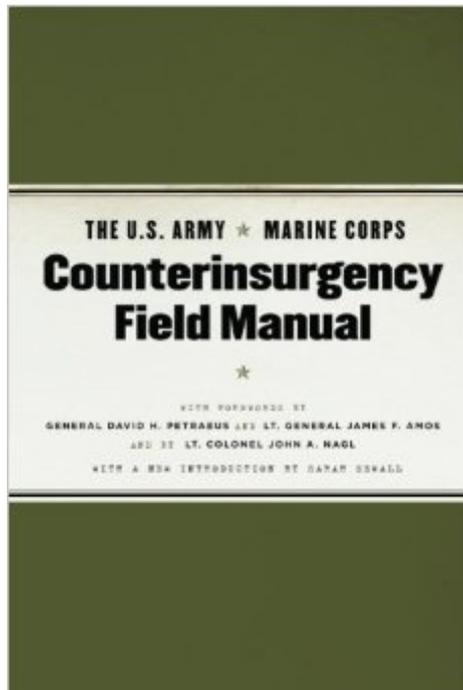


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The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual



Synopsis

When the U.S. military invaded Iraq, it lacked a common understanding of the problems inherent in counterinsurgency campaigns. It had neither studied them, nor developed doctrine and tactics to deal with them. It is fair to say that in 2003, most Army officers knew more about the U.S. Civil War than they did about counterinsurgency. The U.S. Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual was written to fill that void. The result of unprecedented collaboration among top U.S. military experts, scholars, and practitioners in the field, the manual espouses an approach to combat that emphasizes constant adaptation and learning, the importance of decentralized decision-making, the need to understand local politics and customs, and the key role of intelligence in winning the support of the population. The manual also emphasizes the paradoxical and often counterintuitive nature of counterinsurgency operations: sometimes the more you protect your forces, the less secure you are; sometimes the more force you use, the less effective it is; sometimes doing nothing is the best reaction. A new introduction by Sarah Sewall, director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, places the manual in critical and historical perspective, explaining the significance and potential impact of this revolutionary challenge to conventional U.S. military doctrine. An attempt by our military to redefine itself in the aftermath of 9/11 and the new world of international terrorism, The U.S. Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual will play a vital role in American military campaigns for years to come. The University of Chicago Press will donate a portion of the proceeds from this book to the Fisher House Foundation, a private-public partnership that supports the families of America's injured servicemen. To learn more about the Fisher House Foundation, visit www.fisherhouse.org.

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Customer Reviews

This book has become famous or notorious (take your pick) because it was written under the direction of Gen. David H. Petraeus, as of this review the commanding general of American forces in Iraq. I want to prescind from the Iraq question and address the book on its own merits. First, my qualifications. I am a retired Air Force Colonel (non-flying). During the Vietnam war I was heavily involved in Operations Research on counterinsurgency. For five years I was Chairman of the Special Warfare Working Group of the Military Operations Research Society. I spent 20 months in Thailand and Vietnam, running tests on electronic equipment for use by US and allied forces battling insurgents, and gathering and analyzing data on insurgency in Vietnam and Laos. What's in this book? Chapter One is a historical survey of insurgency and the problems of countering it. It draws heavily from the Vietnam experience, but goes as far back as the ethnic struggles in England (Welsh, Scots, Irish) against the Crown. While the historical coverage is broad, it does not, and is not intended to, give coverage in depth. Chapter Two discusses the need for integration of the civilian and military activities in counterinsurgency. What's new about this? Nothing. I wrote the same things (though perhaps not as well) while in Southeast Asia over forty years ago. The fact that it's not new doesn't mean it's not important. It's critical. The fact that it's now in a Field Manual is highly significant. Chapter Three deals with intelligence gathering in counterinsurgency. While the military commander is always in need of intelligence about the enemy (who, where, what, when), the problems of gathering this intelligence for counterinsurgency are very different from those of conventional war.

I actually bought this book some months back but I kept putting off picking it up because I assumed this would be a dense work filled with military jargon and more acronyms than one could shake a stick at. I assumed that it would be a tedious and difficult read so I found reasons to put it off, but when I finally forced myself to begin this book I was quite shocked. The book is very easy to read and very well written. The book has just a few acronyms that I had memorized within a couple of pages after their introduction, and the book is very well laid out with impeccable organization (as should be expected I guess). I dare say I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book on all levels. Of course the information and the knowledge to be gleaned from this work is extremely important. I think if this book were to become required reading for students then I think we could prevent some costly misadventures in future because this book really details what an occupation requires.

Everyone would understand that military action will require a deep level of commitment for the military and on all levels of civil society as well. I also think it is the least we can do as citizens to educate ourselves on what our military men and women are doing and attempting to implement in situations where they face this type of conflict. One gets a sense of what a soldier goes through and the huge load that is put on the ordinary soldier. It is an extremely difficult task they are asked to perform in these situations, and they are asked to perform this task with honor and discretion in the face of terrible situations.

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