wider effort to counter violent Islamic extremism around the world. Aside from providing conceptual continuity between seemingly disparate efforts, this characterization of the mission also implied a greater allocation of resources and authorities, and thus gained traction within the Joint Staff and US Pacific Command.

The importance of this designation went beyond the superficial, as the nesting of JTF-510's mission under the umbrella of OEF allowed Wurster to access newly approved lines of funding.[318] The US Congress had approved USD 40 billion in the fall of 2001 to pay for Operation Enduring Freedom. Had Blair and Wurster not framed JTF-510's mission within OEF, Wurster would have been relegated to using Balikatan exercise funding only.[319] On February 2, 2002, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Air Force General Richard Myers directed that JTF-510's operation be named "Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines" or OEF-P. When Admiral Blair sent his commander's guidance to Wurster, he explicitly outlined JTF-510's mission as "in support of Operation Enduring Freedom."[320] Still, the Title 10 funding for OEF would only pay for the day-to-day operation of US forces, not for the humanitarian assistance and military assistance Wurster required to complete the task force's mission on Basilan.

316. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.
317. Radics, 116; Bello, 18.
318. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.
319. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.
320. Blair, email to Wurster, 2 February 2002.

To help secure additional funding beyond Title 10, Wurster flew to Manila to meet with Senators Ted Stevens (R–AK) and Daniel Inouye (D–HI) in April 2002. Wurster's compelling argument for how humanitarian assistance supported the fight against terrorism earned the support of the elected officials, both of whom were influential members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Even though Wurster had made a formal request for additional funding through US Pacific Command channels, the senators pressed him on exactly how much funding he needed. Wurster replied that he needed USD 25 million in military assistance to equip the AFP and another USD 5 million in humanitarian assistance—to which Senator Stevens replied, "you'll get it."[321] By seizing the opportunity to walk the senators through his strategy for Basilan, Wurster demonstrated a combination of bureaucratic savvy and political awareness to further the mission of the task force.[322] When Admiral Blair testified days later in front of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Inouye stated in his opening remarks:

> Over the past two weeks, Senator Stevens and I traveled again to Asia. . . . At each stop, we heard the same thing. The United States must stay engaged in the region. We must maintain our military posture. We must keep our cooperative engagement strategy. . . . In the Philippines, we received a briefing from our military leaders that are engaged with the Philippine Government to defeat terrorists. Admiral [Blair], we come back here sobered by these concerns. To those who believe we can withdraw from the region, we say nonsense.[323]

The effort to secure additional funding for JTF-510 was just one example of how Wurster used consistent messaging and a compelling narrative to acquire the resources needed to succeed in his assigned mission.[324] Even though Wurster aggressively pursued funding as the commander, his approach to resources was still congruent with his distributed leadership style. He coordi-

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321. Even though Wurster possessed presidential drawdown authority to give the AFP any equipment he deemed necessary from JTF-510's inventory, handing over equipment to the AFP in this manner was not a sustainable option. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

322. Following the senators' visit to Manila, Air Force Colonel Randy O'Boyle, US Pacific Command legislative liaison officer, remarked in an email to Wurster, "don't know how you did it but know what you did was build tremendous support and determination by these most important senators—told CINC the same—he laughed when I told him they said He was very professional in how he laid out the problem—'almost reminded me of a preacher, we will all now turn to hymn #. . .' they liked it." Randall O'Boyle, "Ref UAV—from Col O'Boyle," email message to Donald Wurster, 8 April 2002.

323. United States Senate Committee on Appropriations, "US Pacific Command Posture," opening statement by Daniel K. Inouye during a meeting of the Subcommittee on Defense, Honolulu, Hawaii, 3 April 2002.

324. Wurster recounted that he learned the importance of crafting "consistent, compelling messages" from Air Force General Charles R. Holland, a former commander of US Special Operations Command, and one of Wurster's mentors. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

nated to have executive agency for accounting and finance of the entire operation distributed among PACOM's theater components. In this way, SOCPAC's headquarters was not burdened by the job of distributing funds at the tactical level.[325] With funding secured, Wurster's strategic narrative was coming together. To those in Washington, JTF-510 would be fighting an extension of the War on Terror; to those in Manila, the task force would be conducting an exercise to bolster the capacity of the AFP; and to those on Basilan, the Americans would be improving basic infrastructure and services. No matter the lens through which the deployment was viewed, the United States would be taking proactive measures to degrade ASG and expel the insurgency from the island.

Formulating and Communicating the Strategy

When Wurster took command of SOCPAC in October 2000, there existed some initial skepticism among some members of the staff who were unsure of how an Air Force pilot could understand the intricacies of working on the ground with partner forces.[326] This sentiment was prevalent among some in the Army Special Forces, or "Green Beret," community assigned to the staff. One Green Beret officer observed that, despite the initial feelings of uncertainty, it became clear Wurster was interested in educating himself in the Special Forces mission. The Green Beret noted, "He took the time to learn our language. . . eventually he thought like we thought."[327] Over time, Wurster earned the trust of the Special Forces personnel through his "credibility, knowledge, and respect of differing opinions."[328] Throughout the collaboration between SOCPAC and 1st SFG specifically, several staff officers credited Wurster for setting a tone that discouraged any interservice rivalry or turf battles.[329]

Well before the mobilization of JTF-510, Wurster came to rely on a small cohort of staff officers to generate fresh ideas, conduct short-notice planning, and sometimes even circumvent slow-moving military bureaucracy. Made up of about six staff officers at any given time throughout his tenure at SOCPAC, Wurster called this informal group of officers his "sled dogs," a nod to his time spent in Alaska. Among the "sled dogs" from SOCPAC who accompanied him to JTF-510 were Air Force special operations pilot Major Christopher Kaufman, Army Special Forces officer Major Mike Lugo, Navy SEAL Lieutenant Commander James Marvin, and Major Rieka Stroh, an Army psychological

325. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.
326. Michael J. Lugo, (former SOCPAC J33 operations officer and JTF-510 Deputy J3 operations officer) interviewed by author, 3 May 2022.
327. Lugo, interview, 3 May 2022.
328. Lugo, interview, 3 May 2022.
329. Kaufman, interview, 19 February 2022; Lugo, interview, 3 May 2022; Marvin, interview, 4 May 2022.

operations officer.[330] In the fall of 2001 when it came time to develop the plan for JTF-510's execution, Wurster paired his "sled dogs" with Army planners from the 1st SFG. Additionally, many of these staff officers would serve in the joint operations center (JOC) in Zamboanga in 2002.

Wurster's strategy was formulated from an intense collaboration between Colonel Fridovich's assessments on Basilan, options for counterinsurgency models proposed by his planning staff, and the operational preparation done by a team of staff officers. The strategy Wurster eventually put into action to follow through on the narrative he created was formulated before JTF-510 departed for the Philippines. After reviewing the results of the population assessments done by Colonel Fridovich and his team, Wurster met with a core group of planners to refine a broad counterinsurgency strategy for the mission. One Army Special Forces officer, Major Eric Wendt, in the J5 Plans directorate of SOCPAC proposed several models for a counterinsurgency strategy to Wurster.[331] The model that resonated with Wurster the most was a graphic depiction of the interaction between the government, the population, and the insurgents (see Figure 5). The separate interactions between the three groups formed a triangle, indicating three distinct types of action by the counterinsurgency force. Specifically, the model called for enhancing the legitimacy of the local government in the eyes of the population, severing the connection between the population and the insurgents, and responding directly to the insurgents with force if necessary.[332] Through this model, Wurster believed he could easily articulate to a wider audience how US forces would enable the AFP to conduct all three actions.[333]

Wurster's ability to utilize the expertise of SOCPAC's staff was crucial to the successful communication of his vision. Wurster negotiated the seemingly in harmonious aims of distilling a complex operating environment into a simple idea, while still retaining the high degree of nuance necessary to accomplish the mission in a politically sensitive environment. Once JTF-510's

330. Marvin, interview, 4 May 2022.

331. Eric Wendt attended the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) prior to his assignment at SOCPAC, where he gained exposure to the teachings of Dr. Gordon McCormick, the NPS professor who developed the counterinsurgency model eventually chosen by Wurster. McCormick later refined and expanded his model, which became known as the "magic diamond," but he never formally published it. For a description of the model updated in 2011, see Gregory Wilson, "The Mystic Diamond" in Michael Freeman and Hy Rothstein, eds., *Gangs and Guerrillas: Ideas from Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism*, NPS Department of Defense Analysis Report 11-001 (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), 27–32.

332. For a detailed description of these lines of effort, see Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 4–5.

333. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022. For examples of other models similar to those presented to Wurster in 2001, see Eric P. Wendt, "Strategic Counterinsurgency Modeling," *Special Warfare* 18, no. 2 (September 2005): 2–13.

headquarters deployed to Zamboanga, Wurster personally met every cargo aircraft that landed on the airfield to brief arriving US personnel on the mission of JTF-510.[334] Wurster recognized the dispersed nature of the task force's mission meant he would not interact with all 1,300 troops under command daily. He therefore needed to communicate his intent as the commander to ensure unity of effort. His briefing included the graphic depiction of his counterinsurgency strategy, and he talked through his intent for the relationships between the government, the population, and the ASG insurgents.[335]

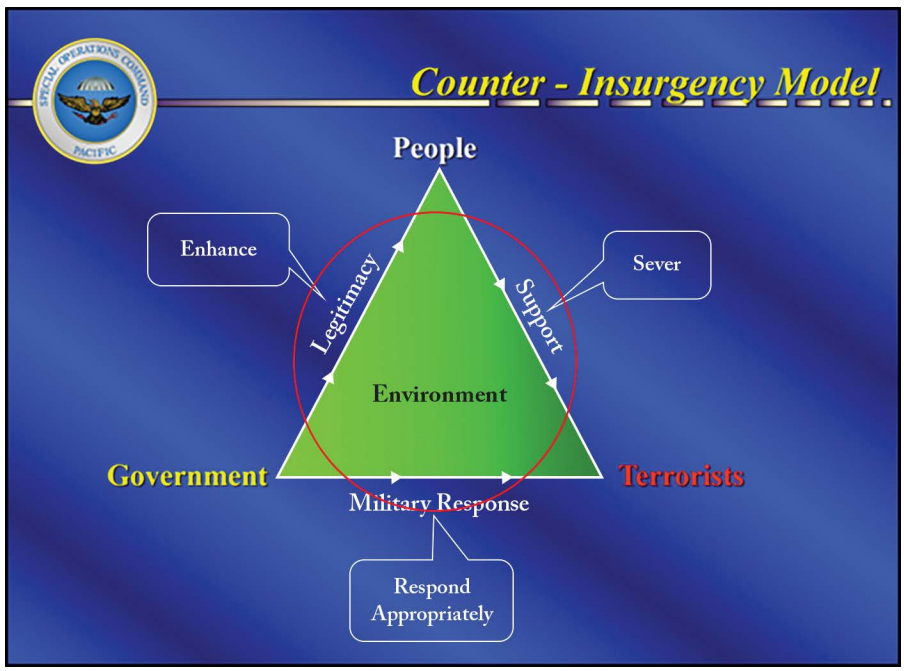

Figure 5. Model used by Brigadier General Wurster and JTF-510 to communicate counterinsurgency strategy, 2002. (Source: Donald C. Wurster, "JTF-510 Enduring Freedom-RP," unpublished PowerPoint briefing.)

Wurster's briefing to newly arrived personnel emphasized another one of his core tenets: there would be strict discipline enforced within JTF-510. Given the Philippine population's general skepticism, the government's strict terms of reference, and the unblinking local media attention, there would be no room for

334. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
335. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.

any behavior which could discredit the US military mission.[336] Wurster understood that a single photo, action, or remark by any US personnel would immediately become headline news, and be construed to confirm the worst fears of critics in the Philippine government and society.[337] Any negative press could derail the entire effort to sever the connection between ASG and the population on Basilan. In the course of the six months of JTF-510's operation in the Southern Philippines, the task force did not have a single instance of a negative press story due to poor conduct.

Wurster packed two personal books in his kit before deploying to Zamboanga—a Bible, owing to his religious upbringing, and Sun Tzu's *Art of War,* an influential text from his professional military education.[338] His emphasis on discipline and respect within the task force was inspired in part by one Sun Tzu quote in particular: "To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself."[339] Wurster perceived that the quickest way to ensure defeat was to display to a skeptical press behaviors that they expected to see, such as the disrespect of women or the trampling of Philippine sovereignty.[340] Throughout the six months in command of the task force, Wurster would repeat the phrase, "we do not want to lose while we set the conditions to win."[341]

Wurster's interactions with the Philippine people led him to infuse empathy into his strategy. During the campaign, Wurster met with a group of Filipino college students at Mindanao University in Davao City as part of a public relations trip. Engagements such as this emphasized to Wurster the impact that emotion and goodwill would have on JTF-510's efforts. In Wurster's assessment, Filipinos "think with their hearts."[342] Wurster understood that for his narrative to resonate with the people, he would have to appeal to both reason and emotion.

Wurster's strategy ultimately coalesced into an indirect approach. Since the Philippine government's terms of reference explicitly prohibited direct, unilateral action by American forces against ASG, an indirect approach was a natural choice. In light of the political constraints, the disposition of the local population, and the nature of the insurgency, Wurster recognized the fight on

336. Kaufman, interview, 19 February 2022.
337. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
338. Donald C. Wurster, email message to author, 9 February 2022.
339. Wurster, email message to author, 9 February 2022. Another translation of Chapter IV, verse 2, reads: "Invincibility depends on one's self; the enemy's vulnerability on him." Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War: The Definitive English Translation by Samuel B. Griffith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 127.
340. Wurster, email message to author, 9 February 2022.
341. Wurster, email message to author, 9 February 2022.
342. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

Basilan was "not ours to own."[343] As a commander, Wurster realized his job was to "ensure strategic success" by harmonizing partner country considerations, the concerns of the simultaneous American diplomatic and interagency missions, and political considerations in Washington.[344] His ability to maintain awareness of the factors affecting his strategy while being knowledgeable of the tactical situation on Basilan stands out as critical to his success. With Wurster managing strategy at the helm, JTF-510 implemented three lines of effort: a combination of civil-military operations, information operations, and partner capacity-building to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of the AFP.[345]

Civil-Military Operations

Early in 2002, even though Wurster garnered the support of Senators Stevens and Inouye for an additional USD 5 million for humanitarian assistance, those funds would not be appropriated until October. Since JTF-510's mission was set to expire on 31 July, Wurster assessed that some ingenuity would be required to conduct the necessary infrastructure projects on Basilan before the task force departed. At the suggestion of the task force's judge advocate general (JAG), Wurster and his staff developed a plan to validate the use of Title 10 funding for civil projects on Basilan as "dual use," since the US forces on the island required the infrastructure for movement and resupply.[346] If one ODA needed to respond to another ODA on Basilan in an emergency, the task force JAG pointed out, then Title 10 could be used to repair the road connecting the two units. With ODAs spread out across the island, the entirety of the island's ring road could be repaired—facilitating the AFP's ability to secure remote parts of the island and frustrating ASG's freedom of movement. The empowering tone set by Wurster at the helm of JTF-510 enabled his staff to generate innovative solutions in the unstructured environment of the southern Philippines.

Another barrier was the 160-personnel limit to the number of troops allowed on Basilan imposed by the terms of reference. The task force was already operating at the maximum number of personnel allowed on Basilan and in Zamboanga, where Wurster previously had to redeploy several support personnel to stay in compliance with the terms of reference. To complicate matters, this constraint did not allow for the required number of construction personnel

343. Donald C. Wurster, "Phase 2 Operations," email message to Dennis Blair, 10 April 2002.
344. Wurster, interview with Global SOF Foundation, 1 April 2021.
345. Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 6; Robinson, 153.
346. Robinson, et al., 30; Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.

needed to complete the infrastructure projects. Recognizing the urgent need, Admiral Blair ordered a Naval Construction Task Group (NCTG) from US Pacific Command, consisting of 500 Navy Seabees and a Marine security detachment, to sail to a position 12 miles off the coast of the Philippines. Admiral Blair then called Wurster, who in turn phoned Philippine National Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes. Admiral Blair's message to the Philippine government was clear—the construction task group was available for use on Basilan, but if it was not sent ashore in the next several days, it would not be available again for the rest of Balikatan 02-01. With final approval from President Arroyo, the Navy Seabees and Marines landed on Basilan and started their task of improving Basilan's vital infrastructure.[347] Despite the fact that the number of US troops in the southern Philippines swelled to well over the 160-person limit for the duration of the operation, there was no protest from the Philippine government.[348] Because Wurster gained buy-in from the Philippine government's leadership and had the support of Admiral Blair, he was willing to question a previously held assumption regarding troop strength in order to accomplish the mission. In the task force's daily situation reports that followed, Wurster accurately listed the number of personnel in each unit under his command. He directed, however, that the final tally of American troops in the southern Philippines be removed from the report so as not to arouse prying questions in Washington.[349]

Civic action programs encouraged the population of Basilan to view the Philippine government as a source of assistance rather than a source of disenfranchisement and neglect.[350] An Army Civil Affairs team deployed to Basilan to conduct assessments, while at the same time ODAs held medical civic action programs (MEDCAPs) and dental civic action programs (DENTCAPs).[351] During the six months the JTF was on the island, the NCTG and AFP units focused on improving a total of 80 kilometers of road, four bridges, two piers, and five water projects, and three helicopter landing zones.[352] To hasten the completion of the projects, local workers were hired for both labor and perimeter security for construction projects.[353] Wurster would later recall the

347. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
348. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
349. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
350. Robinson, 153.
351. Cherilyn A. Walley, "Civil Affairs: A Weapon of Peace on Basilan Island," *Special Warfare* 17, no. 1 (September 2004): 30.
352. Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 7; Robinson, et al., 29; Donald C. Wurster, "JTF-510 Enduring Freedom-RP," lecture and associated PowerPoint presentation, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2 April 2021, slide 29.
353. Wurster noted the employment of fighters from the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU), a local militia group friendly to the government, was very effective at preventing security incidents

enthusiasm among locals working on the road specifically because once the road was complete it would "take [the worker's] children to the new schools we were building, it would take his family to the clinic we fixed, and it would take his goods to market."[354] In turn, the local confidence in the government began to increase. In addition to bolstering local support for the government, the civil projects and services enabled increased freedom of movement for US and AFP troops and also facilitated the collection of intelligence on the enemy's disposition.[355] Wurster noted that at one point during Balikatan 02-01, the MILF posted on its website that MEDCAPs were more dangerous to its cause than bullets.[356]

By April 2002, the narrative among the people on Basilan was shifting in favor of the American presence, and by design, the Philippine government. In one incident, a local family brought an injured child to an ODA team operating outside Isabela City, the island's capital. An American medic treated the young girl for a wound caused by a fishhook, giving her antibiotics and telling the family to return in three days if the injury worsened. The girl was the granddaughter of the grand imam of the neighboring Lantawan county, an area on the northwest corner of the island known as an ASG stronghold. Wurster recounted that when the imam learned of how the Americans helped his granddaughter, the imam decreed that no US personnel should be harmed in Lantawan.[357] The story is just one example of how JTF-510, under Wurster's leadership, worked to control the narrative on Basilan through their actions.

Ultimately, JTF-510's civic actions helped President Arroyo quell domestic critics in Manila.[358] Before the deployment of American troops, the inhabitants of the Sulu island chain still maintained a collective cultural memory of the brutal Moro Wars. Civilians on Basilan initially greeted American troops with throat-slashing signs upon their arrival in early 2002.[359] Decades of re-

during the NCTG-led construction projects. US construction units were never fired upon during their operations. Two snipers from the US Marine security detachment did, however, exchange gunfire with insurgents on one occasion on an outer perimeter. The firefight ended with no American or AFP casualties. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.

354. Wurster also observed that after the all-weather road connecting the interior of the island was completed, the ease of transportation on the road and the disappearance of ASG checkpoints led to a new problem—an increase in car accidents from locals driving too fast. Wurster, interview with Global SOF Foundation, 1 April 2021.

355. Eric Schmitt, "On Basilan, Roads and Wells to Fight Rebels," *New York Times*, 14 June 2002.

356. Targeting the MILF was not a JTF-510 objective, but as Robinson, et al. describe, there existed a "web of familial, clan, and patronage ties, in addition to political sympathies" among the various Islamic extremist organizations in the Sulu archipelago that made for a complex operating environment. Robinson, et al., 41; Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

357. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.

358. Niksch, 15.

359. Robert D. Kaplan, "Imperial Grunts," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 2005, 3.

sentment evaporated in a matter of months, however, as the population witnessed the security situation dramatically improve after the return of law and order. By the time JTF-510 completed its work in the summer, AFP troops had denied ASG insurgents' freedom of movement in the populated areas of the island, such as Isabela City in the northwest.[360]

Media Relations and Information Operations

The Balikatan series of joint exercises between the US forces and the AFP provided the ideal messaging platform through which to communicate the proposed US presence on Basilan. The Philippine government used the Balikatan name for the US presence because it was more politically palatable to frame the introduction of US troops to Basilan as an ongoing exercise instead of a military operation. In discussing the US presence publicly, Wurster understood that he would have to use caution—he could not call the effort by its exercise name since he expected to receive Title 10 funding for OEF.[361] The name Balikatan allowed AFP leadership to market the US troop presence as an exercise, while Wurster simply avoided using the Balikatan name and also did not emphasize the "second front" narrative which could have exacerbated political sensitivities in Philippine society.

Since its original deployment order did not initially allow JTF-510 to conduct deliberate psychological operations (PSYOPs) targeting ASG fighters, the task force instead employed a broader information effort aimed at boosting the AFP's image among the Basilan population.[362] As a result, much of this public messaging fell to Wurster to be the face and the voice of the operation, carefully crafting messages meant for both Filipino civilians and ASG to consume. At the outset of the mission, Admiral Blair directed Wurster to engage with the press in the course of his duties.[363] This engagement began early on, in January 2002, when Wurster arrived in Zamboanga on a military transport aircraft. Wurster's team expected to land with little fanfare, but instead he was greeted on the ramp by a swarm of about one hundred reporters from various media outlets.

Wurster was commonly photographed and interviewed alongside his counterpart for the Balikatan exercises, AFP Marine Brigadier General Emmanuel Teodosio.[364] Skeptical Philippine reporters launched waves of questions at

360. Stentiford, 39.
361. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
362. Robinson, et al., 30; Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
363. Blair email to Wurster, 2 February 2002.
364. Roel Pareño, "Balikatan to Push Through Tomorrow," *Philippine Star*, 30 January 2002.

both Wurster and Teodosio during press conferences, but the generals presented a united front. When confronted with pointed questions early in the operation, Wurster recounted his response entailed, "Give us a chance to do what we said we're going to do."[365] In Wurster's opinion, the Philippine media were searching for any comment that would indicate the Americans were not treating the AFP as equal partners. Wurster became immersed in monitoring the print media and read the local papers in Zamboanga every day, acknowledging that the public perception of the task force was paramount. He remarked to Admiral Blair in an email, "As a quiet professional, I would rather eat glass than face this much exposure to the media but our messages are in step and seem to be reported with reasonable accuracy."[366] Despite Wurster's inclination to remain outside of the media spotlight, his willingness to engage with the press contributed greatly to his ability to communicate the US government's narrative surrounding the American military mission in the southern Philippines.

Interactions with the public and the media also served to broadcast messages to the insurgents. During some media engagements, Wurster deliberately hinted that there were informants among the ranks of ASG with the intent to break down trust and unit cohesion among the enemy. Additionally, Wurster and his staff welcomed the public and press to look at the helicopters used by JTF-510 up close. These static aircraft displays increased transparency with the public, and by deliberately showcasing the miniguns on each side of the helicopters, they also sent a message to anyone thinking about shooting at the task force's aircraft.[367]

Furthermore, Wurster's trusted "sled dog" officers were given wide latitude to generate fresh ideas that could further the task force's objectives in the battle of competing narratives.[368] Brainstorming sessions with this informal group of officers often led to unorthodox ideas, but Wurster listened intently. When an idea was too far-fetched, or not aligned with the task force's mandate, Wurster would explain why the idea was not actionable and revectored the energy of his officers in another direction. This style ensured his officers were not discouraged from continuing to bring him creative and innovative ideas.

One example of an idea hatched by Wurster's "sled dogs" involved military deception. With ASG fighters increasingly forced to maneuver on jungle trails

365. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022.

366. Wurster email to Blair, 2 February 2002.

367. The American embassy in Manila also conducted aircraft static displays and showcased unarmed remotely piloted aircraft to Philippine government leaders to build their confidence in the US military presence. Robinson, et al., 31; Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.

368. Stroh, email message to author, 13 May 2022; Marvin, interview, 4 May 2022.

because of the construction and security presence on the island's main road, JTF-510 planned ways of using military deception to limit ASG's movement even further.[369] The plan called for scattering brown-painted ping pong balls on the jungle floor and tricking ASG insurgents into believing these "sky pebbles" could detect them using tracking devices and cameras as they maneuvered through the jungle.[370] Wurster later recalled the plan was scrapped by Pacific Command and never materialized, however, because higher headquarters was concerned about a breakdown of trust between the Americans, the local government, and the population if the Americans were caught conducting an obvious deception operation.[371] While the "sky pebbles" idea displayed the creativity of Wurster's staff and the culture of innovation he fostered, the effort was ultimately incongruent with his emphasis on building trust with the AFP and the population, even if the deception would have been aimed at ASG fighters.

Train, Advise, and Assist Mission

Over the course of six months of JTF-510's operation on Basilan, 10 American ODA teams advised 15 Philippine infantry battalions fighting the Abu Sayyaf Group.[372] Additionally, Navy SEALs advised the AFP on maritime operations.[373] When advertised to the public, these interactions were labeled as subject matter expert exchanges to emphasize Americans were sharing knowledge with the AFP as equal partners.[374] The reality was that the ODA teams found the AFP in disarray and badly in need of infantry skills, combat lifesaving training, and weapons proficiency.[375] The training instilled AFP units with the confidence and morale needed to more effectively patrol ASG-held areas on the island, deny the insurgents sanctuary, and ultimately take more responsibility for the security of the Muslim population.[376] In particular, the use of American helicopters to conduct night medical evacuations

369. Stroh, email message to author, 13 May 2022.

370. Rieka Stroh, the JTF-510 PSYOP planner, recounted that the AFP suffered from a lack of operational security. The canceled plan called for a false description of the "sky pebbles" to be sent to the AFP with the understanding that word would eventually reach ASG insurgents. Stroh, email message to author, 13 May 2022.

371. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.

372. Stentiford, 37.

373. Marvin, interview, 4 May 2022.

374. Stentiford, 37.

375. Maxwell, 7; Robinson, 159.

376. One high-ranking AFP officer told Colonel Fridovich at the conclusion of JTF-510's operations, "You taught us how to treat all of our people like all of our people," emphasizing that the Philippine Army had learned to be the army for all the people, not just the Christian majority. David P. Fridovich, interview with Global SOF Foundation, 1 April 2021.

(MEDEVACs) of AFP soldiers motivated them to continue pursuing ASG after dark.[377] Wurster recounted that before the introduction of Special Forces teams on Basilan, regular AFP units often stopped patrolling in the mid-afternoon. The Philippine troops understood that if they were injured after that point in the day, they could not be evacuated to a medical facility until morning, decreasing their chances of survival. Once US helicopters began 24-hour medical evacuation flights, Wurster directed that an injured AFP soldier in the hospital use a phone to call the members of his unit to relay that he was successfully evacuated and treated.[378] Word then spread in AFP units regarding the reliability of the MEDEVACs. From Wurster's perspective, improved equipment, intelligence, and noncommissioned officer leadership had the effect of providing a "spinal transplant" to an AFP infantry unit.[379]

Despite early success, the mission to build the AFP's legitimacy and capacity faced limitations. US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld directed from the outset ODA teams limit their advising to the battalion level, instead of accompanying AFP units on company-level patrols.[380] Wurster knew President Arroyo was a proponent of US troops advising at the AFP at the company level, and the Philippine senate's terms of reference allowed for such advising as well.[381] Wurster appealed to Admiral Blair for company-level advising, or what became known as "Phase 2" operations, because he believed it enabled the ODAs to increase the effectiveness of AFP units without owning the fight.[382] Wurster crafted a narrative that argued a "top down" capacity-building operation using technology, command and control, and intelligence fusion was inadequate if not coupled with a "bottom up" effort that needed to start in company-size units.[383] While embedded with AFP companies, US Special Forces soldiers could hold units accountable for conducting patrols,

377. The JTF-510 air component consisted of Army MH-47E helicopters, Air Force MC-130P refueling aircraft, and later Air Force HH-60G helicopters positioned at Mactan Air Base, Cebu City. The operations of the air component were marked by tragedy on the night of 21 February 2002, when an MH-47E crashed while returning to Mactan after the initial insertion of ODAs on Basilan, killing eight soldiers and two Airmen. Briscoe, 19; Kenneth Finlayson, "Night Stalkers in the Philippines: Tragedy and Triumph in Balikatan 02-1," *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History* 2, no. 1 (2006): 54–59.

378. Wurster, interview with Global SOF Foundation, 1 April 2021.

379. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.

380. Rowan Scarborough, "Rumsfeld Needs Information Before Philippine Campaign," *Washington Times*, A7, 5 June 2002; Niksch, 13.

381. Robinson, et al., 41; Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.

382. According to SOCPAC's proposed implementation plan, only two Special Forces soldiers were required to advise an AFP company of 200 troops. Special Operations Command-Pacific, "Implementation Plan: RP-US Counterpart Concept," Unpublished PowerPoint briefing, January 2002; Wurster, email message to Blair, 10 April 2002.

383. Kaufman, interview, 19 February 2022; Wurster, email message to Blair, 10 April 2002.

and also observe any violation of human rights.[384] Wurster and the new commander of US Pacific Command, Admiral Thomas Fargo, advocated for the change for the first five months of operations on Basilan.[385] Only after Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz met with President Arroyo in Manila and visited Wurster in Basilan did Secretary Rumsfeld finally lift the prohibition of advising at the company level—leaving just four weeks for ODAs to advise those smaller units before the end of Balikatan 02-01.[386] Wurster suspected Secretary Rumsfeld wanted to avoid photos in the media of American soldiers in jungle combat, similar optics to the US experience in Vietnam.[387]

In the wake of 9/11, a sense of aggressiveness existed within the ranks of some ODAs, leaving some Special Forces soldiers with the desire to conduct unilateral operations against ASG insurgents, particularly those holding Martin and Gracia Burnham.[388] Not only were US operations independent of the AFP prohibited by the terms of reference, but Americans "going operational" on their own against ASG would have undercut Wurster's indirect approach for JTF-510.[389] By advocating for advisors at the company level, Wurster carefully threaded the needle between the desire to enable the AFP's pursuit of ASG, while also ensuring Americans did not "own the fight."[390] Any force larger than advisors at the company level could have created a dependency on the Americans within AFP units.[391]

The task force's advise, train, and assist mission culminated in two direct action raids by AFP troops against ASG insurgents. The search for Martin and Gracia Burnham, ASG's American hostages, was enabled by JTF-510's intelligence fusion capability, but plagued by interservice rivalry between AFP army and marine units.[392] Additionally, the Bush administration conducted a covert, but ultimately unsuccessful attempt in April 2002 to pay Abu Sabaya a USD 300,000 ransom for the Burnhams.[393] As covert measures failed, JTF-510 eventually submitted a plan to have Navy SEALs conduct a raid on ASG as intelligence grew more certain of the hostages' location, but Secretary Reyes

384. Wurster, email message to Blair, 10 April 2002.
385. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
386. Eric Schmitt, "Rumsfeld Urges Caution on US Role in Philippines," *New York Times*, 5 June 2002; Briscoe, 24; Robinson, et al., 42.
387. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
388. This sentiment is captured in an unpublished paper written by a US Special Forces noncommissioned officer who was a member of JTF-510. Roger A. Thompson, "Special Forces ODA-192 and OEF-P," United States Sergeants Major Academy Class 57, 20 September 2006; see also Stentiford, 38–39.
389. Stentiford, 39.
390. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
391. Robinson, 159.
392. Robinson, et al., 34.
393. Raymond Bonner and Eric Schmitt, "Philippine Officials Detail the Trap, Set with US Help, that Snared a Rebel Leader," *New York Times*, 22 September 2002, 22.

disapproved of the plan.[394] Then, on 7 June 2002, before the prohibition on company-level US advisors was lifted, an AFP scout ranger company raided a hideout of Abu Sabaya, ASG's Basilan ringleader, to recover the hostages.[395] In the ensuing firefight between ASG and AFP forces, Abu Sabaya escaped and Martin and Gracia Burnham, along with Filipina captive Ediborah Yap, were all struck by gunfire. Gracia Burnham was the lone survivor of the raid, having sustained a gunshot wound to her leg.[396] She was evacuated by AFP helicopter to Zamboanga, where JTF-510 personnel received her for medical treatment before transporting her on to Manila.

Thirteen days after the raid by AFP scout rangers, JTF-510's intelligence fixed Abu Sabaya's position. When JTF-510 initially received intelligence about Abu Sabaya's whereabouts, Wurster was returning from Kadena Air Base, Japan.[397] In his absence, American officers ordered the initial movements of US forces in support of the AFP since waiting for Wurster's approval would have prevented the execution of the mission. When Wurster returned to the JOC before the raid was to commence, he listened as his officers briefed him on the plan and gave his approval for the operation to continue.[398] The officer's initiative and empowerment to operate in the absence of orders is a testament to the command climate set by Wurster.

That night, Philippine marines conducted an operation to intercept an ASG boat carrying Abu Sabaya. Navy SEALs from JTF-510 helped the AFP marines rehearse the intercept, and shadowed the main AFP element from a distance as they executed the operation.[399] An exchange of gunfire with the ASG boat killed Abu Sabaya and two other insurgents.[400] JTF-510, as well as the CIA, supported the operation with communications, intelligence, and sensor platforms. JTF-510's helicopters also served as a quick reaction force.[401] While the raid to recover the Burnhams only achieved partial success, the killing of Abu Sabaya validated the ability of the AFP to conduct direct action against the ASG when enabled by JTF-510.

In a message to JTF-510 personnel after the recovery of the Burnhams, Wurster recounted that during the raid, the AFP employed its forces in ways

394. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
395. Stentiford, 39.
396. Robinson, et al., 34.
397. Marvin, interview, 4 May 2022.
398. Marvin, interview, 4 May 2022.
399. Bonner and Schmitt, 22.
400. For a detailed account of both the AFP raid to recover the Burnhams and the intercept of Abu Sabaya's speed boat, see Mark Bowden, "Jihadists in Paradise," *The Atlantic*, 1 March 2007, 54–75.
401. The CIA's participation in the raid on Abu Sabaya is described in Bowden, 69–71; Donald C. Wurster, email message to Blair, 21 June 2002.

they were not capable of before the task force began its work on Basilan. Not only did the AFP rangers treat Gracia Burnham with combat lifesaving skills learned from an ODA team, but they had called for and received their own medical evacuation via AFP helicopter. Additionally, the AFP had conducted its own command and control of the operation, another improvement over its previous capabilities.[402] Wurster wrote in a task force-wide message, "These are things [the AFP] did not do 5 months ago."[403]

Philippine forces treated and transported a wounded Gracia Burnham first to a medical facility in Zamboanga. Wurster displayed a high degree of awareness of the fact that Gracia had been held for 376 days and surrounded by male insurgents. Being surrounded yet again by another group of males, even if they were in the American military, could have delayed Gracia's healing process.[404] Recognizing this dynamic, Wurster directed Army Major Rieka Stroh to accompany Gracia as she flew to Manila and throughout her recovery and repatriation.[405] Stroh was one of Wurster's "sled dog" staff officers and one of the only women assigned to the task force. After the operation against Abu Sabaya, Wurster wrote Gracia a letter detailing the names of the ASG fighters who had held Gracia and her husband captive. Next to the name of each insurgent Wurster listed their fate—all either killed or captured by AFP forces.[406] Weeks later, when the Philippine government decorated their marines who executed the night raid on Abu Sabaya's boat, Wurster was purposely and inconspicuously seated in the fourth row of the audience as the only American in the room.[407]

Wurster's Resistance to an Expanded Mission

With JTF-510's mandate set to expire at the end of July 2002, many in the Philippine government and US Pacific Command were ready to build on the success of the past six months. Secretary of National Defense Reyes proposed a plan to President Arroyo which called for the expansion of the US military presence farther south in the Sulu archipelago to the island of Jolo.[408] Even though Jolo remained an ASG stronghold and Wurster's authorities as JTF-510 commander would have allowed him to deploy advisors to the island if

402. Wurster, email message to JTF-510 personnel, 8 June 2002.
403. Donald C. Wurster, email message to JTF-510 personnel, 8 June 2002.
404. Rieka M. Stroh (former SOCPAC and JTF-510 PSYOP planner), email message to author, 13 May 2022.
405. Stroh, email message to author, 13 May 2022.
406. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
407. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.
408. Robinson, et al., 37.

needed, he assessed US troops would be in contact with the enemy immediately upon arrival. This high risk for direct combat was not consistent with JTF-510's established strategy for conducting counterinsurgency "by, with, and through" a partner force.

Instead, Wurster's recommendation to US Pacific Command was to hold off on sending US troops to Jolo, as to give the inhabitants of Jolo time to learn about what had happened on Basilan. This way, the tide of public opinion could start to turn against ASG before the introduction of any troops. Ultimately, Wurster was more concerned about Jemaah Islamiyah, the terror group operating out of Indonesia. ASG was a group of criminals who no longer held hostage any Americans. When Admiral Fargo asked Wurster in the summer of 2002 if SOCPAC should set its sights on ASG activity in Jolo, Wurster replied, "the Tausug pirates of Jolo are not a threat to Los Angeles."[409] This view placed Wurster at odds with President Arroyo, albeit only temporarily. Arroyo was keen to capitalize on the success in Basilan and remarked that the decision to go to Jolo was "not for [Wurster] to say."[410] With President Arroyo's support, US Pacific Command directed a task force of US Marines, to be designated Joint Task Force-555, to plan a combat operation on Jolo. JTF-555 never mobilized, however, as public outcry forced President Arroyo to change her position on allowing US troops in a direct combat role.[411] The tension between Wurster and those at US Pacific Command and in the Philippine government over the expansion of the American military mission demonstrates Wurster's determination to focus only on US vital interests and avoid mission creep brought on by an expanded American military role.

Conclusion

Donald Wurster displayed the salient qualities of trust, discipline, and communication throughout his time flying helicopters and in command. At SOCPAC, Wurster was confronted with waging an irregular warfare campaign within a complex geopolitical environment and against the backdrop of the opening act in America's post-9/11 reaction to international terrorism. In the role of JTF-510 commander, Wurster demonstrated an ability to collaboratively develop a strategy, manage an array of political and military stakeholders, and communicate his vision for a light-footprint approach that honored the realities

409. Wurster, interview, 12 February 2022. The Tausug people are an Islamic tribe native to the island of Jolo. For more information on Jolo, see Richard C. Paddock, "A History of Hostility in Philippines," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 February 2003.

410. Roel Pareño and Marichu A. Villanueva, "Arroyo Scolds US General," *Philippine Star*, 11 July 2002.

411. Robinson, et al., 37; Ryan, 65–66.

and sensitivities in the modern Philippine Republic. In August 2002, Wurster was awarded the Philippine Legion of Honor by President Arroyo in Zamboanga City, the same honor bestowed to Edward Lansdale a half-century earlier.[412] Admiral Blair praised JTF-510's performance as "the single most successful capability-building operation I have observed in the US armed forces."[413]

Wurster's indirect approach, developed in concert with Colonel Fridovich, Lieutenant Colonel Maxwell, and the informal group of "sled dog" staff officers in the organization, became known as the "Basilan Model."[414] By denying insurgents sanctuary, bolstering the AFP's capacity, enhancing the legitimacy of the Philippine government, and fostering a favorable opinion of US forces throughout the island, JTF-510 set the conditions for the AFP to succeed on Basilan. The author Robert Kaplan, in an email to Secretary Rumsfeld after touring Basilan in 2003, summed up JTF-510's efforts this way: "It shamed the corrupt Manila oligarchy into paying more attention to its own Moslem south. And it showed Filipino Moslems that everything that Abu Sayyaf said about Americans was not true. That, ultimately, is what severed the link between Abu Sayyaf and the island's inhabitants."[415] In the end, the security situation was such that the AFP was able to reduce its presence on the island from 15 battalions in 2002 to just two by 2006.[416] Joint Task Force-510, under Wurster's leadership, was the catalyst for a sustained, multiyear American military effort in the southern Philippines. Focused on building the capacity of the AFP, Joint Special Operations Task Force–Philippines sustained increased interoperability between the American and Philippine militaries until the mission ended in 2015.

412. Roel Pareño, "US General: Abus Should Seek Another Line of Work," *Philippine Star*, 1 August 2002; United States Air Force, "Major General Edward G. Lansdale," official biography.

413. Dennis C. Blair, letter to Wurster, 28 September 2002. Additionally, during his Senate testimony in April 2002, Admiral Blair told the Appropriations Committee, "I want to especially commend the effort led by General Don Wurster, Commander of the Joint Task Force-510 and the coordinator of our counterterrorism exercises in the Philippines. It was clear during our visit the great work underway in the Philippines and the personal leadership demonstrated by General Wurster in that effort." United States Senate Committee on Appropriations, 3 April 2002.

414. Wilson, "Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation," 8.

415. Robert D. Kaplan, "Re: Basilan Island," email message to Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, forwarded from Secretary Rumsfeld to General Richard Myers, Paul Wolfowitz, and Doug Feith, 11 September 2003.

416. Stentiford, 39.

Analysis: The Irregular Warfare Mind-set

We couldn't afford to just be against the communists. We had to be for something ourselves.

—Major General Edward G. Lansdale, USAF (Ret.)
In the Midst of Wars, 1972

In the IW context, any action, even down to the individual Airman, can have strategic level impact. In this sense, IW is largely a "battle of the narrative," each side working to have the more effective strategic communication effort to capture the support of the people.

—Lieutenant General Donald C. Wurster, USAF
Joint Forces Quarterly, 2010

British author Emile Simpson, writing on the nature of contemporary conflict, observes that "War can be understood as a competition between strategic narratives."[417] Strategic narratives, such as the ones crafted by Lansdale and Wurster, provide an interpretation of events and are tailored to influence the perception of a target audience. Simpson also argues that the historical distinction between population-centric and enemy-centric counterinsurgency is "artificial" and "unnecessary" because approaches to defeating insurgencies should use a blend of both means to achieve policy ends.[418] According to Simpson, "strategy should start by considering the political problem on its own terms and then pragmatically draw upon doctrine to create a tailored operational approach" to solving a problem.[419] Separated by five decades in the Philippines, Edward Lansdale and Donald Wurster embodied this kind of pragmatism, developed their own strategic narratives, then employed a tailored approach to solving complex problems. Both officers used the military and information resources at their disposal to further American foreign policy objectives while navigating the wider sensitive relationship between the United States and the Philippines. As a "secular evangelist" for democracy, Lansdale demonstrated that a small group of Americans could help build the legitimacy of the Philippine government and undermine a communist-inspired insurgency without a large deployment of troops.[420] Lansdale adeptly communicated an approach based on influence and capacity-building to

417. Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 61.
418. Simpson, 155.
419. Simpson, 155.
420. Nashel, 5.

decision makers in Washington desperate for solutions that did not require a substantial commitment of American soldiers. In the same vein, Wurster keenly assessed both the political sensitivities of operating in the Philippines as well as the desire of political leaders in Washington to respond globally to Islamic extremism—offering an approach that carefully straddled the two overarching dynamics at play. Both officers employed a lighter, nuanced touch in their dealings with the partner government and kept their counterinsurgency approaches tethered to the realities of their respective political contexts.

When assessed side-by-side, what is perhaps most remarkable about the two officers is that they operated during a nadir of expertise in irregular warfare within the US military. In Lansdale's case, there was little institutional competency in irregular warfare immediately following the conventional victories of World War II. In Wurster's era, only small pockets of established memory remained from the lessons learned in Vietnam, and the Army's counterinsurgency field manual would not be published until 2006 in response to the exigencies of Iraq and Afghanistan. That left both officers to rely heavily on their own judgment, intellect, and the staff officers and functional experts who worked for them. Lansdale listened to the advice of Charles Bohannon, while Wurster trusted David Fridovich, David Maxwell, and his action officer "sled dogs." While they implemented their respective approaches, Lansdale and Wurster exhibited both commonalities and points of departure, shaped by their backgrounds, experiences, education, and leadership characteristics.

A comparison of the two officers illuminates important attributes that contribute to an understanding of the "mind-set" called for in the 2020 Irregular Warfare Annex.[421] Specifically, five attributes stand out: communicating a vision and controlling a narrative; relationship building and networking for effect; strategic listening, empathy, and respect; a willingness to question assumptions and reevaluate approaches; and a bias for understanding (see Table 1). Each of these attributes alone is not unique to irregular warfare per se, but collectively they are well beyond the expectations of military leaders conducting conventional operations in traditional warfare. While not intended to be all-encompassing or a definitive interpretation of the IW mind-set, these common attributes of Lansdale and Wurster help explain why they succeeded in accomplishing their missions in a complex and unstructured environment.

421. Department of Defense, "Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy" (Washington, DC: The Pentagon, 2 October 2020), 4.

Communicating a Vision and Controlling a Narrative

Simpson asserts that "strategic narrative is the explanation of actions" which interprets events for a target audience through a lens of policy objectives.[422] He further notes that "the key to counterinsurgency is to match actions and words so as to influence target audiences to subscribe to a given narrative."[423] Both Lansdale and Wurster understood the importance of providing the Philippine people with a compelling counternarrative that undermined the insurgency. Equally as important to developing those counternarratives was ensuring that the Philippine government had the capacity to follow through on what they were marketing to their people. Simpson draws an apt comparison to advertising when he notes, "the application of counterinsurgency doctrine can be compared to that of a sales technique. One may be the best salesman and apply the technique, but if the product is poor, one will still struggle to make the technique work."[424] Lansdale, the experienced advertiser, understood that the population of Luzon had to witness firsthand the military reforms that Magsaysay touted publicly to choose the government over the Huks. Likewise, Wurster knew that his message of working side by side with the AFP on Basilan would not resonate with the population unless they actually witnessed US troops supporting the AFP and improving life on the island in a way that ASG could not.

Both officers understood that their messaging had to, as Simpson puts it, "align the rational and the emotional."[425] Lansdale and Wurster were fluent in the dialects of heart and mind, infusing emotion into their narrative to the Philippine public while communicating a national interest-based argument to stakeholders in Washington. After identifying potential in Magsaysay, Lansdale lobbied leaders in the Pentagon and State Department to pressure President Quirino to install Magsaysay as Secretary of Defense. Likewise, Wurster effectively persuaded influential senators to fund humanitarian construction on Basilan by articulating why civic action could help JTF-510 expel ASG from the island.

422. Simpson, 179.
423. Simpson, 154.
424. Simpson, 155.
425. Simpson, 199.

Table 1. Commonalities of attributes

Attribute	Edward Lansdale *Hukbalahap Insurrection*	Donald Wurster *Joint Task Force-510*
Communicating a Vision and Controlling a Narrative – Political awareness	• Preaccession background as an advertiser • Positive relationship with the Manila press • Lobbied for Magsaysay to become Philippine SecDef • Created counternarratives to Huk messages (EDCOR)	• Briefed mission importance to maintenance personnel • Secured funding from US senators by communicating vision • Briefed every member of JTF-510 on indirect COIN strategy • Advocated for "Phase 2" ops • Civic action bolstered AFP credibility
Relationship Building and Networking for Effect Influence – Trust	• Used professional network to seize opportunities to return to the Philippines • Introduced Magsaysay to key USG stakeholders • Invited Magsaysay to live with him in 1950	• Briefed SOCPAC plan to Philippine govt officials to establish buy-in • Navigated political sensitivities surrounding terms of reference
Strategic Listening, Empathy, and Respect	• Upbringing as a religious and social outsider • OSS intel-gathering work during WWII • Informal "coffee klatches" with AFP officers and gov't officials • Respectful and friendly dialogue with Filipinos	• High degree of trust in subordinates to generate fresh ideas ("sled dogs") • Patience and respect with Sec Reyes and Gen Teodosio • Compassion during the Burnham recovery • Met with college students in Mindanao
Willingness to Question Assumptions and Reevaluate Approaches	• Sought nonstandard career opportunities (USAF, OPC) • Rejected PC's brutal tactics in 1946 • Efforts to increase transparency and accountability within the AFP	• Implemented creative approaches to problem-solving while flying rescue helicopters • Nonstandard approach to career (mid-career break in service) • Creative approach to funding Basilan construction projects
Bias for Understanding – Knowing the adversary – Study of history – Curiosity for local politics	• Studied on social conditions in Central Luzon for AFWESPAC • Toured of "Huklandia" with Pat Kelly and Magsaysay • Studied Mao and Lê Duẩn's writings • Targeted leadership and raids on Manila Politburo in 1950 • Created PSYOPs to sow doubt within enemy ranks	• Reviewed initial TCAV assessments of Basilan population and chose appropriate COIN model • Studied Sun Tzu and winning without fighting • Objection to expanded US combat mission to Jolo

Source: Author's original work

In both cases, Lansdale and Wurster showed how their vision aligned with elected leaders' priorities. In Lansdale's case, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations wanted to avoid another Korea. Lansdale's relationship with Magsaysay provided the means to influence and steer events in the Philippines without a politically untenable commitment of American troops as the Cold War was ramping up elsewhere. In Wurster's situation, the Bush administration was preoccupied with Afghanistan and the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, and also haunted by the memory of American troops in jungle combat—making a light-footprint approach all the more politically desirable. The way in which Wurster navigated the constraints placed upon him was a marriage of the politically desirable and the strategically sound. The fact that Wurster was keenly aware of Secretary Rumsfeld's aversion to even a remote comparison to the Vietnam War enabled him to responsibly advocate for Phase 2 operations while adhering to the political considerations of civilian leaders.

The performance of these two officers in the Philippines shows it is not simply enough to create a strategic narrative; leaders in unstructured environments must also communicate it effectively. Both officers faced a similar challenge in communicating their strategic messages, and each came to appreciate the role the press could play in narrative shaping. Lansdale and Wurster possessed an initial inclination to avoid public relations, as evidenced by Lansdale's assertion of public affairs being the "lowest form of life" and Wurster claiming he would "rather eat glass" than talk to the press. Despite this sentiment at the outset, both officers quickly evolved to harness the power of media to communicate their respective narratives to target audiences. Lansdale's advertising background meant that he could set aside his personal reservations and recognize the importance of building a positive affiliation with the press in Manila. These contacts allowed him to guide the public's perception of AFWESPAC and later PHILRYCOM. Subsequently, Lansdale's influence with the press helped amplify the narrative that the government was rewarding the surrender of Huk fighters with a plot of land through the EDCOR program. Lansdale's relationship with the media allowed him to show the public, through a seemingly impartial third party, that the reality of Magsaysay's reforms indeed matched his rhetoric of increased transparency and accountability for the Philippine Army.

Like Lansdale, Wurster's close ties with the media in Manila also proved invaluable. He used his influence to shape the narrative that JTF-510's operations in the Sulu archipelago were a continuation of the Balikatan exercises. He was conscious that the symmetry of effort on the parts of the American and Philippine forces had to be visually represented and continually reinforced with messaging. At regular press conferences, Wurster sat shoulder to

shoulder with Secretary Reyes and General Teodosio to reassure the public that the United States was treating the Philippine Army as an equal partner. This perception was critical to the Philippine government's ability to endorse the operation, albeit under strict terms of reference, and mitigate public outcry regarding the presence of American troops in the country.

For Wurster specifically, the ability and desire to communicate his vision to his troops was a common element throughout his career. From his group and wing-level command practice of including support personnel in mission briefings to introducing every newly arriving member of JTF-510 to the task force's approach, Wurster ensured unity of effort across his command. By controlling the narrative within his command regarding why US troops were in the Philippines and how their purpose was to operate "by, with, and through" the AFP, Wurster prevented undisciplined actions by US service members that could have jeopardized the mission. If modern conflict indeed involves competition between strategic narratives, then the irregular warfare mind-set requires leaders to be aware of the political and social forces acting on the operating environment. They must manage the narratives that influence the enemy, the population, and even their own forces and then allow them to take hold through targeted relationship building. Another attribute that can enable the success of these narratives and an IW effort writ large involves forging relationships.

Relationship Building and Networking for Effect

Inherent to the IW mind-set is a distinct emphasis on the importance of relationships with key stakeholders who can enable mission success. Lansdale cultivated his most important relationship with Magsaysay, first by introducing him to decision makers in Washington, then by inviting Magsaysay to live in Lansdale's own quarters in Manila. There is little doubt the United States would have faced a nearly insurmountable challenge in encouraging the military reforms needed to bolster the Philippine government's credibility without the mutually-beneficial nature of this relationship. Lansdale observed that "the most endearing quality to the Filipino was that the American trusted him. . . when trust is bestowed, wisely, the result is the strongest bond."[426] Like Lansdale, Wurster established buy-in from the important players in the Philippine government at the outset of planning for JTF-510's activities. He could proceed with the mission because he understood what the Philippine leaders

426. Edward G. Lansdale, "The 'True American,'" mimeographed letter containing comments on the deterioration of Philippine-American relations, 3 June 1960, 3.

valued the most—the perception that the AFP would be in the lead. Wurster forged these relationships with the top military and civilian officials in Manila despite the initially contentious dynamic Secretary Reyes adopted with Wurster in front of the media. The relationships Wurster built proved fruitful later in the operation, particularly when he requested approval to bring the Naval Construction Task Group ashore despite the additional US personnel constituting a violation of the terms of reference.

These relationships, along with the resulting networks both Lansdale and Wurster built, enabled both officers to articulate continually the value of counterinsurgency and foreign internal defense to their allies in the Philippines and leaders in Washington. Compared to traditional warfare, progress in irregular warfare is comparatively difficult to measure, with its lack of frontline and force-on-force engagements. Gaining reliable intelligence on an insurgency or building the credibility of partner forces takes considerable time and effort. Therefore, leaders in irregular warfare must work to build trust and influence among stakeholders both in the partner nation and their own government so that they can articulate the value of protracted IW efforts. Practitioners cannot sustain successful long-duration IW operations in conjunction with a partner force without practicing listening and empathy.

Strategic Listening, Empathy, and Respect

Max Boot labeled Lansdale's unique style of patience and attentiveness as "strategic listening," whereby he would absorb what others had to say before offering his own thoughts.[427] Lansdale's upbringing as both a religious and social outsider forged a capacity for empathy which resonated throughout his career. It became apparent that Lansdale's ability to listen and form meaningful connections with foreigners was a rare gift, noted during his early contract work with the OSS during World War II. This skill was exceptionally useful during Lansdale's tours in Manila, where informal coffee klatches at his home evolved into caffeine-fueled incubators for fresh counterinsurgency ideas. Lansdale's tolerant, unassuming "California sensibility" made it easy for him to bring disparate players into a conversation, be they AFP military officials or power brokers in Washington.[428] It was common for Lansdale to listen intently, resist the urge to fill natural lulls in the conversation with talking, then summarize the speaker's points and offer his own interpretation on the matter. In this way, Lansdale ensured that Magsaysay, or any number of the AFP officers

427. Max Boot, *The Road Not Taken: Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2018), 605.

428. Boot, 122.

listening, truly owned the decisions made as a result of the conversations. Lansdale railed against the narrow-mindedness and "seeming pragmatism" of Americans who attempted to make short-term gains in the Philippines without realizing the long-term consequences.[429] In the same sense, Wurster's attentiveness to AFP leadership made him sensitive to the fact that placing Americans in the lead to make short-term tactical progress would become detrimental to the credibility and the capability of the AFP. Seeing the situation from the AFP's perspective, Wurster knew that Filipino military leaders and soldiers had to "own the fight" to achieve lasting progress against the insurgency.[430]

While Lansdale's upbringing forged his particular listening abilities, Wurster's emerged from key flying experiences. Wurster's background in piloting rescue helicopters in remote locations instilled a great respect for the expertise of those closest to a given problem. In Wurster's view, the culture of decentralized execution encouraged in Airmen a high degree of trust in the disparate units and forces which make up combat power.[431] This trust and respect for expertise are reflected in the leadership style of a commander who listens to an array of voices as he or she makes a decision. This attribute was on display when, as the commander of a joint force, Wurster listened to his staff and the Army Special Forces officers with the requisite experience in building partner capacity. His pragmatic, nonparochial style of leadership while in command of JTF-510 enabled a wide array of voices to be heard and ideas to be discussed. For example, the fact that the military lawyer assigned to the task force felt comfortable enough to offer the idea of using Title 10 funding for urgent construction on Basilan is indicative of the collaborative atmosphere that Wurster fostered within his command. The JAG felt comfortable raising the suggestion because he knew the command culture would entertain the idea on its merit. Lansdale's coffee klatches and Wurster's informal band of innovative staff officers enabled the most creative ideas to percolate to the top.

Lansdale and Wurster both prided themselves on the ability to view the situation and the insurgency from the perspective of the local population. In Lansdale's case, his tours of Huklandia and the dialogue those visits generated fostered an empathy that informed his policy suggestions for Magsaysay's implementation. Similarly, Wurster met with college students in Mindanao to develop a sense of what was important to them and how they thought about the problems in the southern Philippines. An understanding of the local pop-

429. Lansdale, "The True American," 5.

430. Donald C. Wurster, (former commander, Special Operations Command-Pacific) interviewed by author, 16 February 2022.

431. Wurster, interview, 16 February 2022.

ulation gave Wurster the confidence that his counterinsurgency approach would work. Civic actions would improve lives and bolster the credibility of the government, while a small footprint of disciplined, respectful US troops would not trigger negative emotional responses rooted in local political sensitivities. Wurster would later describe his approach this way: "The bottom line is whether, in the end, our forces contribute to improvements that make lives better. I tell my people that we've got to figure out how to not lose while we are creating the opportunity to win."[432] For Wurster, creating that opportunity meant maintaining high standards of discipline and respect within the ranks of his command.

Willingness to Question Assumptions and Reevaluate Approaches

There is evidence both officers continually questioned assumptions both in their personal careers and in the efforts they led. Both Lansdale and Wurster had nonlinear career trajectories, as demonstrated by Lansdale's entry into intelligence and military work in his mid-thirties and Wurster's mid-career separation from active duty before being inspired to rejoin after the failed hostage rescue attempt in Iran. These nonstandard career paths demonstrate that both officers maintained identities separate from their work in the military, which informed their ability to employ out-of-the-box thinking when confronted with challenges later in their careers. Both had little use for existing orders of hierarchy, especially when that hierarchy impeded mission accomplishment. They also both valued open-mindedness and encouraged the participation of members of their teams regardless of an individual's background.

The fact that Lansdale was not a career military officer and had both corporate and intelligence experience to draw from meant that he was able to readily identify and propose indirect and innovative solutions to the Huk Insurrection during his first tour of duty in 1946. A military officer of a more conventional background may have witnessed the brutal tactics used by the Philippine Constabulary and doubled down by simply employing more combat power against the insurgents—the standard military response to battle. In the same sense, Wurster's identity as an Airman operating in a joint environment meant that he was eager to entertain unconventional approaches to problem-solving when confronted with the dual challenges of capacity-building and counterinsurgency on Basilan.

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432. Guy Martin, "The Architect of Unconventional War," *Men's Journal*, May 2003, 108.

Bias for Understanding

Instead of a predisposition for action, each officer first displayed a bias for understanding. Before they pursued action against the adversary, each person sought to understand the environment and the people involved. While understanding the enemy is important in any form of warfare, it is complicated in irregular warfare by what Stathis Kalyvas calls the "identification problem."[433] This phenomenon describes how insurgents cannot be reduced to a single identity and the population is often reluctant to identify those in the insurgent ranks. Where Lansdale used his excursions into Central Luzon with Pat Kelly and Magsaysay to build his knowledge of the Huks, Wurster relied on proxies under his command: Special Forces personnel to conduct assessments of local villages on Basilan and collect intelligence during civic actions such as MEDCAPs and DENTCAPs. The perceptions resulting from both Lansdale and Wurster's efforts shaped how they approached their respective missions.

Lansdale privately acknowledged that Huks were largely comprised of poor resistance fighters with socioeconomic grievances, but when reporting back to Washington he continually emphasized their communist ties to hold the attention of political leaders. His description of the Huks generally lacked nuance but ultimately succeeded in ensuring that Magsaysay received the required amount of support from Washington. Lansdale's use of hyperbole in characterizing the enemy in his reports is notable and could have only contributed to the common misperception at the time of the threat to the broader Asia-Pacific from monolithic Communism. To his credit, and reflecting his study of Mao and Lê Duẩn's writings, Lansdale was an early observer of the fact that the Cold War had ushered in an era of political warfare fought by revolutionaries.[434] His black-and-white characterization of the enemy for decision makers in Washington, however, was unquestionably a blind spot.

Wurster, conversely, maintained a clear-eyed perception of the Abu Sayyaf Group throughout JTF-510's operations. He accurately saw ASG as a band of criminals who had been reduced to kidnapping tactics after they fell out of favor with global Islamic extremist groups in the late 1990s. What changed the equation, in Wurster's understanding, was that ASG posed a direct threat to US interests in the Sulu archipelago as demonstrated by their willingness to kidnap American citizens. Furthermore, his review of the assessments done by his Special Forces soldiers informed his selection of a COIN model that

433. Kalyvas, 91.
434. Lansdale, 5.

would bring structure to an ill-defined problem. Wurster remained steadfast in his understanding of the adversary, so much so that after the recovery of the Burnhams and the raid against Abu Sabaya, he resisted efforts by the Philippine government and US Pacific Command to expand the American mission to a direct combat role on the island of Jolo. Wurster carefully distinguished between ASG, JI, MILF, and the MNLF and determined a combat role on Jolo would mark a significant and unnecessary shift in the approach to COIN in the Philippines. Where Lansdale's faith in what the full range of US national power could achieve only increased as his time in the Philippines wore on, Wurster demonstrated an uncommon restraint when confronted with an expanding mission that had no immediate connection to broader American interests. It is particularly noteworthy that Wurster acted as a moderating force in 2002 when the US political climate was more amenable to military adventurism in the immediate wake of 9/11. Just seven months after the end of JTF-510's mission to Basilan, more than 130,000 American troops would invade Iraq, a direct approach conducted under the pretext that US national interests were at stake.

Each man's understanding of the adversary culminated in an indirect approach punctuated by limited direct action against the leadership of each insurgency. In Lansdale's case, the military and intelligence reforms he helped institute paid off during the October 1950 raid on politburo members in Manila. The raid by Philippine police garnered a significant amount of intelligence and furthered an understanding of the Huk leadership and organization. Similarly, JTF-510 fused intelligence with operations and bolstered the partner force's capacity in a way that enabled the AFP to conduct both the Burnham recovery and the raid on Abu Sabaya. During the Huk Insurrection and the effort against ASG on Basilan, the AFP learned to apply an appropriate amount of force to weaken the insurgency, but not alienate the population while doing so. The selective use of force entails calculated risk to defeat insurgencies and the degree to which force is applied requires walking a delicate line while lives hang in the balance.

Risks Inherent to the IW Mind-set

Irregular warfare practitioners operate frequently at the seams between peace and war. In places where special operations forces may not have the same amount of oversight as conventional forces, there exists an ever-present risk of overstepping the moral and ethical bounds of the application of force. When undisciplined forces are allowed to operate with too much latitude, lapses in judgment have the potential to undermine the trust between Amer-

icans and their partner forces—or even compromise hard-won access and placement. Further still, actions by special operations forces that are inconsistent with political objectives could spark unwanted escalation during day-to-day competition between state actors. In situations where SOF are well-resourced and subject to little oversight, can too much tactical success lead to moral hazard?

Lansdale's use of psychological operations, and particularly the terror-like tactic of exploiting local superstitions about vampires, suggest this is possible. Lansdale's plot resulted in the killing of a captured insurgent, a clear violation of military necessity and humanity—two principles of the law of armed conflict. While the psychological effect on the enemy reaped obvious tactical advantages in the short term, Lansdale risked undermining the fragile trust between the population and the Philippine Army that he worked so tirelessly to build. Likewise, the same observation could be made of JTF-510's canceled proposal to use military deception in the form of "sky pebbles," empty ping pong balls that would trick the enemy into thinking they were being monitored as they maneuvered through the jungle. Although military deception would not have resulted in the loss of life like Lansdale's vampire tactic, the task force still ran the risk of reducing the trust between the AFP and local villagers who would have inevitably come across the fake devices. Ultimately, Wurster decided to avoid any actions which could be interpreted as inconsistent with the American narrative of capacity-building and improving the lives of the population.

Occasionally, innovative ideas accelerate ahead of policy objectives and take on a mind all their own. Disaggregated units with leaders who enjoy wide latitude and authorities must always be cognizant of the power they wield and the unintended consequences that may incur in the strategic environment. Lansdale in particular was susceptible to this pitfall. Even though he initially touted the impact that economic programs, military reforms, and nonkinetic operations would have in defeating the Huks, by the end of his second tour in the Philippines he was openly lobbying his superiors in Washington for the transfer of napalm weapons to the Philippine Army.[435] In dealing with a brutal war, irregular warfare practitioners are more susceptible to becoming brutal themselves.

Wurster effectively insulated his command from many of the risks inherent in irregular warfare. Even though his units were disaggregated and operated with wide latitude, Wurster's emphasis on discipline and honoring political sensitivities prevented American misbehavior or brutality that would have

435. Boot, 130–31.

undoubtedly been on full display in the Philippine press. In this way, high standards of discipline, as a way to "set conditions" for achieving objectives, ensured the task force did not lose the hard-won access and placement achieved through diplomatic efforts. One of the most important lessons from Joint Task Force-510 is that discipline can mitigate the risks and pitfalls associated with irregular warfare.

Ultimately, the irregular warfare approaches employed by Lansdale and Wurster were impacted by an array of political, cultural, and economic factors. While the means by which they carried out their strategies differed, their actions and leadership reveal common traits that further the discourse on codifying the irregular warfare mind-set. Both employed a subtlety and nuance in their interactions with the partner government, maintained political awareness of factors important to decision makers in Washington, and ultimately kept their approaches grounded in the local realities.

Conclusion

> *By the study of their biographies, we receive each man as a guest into our minds, and we seem to understand their character as the result of a personal acquaintance, because we have obtained from their acts the best and most important means of forming an opinion about them. "What greater pleasure could'st thou gain than this?"*
>
> —Plutarch

In the second century CE, Greek writer Plutarch authored his seminal work *Parallel Lives*, a series of biographies spanning 25 volumes. In each story, he juxtaposes two prominent leaders, one Greek and one Roman, who lived in different eras yet had similar fates.[436] His purpose was to seek compelling anecdotes with life-and-death consequences to determine how each man's actions, both good and bad, influenced his destiny. His volumes both examined the complex lives of statesmen and generals as well as described the eras in which each person lived. Through his work, Plutarch hoped to "arouse the spirit of emulation."[437]

Edward Lansdale and Donald Wurster offer two parallel lives apt for examination and comparison in the modern era. Lansdale was the quintessential "ad man" who left the comfort of Madison Avenue to pioneer counterinsur-

436. Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, ed. by Arthur Hugh Clough, trans. by John Dryden (New York: Random House, 2001).

437. Lance Morrow, "Plutarch's Exemplary Lives," *Smithsonian Magazine*, July 2004.

gency tactics during America's first venture into the irregular conflicts that came to define the Cold War. Five decades later, Donald Wurster, a pragmatic helicopter pilot, commanded a task force and employed an indirect approach to degrading an insurgency. Separated by half a century, Lansdale and Wurster tackled complexity in the Philippines with notable symmetry. Each man's professional life also maintained a dualistic quality in its own right. They were often compelled to fill simultaneous roles—Lansdale managed both his military and clandestine responsibilities, while Wurster concurrently played the part of strategic communicator to external stakeholders and mission-focused commander to those he led. Ultimately, both officers shaped a strategy imprinted with their singular perspectives and informed by the dynamic political environment. In both the Hukbalahap Insurrection and Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines, each officer succeeded in accomplishing their necessarily limited objectives of degrading an insurgency and improving the legitimacy of the Philippine government.

Lansdale's story in the Pacific did not end with his time in the Philippines. After playing an instrumental role in the 1953 election of Ramón Magsaysay to the presidency in the Philippines, Lansdale served as an advisor to French forces in Vietnam. Following the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, CIA Director Allen Dulles ordered Lansdale to support the newly created government of South Vietnam led by Ngo Dinh Diem. Lansdale attempted to replicate his success with Magsaysay in his new close relationship with Diem. When Diem fell out of favor with President Kennedy in 1963, however, Lansdale opposed efforts to oust him from power. Lansdale would never have the same influence within the American government after Diem's assassination in the fall of 1963. His inability to reproduce a successful outcome with Diem as he had previously done with Magsaysay suggests that there were unique conditions in the Philippines operating in Lansdale's favor absent in Vietnam. Magsaysay proved to be a far more amenable and less autocratic partner than Diem. Ultimately, Lansdale would retire from the Air Force in 1963 at the rank of major general and return to Vietnam as an assistant to Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge from 1965 until 1968. Lansdale died in 1987 at the age of 79.[438]

Donald Wurster completed his tour as the SOCPAC commander in early 2003. He went on to serve at the headquarters of US Special Operations Command and later commanded 16,000 Airmen at Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) in 2007 as a lieutenant general. At AFSOC, his experi-

438. Bart Barnes, "Edward Lansdale, Prototype For 'Ugly American,' Dies." *Washington Post*, 24 February 1987.

ence in program offices at the Pentagon equipped him with the vision to implement a sweeping aircraft modernization effort. As it became clear Air Force special operations units would remain in combat in the Middle East for years to come, Wurster furthered the recapitalization or acquisition of nearly every type of aircraft in AFSOC's inventory. One senior Air Force special operations officer who served with Wurster observed, "His strategy to capitalize our fleet completely changed our future and ability to prosecute the GWOT and [its] successors. It says a lot about a strategy when it survives the tenure of multiple following commanders, and his did."[439] In addition to his legacy at AFSOC, the "Basilan Model" he developed alongside his Special Forces contemporaries in 2002 would continue to be analyzed by special operations practitioners in the following decades. He retired from active duty in 2011.

Recommendations for the Future Force

The hard-won counterinsurgency leadership lessons of Luzon and Basilan invite examination by American military practitioners who will lead the next irregular war. The Republic of the Philippines is vastly different than the environments in which the US military has operated over the past two decades. In the Philippines, the United States enjoys two major advantages: the Philippine military's structure and traditions closely resemble the United States and English is commonly spoken. In the more contemporary battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States overthrew hostile regimes and then built tenuous transitional governments in their place. In both case studies of American action in the Philippines, the United States sought to bolster existing institutions, presenting a host of different challenges.

In the end, the way in which Lansdale and Wurster operated in the Philippines is more instructive for how the United States can support a partner nation during an era of great power competition—where narratives, relationships, and understanding often play an outsized role in influencing existing governments and insulating populations from malign influence. The 2022 Special Operations Forces Vision articulates SOF's role as central to the integrated deterrence of peer competitors, where "SOF will pursue agreements partnerships, and operations—such as increased foreign internal defense, security force assistance . . . to illuminate and counter adversary activities and interests."[440] Given the demand for leadership in irregular warfare will persist

439. William D. Andersen, quoted by Forrest L. Marion, email message to author, 16 May 2022.

440. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict ASD(SO/LIC) and United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM), "Special Operations Forces Vision and Strategy," 11 April 2022, 6.

for the foreseeable future, what can be done to foster and encourage the IW mind-set within America's special operations forces, and the military writ large? Below are several broad recommendations drawing from the observations found in preceding case studies.

Orient Organizations on Problems, Not Platforms

Lansdale transferred his Army commission to the newly created US Air Force not out of an interest in flying, but his belief the young service would be more receptive to creative ideas. Likewise, even though Wurster was a proud helicopter pilot, while in command of a joint force he did not allow his thinking to be constrained by parochialism, loyalty to a service branch, or the supposed superiority of a particular aircraft. When a leader perceives a problem through the lens of a specific platform or weapons system, he or she risks losing sight of the larger range of solutions. Realigning some units to train continually for a problem set, instead of a specific function or area of expertise could help foster unconstrained thinking down to the lowest echelon.

Reorganizing the structure of some military units may not create efficiencies in every case but it would allow the military to be more agile in confronting problems that require more than simply a kinetic solution. On Basilan, JTF-510 placed support personnel including medics and engineers at the center of their counterinsurgency strategy, highlighting how expertise can be used in creative ways to achieve results. Standing up a joint task force with this kind of diversity is routinely accomplished using existing structures, but carving out a deliberate pathway for certain units to continually train in this manner would be an entirely different, and more challenging, endeavor.

Value Preaccession and Mid-Career Diversity of Experience

The 2022 SOF Vision describes creativity as a core value and calls on its personnel to "seek innovative and novel solutions to the hardest, most complex problems."[441] Lansdale and Wurster both exemplified a diversity of experience in their own ways by taking nontraditional career paths. Currently, military officers are rewarded for following a regimented script for career progression meant to groom them for highly technical, conventional warfare. These linear career molds, by design, condition officers for replacement so that no one officer is so unique that he or she cannot be immediately replaced by another when losses accumulate on the battlefield. To encourage truly creative problem solving, however, the military must find ways for innovative service

441. ASD(SO/LIC) and SOCOM, 1.

members to deviate from the normal career path, yet still progress, even if at a slower rate. Those willing to break the regimented, Cold War–era career paths are the same ones likely to display flexibility and agility in an unstructured environment.

The military should condition its bureaucracy to have a higher tolerance for nonstandard career paths, while still building leaders who can be trusted with the routine duties of managing large formations. This effort could take the form of specifically recruiting officers with experience in different industries, such as marketing or advertising. Additionally, the military could allow officers pathways to gain experience in the private sector at the mid-career point. The resulting diversity of thought and experience would increase the design space available to the military when formulating operational approaches. The 2022 SOF Vision outlines that SOF's tasks are to "shape the environment to reduce risk, prevent crises, and set conditions for success in competition and conflict."[442] Ultimately, achieving diversity of thought lessens the unknowns in a given situation, which also helps reduce risk militarily.

Lansdale's background as an advertiser and writer informed his strategic communications strategy in the Philippines, displaying how private sector skills and experience can benefit the irregular warrior. His marketing experience enabled him to communicate the unique role that the military can play in political warfare. Furthermore, his vast professional network acquired during his tenure with intelligence agencies enabled him to bring together stakeholders at critical times. In addition to the private sector, experience in other departments and agencies in government would also allow military officers to expand their professional networks and learn how those institutions function, as well as frame and approach problems. It is rare for modern officers in combat arms career fields to transition between the military and intelligence communities as seamlessly as Lansdale did, but additional opportunities could be introduced to help officers gain similar experiences. Lastly, sending officers to work for nongovernmental organizations, particularly in a foreign country, could heighten awareness of the political, social, and economic drivers of conflict.

Prioritize Media Training and Strategic Communications

Within the military, and SOF specifically, there is a perception that the press is an adversary, prioritizing the need to publish information without consideration of operational consequences. Social networks and the broader media can pose a danger to operational security, yet military leaders' strategic employment of these tools can be uniquely effective. Acknowledging this reality requires a mind-set shift when it comes to the purpose, utility, and

442. ASD(SO/LIC) and SOCOM, 1.

value of the press and the information domain. Leaders in irregular warfare contexts must be prepared to provide the media with information that supports their strategic narrative or risk the likelihood the media will develop their own, partially informed interpretation of events.

Both Lansdale and Wurster found themselves interacting with the media when they would have preferred to remain out of the public eye. Despite their reluctance, both excelled at controlling their narrative by building relationships with the press and its reporters. While it just so happened that Lansdale and Wurster were adept at managing the press, a holistic understanding of the media is not a core competency of American military officers. Training focused on how the media can be an effective partner, instead of merely a threat to operations, would allow the American military officer corps to tap a resource useful in irregular warfare. Simulations or tabletop exercises centered around the information domain could prepare irregular warriors to have a competitive advantage in future strategic competition. As Lansdale and Wurster showed, maintaining the demeanor of a *quiet* professional does not necessitate being a *silent* professional.

Two Airmen, Major General Edward Lansdale and Lieutenant General Donald Wurster, successfully navigated the intricacies of supporting a partner nation to achieve American foreign policy objectives in the Philippines during two different eras in both countries' histories. In the future, geopolitical conflicts and crises will present new opportunities for Airmen to leverage their unique background, training, education, and experiences to advance American political objectives. To do so, they must collaboratively develop a strategy, manage an array of political and military stakeholders, and maintain an irregular warfare mind-set while operating in an unstructured environment.

Glossary

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
AFWESPAC	Army Forces Western Pacific
ARMM	Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
ASD(SO/LIC)	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BCT	battalion combat team
CAFGU	Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CINC	commander in chief
CJTF–OIR	Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve
CMTC	Citizens Military Training Corps
COI	Coordinator of Information
COIN	counterinsurgency
CT	counterterrorism
DENTCAP	Dental Civic Action Program
DOD	Department of Defense
EDCOR	Economic Development Corps
GDP	gross domestic product
GWOT	Global War on Terror
IW	irregular warfare
JAG	judge advocate general
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JOC	joint operations center
JP	joint publication
JTF	joint task force
JUSMAG	Joint United States Military Assistance Group
LRC	light reaction company
MARFOR	Marine Corps Forces
MEDCAP	Medical Civic Action Program

MEDEVAC	medical evacuation
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MISO	Military Information Support to Operations
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MTT	mobile training team
NAVSOF	Naval Special Operations Forces
NCTG	Naval Construction Task Group
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Operational Detachment–Alpha
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OPC	Office of Policy Coordination
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PACOM	Pacific Command
PC	Philippine Constabulary
PHILRYCOM	Philippines-Ryukyus Command
PKP	*Partido Komunistang Pilipina* (Philippine Communist Party)
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSYOP	psychological operations
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
RP	Republic of the Philippines
SEAL	Sea, Air, and Land
SFG	Special Forces Group
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOCPAC	Special Operations Command Pacific
SOF	Special Operations Forces
TCAV	Terrorism Coordination and Assistance Visit
TSOC	Theater Special Operations Command
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
UW	unconventional warfare

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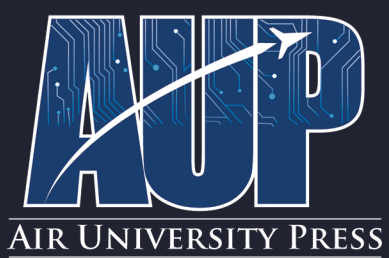

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