

In Vietnam, we struggled with this as well; but eventually developed what Gen Creighton Abrams described as a "One War" approach, "with all of us on one side and the enemy on the other." The clearest reflection of this approach was the Civil Operations and Revolutionary (later "Rural") Development Support program, known as CORDS. CORDS managed to achieve a combined civilian and military effort by eventually developing a clear chain of command toward a single objective. Civilian contributions to CORDS included several civilian agencies working with their military partners, including among others, the Central Intelligence Agency, Agency for International Development, U.S. Information Service, and State Department. These civilian-military teams worked closely with their Vietnamese counterparts to meet the needs of the population and also develop better intelligence to identify and defeat Viet Cong. CORDS was an instrumental element in clearing the insurgency from 93% of South Vietnam's villages.

Unfortunately, because of the controversies and trauma surrounding the Vietnam War at the conclusion of this conflict, much of this type of experience was summarily repressed.

I know that many of the people in this room have begun to examine the CORDS model more closely to determine what lessons might be applicable today. Whatever lessons we recapture from that experience, and whatever new lessons we learn from Iraq and Afghanistan today, I urge you not to repeat the mistake of assuming that we will never do anything similar – on a larger or a smaller scale – again. We simply cannot predict - or choose – the types of challenges we will face in the future. But our 200-year history makes it fairly clear that the problem of unity of effort has been a perennial one.

2. Need to overcome bureaucratic inertia

Bob "Blowtorch" Komer, the man who developed the CORDS concept, in a critical study for RAND in 1972 identified the dysfunctional institutional that hindered the effort in Vietnam. In "Bureaucracy Does Its Thing" Komer points out that in Vietnam even though many in the individual bureaucracies knew what needed to be done, and even though there were high level policies in place articulating the right strategy, individual organizations tended to revert to the tasks they were designed to conduct rather than adapting to the circumstances on the ground. They optimized for success in their respective stovepipes, but this resulted in less-than-optimal outcomes for the overall endeavor.

For example, the U.S. military, which was designed to fight the Soviet Union in conventional warfare, applied inappropriate strategies and tactics against the Vietcong. As Komer says, "we fought the enemy our way – at horrendous cost and with tragic side effects – because we lacked the incentive and much existing capability to do otherwise."

Even worse for counterinsurgency, where a key objective is to assist the host nation in developing its own capabilities, we transferred this orientation to the Vietnamese military:

"Molding conventional Vietnamese armed forces in the 'mirror image' of the U.S. forces... was a natural institutional reaction. [Komer claimed] We organized, equipped, and trained the [Vietnamese] to fight American style, the only way we knew how."

Fortunately, and thanks to the efforts of those like Generals Petraeus, Dempsey, Eikenberry, Durbin and many others in the Coalition, I believe we have avoided making this mistake in Iraq and Afghanistan. Working with the host nations in these states, we are not creating, nor have we attempted to create, a "mirror image" of our own military. Instead, we are helping to build forces that can counter their respective insurgencies and which can be sustained by the host nation.

Komer's warning, however, is equally valid for other parts of our government and others which are helping partners and allies develop counterinsurgency capabilities. Whether helping others or working independently, the tendency for bureaucracies and bureaucrats to revert to their comfort zones is a real threat, and something we cannot afford as we carry out our strategy in the War on Terror. Your efforts this week, and more importantly,