

Unconventional Warfare[#]

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Introduction

A lot of new ground has been broken in unconventional warfare by US Army. Pamphlets have been published giving characteristics of the organisation of unconventional forces, their employment and operations. It is the intention here to narrow down the generalities and apply some principles of this type of warfare to conditions obtaining on our borders, as also to suggest a possible organisation and employment of Special Forces for achieving our strategic objectives.

Historical Background

UNCONVENTIONAL forces have a very long history. Such forces were systematically employed during the American War of Independence, war on western border against the Apaches and the Red Indians, guerilla activities in the Spanish War of 1812-13, and Russians' scorched earth policy in the face of Napoleon's invasion. The Arab resistance movement led by Lawrence against the Turks assisted Allenby's operations considerably in Palestine during the First World War. The Chinese guerilla activities against Japanese invasion forces from 1937 onwards and the covert activities of communist army offer examples just prior to the World War II, while the partisan movement in Yugoslavia and the Russian partisan warfare behind Nazi forces in Russia are those from World War II. In our own country, the Marathas used these tactics with devastating effect against Aurangzeb's Mughal Army. Bush-war tactics in Algeria and communist guerilla activities in Malaya, Vietnam and Indo-China are recent examples. Communist ideological infiltration is followed by establishment of guerilla bases and then slowly the resistance movement gains momentum. At a suitable time, open hostilities break out and the power is transferred into revolutionary hands. This has been the pattern of communist revolutionary wars. All this study highlights one important lesson. That small forces highly mobile, lightly

equipped, suitably indoctrinated, operating in a friendly population, and in favourable terrain can ultimately defeat large regular forces. Their ubiquity, flexibility, power to vanish and appear at appropriate times, refusal to fight a losing action, and be fixed, are baffling to a regular army used to cumbersome, time consuming procedures and mostly road bound. Because of their devastating nature, big powers can ill-afford to use nuclear weapons. This hesitation has led to the use of cold war tactics and unconventional warfare. In fact, the future wars will mostly be bush-wars based on guerilla tactics supported by ideological infiltration. In brief, small battles and pressure tactics will be the normal pattern of all future wars.

Guerilla Techniques

In order to function efficiently against an invading army, our guerilla forces will need a friendly and sympathetic medium to work in. Whether operating deep in enemy territory, friendly neighbouring countries or in our own border areas, the guerillas should first be acceptable and then gain the confidence of the populace. For this, they should have a political ideology and emancipation programme of greater promise than the so-called communist liberation movement. This should be the natural outcome of sound political wisdom, diplomatic foresight, bold and constructive social and economic programme. The agrarian economy and feudal character of society in these regions has to be borne in minds. The political programme will have to be based on agricultural reforms, co-operative movements, productivity schemes and so on.

The religious and cultural traditions of the people should be respected and any communist attempt to falsify and misquote history should be resisted. Efficient counter propaganda machinery working with good political intentions will turn the tide of the communist suppression movement. The guerilla movement will have the normal three phases of development. First, the organisation, consolidation and preservation of regional bases situated in isolated and difficult terrain. Woven round each base should be a protective belt of sympathisers willing to supply food, recruits and information. The second phase is one of direct action. This will include acts of sabotage and terrorism against enemy

occupation forces, attack and ambush on his outposts, supply dumps and isolated garrisons. In this phase, the guerilla expansion of 'liberated areas' is carried out including political indoctrination of peripheral areas.

In the last phase, the guerilla forces seek a decision and aim at the destruction of enemy. During this phase, a large proportion of guerilla force completes its conversion into conventional force and engages enemy in conventional battles, thus, completing his destruction. Mao Tse-tung in his book has stressed upon the importance of guerilla warfare as a 'necessary strategical auxiliary' to the operations of the regular army. General Blumentritt has gone even further. He says: 'It is my belief that in a future war the fight will be directed primarily against enemy activities in rear and that battle will be sought only as an auxiliary means to achieve victory'. This is our cue. We shall do to the communist invading hordes what they did to the Japanese invasion army.

Regular Forces in Unconventional Role

There were some regular forces employed in an unconventional role during World War II. These were the following:-

- (a) **Long Range Patrol Group.** These were observation elements 'deployed by the Eighth Army' for gaining intelligence about the enemy during its frequent advances and withdrawals. These were mainly patrols living out in no man's land or even enemy territory. Their task was to pass back useful information, deny some features to enemy, raid his convoys and supply dumps, and sometimes even carry special missions.
- (b) **Command Forces.** These were regular forces specially organised, equipped and trained, and meant to carry out special missions. British commando raids over German occupied Norwegian Coast to destroy Heavy Water plants are well known.
- (c) **Deep Penetration Forces.** Planned, organised and led by Orde Wingate, these forces operated behind Japanese lines, snapped their communications, contained some regular

enemy forces, and generally helped the operation of main forces.

Though their method of employment is novel, all forces mentioned above are still conventional forces used to assist the operations of the main regular forces.

Special Forces

What we understand by Special Forces now is forces specially organised, trained, equipped and probably dressed, employed to operate independently or in conjunction with the main regular forces under the theatre commander. Special Forces employed under the theatre commander will be trained to conduct guerilla warfare and related unconventional warfare activities. Their task will be to develop, organise, equip, train, and direct indigenous forces in the conduct of guerilla warfare. They may also have to advise, train and assist indigenous forces in counter insurgency operations. These will employ guerilla or regular tactics as required and raise resistance forces from amongst the countries where they are operating. They may be called upon to initiate guerilla movement against the established authority or resist foreign invasion by guerilla tactics, acting as partisans or to counter enemy guerilla tactics in one's own or neighbouring countries, and even in a counter insurgency operation in own country.

Characteristics

These should be highly mobile, lightly equipped, air transportable forces capable of being air-dropped and maintained. They should be kept at the highest state of readiness, ready to move to the threatened or desired area of operation at a short notice. They should be under the control of the highest strategic commander in a theatre.

The personnel of Special Forces must be volunteers suited to operate in a particular geographical terrain. They should have enough local knowledge, be acceptable to the population, and should be capable of acting as guerilla leaders for the indigenous resistance forces. Needless to say, they should be tough,

resolute, dedicated men, well versed in all skills of soldiering, weapons and tactics.

Organisation

The Special Forces group consists of a Headquarters, Headquarters Company and four Special Forces companies. Each company has an administrative detachment, one operational detachment C, three operational detachments B and twelve operational detachments A with varying tasks and capabilities. They can operate independently as guerilla detachments or in conjunction with the regular tactical field armies. Each detachment is capable of raising varying number of local insurgency battalions. The Special Forces group should be under the strategic control of the theatre commander. Each group should be capable of establishing itself alongside a theatre Headquarters and deploy its companies with army groups. Companies, in turn, deploy their detachments down to armies. Down to section level, the Special Forces should be well served with propaganda machinery in its organisation. This is vital since the main task of the Special Forces initially is to win popular opinion by offering constructive political philosophy with concrete immediate advantages to show. To counter the enemy's political indoctrination and propaganda, this machinery will have to be very ingeniously devised.

In the initial stages, Special Forces sections deployed in own, friendly or enemy territory will be busy winning public support. The second stage will be a careful study of enemy methods, tactics, and gathering all intelligence about his forces. Then the forces will start training the resistance forces for their role. Their tactics initially will be one of consolidation and surveillance; then they will expand their bases and group them into bigger bases. Still on the defensive, fighting only for capturing enemy weapons, equipment and supplies, they will consolidate their hold, indoctrinate the population or probably counter indoctrinate them. In all this, the Special Forces must understand the customs, traditions, past history of the people, their economic conditions, and political aspirations. The attitude towards the population should be one of respect, understanding, and affection. Later on when their hold grows stronger, Special Forces take to open battles and fight major actions.

All along, the Special Forces will have to be in communication with the theatre commander. Full logistical support must be ensured for the troops in addition to living off the land.

The Special Forces should be able to subsist for a long period in enemy territory, may be years, and merge with the local population in appearance, customs, habits, language, and way of living. They should have a thorough knowledge of enemy organisation, weapons and equipment, and know-how to use them.

Areas of Employment

Special Forces can operate in the following areas:-

- (a) Contiguous border areas during initial invasion of own territory.
- (b) Own areas lost to invaders when enemy drives through the first line of defence.
- (c) In offensive operation in enemy territory ideologically and politically favourable to us.
- (d) In a ring of friendly countries to contain communism and form an ideological and military barrier against enemy indoctrination military operations.

Method of Employment

Special Forces can be employed as an independent force in a friendly country to fight communist expansion. It could also be employed independently in one's own or enemy territory to wage a guerilla war. It could alternately be employed in a resistance movement to assist the operation of own main forces in offence and defence by deploying either behind the enemy or on his flanks.

Offensive Operations. In offensive operations, these forces could form the vanguard of our invasion forces operating much ahead of our advancing armies and finally having done their work, link up with the head of the advancing forces. Their work will start much earlier also. They will prepare ideological ground by starting a movement of liberation. Living with the people and indoctrinating

them, they will create out of them willing receptionists to welcome our advancing armies. They will protect the flank of the advancing army as Lawrence's Arabs at Amman protected the eastern flank of Allenby's Army. They could also indulge in a whispering campaign to discredit the enemy government by exaggerating our success and undermining his authority. Espionage, sabotage on enemy communication, mobilisation efforts and essential services, and all other fifth column tactics will be used. There are many friendly areas within enemy territory where these forces could be landed and where they can establish their bases. Our foreign refugees could form the scouts and even major portion of our Special Forces. These smuggled inside enemy territory will form the nucleus of our friendly firm bases.

Defensive Operations. In defensive operations, our Special Forces will initially be mainly employed in the harassing operations, employing typical guerilla and partisan tactics, themselves or with the help of the local population. They will be operating mainly in our own territory lost to the enemy. Our border hilly areas and neighbouring countries provide excellent terrain for such tactics. Mountains, jungles and valleys are ideal places for guerilla activities. Their main tasks will be to operate in enemy rear, harass, uproot and destroy. Hanging on enemy flanks like invisible wasps, and harassing his rear, these forces will indulge in all normal guerilla activities. Killing commanders, sniping, ambushing, holding up convoys, looting weapons and equipment, they will force on protection duties and put out of action a large portion of enemy fighting strength. Their intimate knowledge of our own territory and popular support will give them all the advantages of a partisan. Slowly as our main forces take up the offensive and prepare to counter attack, these forces will whip up their activities, gain initiative, gather momentum, enlist popular support and ultimately by employing normal tactics join up with the main forces. These forces will be readily convertible from guerilla into regular troops and vice versa.

Conclusion

The time has come when we have to think in terms of our offensive response to the communist military and ideological infiltration. Placed, as we are, dangerously close to a ruthless, highly efficient, and expansionistic communist dictatorship, our democracy can ill-afford to lose sight of the handicaps of a purely defensive strategy. While closing all gaps in our own defensive set up, our eyes should seek for a chink into the enemy's armour. Well organised Special Forces, versatile, ubiquitous and well supported shall arrest further communist expansion in our own and neighbouring countries and help decisively our offensive and defensive operations.

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