

# A winning way for Iraq

By F. Andy Messing/ Gregory H. Winger

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As America bounces along in Iraq, few noted a comment that rocked the underpinnings of the faithful. The remark came from U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker, when asked whether America was winning the war there, after a significant pause the general responded, "Well, we're not losing." What like-minded conventional warfare John Wayne buffs do not grasp, is the truth of a maxim of low-intensity conflict espoused by a famous irregular warfare expert, retired Master Sgt. Allen B. Hazlewood, a DELTA Force founder and Special Forces veteran: "If you're not winning, then you're losing."

Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, in the documentary "Fog of War" stated, "any military commander who is honest with himself, or those he is speaking to, will admit he has made mistakes in the application of military power." As we listened recently to the chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff testify before Congress about dire conditions in Iraq, we must admit we have made mistakes. It is not enough to reflect on the errors, as we must also learn from them, so that we can do more than just not lose.

Five days after the attacks of September 11, 2001, President Bush declared the fight against terrorism would be a "special operations war," ideas gained from a defense briefing in Austin, Texas, in July 1998. Initially, in Afghanistan, America embraced this mentality, wielding force like a surgeon's scalpel applying power with special operations soldiers. The result was the downfall of our enemies in a matter of weeks by focused airpower with 300 of our operators on the ground.

Despite this design success, the World War II mentality of our military reverted to a costly and bulky conventional means there, and later to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Today, this addiction to those conventional methods has caused us to lose sight of the SpecOps origins of this conflict, dissipating our efforts, costing some 2,600 American lives, 20,000 sick and wounded, \$500 billion and negatively affects to our national prestige.

The Army Field Manual describes two strategies for the relationship between conventional and special operation forces. One strategy is the use of special operation forces to complement line battalions and tanks, like in a NATO scenario. In the second strategy, special operations are primarily used, supported by conventional assets. In Iraq, America's generals made the choice of highlighting conventional forces, waging war like a pounding fist in the tradition of Karl von Clausewitz, Napoleon Bonaparte and Gen. George S. Patton, complete with tanks. However, while a closed fist can destroy, it is not suited for rebuilding. As a matter of fact, conventional generals' mantra to Congress in the 1980s and '90s was, "We're just here to break things."

Anti-insurgent warfare cannot be fought with just closed fist assets, because to ultimately win, we must use smaller focused elements and open that hand to address the needs of the population. To secure the situation, we must move beyond force, to feeding, healing and employing, which

will lead to lower levels of violence and enhanced security, allowing us to disengage -- among other benefits. By shifting this philosophical paradigm with which we conduct war, both issues can be addressed.

We must move beyond brute conventional might to a level of finesse, a strategy more economical in lives, costs and political risk that will allow us to go the distance in this war on terrorism. Simply put, irregular wars must be fought by irregular warriors.

Therefore, political and military leaders should not contest calls to draw down troop levels in Iraq. A reduction of soldiers in Iraq is exactly what is needed. Our commanders could replace every three conventional soldiers in Iraq with a specialized adviser versed in irregular warfare, who can promote and conduct civic action and civil affairs measures in the language of the locals, fundamentally, requiring us to invest in that type of training.

The late Gen. Edward Lansdale identified political, economic, social and security aspects to irregular warfare. After an initial security posture, all factors must be confronted simultaneously for traction. If Iraqis are underfed, need basic medical attention and are unemployed, the insurgency will continue. Lansdale held, "Addressing this will take the cause away from the insurgent."

While conventional soldiers do not normally address these needs, a supported adviser can. It is only through rebuilding, working with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that esoteric concepts of democracy can take root.

Since "Swamp Fox" Francis Marion fought insurgent warfare against the British during our Revolutionary War, America has known how to address this type of warfare. All that remains is to choose to do so.

We can either learn from the lessons of Vietnam and the success of El Salvador or keep floundering along, trying to put a size 13 foot into a size 7 shoe.

F. Andy Messing is a retired special forces major and has been to 27 conflict areas. He is the executive director of the National Defense Council Foundation. Gregory H. Winger is senior research assistant for the foundation.