LTC Nagl began his talk by noting that his remarks would reflect only his own opinions, not those of the Secretary of Defense or the Defense Department.

Background and Introduction
LTC Nagl explained his background
- 25-year-old tank platoon commander during Desert Storm
  - In a war where the enemy was completely over-matched by US power
  - Lessons taken from that war by the Army and DoD
    - The Air-Land-Battle concept really worked
    - We should do more of it
  - Nagl’s take on the war
    - The US was really good at what it did
    - No other enemy will ever let us fight that way again
      - They will either go to a hi-end solution (WMD) or to a low-end with numerous non-traditional ways
- At Oxford University as a graduate student, chose to look at the history of insurgencies
  - Most books on the subject are written by the counter-insurgents
  - Many insurgents have been illiterate
  - T. E. Lawrence was one of few insurgents who did write about the experience
    - Said he felt sorry for the counter-insurgents
      - They were fighting only against mist forces – those that would rise up, attack and slip away
      - Rather like muscle-bound fighters who could not touch their more agile opponents
  - Since insurgents can’t succeed on traditional battlefields, they turn to other types of warfare and learn to adapt to changing situations
  - Lawrence used the term *eating soup with a knife* to indicate the difficulty of the tasks of the counter-insurgent

Of all the counter-insurgency wars, the British did it best in Malaysia from 1948-1960
- They originally did not do much to *win the hearts and minds* even though the phrase came from that war
  - It was the classic case of Western counter-insurgency
  - It should be noted that it took 12 years to do – and it was the best ever done
    - Shows how messy and slow such wars are
Nagl’s study then compared that situation to Vietnam
• US Army (ground forces) did eventually adapt to the insurgency, but…
  - It took a long time
  - Came too late (after the Tet Offensive) since by then the American people had lost faith in the fight – among many other reasons for failure
• Organizationally, the British were better able to adapt to the insurgency method of warfare
  - Nagl worked on the study in the late 1990s
    - His book was published in 2002
    - In 2003-2004 he went to practice in Iraq what he had written about

US ground forces (Army and Marines) have adapted fairly quickly to the new situation
• Much faster than they did in Vietnam
• There is much more adapting to be done but must involve the rest of the government and even civilian entities
• This talk will focus on:
  - How the Army has learned counter-insurgency (COIN)
  - What else needs to be done

Traditional Armies Avoid Doing COIN
• Their fighters want to fight other equivalent fighters
• Do not want to do the slow, hard work of building up intelligence pictures from villages
• However, the Army can learn
  - Richard Downie spoke about this in The U.S. Army as Learning Institution
  - Downie described the institutional learning cycle which all healthy organizations must use to continue to flourish

Organizations need to change when their SOPs no longer work for them
• Some members of the organization will raise the flag of the problems or new ways to operate
  - Hard part is getting agreement that there is a need for change and accepting it
Dell, other healthy commercial organizations do it all the time
Harder for Army to do since they fight only periodically
- They must make assumptions about the future
- In the Cold War the US was only fighting the Soviet Union
  - Only needed to cycle faster than the Soviets did
  - The Soviets were even slower to change than the US
- US is not faster at adapting than its current enemies
  - IEDs are good examples of where it is easier to make new kinds rather than to make countermeasures to existing devices

Indicators of Learning Institutions
- Involves thinking about the specific situation. Example:
  - A very successful COIN academy was established in Iraq
    - Had to be close to where the action was
    - Taught soldiers what they would see in their patrols which they would be doing within days
    - Question from the students: Why did we have to wait until now to learn about these things – need stateside learning
  - A similar academy is being set-up at Ft. Leavenworth
    - There is a need to keep the staff rotating back and forth to Iraq to stay fresh
    - Shows they are learning to train differently than they have been
- Other indicators include
  - Bottom-up input
    - Learning the importance of intelligence developed locally
    - Learning the importance of training local forces and teaching governments to govern
    - An all-professional force helps
      - Only a very small number have been bad apples – still too many
    - NCOs and young officers are coming up with most of the adaptations
      - Iraq has been mostly a platoon leader’s war
      - Brigades / other major units only provide material requirements and support
    - Bosnia experience has been helpful
      - Iraq is like Bosnia except that people are trying to kill US soldiers in Iraq
    - Some leaders in Iraq have spray-painted mottos on buildings to remind troops of their responsibilities to the Iraqi people
  - Superiors can be questioned and are available
    - Now it is important that the generals get into the adaptation/innovation mode of ops
    - Especially important in training commands
    - Need to make doctrine out of the innovations that have come from below
  - Theoretical thinking
    - About strategic environment
    - About core missions of organization
    - Local doctrine development
    - Local training centers
    - Small, responsive staff
- The Army has not captured these innovations as well as they should have
  - It takes a long time to write doctrine – from recent personal experience
  - Soldiers can talk on companycommand.army.mil/ but need more than that
  - Need to institutionalize these lessons so not always making changes

In Vietnam General Westmoreland’s answer to insurgency was “firepower”
- He was wrong then and it would be wrong now
- Intelligence is what is needed
  - Only 600 of the 600,000 would be committed insurgents – But which ones?
  - Must have boots on the ground and a population willing to pass on information
Troops need to be good to the local people to foster a good environment for sharing

Problem: There are regulations against non-intelligence soldiers developing their own sources
  • Often don’t have intelligence specialists available
  • May not always do things the right way
  • Need to rethink how intelligence is done

Must think of insurgents more like the Mafia
  • Who is related to whom?
  • Where do they sleep at night?
  • What schedules do they keep?

If done right, will develop targets and will recognize the gaps of info that needs to be collected
Particularly need language skills
If don’t take out on patrol all those skills, then only trolling for IEDs

Some Things That Are Working in Iraq
  • Dollars are bullets: a major help is CERP – Commanders’ Emergency Reconstruction Program
  • SWET: Sewers, Water, Energy, Trash
    • Some commanders focused their troops on such programs
    • Can show that trash pick-ups directly related to reduction in insurgent activities
      • Hire people to pick up trash gives them a job and money
        o Too tired to plant bombs at night
        o Safer to get a pay check

Some Major Requirements beyond Unit Commanders’ Capabilities
  • Court and legal system
    • Once you know where people sleep, then can arrest them rather than shooting them
    • Need to teach local forces that they cannot shoot suspects
    • Local forces need a legal packet of charges and info that will hold up in court
    • All hard to do for the US commander involved
      • Working with an unknown, untested legal/court system
      • Working to develop cases in unknown languages
  • National unity government
    • Very important
    • Some work going on but needs much more
    • Sunnis need to be given a greater part and not just money from oil sales
    • Need to get control of the militias – especially important
  • Acceptance of another of T.E. Lawrence’s axioms: “Better the Arabs do it tolerably than you do it perfectly.”
    • Locals will know their own ways and sensitivities better than any US commander
  • Increased embedded team training especially with local police units
    • No US Army organization is ready to do such a thing on a large enough scale
    • Need police transition teams made up of civilian specialists
      • Local forces need to be better controlled and standardized
  • Building up leadership roles in the local forces is very important
    • Insurgents and criminals know how important leaders are so they are most often targeted
    • When lost a popular leader to insurgents also lost his battalion which drifted away and took their weapons and equipment with them
      • Also lost support of the people who were losing hope
      • Concept important to the local population: If you can’t protect battle commanders, how can you protect regular civilians?
  • As in Vietnam, can’t just win militarily
    • Must win completely in all fields
    • Calls for help from CIA/State Department/USAID/etc.
      • Need to stay around for more than their usual 3 month deployments to get to know locals and their ways of doing things
• Need much bigger civilian manpower commitment to such projects
  o State Department only has 6,000 foreign service officers
  o State is hiring more people but not enough funds to pay for/train what they need
  o Need will continue because this is the “Long War”
  o Underlying problem: 3,000 were killed on 9/11/01 only because the enemy could not kill 3 million but they wanted to
• The QDR (Quadrennial Defense Review) does show that some things are improving policy-wise
  ▪ Not enough
  ▪ DoD Directive 3000.05 also moving in the right direction toward policy
  ▪ Still working toward COIN away from Major Combat Operations (MCO) policies

Key indications of true learning are doctrinal innovation, changes in unit organization and mission
• Need to develop different types of units
  ▪ DoD won’t be given the funding to have separate MCO and COIN forces
  ▪ Must think of ways to use available forces better

Overall conclusion: Counterinsurgency is hard to handle
• General Jack Keane has noted that the US wiped away all vestiges of COIN after Vietnam
  ▪ Too tied up with the loss of the war
  ▪ Was a mistake to do so
Question and Answer Session

What should Israel do differently in the latest situation with Hezbollah in the area of strategic communications?

- Israel could win operationally but not strategically
  - US needs to push the concept of the Long War with its own people
  - The strategic communications message for allies would be a little different
  - Different still for the uncommitted countries
  - Even more different for the enemy

- The single most important thing that Israel (and the U.S.) could do better is improve strategic communications
  - If you lose the information war, you lose everything

Definitions of winning and victory – really World War II words

- Victory would be having other countries stop supporting terror
  - Must be done by governments that respect their own people
  - Different than in old ways of war – no battlelines
    - No longer do newspapers publish maps showing the progress of war campaigns
    - Hard to keep track of the war trends that matter now
      - Can Iraqi units patrol on their own or not?

- Need to explain the ultimate objective to the people

Putting down an insurgency could be done like the British did in Malaysia:

- On a peninsula or other geographic location where it would be difficult for insurgents to bring in relief support
- Involving only an ethnic minority which would never get the full sympathy of the people
- Before the existence of CNN
- Brits controlled the situation using “resettlement camps” called new villages
  - Done for the necessary population control
  - Not an option in Iraq where population is highly urban and there are 21st Century sensibilities
  - Bio-metric ID cards might work to help control this population
    - Some units developed identity systems on their own initiative
    - Needs to be done on a national level to have effect

- There is a 3-way problem
  - What to do with Baghdad
    - No longer as integrated a city as it once was
  - Not yet time to say that there is no hope for Iraq

General Conway in his testimony to Congress noted some of the problems

- Things might have been significantly different if two decisions had been made differently
  - DeBathification put too many people out of work
  - Demobilizing the Army put Sunnis on the street with weapons they were trained to use

- Like in medevac situations, there is a golden hour in COIN when what is done sets the tone for all of the future

The questions of urban insurgency are likely to be key over the next 50 years

- Insurgents who can hide among city populations are very difficult to handle
- Urban insurgents use the tools of globalization (GPS, miniature radios, fire & forget missiles
  - Support of the local populace is also important
  - No quick answers – the classic principles of COIN apply but are harder to do in urban areas
Religious issues

- US military and people are uncomfortable with the subject and fear being insensitive but needs to be studied
  - Pulls in political issues, too
  - Struggling with the problem
    - US has not thought through the sources of radical conduct yet
    - Need much more thinking by Islamic specialists and Arabic speakers
      - To understand enemies and supporting populations
      - They will likely still continue to resent US policies

Special Operations Forces

- Need them more than ever but they are withering away
- QDR called for more
  - The problem is that it takes a long time to develop SOF troops
  - If QDR was done again, would still say the same thing
- The Army has adopted some elements of SOF – uniforms for one thing
  - Need to move more in that direction
- SOF are on the Frontline of Freedom
  - Need even more in countries where we don’t have major presence
  - Especially need in countries where we are not at war
    - At the Zero level of conflict can work to avoid situations that incite insurgency

The Timing of Iraqi Development

- Needs to be done while keeping US people satisfied with progress
- US does not think of war correctly
  - World War I was not really completed until the Marshal Plan
  - WWII was only the unfinished part of WWI
- The benefits of transforming the Middle East have been explained
  - Need to better explain the costs involved
  - The 2005 Strategic document on Iraq was good but needed a more robust communications package
  - One problem is the general level of rancor among the parties on Capital Hill
    - Lack of consensus is amazingly broad
    - Need the whole country together on such questions
  - Consequences of not having a good strategic communications plan are enormous

What is different about Iraq from the other situations studied?

- Big problem – the power of one bad soldier is amplified by the global media
  - A strategic corporal has the power to influence things both for good and bad
  - LT Gen David Petraeus in *Military Review* recently wrote about the necessity for good commanders
    - *Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldering in Iraq*
    - They need to set the moral tone for their units
  - Need to add sections on leadership and ethics to doctrine documents
    - Need to publicize the steps the US will take when soldiers do wrong
    - Must be part of the mission
- Iraq is the first internet war
  - Not yet clear how to fight that
  - The enemy is using the internet, too
  - The enemy is using tools of globalization against us to wipe out the good that can come from globalization

Building ethnically integrated security units in Iraq

- There are no problems recruiting Sunnis for security forces
  - Despite attacks even on lines of recruits waiting to process
Recruits collected the bodies and injured and got back into line
Not that they were all there for patriotism
More to do with the high unemployment and the need to feed their families

Concept needs more thinking
- The thinking needs to be done closer to the problem – in Iraq

Best book on COIN: *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice (Science 101)* by David Galula
- 80% of the battle depends on the forces involved
- Getting forces into a situation early on will have a major follow-on impact
- As a commander in Iraq, did not have the skill sets needed to handle civil affairs
  - Often really need police rather than military experience
- But there are problems with the concept of bringing in civilians with the right skill sets
  - Culture is very different than that of the military
    - Can’t be forced to deploy
    - Would be less likely to take on risky positions
    - Would likely stay for only short deployments – too short to develop good local contacts
  - Secretary of State Rice is working to develop a more expeditionary force of foreign service officers
    - Need more resources to carry out *diarrhea diplomacy*

Problems with private armed security agents
- Like the religious/policy concept interplay – problem is too hard to handle so far
  - There are problems with local legal authorities
  - Other problems relate to their training, certification, and integration with the military
- There appear to be no good answers
- State Department is working on this one, too

Centers of Gravity
- Based on work by Andrew Krepinevich *How To Win in Iraq*
  - Must look at
    - The Iraqi people
    - The US people
    - The US Army / ground forces
  - Need to have all three committed to the mission
  - Iran is also involved and is not being helpful
    - It is sponsoring and paying for insurgency and terror in Iraq and Lebanon
  - The major problems in Iraq are Iraq issues
    - Number of foreign fighters is very low
    - Still have the Sunni insurgency and the Shia reprisals
  - Hezbollah’s seizing of Israeli soldiers is probably not unrelated to the nuclear issue problems that Iran has been having

The Role of Technology in COIN
- Much has been done with the rapid fielding of new technology for the field in the last couple of years
- What still needs to be done:
  - Standardization of methods and equipment across Iraq
  - Includes ways to make it clear through public campaigns how civilians are to behave at checkpoints
  - Improved intelligence data base needs work
    - Problems with merging together several data sets not designed to be used for insurgents and terrorists
- Ultimately, it all comes down to human relations
  - Need to find ways to empower 22-year-olds to do the right thing as needed