Six Lessons for Tomorrow

by Capt David W. Hudspeth

The lasting contribution of those involved in Kosovo is the lessons they have generously and sometimes unknowingly provided.

s in any conflict, NATO's involvement in Kosovo has some valuable lessons to be learned. These lessons, if learned and applied properly, can potentially multiply American combat power, diplomacy, or a combination of both in future conflicts.

The first lesson learned is that air still cannot win wars alone. In the 13 September 1999 edition of the *Marine Corps Times*, Gen Wesley Clark was quoted as saying:

> The Serb army had a terrible fear of what was coming and eventually I think that fear was communicated to President Milosevic. . . The Serb army was convinced NATO eventually would attack on the ground. Milosevic had plenty of intelligence and all of the indicators that would have made him conclude that we [NATO] were going in on the ground.

It was tbe fear of a committed ground campaign coupled with the ongoing effective air campaign that achieved NATO's goal of removing the Serb army from Kosovo.

The second lesson learned is that the Powell Doctrine must take into account total combat capability. Gen Colin Powell said that the American military should only be utilized when it can be committed with overwhelming force. Due to budget cuts, reduced tensions due to the end of the Cold War, etc., the American military establishment, when based on manpower levels alone, will find it difficult to fight two major regional conflicts at the same time. When American manpower, however, is multiplied by its air superiority, cruise missiles, sea lane interdiction capabilities, electronic warfare, and Space Command assets, then even the smallest ground combat force may have an "overwhelming advantage" over a numerically superior enemy force.

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The third lesson is that even though NATO and our other allies may downplay force protection measures, the American Armed Forces must continue to emphasize and train to enhance force protection. Having three soldiers taken prisoner made many American civilians and even its military personnel question our involvement in Kosovo. CWO Durante being taken prisoner in Somalia was one of several factors that led to an American-led pullout of that nation. The American Armed Forces cannot afford to do the enemy's work for them by allowing our servicemembers to be less watchful. Simple rules of engagement now allow Americans to fire at suspected enemy threats more easily, but is every servicemember capable and trained to do so? Each Service should look at its force protection measures more closely. Perhaps all the U.S. Armed Forces should implement programs similar to Marine Combat Training where all Marines regardless of their military occupational specialties are trained to protect themselves and perform the basic fundamentals of riflemen.

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The fourth lesson is that in peacekeeping or peace enforcing operations there has to be population reeducation. Thomas Patrick Melody in the 31 August 1999 *Washington Post* stated that "the U.S. Government is imposing its policy of immediate reconciliation and living together as next-door neighbors." Melody says that this policy will not work and that "worse it will encourage more violence and instability in Kosovo. The ethnic confrontation in Kosovo, as in Burundi where Melody was U.S. Ambassador in the early 1970s, is "rooted in centuries-old alienation and animosity between the two communities [Serb and Albanian]." Although the presence of outside forces will prevent major confrontations, these forces will one day be pulled out. The success of their mission should not be measured in the number and severity of hostilities during their deployment, but rather the number and severity of hostilities after their withdrawal. To guarantee a successful mission, there must be reeducation of the population, specifically the younger generation of Serbs and ethnic Albanians who would be the vitality of a renewed conflict or a continued and lasting peace. The future of the region will be based on just how successful and wide-ranging the reeducation effort will be. Based on America's own history following its Civil War where ethnic confrontation was not rooted as deeply as in Kosovo, our political and military leaders should be reminded that this effort will take years, even decades, in order to produce a lasting peace and tolerance. Reeducation cannot take on any form or semblance of propaganda. It has to be made up of caring, tolerant people who are devoted simply to the welfare of fellow human beings regardless their ethnic or religious affiliations. Military personnel are not suited for the reeducation process. For this job it will take many civilians whose appearances themselves may invite eventual trust and communication.

The fifth lesson is that the "strategic corporal is a real person" according to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) lessons learned. Noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and junior officers have been and will continue to be faced with perplexing dilemmas unfolding at a rapid-fire pace in Kosovo and in future military operations other than war (MOOTW). They must be continually empowered to make instantaneous decisions, but hand in hand with the continual empowerment must come continued training specifically concerning immediate action drills and rules of engagement. President Woodrow Wilson stated best the need for training NCOs and junior officers in such subjects when he said:

> The newspapers talk about me like I am a god for keeping us out of the war [World War I], but some German lieutenant could commit some atrocity today and we'd be at war tomorrow.

The intent of such training should be to place our NCOs and junior officers repetitively in MOOTW situations, both routine and those completely out of the ordinary. The more times NCOs and junior officers are faced with the same situation or similar situations, the more conditioned and less uncertain their responses will be. This training will both enhance initiative by keeping all servicemembers aware of what they can do and confident of their ability to lead.

The sixth and final lesson is intelligence, intelligence; and intelligence. According to the 26th MEU lessons learned the only reliable human intelligence was organic counterintelligence assets and what the individual Marine gathered at

the company level. Servicemembers must be trained to report everything they see, hear, or are told by nationals or allied forces. Everyone has heard of the cliché "there's no such thing as a stupid question." In MOOTW scenarios like Kosovo the cliché should be "there's no such thing as an unimportant observation." Everything has significance, although an observation made today may not be needed, it may come into play a day or two from current operations. This lesson must get to the lowest ranking servicemember as soon as possible.

The lessons learned outlined by this paper are on a strategic, operational, and tactical level. They are (1) airpower cannot win wars alone: (2) the Powell Doctrine does not hinge on manpower counts alone; (3) force protection measures must be continually emphasized; (4) an effective reeducation effort is an essential part of any Kosovo-type operation; (5) the strategic corporal is a real person. and he must be prepared for his role; and (6) human intelligence from all sources is of overwhelming importance.

Americans involved in Kosovo should all be commended and thanked for their efforts, however, their lasting contribution hasn't been the success of their mission but the lessons they have generously and sometimes unknowingly provided. These lessons, if applied properly, will assist Americans striving to be successful in those conflicts as yet over the horizon. US MC

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