

**IDEAS & ISSUES (DOCTRINE)**

# Irregular Warfare

**New concepts for consideration**  
by Concepts and Plans Division, MCWL

**T**hus far in the 21st century, the United States has increasingly faced state and nonstate adversaries who employ irregular warfare to counter our vast conventional military power. That trend is expected to continue with the implication that U.S. forces must become as adept at waging irregular warfare—both defensively *and offensively*—as we are at waging conventional warfare. We must become expert in irregular methods—unconventional, guerrilla, economic, cultural, technological, and other assorted means—in order to defend the Nation in the protracted regional or global irregular warfare campaigns ahead.

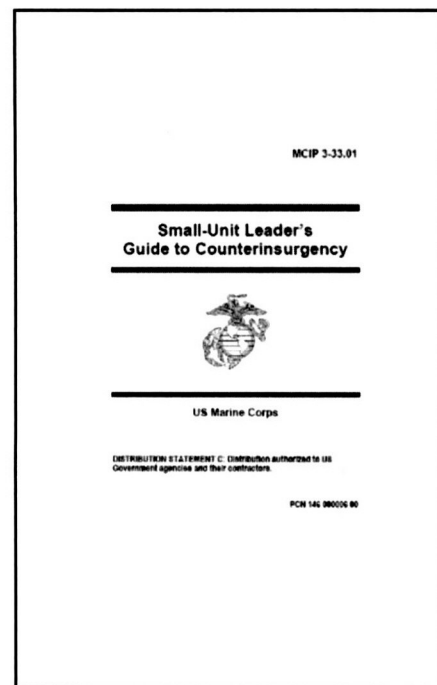
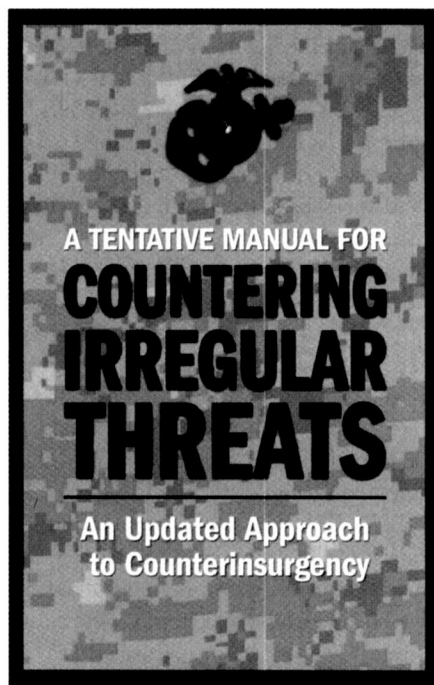
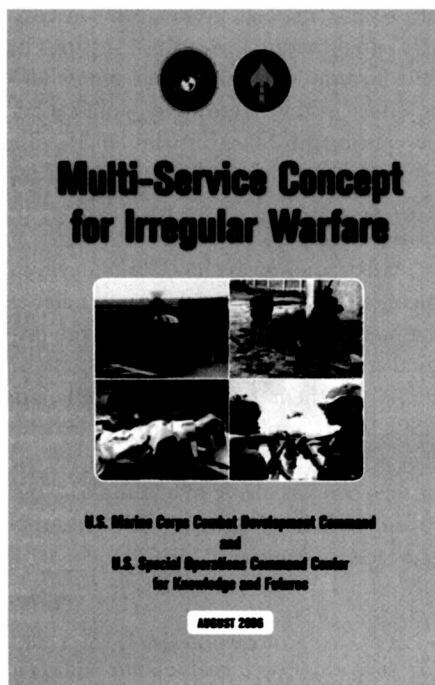
Our rich and varied national experience in irregular warfare—from 1776 to Iraq—shows that we must approach it in a fundamentally different manner from our approach to conventional warfare. While many of our current Department of Defense capabilities have applicability in ir-

regular warfare, many others need to be developed and incorporated into doctrine and training. The Concepts and Plans Division, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL), Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), is developing a set of concepts and doctrine to help shape the capability development. These recently published or forthcoming publications include:

- *The Multi-Service Concept for Irregular Warfare* was produced in cooperation with U.S. Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM's) Center for Knowledge and Futures and approved by the Commanding General (CG), MCCDC and the Deputy Commander, USSOCOM in early August 2006. It describes how U.S. military forces will conduct irregular warfare in support of unified action on a regional or global scale against both state and non-state adversaries. It is meant as a guide for enhancing and improving U.S. military

capabilities and capacities, and to point toward closer integration of U.S. military and civilian agencies in meeting the irregular warfare challenge. It describes a comprehensive approach for applying all elements of U.S. national power—economic, diplomatic, cultural, and technological, as well as military—to achieve U.S. objectives. This publication may be viewed on the MCWL web site at <http://www.mcwl.usmc.mil>.

- *A Tentative Manual for Countering Irregular Threats: An Updated Approach to Counterinsurgency* was issued in limited numbers by MCCDC during July 2006 for comment and refinement. Targeted at the battalion level and above, it is intended to promote discussion and debate on how to counter complex and dynamic insurgent threats by influencing the environment through the coordinated pursuit of six logical lines of operation—information/intelligence, humanitarian



*These new doctrinal publications provide the basis for an operating concept in irregular warfare. (Covers courtesy of Concepts and Plans Division, MCWL)*



**Irregular warfare is a part of the Corps' past, present, and future.** (Photo by LCpl Terence L. Yancey.)

aid, economic advice, defense and security, governance, and combat operations. These six operational lines, all applied by a combined military/civilian team, are not prescriptive but representative, and the *Tentative Manual* shows how, in a given campaign design, their number can be expanded or shrunk to meet the requirements of a particular intervention. This publication is available to registered users on the MCWL web site at <http://www.mcwl.usmc.mil>.

- *Small Unit Leader's Guide to Counterinsurgency*, signed by the CG, MCCDC on 20 July 2006, provides a collection of tactics, techniques, and procedures that represent the current counterinsurgency "best practices" from the U.S., British, and Australian experience. This publication is aimed at small unit leaders at the squad, platoon, and company levels. It is available to registered users on the MCWL web site at <http://www.mcwl.usmc.mil>.

- *Field Manual 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3.33-5, Counterinsurgency Manual*, is currently under development in cooperation with the U.S. Army. It aims to fill a doctrinal gap by describing how offensive, defensive, and stability operations, conducted along multiple lines of operation, are necessary to defeat insurgency. It requires that soldiers and Marines balance a mix of famil-

iar combat skills with skills more often associated with civilian agencies, such as reconstruction and stability, to defeat an insurgency.

Although the future is highly uncertain, what does appear likely is that our Nation's enemies will not seek to attack our strengths but, rather, will strive to negate these strengths through various means, including hiding amongst the indigenous populations of fragile or failed states. The publications noted above reflect the complex environmental challenges that war amongst the people can create. A common theme that emerges from these publications is that the capabilities required to wage irregular warfare are largely intellectual rather than material or technical. The general premise is that mental agility and organizational adaptability will enable and support the Marine Corps' successful participation in intervention campaigns—even if that intervention is in the complex environment posed by irregular warfare.





## Marine Corps Association

*The Professional Association for All Marines*

In partnership with nuTravel, Inc.,\*  
a leader in online travel management, the Marine Corps Association proudly provides a complete online leisure travel reservation system offering exclusive discounts to MCA members and subscribers.



SEMPER FI  
*Travel*

Book your next travel with MCA Semper Fi Travel!

[www.mca-marines.org](http://www.mca-marines.org)

We're Always Faithful.

\*This unique partnership with nuTravel makes it possible for the association to pass along exclusive savings to members, subscribers, and their families. nuTravel works with a multitude of popular, industry-leading travel vendors and inventory providers, identifying opportunities where they can work together and offer excellent exclusive deals to the MCA.

This addition to the MCA benefits package is designed to provide MCA members, subscribers, and their families the benefit and savings of booking flights, hotels, rental cars, vacations, and cruises at MCA exclusively discounted rates not available anywhere else! Semper Fi Travel will be entirely web based and accessible via any web browser right from the MCA web site.