

The Impact of Unrestricted Warfare on Small Unit Reconnaissance

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The Importance of Defining Terms

- **To clarify the definition of “unrestricted warfare” (URW) one must specify what aspect of warfare is no longer being restricted**
 - **Tactics**
 - **Selection of targets**
 - **Selection of weapons**
 - **Ethical rules of engagement**
 - **Scale of warfare**
 - **Dimension of warfare**
- **This presentation uses URW to refer to the conduct of warfare in dimensions other than the traditional military dimension (e.g., economic, media, cultural, etc...)**

What is a Small Unit?

- **Small Unit – A group of ~1-8 individuals that work as**
 - **Overt units – Small units which do not seek to conceal their presence while conducting their mission (e.g., infantry units on patrol)**
 - **Covert units – Small units which seek to conceal their presence while conducting their mission. (e.g., Special Operating Forces)**
 - **Clandestine units – Units which seek to conceal their mission and affiliation but not their presence while conducting their mission (e.g., human intelligence collection)**
- **Reconnaissance is not necessarily restricted to military dimension of warfare but can apply to other dimensions as well**
- **Collected information can be used for situational awareness, tactical, or strategic purposes**

URW – Something New Under the Sun?

- Publication of *Unrestricted Warfare*, by Liang and Xiangsui has drawn attention to unrestricted warfare but what is new?
 - Theory?
 - Theorists have proposed various forms of URW for centuries
 - Practice?
 - History is replete with examples of large and small forces engaging in multi-dimensional warfare
 - Acceptability?
 - Many dimensions of URW are currently accepted in the western world
 - Effectiveness
 - The global environment has changed in such a way as to make URW a more effective mode of warfare than in the past

Why is URW More Effective Now?

- URW is more effective now than it has been in the past for both state and non-state actors because
 - Globalized, high-tech world creates an interconnected environment rich with both vulnerabilities and new attack vectors
- But URW is particularly appealing for non-state actors due to multiple “leveling” forces
 - Information Technology revolution has altered global power dynamics, “leveling the playing field” for smaller organizations
 - Easy access to information
 - Near costless dissemination of information
 - Ubiquitous global communications
 - Enhanced computational power and productivity
 - Pace of technological change and power of COTS products will continue to negate technological advantages of rich country security establishments

Impact of the New Global Environment on Non-state Adversary Activity

- **Organizational Structure (smaller & harder to find)**
 - Individuals and small units now capable of global impact
 - Units can operate as a distributed, clandestine, networked force
- **Reconnaissance and Planning (better intelligence, weapons, and training)**
 - Data mining can help identify potential vulnerabilities for exploitation
 - Training materials abundant on-line
 - COTS tools offer previously unavailable capabilities
- **Operations (operational forces more capable and sustainable)**
 - Fundraising
 - Recruitment
 - Operational Coordination
- **Publicity and Propaganda (messaging more sophisticated)**
 - Highly effective and up to date messaging

Examples of Terrorist Use of the Internet

- **Terrorist and Iraqi insurgent force interest and savvy in URW can be seen in their use of the internet in recent years**
- **U.S. Institute for Peace, “How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet”**
 - **Terrorist organizations are increasingly targeting their messages and distribution channels to distinct audiences: supporters, international public, and enemy public.**
- **International Crisis Group, “In their Own Words: Reading the Iraqi Insurgency”**
 - **“The insurgency increasingly is dominated by a few large groups with sophisticated communications.”**
 - **“The groups appear acutely aware of public opinion and increasingly mindful of their image.”**

Imperatives for Small Unit Reconnaissance in URW

- **Small units play a critical role in helping the nation to address these critical challenges particularly by providing access to critical information in all dimensions of warfare**
- **To be maximally effective small units must**
 - **Cross-train in multiple dimensions of warfare**
 - **Maintain awareness of cutting edge technologies**
 - **Maintain operational security**
 - **Be focused with accurate cueing from other sources**