

Impact on Army

The work Gorman and I had done, and which I explained and briefed around the Pentagon, had a large impact on one of the most important men in the US Army - General Harold K Johnson, Chief of Staff of the Army at that time - Mid 1965.

I referred to him earlier when he was the commander of Fort Leavenworth and its Command and General Staff College. He was the WWII veteran who suffered the Bataan Death March and was a Prisoner of War for 4 years.

But I knew he was a very thoughtful man. He not only read the study, but had me in his office for several searching discussions about the implications of it for the Army. In essence 'he got its message'

He commenced putting it into his many speeches, not only before US Army audiences but many civic ones. One of the best he delivered May 29th, 1965 at the Military Government Association Convention in Portland, Oregon.

He tied our work and insights into the changed nature of war directly into the Vietnam War which was ongoing - and had 7 more years to go.

You can read it here as a PDF file.

<http://davehugheslegacy.net/images/PDFs/haroldjohnsonroleofusarmy0001a.pdf>

I was immensely pleased, for his views could have a large impact on the readiness of the Army for future Insurgent wars - its doctrine, its organization, and training, in the post Vietnam era. Remember that the Department of the Army is charged with developing the doctrine for Army operations, the organization of Army units to support that doctrine, and the education and training - from Basic training through the War College - of Army Personnel. While the regional Joint Services Commanders actually control the operations of the units in time of war.

The fact that the US effort in Vietnam was too big, too late, to start reforming the way it organized, trained and operated right in the middle of the struggle, did not diminish the fact that vital seeds were sewn in the minds of young professional Army officers who would later rise to command Army units who would have to deal with the Insurgent form of war selected by enemies of existing regimes around the world.

That Johnson speech - others he delivered during his term in office, and his injecting that doctrine into Army units - 30 years later - would be the essential strategy Senior Army Officers, from Gen Petraeus commanding all US military forces in the Middle East, to the controversial Col McMasters who commanded and trained the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Carson which totally

defeated the Al Quada insurgents in and around the Iraqi city of Tal Afar in 2007. He even got public praise from President George Bush in 2007 for executing the 'new' strategy (part of which was the troop-level numerical 'surge') that would turn around the effort in the Iraq War. Even though after decades of between 1972 and 2001 when the dominant view in Army senior ranks and by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld was 'counterinsurgency is dead' except for the handful of 'Special Operations' carried out by Special Forces.

Off to the Secretary of Defense's Office

The word got all the way to Secretary of Defense McNamara that the Army 'thinkers' somehow had a fresh strategic perspective on, not only the Vietnam War but the rising tide of 'lower spectrum of war' conflicts. And that an Army officer Lt Col David Hughes was one of its authors and its current spokesman in the Pentagon. McNamara, frustrated with his own failure to make progress in Vietnam using a combination of General Westmoreland's reliance on conventional ground military tactics coupled with an Air Strike war over North Vietnam, his own efforts to defeat the Vietcong out of his own theory of 'cost effectiveness' R&D developments, with ever more technological advanced weapons and jungle sensors, and the fiddling by the National Security Staff under President Johnson by civilians actually controlling air strikes over Hanoi from the White House under their theory of 'progressive escalation' to 'compel' the North

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Vietnam to the negotiating table - all these efforts failed, and America suffered its first politico/military defeat since the War of 1812 - McNamara was ready to embrace new, radical ideas.

Before the Vietnam War was all over by 1973, I would be serving a year in Vietnam as an Army Battalion commander, after my Pentagon and Army War College tours, and I could do little to operate the way I knew would work. I would be frustrated. Still, I would first find the revolutionary ideas Gorman and I developed, and I championed, being put forth by no less than Secretary of Defense McNamara even though he was already privately deciding to leave the Johnson Administration.

So I was reassigned to the Office of the Secretary of Defense from the Army staff, to inject those new ideas into the civilian DOD hierarchy, my last year in the Pentagon.