



02

CIVIL AFFAIRS FORCE OF THE FUTURE

Empowering and Optimizing the Future Force.

BY MR. MIKE DAWDY

“The best way to predict the future is to invent it.” — Alan Kay

For those in the Profession of Arms fathoming the nature of conflict is critical to preparing for it, as failing to prepare *for* conflict is preparing to fail *in* conflict. As such, the Civil Affairs (CA) Regiment must strive to imagine and comprehend the nature of their future operating environments. From such inquiry, they must adapt and match resources to reasonably predicted conditions and scenarios. Above all, the CA force must comfortably embrace ambiguity by building resilient formations and purposefully growing their capability and capacity to navigate unexpected events and environs.

The military’s requirement to conduct CA operations not only remains acute, but its importance steadily rises. That obligation will increase in scope and scale as populations grow, become denser, more urban, and more connected.⁰¹ Complicating these realities will be the likely prevalence of gray zone conflicts requiring enduring development of relationships with civilian stakeholders that lead to desired civil-military effects in support of broad strategic defense objectives. In these conditions, the indigenous populations’ cognitive and emotive capital will remain a crucial prize to be won by competing powers.⁰² To win their piece of the gray zone fight, the CA force must recognize that CA operations there are *political warfare* that must be won by our supported indigenous partners and surrogates, whether state or non-

state actors, empowered by their constituent civilian populations.

These coming conflicts will involve competing campaigns to secure contested human will—the will of people whose consent or compliance is required for political actors to achieve governance amongst civil society and determine sovereignty over disputed territory.⁰³ The thresholds separating state and non-state, regular and irregular, combatant and civilian, are increasingly eroded, adding sensitivity and complexity to future CA operations. Under these conditions the depth and breadth of CA forces’ cross-functionality, integration, and synchronization across Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) and the

02

A U.S. Army Civil Affairs team leader discusses the importance of governmental collaboration with local leaders and the commander of the 12th Regional Infantry Commando Battalion in Burkina Faso. As populations continue to grow, become denser, more urban and connected, building enduring relationships with stakeholders that lead to desired civil-military effects becomes increasingly more important. U.S. ARMY PHOTO COURTESY OF THE 91ST CIVIL AFFAIRS BATTALION (AIRBORNE)

whole-of-government will be fundamental to employment of the Global SOF Network.⁰⁴ To do so, CA forces will harness new technologies and authorities, modernize its force structures, expand expertise through advanced training and education, and find innovative and agile approaches to solving new problems.

THE FUTURE CA OPERATING ENVIRONMENTS WILL BE HEAVILY POPULATED, URBAN, AND HYPER-CONNECTED

Trends in changing security environments indicate a likelihood of a continued disintegration of the Westphalian state system via gray zone conflicts in which state sovereignty is threatened by a variety of causes and catalysts. These threats will take the form of malign state and non-state actors, criminality,



01

resource scarcity, mass migration, disease, localized political instability, and climate catastrophe—all affected by cheaply distributed and accelerating technology.⁰⁵ Hyper-connected communities are urbanizing at unprecedented rates and are increasingly able to cross porous borders, mobilized by political, social, and economic anxieties and opportunities. These patterns will place severe strain on nations' urban centers and social fabrics not organized for the absorption of massive civilian migrations.⁰⁶ Exacerbating these civil trends is the likelihood of near-peer adversaries such as Russia, Iran, and China continuing their subversive hybrid warfare strategies. These campaigns destabilize regions by provoking crises along ethnic and religious fault lines below the threshold of overt war, through and with local proxies.⁰⁷

In aggregate, these conditions indicate that minimizing civilian casualties in military operations will be increasingly difficult, while mitigating



02

consequences of those events and of populations displaced by them will be a persistent civil-military challenge. The toll paid by civilians in these short-of-war scenarios will be high and this milieu of chaotic international affairs will require US response strategies that call upon many DoD capabilities, not the least of which will be the unique knowledge, skills, and attributes of CA forces.

Evolving CA forces' approaches to their core tasks in these environments will be necessary. Firstly, new frameworks are required for the chartered activities of Civil Reconnaissance (CR) and Civil Information Management (CIM).⁰⁸ Scarcity of information was once a challenge for developing the Common Operating Picture of an area of operations. Today, and into the future, volume of information from competing sources of disputed reliability is a greater obstacle, making on-the-ground investigation more critical. The existence of dense population centers with increasingly networked infrastructure and governance systems⁰⁹ will mean the struggle to reconnoiter, map, and understand the human terrain and civil infrastructure of a host nation or adversary will become more complex and will frustrate decision-making processes.

The foci of CR will likely need to shift into areas of disease surveillance, climatology, urban planning, and political data sampling, among others, in order to be the most relevant.

Mission success will rely upon innovative technologies that utilize such data to enable precise descriptive and predictive analysis at the operator's fingertips, in real time, that can be fed into decision-



making and intelligence cycles, not stove-piped into proprietary CIM databases. The high-tech urban environments of the future will mean that CA forces' CR activities will almost always have state and non-state technical surveillance, exacerbating security and public perception challenges long-faced by CA forces that must be addressed in new ways.

Support to Civil Administration (SCA) will also require new, hybrid approaches. In gray zone conflicts, SCA activities will involve additional support to non-state actors competing for statehood, filling political vacuums or resisting the de jure governing power in under-governed or abdicated territories, particularly in semi-rural communities stressed by expanding urban sprawl. Thus, frameworks for SCA will combine low-visibility advise/assist/accompany techniques with humanitarian and civic action and will include tactical and operational military governance-like activities employed to midwife burgeoning political structures or resuscitate failing ones.

FUTURE CA OPERATIONS WILL PLAY ROLES IN POLITICAL WARFARE AND DETERRENCE

Irregular warfare is very regular, indeed, because irregular warfare is about determining who can monopolize the use of force over internal populations and resources,¹⁰ as opposed to hegemony over extra-territorial resources or domination of rival nations. In this sense, future gray zone conflicts are "wars of governance"¹¹ and governance is established by who

wields political power and the ways and means they do so effectively. CA operations are, foundationally, tactical and operational political warfare. CA engagements, network development, civic action programs, and projects are not employed for altruistic ends in indiscriminate humanitarian ways--they are targeted for military purposes with intended effects that benefit national security and strategic objectives by working through people with political agency over the actions of others.

Political warfare includes activities designed to help proactively shape environments and prevent broader military actions by influencing the decision-making processes of specific actors and organizations toward favorable strategic diplomatic, economic, and military outcomes.¹²

This is often achieved by demonstrating or implying the likelihood of various incentives and consequences, and through persistent presence and engagement.¹³ CA operations contribute by gaining and maintaining proximity and access to key actors and organizations, by developing networks of purpose, reciprocity, and trust, by evincing tangible benefits of cooperation, and by shaping the perceptions of populations whose acquiescence or support those political actors require. CA forces are naturally postured to provide the necessary advanced understanding of political and economic forces at work and under stress that can be leveraged by Combatant Commanders for indigenous political effects in line with theater strategy.

In phase zero activities, where the current Civil-Military Engagement (CME) program is employed, CA operations help consolidate or expand the internal power of partner nations by enabling governmental institutions and implementing partners to influence vulnerable and susceptible populations and out-govern malign non-state actors. As many of the current long-term CME programs come to fruition, these and other CA shaping activities will fortify allied populations against adversarial meddling and shape those adversaries' calculations of earned incentives gained from subverting newly-resilient institutions and communities that CME activities have strengthened.

As phase zero environments transition to gray zone conflicts, CA's political warfare activities will take a more aggressive posture. This involves targeted, large-scale social and economic development programs that leverage human capital and sway popular support toward either incumbent or resistance political institutions. Such programs will require enhanced synchronization with interdepartmental partners and dedicated resources disbursed in earnest by empowered CA forces. Aggressive tactical political warfare will require civil analysis that illuminates socio-political power structures within a society that can be targeted to empower political actors who align with US strategic ends.

01
A Civil Affairs medic instructs members from the Philippine Marines, Coast Guard, and National Police on Tactical Combat Casualty Care in Puerto Princesa, Philippines. The training was held to practice techniques to respond to crisis in the region effectively. As population density continues to rise, minimizing civilian casualties in military operations will be increasingly difficult, while mitigating consequences of those events and of populations displaced by them will be a persistent civil-military challenge. U.S. MARINE CORPS PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. WESLEY TIMM

02
Civil affairs team members serve as observer controllers while Indonesian Military Peacekeeping Forces transport a simulated casualty during a scenario-based partnered training event near Jakarta, Indonesia. The exercise builds interoperability and cultural understanding while testing the civil affairs team member's ability to effectively communicate with partner nation forces. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SGT. 1ST CLASS THOMAS COLLINS

FUTURE CA ORGANIZATIONS WILL BE CROSS-FUNCTIONAL, NETWORKED, AND TECH-ENABLED

CA forces have recently seen more integration with the other ARSOF formations and our interdepartmental stakeholders and this trend will continue. Several significant steps have already been taken that partially foretell future trends in this vein. Notably, the establishment of the 1st SFC(A) consolidated the active duty ARSOF Career Management Fields (CMF) into a more scalable and modular Division-like formation. This increases SOF-CF interdependence and helps to realize the potential of fully optimized and seamless ARSOF capabilities.

Continuing current practices of collaboration with industry, academia, and the interagency will exponentially enhance interoperability.

The instability and complexity anticipated in the future precipitates the need for cross-functionality as a trait and best practice of future ARSOF formations.¹⁴ Flexibility in future conflicts will require more ad-hoc, projectized formations designed to rapidly match highly-specific requirements to available personnel, rather than rote adherence to bureaucratic, doctrinal roles and functions.¹⁵ This will mean whole-of-ARSOF team formations for specific, atypical mission sets. The future CA force should embrace the possibility of force structures resembling the concept of “Special Operations Groups” (SOG) that more closely mimic a Brigade Combat Team (BCT) than they do the Groups and Brigades structure. An infantry BCT contains infantry battalions, plus a reconnaissance, an artillery, an engineer, and a support battalion. All of these capabilities are under O-6 discretion for training and employment in the battlespace and are scalable down to platoon-sized elements. Imagine a “SOG” that forms and deploys “Special Operations Detachments” that integrate SF, PSYOP and CA, that are precisely-sized and deliberately matrixed with exactly the appropriate CMF & MOS, language, experience, and rank composition for the mission, and that are assembled and commanded at the lowest, most decentralized level necessary.

Beyond fellow ARSOF brethren, CA forces will continue to increase collaboration and coordination with interdepartmental partners. There remains untapped potential for hand-in-glove synchronization with the Department of State’s Bureau of Conflict & Stabilization Operations and USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives, among others. The complexity of gray zone conflicts and political warfare requires broad spectra

of expertise applied from across the whole-of-government. CA holds the distinction of being responsible for shaping a “a positive climate for the military and for the nation to pursue diplomatic activities that achieve foreign policy objectives.”¹⁶

Future cross-functional and projectized ARSOF organizations should seek out new ways to episodically assign interdepartmental federal civilian employees, technical and academic experts, and Reserve Component functional specialists to CA formations in order to synergize whole-of-government approaches to future problems. Inversely, when future problem sets faced by interdepartmental partners in-the-lead require expertise found in ARSOF ranks, CA personnel could be detailed to, for example, the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance on ad-hoc bases. The obstacles to these possible collaborations should not dissuade action to realize them.

Improved mechanisms for these assignments and proofs of concept will be required, but all of these concepts are in line with USSOCOM’s “Integrated Campaign” concept.¹⁷

A certainty for future CA formations is their inclusion of rapidly advancing technology. Future CR may be augmented by unmanned aerial systems (UAS) used for discreet targeted civil data accumulation. For example, UAS sensors can measure population density in a city to inform food security or public health programs or enable the delivery of medical supplies to austere locations. Real-time communication with stakeholders from interdepartmental, partner nation, and nongovernmental implementing partners will be achieved through secure commercial mobile technology enabling rapid collaboration, particularly useful in HA/DR scenarios when access to information could mean life or death to targeted communities. 3D printing may enable CA personnel to design civic action projects to manufacture common medical, water filtration, sanitation, or other assistance items or devices in lieu of costly commercial procurement mechanisms, serving to instill real resilience in communities whose political will is required for operational objectives. Social media will increasingly be a source of civil information but also a venue through which CA forces engage, inform, mobilize, and influence civil populations toward US strategic interests. Operating in the cyber domain is not an option—it is a requirement to succeed in CA’s chartered activities.

To capitalize on recent successes in the CA Regiment and to meet demands of future scenarios the force must consolidate its gains and transform. Several proposals are starting points for ways ahead

A CERTAINTY FOR FUTURE CA FORMATIONS IS THEIR INCLUSION OF RAPIDLY ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY. FUTURE CIVIL RECONNAISSANCE MAY BE AUGMENTED BY UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS USED FOR DISCREET TARGETED CIVIL DATA ACCUMULATION.

that may solidify the roles and functions that the Regiment has come to occupy and those that Commanders seeks to expand or resign. Four areas stand out: Force Structure, Training & Education, Doctrine, and Fiscal Authorities.

FORCE STRUCTURE

Force structure issues already addressed include the aforementioned ARSOF integration via “SOGs” however that potentiality relies on an abundance of externalities. Two largely internal force structure alterations for proposal are (a) size of a CA Team, and (b) addition of a Warrant Officer to the CMF. As outlined, the demands on future CA forces will increase. The current four-man configuration of a CA Team is antiquated and inadequate for emerging threat environments. A minimum of six personnel should compose the CA Team of the future in order to (a) ensure physical security during independent maneuver in semi-permissive or hostile environments, (b) enable split-team operations and for long-term talent management targeted toward country-specific expertise, and (c) ensure dedicated CR and CIM expertise on every team to professionalize those core activities.

The professionalization of CR and CIM at the team, company, and battalion levels should be accomplished through the creation of a Warrant Officer (WO) in the Regiment. The role of a WO would serve multiple purposes: provide the necessary command and control structure for split-team operations, critical longevity and continuity for teams and companies, and a technical ex-

pertise capability in, primarily, CR and CIM. To meet the CR and CIM demands of the future operating environment, specialized training, education, and expertise that is persistent at the team level will be critical to success.

TRAINING & EDUCATION

The Regiment’s personnel will require academic and industry certifications via higher education institutions and professional accreditation organizations. The goals of such certification and academic accreditations are three-fold: credibility with interdepartmental and civilian partners, gained expertise in management-level tasks and performance measures of governmental and non-governmental activities, and long-term professional development of the regimental-specific core activities that the current military education systems are ill-equipped to provide.

Sincere credibility with interdepartmental and non-governmental stakeholders will only be achieved through formally acquired skills that CA forces can master in Exercises and apply in Operations. Academic degrees and professional industry certifications demonstrate immediate value that translates across the civil-military divide and have a force-multiplying effect on the quality of CA forces’ best practices. Incorporating multi-tiered, specialized, formal academic accreditation at the CA Qualification Course should be the first priority for reform and where personnel begin their ascent through additional tiers of recertification or continuing education, similar to but distinct from ILE or NCOES, tied to continuing service and assignment

01
A U.S. Army Civil Affairs Team member provides guidance on mapping drones during Counter Illicit Trafficking training, in Gabon. The training enhances partner force counter-illicit trafficking capabilities in Gabon.
DOD PHOTO BY CHIEF MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST JOHN M. HAGEMAN





01

specificity. This iterative track-based advancement of a soldier's civilian education will reinforce a culture of learning in the Regiment and produce an operational force that shares equivalent bases of knowledge and comparable academic pedigrees with DoS, USAID, and NGO partners. It is not enough to be internally certified as "SOF" and "CA Operators" and to piecemeal with episodic training exchanges and disparate individual education; the active component of the Regiment must reach further and require its members be recognized as Civil-Military Professionals by non-military stakeholders, much like the Reserve Component (RC) by its fundamental composition of qualified civilians in respective functional areas. Project Management, Emergency Management, Nonprofit Management, Organizational Development, Public Administration, and Data Analytics are all examples of fields from which to begin.

DOCTRINE

Civil Affairs doctrine must embrace the future ways and means by which people learn. Modern technology enables the fusion between doctrine, training, knowledge management and operations delivered to the palm of a soldier's hand. It is not enough to catalog concepts and broad approaches in written form. CA forces must utilize technologies that provide immediate, global access to analysis and planning frameworks and current best practices, layered by updated institutional doctrinal knowledge, accessible by secure mobile device,

tethered by cloud infrastructure. These solutions must incorporate the use of multimedia--doctrine must explain concepts through video, audio and even virtual or augmented reality formats and interactive online learning systems that captures and keeps the next generation's attention. Enterprise-wide wiki-like spaces built for highly-specific topics can enable users in the field to contribute lessons-learned and capture best practices in real time. Should this be fused with CIM databases and predictive analytical systems, CA's past, current and future operations can be networked and available for extrapolation in the field. This infrastructure could empower doctrine developers to crowdsource enormous data samples of CA Operations to incorporate that collation into evolving, dynamic doctrinal products that insure CA doctrine's relevance to the force.

FISCAL AUTHORITIES

CA Operations are most effective when they have enduring, tangible, and visible effects in targeted communities that enable the appropriate stakeholders to take credit with their political base and which manage the attribution of the US government's role along a spectrum from overt to opaque. In accomplishing this, much debate surrounds the relationship between money & projects to performance & effectiveness. Local control of dedicated, Title X, civic aid and development funds for the rapid financing of civic action, humanitarian assistance, and development programs and

01

A 97th Civil Affairs team visits a fishing village of Vietnamese immigrants in North Carolina during a mission readiness exercise. The team was surveying residents about their hurricane evacuation plans. Practical exercises such as this are a critical part of pre-mission team training to simulate real-world scenarios. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY LESLIE OZAWA



Plans and complement the effects of the entire suite of SOF Enterprise operations and activities.

CONCLUSION

The CA Regiment is on solid footing for future success. In the twelve years since the creation of the Active Component CA force, we've watched the unprecedented growth, evolution, and maturation of the force. There have been significant growing pains and, make no mistake, growing pains will continue. However, when taking stock of, and looking forward to, the CA force much is to be celebrated and applied to future successes. Any stakeholder in the ARSOF enterprise can be confident in several things: the future operating environment will place CA forces in high demand, many of those operations will be in urban, gray zone environments involving a contest for political wills, and the employment of CA will be significantly integrated with a variety of fellow military and other USG partners, all enabled by rapidly evolving technology. For those who have a stake in this future, the time is now to innovate ideas, collaborate with strategic consorts, and advocate for bold thinking on age-old civil vulnerabilities manifesting themselves in new ways. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Dawdy is a Senior Military Operations Analyst and SOF Instructor at the Special Warfare Network Development Course (SWNDC) in 6th Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne). He served fourteen years on active duty in the Infantry and Civil Affairs Regiments, including overseas tours in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, and The Republic of Korea, and as an augmentee at two TSOCs. His positions included CA Team Sergeant, CA Planning Team NCOIC and Senior SOF Instructor/Writer.

Mr. Dawdy is a contributor to the "Unconventional Warfare Mission Planning Guide for the SFODA Level" (TC 18-01.1, 2016), the author of "Governance as a Weapon: Advising the Shadow Government in Unconventional Warfare", and a novel, *The Prides of Lions*. He has earned a Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.) with a concentration in public policy analysis from Pennsylvania State University and a B.S. in Strategic Studies and Defense Analysis from Norwich University.

projects will significantly empower CA Teams and their supported Combatant Commands. To completely and effectively fulfill many doctrinally prescribed functions in the future gray and urban conflicts, dedicated "CA Money" would be a critical force multiplier to the full spectrum of SOF Core Activities. Current funding paradigms are inadequate for the coming fight but examples exist that can be easily mimicked to fill the gaps.

These funds could look similar to "127e" Counterterrorism (formerly "1208") funding lines in allowing the efficient enabling of local implementing partners to produce targeted civil-military effects. Augmenting the current, cumbersome competition and approval processes of existing fiscal rice bowls that CA forces tap into would optimize the capability to execute programs and projects that are persistent and appropriate. Such programs and projects can be better integrated into and synchronized with existing Theater Campaign

NOTES 01. Kilcullen, David. *Out of the mountains: The coming age of the urban guerrilla*. Oxford University Press, 2015. 02. Bennet Sacolick and Wayne Grigsby, "Special Operations/Conventional Forces Interdependence: A Critical Role in 'Prevent, Shape, Win'," *Army* 62, no. 6 (June 2012): 40. 03. Cleveland, Charles, Shaw Pick, and Stuart Farris. "Shedding Light on the Gray Zone: A New Approach to Human-Centric Warfare," *Army Magazine*, August 17, 2015. 04. Ricks, Chuck. *The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment*. Joint Special Operations University, 2013. 05. "Non-State Armed Groups and Technology: The Humanitarian Tragedy at Our Doorstep." *Nar'1 Sec. & Armed Conflict* L. Rev. 3 (2013): 26. 06. Guterres, A. "People on the Move: The Challenges of Displacement in the 21st century." *International Rescue Committee UK Annual Lecture*, Royal Geographical Society, London (2008). 07. Wither, James K. "Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare." *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 15, no. 2 (2016): 73. 08. Alexander, Nicole, Moore, April, and Sogge, Ashley. "Civil Information Sharing in the Gray Zone." *Special Warfare*, January - June 2016, 29-1. 09. "Trends in Smart City Development." National League of Cities - Center for City Solutions and Applied Research, 2016. 10. Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation." (1965). 11. Brown, Joe. "Making Sense of Irregular War." *Over The Horizon*. April 26, 2017. Accessed May 05, 2017. 12. Department of Defense, US Army Special Operations Command. ARSOF Next: A Return to First Principles. *Special Warfare* (2015). 13. Becker, Joseph D. "Building Strategic Influence: The SOF Role in Political Warfare." *Special Warfare* 31, no. 1, January - March, 2018. 14. Simkin, Howard R. "The Future ODA 2035-2050." *Small Wars Journal*. March 8, 2018. 15. Bakal, Justin K., Steven E. Crowe, and Adam J. Wachob. *Innovative practices for special warfare*. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2015. 16. Department of the Army. *Civil Affairs Operations* (FM 3-57). Washington, DC: 2011). 17. Searle, Garrett. "Beyond the Interagency Liaison: Integrated Campaigns Require Cross-functional Teams." *Joint Special Operations University*, 2017.