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An Embarrassment of Riches? - Britain's Lost Lessons from The Rhodesian Counterinsurgency War

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When the Rhodesian government of Ian Smith signed the declaration of independence from the United Kingdom on Armistice Day, 11 November 1965, it did so under a portrait of the Queen, with the declaration ending with the words 'God save the Queen'.[1] With this demonstration, the Salisbury government signalled their severance of ties to the British government but remained true to the Crown, thus indicating their loyalty and fraternal ties to the people of the UK. Rhodesia had been unique within Britain's African colonies as it 'had been a self-governing colony since 1923, with the right to defend herself.[2] 'All Britain retained was a veto to protect African rights and, of course, sovereignty'.[3] Accordingly, it had its own armed forces and civil service yet her loyalty to the UK remain among the strongest throughout Africa. During the Second World War, White Rhodesia sent 6,500 men out of an estimated 30,000 available to fight, and trained 10,000 of the Empire's aircrew as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme.[4] With such close ties, Harold Wilson's government in London refused to send troops to resolve the illegal declaration and, instead, relied upon UN economic sanctions to force a solution.[5] With this as a background, this paper will identify lessons arising from the 14-year long counterinsurgency campaign fought by the Rhodesian forces and question why the lessons arising from do not appear, on face value, to have been widely heeded by British Forces in their recent COIN operations, despite strong cultural, economic and military links, which lasted until UDI, as it has entered British vernacular.

The counterinsurgency in Rhodesia arguably dates back to 1962, before UDI, but it was a low-level struggle that was readily contained by the Rhodesian police, so for the sake of this dissertation, the effective start date will be that of 11 November 1965. Similarly, despite a ceasefire coming into effect in December 1979, small-scale incidents continued to occur in Rhodesia until the official handover of power to the Mugabe government, therefore, the end date will be taken as the creation of Zimbabwe on 18 April 1980. This paper will start by contextualising the conflict, before breaking the insurgency and the campaign to counter it into four phases; the initial years of 1965-1969, the quiet before the storm of 1969-1972, the escalatory years of 1973-1976 and the culmination between 1977 and 1980. Within each division, it will address some of the lessons that were collected from Rhodesia and which could have proven useful within the context of the Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan counterinsurgencies, as it is only those operations that could have

[1] Smith (2008), p.105
[2] Wood (2010), p.192
[3] *ibid*
[4] Moorcraft & McLaughlin (2011), p.23
[5] Thomson (2010), p.162

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directly benefited from an historical study of the Rhodesian conflict. The paper will then analyse how the UK has hitherto learnt its contemporary counterinsurgency lessons, before concluding with an assessment of whether the UK chose to ignore the Rhodesian campaign.

Throughout, the paper will aim not to judge the controversial socio-political policies of the Salisbury government, save those directly related to the counterinsurgency campaign. In order to readily identify the warring parties, it will use the term 'Whites' to refer to the European-settler population of Rhodesia and 'Blacks' to mean the indigenous black population, with 'Rhodesian' applying to loyalists, both black and white, of the Salisbury government. The pejorative term 'Terrorist' will be avoided, for whilst Rhodesians often referred to their enemy as such, usually abbreviated to 'terrs', the use of terror was not exclusive to one side; the term 'Insurgent' will identify anti-government forces and 'Nationalists' applied to those politically opposed to white-minority rule; 'Security Forces' will apply to the Rhodesian Government's military and police. Finally, many place names were changed following the establishment of Zimbabwe, therefore, all locations will be referred to in their pre-1980 sense.[6]

Since the Second World War, Britain has fought many counterinsurgency operations, notably in its withdrawal from Empire. Before the split, Britain's campaigns in Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus and Aden were all supported with troops and air power from Rhodesia.[7] After UDI, the British went on to fight COIN operations in Aden, Northern Ireland and, most recently, Iraq and Afghanistan. It is widely accepted that 'the large volume of British irregular warfare experience has equated to competence in COIN operations'.[8] Recent operations, since 2003, have brought criticism that the British military have been slow to react to the complexities of new challenges and that quantity has not equalled quality.[9] Given Britain's vast, if uneven, experience in COIN, it would be unsurprising if it was introspective in its learning, yet the Rhodesian War gives many parallels from which to draw direct comparison. The structure of the Rhodesian army and Air Force were taken directly from those of the UK, predictable in view of the shared experiences since 1939, and the UK continued to support the Rhodesian government with arms and training. At the time of UDI, the small Rhodesian Forces were professionally aligned with the UK, having fought COIN operations alongside the UK both on the ground and in the air, and its air force was one of the most modern in Southern Africa, with the latest British Hunter and Canberra aircraft.[10] Considering the 'kith and kin' nature of the Rhodesian Forces, in terms of experiences, tactics, training and equipment used, the question of what lessons from this campaign could have been absorbed will be addressed.

Was Rhodesia's declaration of Independence, the first such since the loss of the American Colonies of 1776, and its white-minority attitudes, such an embarrassment for the UK that it was culturally unable to absorb lessons, regardless of their value? Is

[6] Barrett (2009), p.3
[7] Wood (2009), p. 33; Lowry (2009), p. 88
[8] Mumford (2011), p.1
[9] *ibid*
[10] Corum & Johnson (2003), p.296

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the fact that Rhodesia was a pariah to the British for 15 years a reason for it to go unstudied? It will be argued here that Britain has not regarded the Rhodesian War as an important counterinsurgency struggle, as Britain was not directly involved. Instead, Britain has historically been disinterested in studying COIN operations, choosing to concentrate on high-end operations and assuming that it can adapt to the 'lesser' challenge of counterinsurgency. When obliged to invest time in studying COIN, the analysis has been of its own operations and rarely that of other nations' counterinsurgencies. In choosing to research this war, it has been found that there are a steady stream of books and articles on the subject. There is no shortage of anecdotal writing from some of those who fought, in much the same way that there is a plethora of books merging from veterans of Britain's 21st Century COIN operations. Additionally, there is sufficient academic analysis into the general conduct of the war and of the political machinations by the Rhodesians. Crucially, there is very little in the way of direct comparison between that war and those fought by the UK over a similar period, and little study conducted by Britons with direct personal involvement in Britain's counterinsurgencies. Prolific in his writings on the Rhodesian War, ex-Rhodesian Intelligence officer, Dr Richard Wood, admits that he has 'done some work on the Ministry of Defence files at Kew but none after 1980 (April 1980 is my cut-off date)'.[11] Within the Joint Services Command and Staff College library, there are just six papers on the subject of Rhodesia. This is not entirely surprising given that 'a 2009 study sample of 114 officers at the [JSCSC] revealed that more than two-thirds "had no knowledge of fundamental COIN principles"', yet it is surprising that its study is so insignificant, given the provenance of the Rhodesian forces.[12]

The Rhodesian War, 1965-1980

The start of the insurrection in Rhodesia can be considered to be 1965, yet uprising in Rhodesia was almost as old as the country itself. The first *Chimurenga,* or freedom struggle, of the 1890s was a Matabele response to white settlers drifting up from the south.[13] Following the granting by Britain of self-governing, almost dominion, status to Southern Rhodesia in 1923, the seeds for disquiet were sown with the Land Apportionment act of 1930 where distinct areas were drawn up for blacks and whites, with the blacks being allocated the poorer soil within 'reserves', later termed 'Tribal Trust Lands'.[14] Following the Second World War, the rise of nationalism across the British Empire, and a growing awareness of injustice amongst the black population of Rhodesia was enhanced by the granting of independence to Britain's African colonies and by Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' speech in 1960.[15] A federation between Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland had been founded in 1953 but this was destined to fail owing 'to the internal racial policies of Southern Rhodesia and the realisation that these policies were incompatible with a closer relationship to neighbouring black states'; the winds of change were to become the Doldrums of Rhodesia.[16] Dissatisfaction with the Federation amongst Rhodesia's blacks had

[11] Wood - email 3 Aug 12
[12] Mumford (2011), p.7
[13] Cilliers (1985), p.1
[14] *ibid*
[15] Smith (2008), p.40
[16] Cilliers (1985), p.3

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resulted in the formation of the African National Congress in the 1950s and the National Democratic Party in January 1960, with a goal of one-man-one-vote and majority rule; a new constitution, agreed by Britain in 1961, pre-empting impending Federation collapse, although promising greater black representation, delayed universal suffrage by several years, resulting in NDP-organised riots and its banning.[17] 'Almost immediately the African nationalists formed a new party called the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU – its armed faction being the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army, ZIPRA)' which itself was soon banned.[18] In August 1963, one of the founders of the NDP and ZAPU, Ndabaningi Sithole, broke away to form the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU – its army later being called the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army, ZANLA); whilst both organisations were committed to majority rule, their rivalry was fierce and violent, but it was to be these two organisations and their armed wings which were to be the main protagonists throughout the bitter counterinsurgency war of the late 60s and the 70s. With an increasing determination to keep the *status quo,* the newly-created, conservative Rhodesian Front party was elected to power in December 1962; in 1964, Ian Douglas Smith, who had fought in one of the Rhodesian squadrons of the RAF during the Second World War, ousted Prime Minister Winston Field after Field had been unable to secure independence from the UK.[19] Influenced by recent events in the post-independence Belgian Congo, the massacre of whites during the Kenyan Mau-Mau uprisings and the election 'of an unsympathetic Labour government in Britain in 1964', the RF government were determined that they should be masters of their own fate, convinced that the blacks were incapable of responsible government; the unlawful declaration of independence from Britain followed the following year.[20]

Although unprepared for operations at UDI, the nascent insurgent forces had been aware of the growing need to confront white independence. Initial attempts before UDI to 'foment sufficient violence and unrest in Rhodesia to compel [Britain]…to restore order, thereby paving the way for black majority rule' had foundered once it became clear that the Smith government would not waver.[21] In 1963, the forces of ZANU, the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA) had begun training in China and would continue to be aligned with traditional Maoist insurgency doctrine, which emphasised the need to gain the loyalty and support of the local population, throughout the struggle; by comparison, ZIPRA slowly evolved, with Soviet Union support, to largely concentrate on conventional, rather than guerrilla operations.[22] The first official engagement is recorded as the Battle of Sinoia on 28 April 1966, where Rhodesian Security Forces, led by the Police, killed seven ZANLA insurgents. Although this date is now celebrated in Zimbabwe as 'Chimurenga Day', it, and subsequent operations in 1966-68, were disastrous for the Nationalists, through amateurism on the side of the insurgents and a widespread police informant network; 'the defeats suffered in the field resulted in a collapse of morale and the withdrawal of ZIPRA from the conflict for a number of years'.[23] ZANLA too suffered from internal

[17] Toase (1984a), p.1730
[18] *ibid*
[19] Wood – email 5 Oct 12
[20] *ibid*; Cilliers (1984), p.4
[21] Hoffman, Taw & Arnold (1991), p.9
[22] *ibid*
[23] Cilliers, (1985), p.9

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wrangling but were more ably led and found strength in its Maoist approach of presence amongst the people, thus reducing the effects of the informants.[24]

The apparent defeat of the insurgency, coupled with an economic boom (thanks in no small part to widespread 'sanction-busting', particularly oil sourced through the ports of Beira and Lourenço Marques in Portuguese Mozambique and through South Africa) and increased white immigration, boosted the Smith regime, which declared Rhodesia a republic on 1 March 1970.[25] The shortcomings of this increased confidence were that defence spending remained static, whilst the nationalists were able to disengage and re-group. Significantly, the lesson taken by the government was that military, not political action would be sufficient to destroy an insurgency.[26] The weakness of this was to become apparent in late 1972.

Following talks with the new Conservative British government (a party that the Rhodesians had always seen as their natural ally), an agreement was reached which would guarantee white minority rule into the twenty-first Century. Before ratification, a formality in the eyes of both the RF and the British, a referendum of all Rhodesians was held in order to gain their agreement to the terms. The majority of blacks rejected the terms and the agreement faltered.[27] Bolstered by this rejection, ZANU began preparing for its own offensive, hitherto having been the 'silent partner' in the struggle. The split between ZANU and ZAPU had begun to distil along tribal lines and the northeast of Rhodesia was targeted for its supportive Shona population, along with the area being mountainous and with dense vegetation, thus permitting easier insurgent movement and security. Additionally, the Mozambican rebels, FRELIMO, agreed to support the ZANLA forces by providing basing options within the areas of Mozambique under their control.[28] 'Having built up local support and established arms caches, ZANU finally launched its offensive in December 1972'.[29] The attack on a white homestead in the Centenary district was the culmination of years of preparations and signalled the start of the next round of the insurgency. Many observers see this attack, and the start of Operation Hurricane, as the start of the real counterinsurgency operation and one that would continue until the ceasefire brokered by the Lancaster House agreement of December 1979.[30]

Significant changes took place, on both sides, following the attack of the 21st December 1972. During that month, aware of the insurgent build-up, it had already been announced by Salisbury that national service was to be increased to 12 months, up from 9. The deaths of several security force personnel through landmines, laid with the intent of disrupting rural commercial traffic, indicated that the Operation Hurricane area had been widely infiltrated, resulting in Rhodesian cross-border raids into Mozambique and the closure of the border with Zambia and the establishment of protected villages, an idea that Rhodesian forces had witnessed when working

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[24] Wood – email 5 Oct 12
[25] Nesbit & Cowderoy (1998), p.37
[26] *ibid*
[27] Toase (1984a), p.1732; Lowry (2009), p.100
[28] Cilliers (1985), p.12
[29] Toase (1984a), p.1732
[30] Moorcraft & McLaughlin (2011), p.37

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alongside the British in Malaya.[31] Additionally, a *cordon sanitaire* along the border with Mozambique was established, a barrier of barbed-wire, mines and warning devices that was to be costly and largely ineffective. Possibly the most significant development of this period was the establishment of Operational Areas, each with its own JOC to formally co-ordinate the limited resources at the disposal of the Rhodesians. Formed at army brigade level, the JOC had representation from the army, Rhodesian Air Force (RhAF), the police (both uniformed and Special Branch) and the Internal Affairs Department but, importantly, it signified a shift away from police primacy toward an army-led counterinsurgency campaign and one that often ignored the important civilian angle.[32] Defence spending increased and the expansion of the army brought forth new units such as the Selous Scouts in late 1973. An innovative, multi-racial unit, its prime purpose was intelligence-gathering, working closely with the police's Special Branch; it was to acquire the final accolade as the unit that had the highest kill-ratio of all Rhodesian forces, largely through providing early-warning the enable Fire Force operations.[33]

By 1974, and after some heavy losses, the Rhodesians had quickly adapted to the situation and had developed highly mobile, reactive forces under the Fire Force concept, constituting 9 Forward Air Fields (FAF) that co-located army and RhAF assets, usually consisting of armed Alouette helicopter command cars, defensively-armed Alouette troop-carriers and, later, Dakota paratroop-carriers; 'the RhaF was key to applying mobility and firepower to the battle'.[34] On the face of it, with updated tactics, the Rhodesian Forces appeared to have the upper hand, and thanks to a willingness to believe powerful propaganda, 'two years after Altena, most Rhodesians still retained their illusions'.[35] Politically, however, the Republic of Rhodesia was about to face the beginning of the end; in April 1974, a coup in Portugal accelerated their decision to quit Africa and give independence to its colonies including, most notably for this campaign, Mozambique. 'Rhodesia's strategic position became suddenly precarious as its whole eastern border became open to guerrilla infiltration' despite the planned expenditure on the *Cordon Sanitaire*.[36] Affected by the sudden change in the political landscape, and keen to woo black Africa, the South African government under Vorster, along with Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda sought a *détente* with Rhodesia and 'persuaded Smith to accept a ceasefire in December 1974, and to release jailed or detained Black nationalists'.[37] South Africa had concluded that Rhodesia's position was now militarily untenable and desired to see transition to a stable black, moderate regime, whilst Zambian support for the Zimbabwean cause and the resultant closure of the border had cost it dearly.[38] In view of Smith's unwillingness to conduct meaningful talks with opposition leaders, South Africa, who had supported Salisbury with additional Security Forces since 1967 in the form of police and air force personnel, withdrew 2000 police officers in August 1975, forcing Smith to accept negotiations 'in a railway carriage perched on the bridge over the

[31] Moorcraft & McLaughlin (2011), p. 37; Hoffman, Taw & Arnold (1991), p.10
[32] *ibid* p.14
[33] *ibid* p.33
[34] Corum & Johnson (2003), p.297
[35] Godwin & Hancock (1995), p.116
[36] Cilliers (1985), p. 107; Lowry (2009), p.101
[37] Godwin & Hancock (1995), p. 117
[38] Toase (1984a), p.1733

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Zambezi at Victoria Falls' on the 25 August.[39] The talks collapsed and Rhodesian Forces undertook a renewed offensive to defeat the insurgents in the field, finally breaking a ceasefire that had been regularly transgressed by both sides. The South African change in attitude was a blow to the Rhodesian Front and to white Rhodesian civilians, coming so soon after the loss of Mozambique with its escape of beaches, wine and *gambas*.[40] Although accepted that the South Africans had contributed little in the way of counterinsurgency expertise, they had relieved the pressure on Rhodesian manpower, the effect on Rhodesian morale was significant, thus grew the feeling of isolation within Rhodesia.[41]

If Rhodesia felt isolated, it could have been buoyed by the fact that the nationalists were in some disarray. The ZANU chairman, Herbert Chitepo had been assassinated in March 1975, with the complicit help of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). Orchestrated to look like in-fighting, it resulted in Zambia expelling the organisation and changing its backing to ZAPU. With defeats in the field and with no leadership, ZANU morale slumped until it found a new home in Mozambique under Robert Mugabe.[42] By 1976, incursions had escalated; national service for white Rhodesian males had been extended further and Rhodesia had been forced to trawl for foreign volunteers to serve in its Security Forces.[43] More alarmingly, the arrival of Soviet and Cuban advisers to counter South African excursions into Angola in November 1975 brought an intensification of the Cold War in southern Africa, changing the tone of the insurgency in Rhodesia and bringing the region to the attention of the United States. The final phase had commenced.

With the collapse of talks between the RF and Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU in March 1976, the 'frontline states' of Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique and Botswana finally leant their full support behind the insurgents. South Africa, keen still upon a negotiated settlement that would bring stability to the region, applied increasing political pressure upon Salisbury which, with the loss of access to Mozambican ports, was now almost totally reliant upon Pretoria's support. Following a large-scale raid into Mozambique in August, itself a change in Rhodesian tactics to a more aggressive stance, South Africa, 'seriously embarrassed by the raid' withdrew its remaining military personnel from the conflict.[44] In a September meeting in Pretoria with Smith and US Secretary of State Kissinger, Vorster put forward proposals for black majority rule; five days later on 24 September, Smith announced the transition to black majority rule within two years. Vorster had been put under pressure from Washington, still wary of the escalation of Cold War in southern Africa; with the addition of London's support, Pretoria had pressurised Salisbury to accept the terms by threatening to withdraw economic support. Eager to build upon the momentum, Britain's James Callaghan sought to formalise the proposals with a conference in Geneva in October.[45] The talks lasted until January 1977; Smith had stuck rigidly to the wording of the deal whilst the nationalist leaders had pressed for further

[39] Cilliers (1985), p.24: Godwin & Hancock (1995), p.118
[40] Godwin & Hancock (1995), p.117
[41] *ibid*
[42] Toase (1984a), p.1733
[43] *ibid*
[44] Flower (1987), p.152
[45] *ibid*

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concessions. When no agreement could be reached, the conflict escalated, with Nkomo and Mugabe agreeing terms to work 'together in a loose coalition called the Patriotic Front (PF)'.[46]

In response to dramatically increased insurgent operations, in March 1977, Ian Smith formed the Ministry of Combined Operations (ComOps) and appointed Lt Gen Peter Walls as its commander. With an aspiration to control the war through one supreme commander, in reality, this was never achieved and the 'Rhodesian War effort remained reactive and lacking in a coherent strategy'.[47] With the escalation came also increased call-up time, the extension of the *Cordon Sanitaire* and Protected Villages, along with curfews in the Tribal Trust Lands and increasing cross-border raids and hot pursuits.[48] With the crippling effects of war, Smith eschewed the Vance-Owen plan, a renewed US-British initiative, and sough his own 'Internal Settlement' with those blacks who could be trusted to side against the PF. The proposal saw Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Ndabininge Sithole, who had been ousted as leader of ZANU, and Chief Chirau, a pro-government senator, form a power-sharing agreement with Smith in March 1978, with one-man, one-vote elections following within the year, albeit with whites secure in the knowledge that they had 28 of 100 Parliamentary seats reserved. In April 1979, Muzorewa's United African National Council won and in June, he was sworn in as the first black Prime Minister of the new Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. With denunciations that the election was a sell-out to the RF, the PF intensified the insurgency.[49] Cross-border raids continued, yet the insurgents now numbered in excess of 10,000 and even with South African help, which had been restored following the change in government, the Rhodesians found themselves increasingly on the back-foot; by 1979, whites were emigrating at a rate of 2000 a month.[50] To compound the issue, the US Carter administration, elected on a human rights ticket, had rejected the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia construct on the grounds that it was far from inclusive and refused to lift sanctions.[51] On 4 May 1979, Margaret Thatcher became the Conservative Prime Minister in Britain. Initially inclined to accept the Internal Settlement, the Carter rejection strengthened London's resolve to be rid of the weeping sore of Rhodesia without further delay. In September, all parties gathered at Lancaster House in London, with the old colonial power at the chair. By the end of December, a ceasefire had been agreed and Rhodesia reverted to British rule, albeit temporarily until elections had decided the new government of Zimbabwe. The agreement was signed on 21 December 1979 and the first of 1300 Commonwealth Monitoring Force personnel, comprising troops from the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Kenya and Fiji, as well as British police officers to oversee the elections, arrived in Rhodesia.[52] Rhodesian Forces were returned to barracks and PF insurgents were encouraged to gather at assembly points within Rhodesia, once the ceasefire came into effect on 28 December. Despite tension, Rhodesian plans to launch a coup to ensure the correct result, and British blindness to widespread ZANU

[46] Toase (1984a), p.1734
[47] Wood (2010), p.204-5
[48] Toase (1984), p.1734
[49] *ibid*
[50] Wood (2010), p.205
[51] Mitchell (2009), p.188
[52] Toase (1984b), p.1740

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intimidation during the election, Rhodesia transitioned peacefully to Zimbabwe.[53] Robert Mugabe was elected and on 18 April 1980, the Union Flag was finally lowered on the continent of Africa.

The Security Forces

When mentioning the Rhodesian Security Forces, it is important to outline the organisation of each of the Rhodesian Army, the Royal Rhodesian Air Force (which dropped the Royal prefix following the declaration of the republic in 1970) and the civilian police, the British South African Police (BSAP). Well-equipped by most standards, particularly those of Africa, The Rhodesian Forces were built along British lines. It was a small standing army of 5000 men, comprising the white-officered Rhodesian African Rifles, the all-white Rhodesian Light Infantry and the SAS, which maintained the sub-unit title long into the War of C Sqn, 22 SAS, earned in the Malayan Campaign when they formed alongside, and were integral to, the British regiment. Combat service and combat service support elements made up the numbers, along with 8 battalions of the Rhodesia Regiment, a Territorial regiment in which all white males were required to serve as part of their reserve commitment. The RRAF/RhAF was even smaller, with only 2000 regular members in 7 squadrons.[54] As mentioned, its inventory included Hunter single-seat swing-role fighters and the two-seat Canberra bomber, as well as older jet and training aircraft and a good selection of Alouette helicopters. The BSAP had a somewhat anachronistic title; it consisted of 7000 regular white and black police officers, whose role ranged from standard police duties to paramilitary fighting. Again, there was segregation of duties and responsibilities between black and white.[55] Additionally, the Police Reserve could call upon 30,000 reservists, as well as the Police Reserve Air Wing, which was staffed mainly by farmers with civilian-registered light aircraft equipped with police radios. At this stage, mention should also be made of the CIO and its offshoot, the Special Branch, who worked closely with the Security Forces, particularly in the case of the latter, with the Selous Scouts. An observer of the British police system should note that, unlike the UK, the Rhodesian Special Branch was integral to the CIO, but with its Officer Commanding answering to both the CIO and BSAP, in much the same way that British General Biggs had organised the Intelligence Bureau in Malaya in 1951.[56] All of these forces underwent major expansion programmes throughout the insurgency and tackled the shortages in innovative ways. This paper will explore that journey by following the phases of the war.

The Phases

Although it is universally acknowledged that the Rhodesian War can be broken down into phases, there is debate as to how those phases should be split. For the purposes of this paper, the war and counterinsurgency campaign will be broken into four phases,

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[53] Wood (2010), p.208
[54] Wood (2010), p.195
[55] Lemon (2006) p.26
[56] Flower (1987), p.15; Ellert (1995), p.88; Grob-Fitzgibbon (2011), p.155

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those of 1965-69, 1969-72, 1973-76 and, finally 1977-80. Although this is more that most observers list, it is useful to compartmentalise to such a degree so that the requisite lessons can be drawn from each phase. The second phase, 1969-1972, particularly, is usually subsumed into the earlier phase, however, it was a quiet period where both sides took stock of the situation and few in the way of operations took place. This can be of equal relevance as a shooting war as it sets the conditions for the subsequent conduct of the war and it is for this reason that this phase will remain discrete. Contradictorily, the period 1977-1980 is often broken into two phases, with the delineation generally being the final few months of the war, under the new Zimbabwe-Rhodesia flag. This is a political divide capturing the period of the final 6 months, and overlooks the fact that the escalation of the campaign commenced with the withdrawal of South African support, much earlier in 1976; accordingly, this latter stage will be incorporated into the preceding three years for the purposes of this paper.

1965-1969: The Beginning

Low-scale insurgent operations had commenced before UDI; the Nationalists started to receive arms in 1962, but divisions within ZAPU, and the resulting spilt to form ZANU, diluted any effectiveness that they may have had and it wasn't until the Battle of Sinoia on 28 April 1966 that the insurgency in Rhodesia is truly considered to have commenced.[57] The battle was a victory for the Rhodesian Forces but it was an early indicator that cross-governmental co-operation was a pre-requisite for future successes. The Sinoia operation was police-led who, at this stage, had thoroughly infiltrated both ZANU and ZAPU, leading to most cross-border incursions ending in defeat or capture for the Nationalists.[58] In this instance, police information was that twenty ZANU insurgents had crossed from Zambia and, having blown up electricity pylons, they now had to be located. Security Force tribalism, a factor in many counterinsurgencies, led to the BSAP refusing to see the need for army assistance but they did secure the use of RRAF helicopters to help with the tracking and to transport police reserve officers. With no previous inter-service training, the operation was very *ad-hoc* and it was fortuitous for the Rhodesians that the insurgents were equally amateurish. A small operation, involving only seven insurgents, the effects were substantial; it was found that the police reserve were not trained for this type of operation and wore blue fatigues in the bush, making their identification very easy. Additionally, they had never worked with helicopters, with some making dangerous attempts to fire from the cabin. More importantly, the police radios were not compatible with those of the RRAF, with communication through a relay in the operations room.[59] The operation, as it unfolded, leant itself to army involvement, yet none was asked for; subsequent operations which did involve army and police officers caused resentment when the army had to accept the leadership of more junior police officers, who held primacy.[60]

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[57] Wood (2102a), p.3; Petter-Bowyer (2005), p.102
[58] Hoffman, Taw & Arnold (1991), p.14
[59] Petter-Bowyer (2005), p.100
[60] Wood (2102a), p.9

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The result of this lack of preparedness was the implementation of the regional Joint Operations Centres in late 1966. These composed of local commanders, of similar status, from across the Security Forces, who met daily to jointly direct their resources. Those represented included the BSAP, Army and Air Force, alongside Special Branch and, crucially, representatives from the Internal Affairs Department, whilst all remaining subordinate to the civil authorities.[61] Tactically, the organisation permitted the best allocation of resources and mutual support for any given intelligence. The JOC concept was not new to the Rhodesians as it was one inherited from their shared experiences with the British in Malaya and Kenya.[62] Nonetheless, it was an effective construct for local operations at lower-levels of insurgent activity, which only lacked coherency further up at the strategic level where the national leaders sat at the Operational Co-ordinating Committee. The OCC shortfall of no singular, nominated leader was later to be addressed with the formation of ComOps which will be described later. For the Army, the low-level operations were opportunities to hone their counterinsurgency skills. The close integration of Air Force helicopters within Army operations resulted in the 4-man stick as the basic formation, which was armed with a sustained-fire machine gunner and three riflemen. These men were trained, much like the British, to conserve ammunition wherever possible; the psychologically damaging effects of uncontained fire against a mix of insurgents and civilian villagers were stressed, along with the universal knowledge that ammunition was an expensive commodity to sanction-bound Rhodesia.[63] For the Air Force, there came the realisation that forward-basing was required to provide the Army with the requisite support; the establishment of Forward Air Fields paved the way for the future Fire Force concept of operations. Another fillip for the Rhodesians in this period was the intervention, following ANC support of ZIPRA, of the South African Police in providing companies to patrol the borders from 1967, until their withdrawal in 1975. Whilst this paved the way for further South African involvement, notably in much-needed helicopter support, the police were not universally welcomed as they lacked counterinsurgency training, only to be replaced by further untrained personnel after three months, having exploited the Rhodesian Army's 'scarce training resources'.[64]

The period 1965-69 was not restricted to lessons absorbed by the Rhodesians, for the Nationalists, despite their internecine quarrelling, were to learn at the cost of their young insurgents. They were to realise, quicker that the Security Forces, that the black, village population were largely neutral in their views and that their support must be gained if infiltration was to be successful. ZANU in particularly, with its Maoist philosophy, was to utilise the population with great success, with both carrot and, often brutal, stick tactics. Additionally, most of the costly actions had taken place in the sparsely populated, but open Zambezi Valley, where the Security Forces had little difficulty in tracking infiltrations; lessons learnt as a result identified need for Nationalist co-operation with groups such as Mozambique's FRELIMO who could provide secure basing options, away from danger.

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[61] Hoffman, Taw & Arnold (1991), p.14
[62] *ibid*
[63] Wood (2010), p.198
[64] Wood (2102a), p.22

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Within this early phase of the Rhodesian War, there are notable lessons that can be drawn for the UK's conduct of counterinsurgency operations and in its support to the civil power. One of the first lessons discovered by the Rhodesians was that their radio systems were incompatible with the individual services. Later British operations in Northern Ireland in the 1970s also identified that failing; accordingly, the Cougar radio was procured as an additional radio, rather than a totally compatible system, in 1986.[65] This system was seen as an operational exigency, which although usable by all Security Forces in the Province, and adopted by Special Forces on worldwide operations, was always supplementary to the extant military radio. With the adoption of the MOD's Bowman and Airwave by the Home Office, the UK again does not possess a common, military-civilian compatible radio system, despite the Standing Home Commitment of Military Task 2.1, Military Aid to the Civil Authorities.[66] The JOC organisation in Rhodesia had a provenance shared with the UK, with its format adopted by both countries. In the 1970s, with British Forces embroiled in their own counterinsurgency in Northern Ireland, the lessons of previous operations, and of those continuing in Rhodesia, had been lost; 'the formal relationship between the Army and the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] was not well defined. After the "Way Ahead" paper of 1976 the Army was to act "in support of the RUC". The form of that support was never clear'.[67] With further operations in Iraq and Afghanistan complicated by the UK being part of coalitions and on foreign territory, British Forces rarely realized the necessary close relationship amongst all participants, civil and military, as identified by Rhodesians after Sinoia. Indeed, there was significant mistrust in Iraq, between the British military and the Department for International Development (DFiD); 'so poor were civil-military relations in the first few years after the invasion that…most of the soldiers did not even know that there had once been a civilian presence'.[68] 'It as not until 2006, three years after the invasion of Iraq, that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the…MOD…and DFiD jointly established a formal agency to co-ordinate the delivery of British reconstruction plans.[69]

Whilst close co-operation between elements of the Security Forces at the tactical level is commonplace in the British Forces, the question of ownership of those forces has proved harder to harmonise at the higher levels. This has given rise to a cyclical argument of how to conduct air-land integration. The most recent nadir of this cycle was identified by Project Coningham-Keys after the Iraq invasion of 2003, where a lack of coherence, originating from a lack of practice and resulting in distrust, reduced the combined effort of the UK's forces, despite the existence of joint forces such as Joint Force Harrier, and the Joint Helicopter Command, formed in 1999.[70] The Rhodesian Forces were clearly delineated between all that flew belonged to the Air Force and the rest belonged to the Army, thus giving few grounds for the territorial problems that have dogged the UK MOD. The formation of the FAFs, where Army troopies lived alongside RhAF air and ground crews, greatly assisted mutual trust, which was lacking, for the UK in Iraq, but which has given way to greater

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[65] Cougarnet. http://wykeradio.org/service/dvd/OtherNew/ScannerLists/Cougar.pdf.pdf, 18 Aug 12
[66] DG, DCDC (2007), p.1-5; R&S Wg report J5/8/8 Dated 8 Dec 09
[67] Operation Banner (2006), p.4-3
[68] Mumford (2012), p.129
[69] *ibid.* p.130
[70] Loader (2009), p.51

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appreciation and co-operation with shared living and better use of liaison officers in Afghanistan. Irritation still exists, however, in the differing lengths of time served on operations, with British Army units usually spending six months in theatre and RAF squadrons generally deploying for 2-3 months, reminiscent of South African Police tour-lengths. Equally, the poor performance of the Coalition Provincial Authority in Iraq was attributed, in part, to the short, three-month stints that the administrators served, making the tours too short to be effective.[71]

1969-1972: The Quiet before the Storm

A hiatus in insurgent operations can, with the benefit of hindsight, prove telling in the overall outcome of a campaign. It is with this in mind, that the apparent pause in insurgent attacks on Rhodesian soil must be seen as a gathering of thoughts, particularly Nationalist ones, prior to the subsequent intense operations of the mid-late 1970s, and it is this discrete period that can be used to illustrate errors during operational pauses in which Britain has subsequently been involved, from Northern Ireland to Afghanistan. From roughly 1969, a lull in insurgent operations in Rhodesia was evident and lasted until the attack on Altena Farm in December 1972. This lull stemmed from 'the defeats suffered in the field [by the Nationalists, which] resulted in a collapse of morale and the withdrawal of ZIPRA from the conflict for a number of years' and led the opposing sides into drawing very differing lessons from the conduct of their operations.[72] The Nationalists withdrew to consider their options for a longer war; concurrently, the Rhodesian Forces were satisfied that their small Security Forces had successfully countered all insurgent threats to their country and that future military interventions would be sufficient to ensure Rhodesian security, to the exclusion of political overtures and other, non-military actions.[73] There was a feeling that the war had been won and 'infrequent sabotage attempts and sporadic landmine blasts scarcely dented an assertive white nationalism'.[74] This assertion was to lead Salisbury to believe that its Security Forces were sufficient to continue to ensure security in Rhodesia and that no additional spending on their capabilities was necessary; Rhodesia's economy was flourishing but the government had no desire to waste funds where they weren't required. The maintenance of the *status quo* did not mean that no counterinsurgency operations took place within this period but it did lead to the mistake of maintaining the onus of the intelligence gathering and interpretation with Special Branch and assumption that the information would not be adequately disseminated.[75] Although adept at running informants, their expertise was very much civilian and not in assisting the Army, which possessed no integral intelligence organisation until later in the war.[76] Regardless of any shortcomings, 'Rhodesian intelligence had accurately assessed the growing guerrilla strength; the war was not over'.[77]

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[71] Mumford (2012), p.128
[72] Cilliers (1985), p.9
[73] *ibid*
[74] Moorcraft & McLaughlin (2011), p.35
[75] Punter - email 4 Oct 12
[76] Wood (2010), p.198
[77] Moorcraft & McLaughlin (2011), p.33

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The Nationalists, defeated in the field, had realised by 1969 of the need to re-assess their strategy. Morale was low and in-fighting diverting attention away from the Zimbabwean struggle; ZANU was the first to realise the need to change. Adopting Maoist strategies, they turned to China for support, with the first instructors arriving in southern Tanzania in 1969 and training camps being set up in Mozambique.[78] 'From 1971, ZANU's emphasis was on the political education of the Zimbabwe workers and peasants' in order 'to elicit support from the masses'. This contrasted with ZIPRA who stuck to a strategy of conventional military action and who were to provide the majority of incursions in the early months after the Altena Farm attack. ZANU stuck to its principles and worked deliberately to politicise the black population, thus ensuring sanctuaries within Rhodesia and support of the populace at any ensuing elections.[79] The changed strategy adopted by ZANU was well timed; with support received from FRELIMO in the north-eastern borders, the chosen area had 'suffered decades of administrative neglect' and, with its dense vegetation, was an area much better suited to infiltration than the dry Zambezi Valley.[80] The head of ZANLA, at the time, was later to quote:

> In 1969 it was decided to operate silently…We worked underground, training, stocking, equipment and regrouping inside the country. Special Branch could not find out what was going on and that we were preparing for a continuation of the struggle. Much contact was maintained with the local population to review the terrain…In July 1972 ZANU called together all its forces and met in the bush in Mozambique and reviewed the situation. We were satisfied that the preparations were enough and that enough arms and food had been stashed in the bush and that we could restart the onslaught.[81]

Rhodesian complacency was about to be tested.

Clear pauses in insurgency campaigns, followed by an event designed to shock the defending government and its forces, are relatively commonplace, which makes the tactic all the more surprising that it is still effective. For the UK, the London Docklands bombing in 1996, which caused £100m worth of damage in the heart of London's commercial centre, spelled the end of an 18-month ceasefire by the IRA, whilst the attacks in the US on 11 September 2001 shocked the world into accepting Al Qaeda as a principal terrorist organisation and precipitated the US-led coalition attack on Afghanistan.[82] Less obviously, but still significantly, the pause between the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in May 2003, and the start of the Iraqi insurgency approximately a year later provides evidence that the lessons from Rhodesia support the theory that an insurgency is only ended once a political solution, and not merely a military one had been found.[83] Similarly, in Afghanistan, once the Taliban had fallen, there was little attempt to find a lasting solution, other than to install the Kabul government; the turn towards Iraq at a crucial juncture in 2003

[78] Moorcraft & McLaughlin (2011), p.33
[79] Cilliers (1985), p.11
[80] *ibid* p.12
[81] *ibid*
[82] Operation Banner (2006), p.3-2
[83] Op TELIC (2006), p.7

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permitted the Taliban to regroup and reform into an effective insurgency. The 1969-1972 quiet period of the Rhodesian War delivers two lessons to those studying future counterinsurgencies. Firstly, as the Rhodesians demonstrated, intelligence operations must continue. However, the findings of those operations must not be ignored just because it does not fit the picture that politicians expect or want to portray, nor should that intelligence be the preserve of one organisation, such as Special Branch, it must be shared with those who need to make use of it. In the Rhodesian example, the intelligence suggested that insurgents remained active, which was contrary to the Smith Government's propaganda that the economy was booming and that the insurgents were beaten.[84] The need to share information is now accepted as a principle in the US, following the intelligence failures of 9/11, and is supported by Congress: 'if intelligence is not made available to government officials who need it to do their jobs, enormous expenditures on collection, analysis, and dissemination are wasted'.[85] Secondly, only a political solution can end an insurgent campaign, regardless of the indications of apparent military defeats in the field; the military supporting the counterinsurgency operations must not be diverted from its objectives nor see its funding stagnate in the mistaken belief that the task is complete. This stagnation and 'peace dividend' occurred in Rhodesia, in the intervening months following the fall of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime, and with the diversion of forces from Afghanistan to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, giving the nascent insurgent forces the opportunity to coalesce and rebuild.

1973-1976: Full War

When ZANLA attacked on 21 December 1972, it signalled that the 'liberation war had both intensified and changed direction'.[86] It was not so much the attack itself that created the stir, but the revelation that the insurgents had been stockpiling supplies and living amongst the people within the north-east of Rhodesia for the preceding six months and the correlation that Special Branch's intelligence network had dried up.[87] ZANU had applied Maoist principles and had begun to subvert the local population, thus denying intelligence, by either persuasion or by coercion of the villagers, to the Security Services. By politicising the population, the ZANU leadership had sown the seeds for its ultimate victory in the 1980 elections and had realised far sooner than ZAPU that by applying Mao's key tenet of the support of the population being vital, they would overcome the Salisbury's counterinsurgency operations. In line with Mao's words, ZANU split the country into regions and organised committees to help the life of the local population, but also of reminded them of the consequences of any interaction with the authorities; a relatively neutral population of a few years previously were being coerced into being pro-insurgent.[88]

Two days after the Altena Farm attack, a further attack on a neighbouring farm prompted the Security Forces to come to its aid. Of the relief vehicles, one detonated

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[84] Godwin & Hancock (1995), p.53; Flower (1987), p.120
[85] Best (2011), Summary
[86] *ibid* p.86
[87] Flower (1987), p.121
[88] Wood (2010), p.200

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a landmine, killing a corporal; a week later, three more soldiers fell to landmines.[89] This change in tactic was to have a profound effect and one in which the authorities were forced to turn to ingenious methods to overcome. The effective use of landmines is a strategy that denies the authorities access across large swathes of land that would otherwise be uncontrollable with a small insurgent force. In a country as sparsely populated as Rhodesia (in the 1970s, half the population of London in an area the size of France), roads are vital for linking the small communities and towns and, thus, the roads become the symbol of government; 'areas where roads were closed to government were open to subversion. All that was needed to achieve this was the odd land-mine planted at random'.[90] It is the random threat, along any road, not necessarily the triggering of the mine that causes the authorities to adopt counter strategies. In Rhodesia, civilian traffic fell markedly and manpower-intensive convoy systems were employed; they also turned to a wide-range of locally produced mine-resistant vehicles. The first vehicles appeared quickly and were basic reinforcements of the vehicle's (usually Land Rover) cabin area; as the insurgent's techniques developed, so too did the vehicles and their complexity. As quickly as 1972, Rhodesian industry had developed the Rhino, 'possibly the first attempt at a purpose-built mine-resistant capsule', featuring a v-shaped hull and angled steel plates to deflect the effects of the blast, and hooped roll-bars; inside were seat belts to prevent occupants from being forced out by the blast and an absence of upholstery in order to reduce spinal injuries.[91] Following on from this, the Leopard, using a Volkswagen Combi engine, featured a front axle well in front of the driver's position and the engine at the rear to afford it some protection; in 67 mine detonations, only one person died as a direct result.[92] The Rhodesian philosophy was generally one of protecting the occupants and sacrificing the drive-train or running-gear, as to protect all aspects was costly and difficult to achieve. By 1980, a plethora of mine-resistant vehicles had been produced, from the single-seat Pookie and its unique ability to detect mines on the move, to heavier troop carrying Crocodiles and the Mine-Protected Command Vehicle; the expenditure was not insubstantial but it went some way to allaying the fear that the roads were unsafe, thus reassuring the majority of whites that Rhodesia was worth sticking with. For the blacks, however, no such protection was available, forcing those affected to turn from the government towards the insurgents in the hope that they could end the suffering.[93]

Not content with having to counter randomly-placed mines, the Salisbury government embarked upon its own mine-laying programme with the installation of the *Cordon Sanitaire*. Reminiscent of the French Morice Line in Algeria, Wood and Cilliers agree that it was the Israeli barrier systems that had greater influence on the Rhodesian thinking.[94] The Rhodesian *Cordon Sanitaire*, or Corsan, was originally intended to cover the Operation Hurricane north-east and stemmed from 'an almost panic reaction to the insurgent threat of 1973.'[95] However, its success was limited and demonstrated the economic constraints that the Rhodesians were under. The

[89] Moorcraft & McLaughlin (2011), p.37
[90] Blevin(1991), p.49
[91] *ibid., p.46*
[92] *ibid.*
[93] *ibid.*
[94] Cilliers (1985), p.106; Wood – email 10 Aug 12
[95] *ibid.,* p.107

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Corsan construction, which lasted two years, was typical of most barrier divides, with notable exceptions; the distance between the two rows of fencing was narrow at 25m, the ratio of mines between the fences was only 1-3 mines per metre and the alarm system was installed on only the inner fence. Security force reactions were inadequate owing to too few allocated to the task and to the preponderance of false alarms, whilst the insurgents found that the 25m minefield was an easy distance to traverse. Once Mozambique became hostile territory, the length of the border had become insurmountable and the Corsan, an irrelevance. This defensive folly, described by Petter-Bowyer as 'a complete waste of rations', had cost Rhodesia some R$10m, or roughly US$7.5m.[96]

Another of Salisbury's lesser successful ventures was the use of Protected Villages (PV), also commenced in 1973 by the Department of Internal Affairs, as a reaction to the increased violence within the Operation Hurricane JOC.[97] Conceived from shared Anglo-Rhodesian experience in Malaya and Kenya, the purpose of a PV was to protect the villagers and to garner their support by improving their lives beyond which they had become accustomed to in their traditional homeland. The Rhodesian variety of the PV was poorly executed as it concentrated upon the denial of land to the insurgents, rather than the specific protection of the villagers and the desire to improve the lives of those villagers. Consequently, over the next 2 years, some 240,000 Africans were moved into PVs.[98] Facilities varied greatly and many were often just secure compounds; the programme was not aided by the rush to implement the plan by prematurely moving villagers into PVs with no sanitation or running water.[99] These conditions were hardly conducive to gaining the rural population's support for the Salisbury government and, 'like the Americans in Vietnam, [the Rhodesians] forgot that hearts and minds also live in bodies'.[100]

If, sociologically, the Rhodesians were underachieving, then militarily, things were rapidly improving. The realisation that the insurgent threat was a grave risk to the Smith regime generated a rapid expansion of the Security Forces from its modest pre-UDI size. Along with the growth came innovation, notably in the form of the Fire Force concept and in the pseudo-operations of the Selous Scouts. The Fire Force concept of operations had its genesis at Sinoia, where the helicopter commander, who was able to see the police patrolmen, despite them not being able to see each other, largely controlled the action. Furthermore, the vastness of the operational areas and the limited supply of forces available to patrol that area meant that air mobility was a key force-multiplier.

First deployed in January 1974, a typical Fire Force aviation unit consisted of four Alouettes; one as a command car, with 20mm canon for fire support, carrying the army ground commander, with the pilot acting as air commander, and the other three with sticks of four troops as described earlier.[101] Each stick was heavily armed, equipped with radios and, importantly, trusted to carry out their role in what is now

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[96] Cilliers (1985), p.105; Petter-Bowyer (2005), p.214
[97] *ibid.,* p.83
[98] Moorcraft & McLaughlin (2011), p.39
[99] Cilliers (1985), p.85
[100] Moorcraft & McLaughlin (2011), p.39
[101] Wood (2009), p.90

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known in the UK as 'mission command'. The Fire Force would be tasked from their respective JOC, usually on the back of intelligence reports that a group of insurgents had been detected. The Rhodesians had already identified that FAFs within the JOCs were necessary to forward-locate both the troops and their means of transport, the Alouette helicopters of the RhAF (and those on loan from South Africa), given the short range and small payload of these aircraft. The helicopters would be able to drop the sticks in the correct locations and the attack co-ordinated by the army commander in the command car; alongside him, the pilot, the air commander, would call for fixed-wing aircraft in support of the troops. Later, the helicopters were supported by Dakotas with up to 16 paratroops and a 'land tail' convoy of support troops who could be picked up by helicopter if additional resources were needed, or who could recover the paratroops after the action. British-made Hunters, located at Thornhill in the centre of Rhodesia, provided ground attack but were a valuable luxury, owing to their limited numbers and to sanctions making the supply of spare parts almost non-existent, thus the Rhodesians were forced to look at adapting light attack aircraft sourced through the civilian market. After limited success at obtaining the correct aircraft, the Rhodesians finally secured the purchase of 18 French Cessna 337 twin-engine aeroplanes, which were promptly named 'Lynx' in RhAF service. Through local manufacture, the RhAF was able to take these civilian aircraft and equip them with rockets and over-wing guns, making them an exceptionally potent COIN platform. Innovation had been the key to maintaining the serviceability of the Air Force's inventory, despite the premonition, at UDI, that RhAF jets would be grounded within three months, and the rest within nine.[102] With the help of local industry and the South Africans, the RhAF went on to devise home-grown methods for servicing the most intricate technology, along with the invention of a new range of air-delivered weapons specifically tailored for the Rhodesian bush. Significantly, the time taken to develop this equipment was necessarily short with, for example, the anti-personnel Alpha bomb brought into service within 2 months.[103] What made the Fire force concept so extraordinary was the complete integration of Air Force and Army assets, with clear tasking authority devolved down as far as it needed to go, usually to the two commanders in the one helicopter. This force was dedicated to the one task of intercepting vertically enveloping insurgents, without the requirement to hold ground afterwards, giving great versatility and enabling a very small number of troops to effectively cover a large area of operations. 'The combination of firepower and good training by the Rhodesians resulted in a more than ten-to-one kill ratio by the Fire Forces'.[104]

At the same time as the inception of the Fire Force, and complimenting the overt action of the airborne assets, the Rhodesians had acknowledged the need for a dedicated reconnaissance force adept at tracking, observing and reporting insurgent infiltration. Formed in late 1973, the Selous Scouts' principle role was to 'carry out operations of a clandestine nature', namely the infiltration of insurgent groups through the use of pseudo-operations.[105] The concept wasn't new as it had been taken from the use of pseudo-gangs by the British in Malaya and, later, in Kenya but it had been

[102] Petter-Bowyer (2005), p.94
[103] *ibid.*, p.276
[104] Corum & Johnson (2003), p.298
[105] Reid-Daly (2001), p.36

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necessitated by the 'collapsed Special Branch and Internal Affairs informer networks' resulting from the changed carrot and stick tactics of ZANU.[106] Working directly with the CIO's Special Branch for its intelligence supply, the Selous Scouts was a mixed-race unit, which employed the bold step of integrating 'turned' insurgents and using their specific knowledge to infiltrate insurgent groups operating within Rhodesia. However, this infiltration was secondary to the main role of manning observation posts with the intent of either collating information for future exploitation or of calling in a Fire Force operation with the intent of eliminating the threat; in terms of the latter, the statistic of 68% of guerrillas killed or captured was attributable to the Selous Scouts is often used as a benchmark.[107] Ken Flower, head of the CIO, however, was less enthused by this new unit: the 'formation of the Selous Scouts proved to be the worst mistake I made in the conduct of the war'.[108] His contention was that the Scouts quickly became the Poster Boys of the Army, thus obviating the secret nature of pseudo-operations and their prime role of intelligence gathering. Indeed, the Selous Scouts grew quickly and were soon employed on external hit-and-run operations, a role that far better suited the SAS and Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI).[109] Regardless of the ultimate utility of the Scouts, the concept was bold, though not unique, and the interleaved intelligence gathering with co-ordinated Fire Force operations was an effective mix which went a long way to alleviating the shortage of white manpower available to the Salisbury government. These initiatives, (Corsan, Fire Force and Selous Scouts) within the space of a year, had led, at the end of 1974, to the assessed number of insurgents in country to be as few as 60, all of them in the north-east.[110]

Given the remarkable rate of escalation, of the Rhodesian War during 1973-74, it is, perhaps, hardly surprising that this period gives the greatest number of enduring lessons for British operations. The most notable are the reactions to the mine threat and the lessons to be drawn from the Fire Force concept. Around the time that Rhodesia was facing an increased threat to its mobility from mines, the British were also experiencing similar difficulties in Northern Ireland, particularly in South Armagh. That the reactions from the two nations differ so much is testament to the differences in economic strength and the ability to conduct prolonged, expensive operations. The Rhodesian solution, as described, was to adapt and develop a wide range of mine-resistant vehicles that could access the threatened roads and continue to use ground-based transport for mobility. At the same time, roughly 1976, the UK decided that 'overt road movement was forbidden in South Armagh' and elected to travel by air, mainly by helicopters from the resident RAF sqns; 'for several years Northern Ireland was allocated more than half of all UK [helicopter] flying hours'.[111] This was an expensive alternative and required further RAF helicopters to be moved to the Province, a luxury not available to Rhodesia, given the presence of sanctions and the size of the country. This different approach was to set the baseline for British reaction to a ground threat, it being adopted in Iraq and, particularly, in Afghanistan when the mine and IED threat was, once again, from mines or IEDs. The difficulty

[106] Melson (2005), p.63
[107] *ibid.*, p.64
[108] Flower (1987), p.124
[109] *ibid*
[110] Wood (2010), p.201
[111] Operation Banner (2006), p.6-3 & 6-4

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with helicopter transport, apart from the cost and lack of ubiquity, is that it cannot transport much more than personnel and light equipment and it denies the face-to-face contact with the local populace, usually deemed necessary in current COIN strategy; this was not an apparent requirement for the Rhodesian military. In attempting to continue the presence on the ground and maintain the personal contact, the UK found itself inadequately equipped to counter the threat of mines. The initial reaction in Iraq and Afghanistan was to furnish troops with Snatch Land Rovers that had been used in Northern Ireland. However, the shortcomings of these vehicles had been recognised as they had only been armoured against small-arms fire. Accordingly, they were inadequate against an IED threat, and their employment in Northern Ireland had been limited to areas where they were not vulnerable to IRA anti-armour grenades and projectiles.[112] Surprisingly, the Army had been made aware of Rhodesian innovations as far back as 1983, as a member of the British Military Assistance and Training Team in Zimbabwe had advocated the procurement of the Cougar vehicle for use in Ulster, however, it wasn't until 2003 that the British Army started to procure mine-protected vehicles, initially 8 Tempest vehicles for use in Bosnia, 41 years after similar Rhodesian vehicles had first appeared.[113] The delay in procuring the correct vehicles can perhaps be attributed to the earlier experience in South Armagh of turning to helicopters as a ready counter to the risk posed by the IED threat to road travel, and the later adherence to previous lessons, rather than an identification of contemporary requirements of the need to continue to engage with the population, whilst protecting the troops and their mobility.

The British military has never adopted the Fire Force techniques and the idea of vertical envelopment has not entered the British lexicon. In Northern Ireland, the IRA rarely, after the initial stage of Operation Banner, engaged in large-scale confrontation, which is why the official British Army report describes the period from late 1972 as one of terrorist activity, rather than insurgency, precisely the time when the Rhodesian War was ramping up into a full-scale insurgency.[114] When the IRA did, on the rare occasions, attack in force, the engagement was often from the sanctuary of across the border in the Republic of Ireland, consequently, there was little requirement on the part of the British to address the need for the encirclement of insurgents, with the aim of neutralising.[115] Though the use of aviation did permit the development of 'operations boxes' in Northern Ireland, which permitted a relatively small number of troops to cover a much wider area than would have been possible, the concept was to deliver the troops by air and collect when their patrol was complete, with little understanding of the ground-picture required by the helicopter crews.[116] Again, the British custom of looking back to the last COIN operation for its lessons, which will be analysed later, provided the yardstick for both Iraq and Afghanistan. Though engagements with groups of insurgents in both theatres was more common than in Ulster, the Rhodesian tactic of vertical envelopment and control of the fight from the air has rarely been discussed, although it could have had applicability in the initial

[112] Operation Banner (2006), p.5-5
[113] Blevin (1991), p.47; email Robinson - Deputy Team Leader, Manoeuvre Support, MOD DE&S – 12 Sep 12
[114] Operation Banner (2006), p.3-1
[115] BBC on This Day: 1979: Soldiers die in Warrenpoint massacre http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/27/newsid_3891000/3891055.stm, 31 Aug 12
[116] *ibid.*, p.6-4

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fighting in Helmand Province in 2006 when 16 Air Assault Brigade (the ideal unit in the UK to have integrated helicopter operations) elected to deploy the more complex Manoeuvre Outreach Groups and to draw Taleban attacks with the use of Platoon Houses, with the inherent risk of isolation from support.[117] The use of helicopters in recent operations has been in the simplistic despatch of troops in support of those engaged, rather than as an integrated plan; only in the use of helicopter-borne troops for vehicle intercept has the UK come close to emulating the Fire Force concept, but even then, it is rather basic and lacks fixed-wing integral support.[118] Any subsequent contact is usually controlled by the ground-element and the call for fast air support has always been through a dedicated Forward Air Controller in the ground party or in specialised attack helicopters, which have been an adjunct to the operation, albeit planned, rather than completely integrated as in the Fire Force concept. The Fire Force model is not a complex one, conceptually, nor does it need to be a permanent part of the order of battle, but it would require regular training between air, both helicopter and fast-jet, and ground elements. Significantly, the success of Fire Force operations relied upon the use of co-located fixed-wing, light attack aircraft that were fully integrated into the operation and highly reactive, a capability in which the UK has not invested. In preference, the MOD has relied upon sophisticated Harrier or Tornados, or the slow Apache attack helicopter, all of which lack the long loiter-time necessary to support a prolonged ground operation. Despite the lessons from Rhodesia's FAFs and of helicopter operations in Northern Ireland, the idea of forward-basing, giving optimised speed of reaction of aircraft deployed, has been overlooked in both Iraq and Afghanistan, where only one main operating base was used in each conflict, increasing reaction time and with their inherent vulnerabilities to insurgent attack.[119] Petter-Bowyer, has been a vociferous exponent of the Rhodesian set-up, so much so that he sent a paper outlining, amongst other ideas, the concept of Fire Force to General Dannatt, who had recently retired as Chief of the General Staff, in November 2009; the approach met with little success.[120] The absence of Fire Force from UK aviation doctrine can, perhaps, be attributed to historic 'rivalry and "turf wars"', given the very disparate views and practices of the fixed-wing and rotary-wing communities.[121] Regardless of the utility of Fire Force operations to the UK, its structure could, however, be useful in training our host-nation allies; with its emphasis on low-cost and wide area coverage with small forces, the model would be suitable as a framework for building nascent forces, particularly the air forces of our allies. Whilst the US and UK have concentrated upon training local armies in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the air forces have lagged, despite this area requiring a longer lead-time. By introducing helicopters and light-weight, long-endurance attack aircraft, as the Rhodesians did, and as the US did with some success in South Vietnam, the lead-time can be reduced and the allies provided with exactly the type of aircraft that they require to counter an insurgency.[122]

[117] National Army Museum, http://www.nam.ac.uk/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/helmand/helmand-british-role, 31 Aug 12
[118] Joint Helicopter Command Instruction 15, dated 1 Apr 13
[119] Operation Banner (2006), p.6-6; Camp Bastion Assault: Details Emerge of Taliban Attack. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19704620, 29 Sep 12
[120] Petter-Bowyer – email 13 Aug 12
[121] Operation Banner (2006), p.6-6
[122] Corum (2009), p.219

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Despite the origins of pseudo-operations coming from British operations in Malaya and Kenya, the model does not seem to have continued through British COIN operations. The use of informants and 'turned' persons was widespread in Northern Ireland but this was largely restricted to individuals, owing to the nature of the IRA's structure, particularly once the cell formation was developed. Intelligence-gathering became vital in the Northern Ireland counterinsurgency and battalions were instructed to form Close Observation Platoons, to be used much in the same manner as the Selous Scouts in their OPs, and 'small, highly specialist units were raised to conduct covert surveillance and to collect HUMINT', but these not used to infiltrate insurgent groups.[123] However, taken together, the parallels with the Selous Scouts can be seen. More recently, possibly because the operations have not been on home soil, the UK's COIN efforts in Afghanistan have been at the overt, uniformed end of the spectrum. This does not mean to say that agent handling and infiltration has not taken place, as the turning of Mullah Rassoul has shown but, again, it appears to be focused on specific individuals, rather than on the larger scale seen in Rhodesia.[124] Nevertheless, the wider lesson for the UK in the use of pseudo-operations has come from the insurgents, as very publicly demonstrated by the Taliban's increasingly widespread infiltration of Afghan Security Forces with the intent of killing coalition soldiers in 'green on blue' incidents.[125] Whilst this is a tactic now widely recognised and precautions against such attacks are being established, it should be a salient lesson that counterinsurgency techniques are not the exclusive domain of the counterinsurgents.

1977-1980: The Beginning of the End

By late 1976, with the exponential expansion of the Security Forces, increased white conscription periods, and with ZANLA on the ascendancy, it had become apparent to Salisbury for the need of a national command structure, separate from the JOC construct, with one nominated 'supremo'.[126] Despite the perceived success in 1974, the strategic picture had turned for Rhodesia, with independence of Mozambique in 1975 leading to infiltration across its border in the east and north-east. Additionally, *Détente* had persuaded the South Africans to withdraw almost all of its material and political support. This sharp increase in activity, with the JOCs 'doing their own thing in the absence of clearly defined political and military strategies' led to the formation of ComOps in March 1977.[127] Formed with the primary aim of co-ordinating increasingly stretched resources throughout all of the operational areas, the ComOps idea was sound and based, again, upon Malayan experiences when Britain's General Templer was placed in charge of all agencies, both military and civilian. Templer was given complete power to formulate strategy as he saw fit; Lt Gen Walls,

[123] Corum (2009), p.219, p.5-1

[124] Can turning Taliban foot soldiers turn the Afghan war? http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/04/us-afghanistan-nato-reintegration-idUSBRE8630BW20120704 - 30 Aug 12

[125] 'Green-on-blue' attacks in Afghanistan have jumped by 10 per cent in two years. http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/green-on-blue-attacksin-afghanistan-have-jumped-by-10-per-cent-in-two-years/story-fncynkc6-1226461818524 - 30 Aug 12

[126] Petter-Bowyer (2005), p.297

[127] *ibid.*

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Commander of ComOps, was not and it was in this that ComOps failed for Rhodesia. In the absence of being able to formulate strategy, ComOps was reduced to providing another layer of bureaucracy to the system and to controlling the way that JOCs ran their assets.[128] In current British parlance, the operational level was absent and the strategic headquarters was meddling in the tactical picture. Although Walls was Commander ComOps, his role was little more than a chairman of the new National JOC (NATJOC), which had replaced the OCC, and Walls himself had not received the appropriate recognition of promotion to the post, meaning that he carried the same rank as the head of the Army and was unable to pull rank where necessary. Also contributing to the ineffectiveness of ComOps, were that Ian Smith never relinquished his control over the campaign and never gave Walls the same free-reign that Templer had enjoyed, and that the whole construct was, in hindsight, too little too late.[129]

On 3 September 1978, ZIPRA insurgents shot down an Air Rhodesia Viscount airliner using an infra-red guided SA-7 missile; on 12 February 1979, a second Viscount fell prey to the same type of missile.[130] Despite intelligence that insurgents had been supplied with these modern systems and of evidence that they had been used against the RhAF, Air Rhodesia had ignored advice and had maintained their civilian-looking livery on their aircraft, which observers claim, had now cost the country the two airliners and the lives of over 100 civilians.[131] As early as 1974, the RhAF had been aware of the need to counter the reported IR threat and, working with the South Africans, established two lines of protection; engine exhaust shrouding or suppressing, and IR-absorbent paint. The application of new paint is self-explanatory, although difficult to engineer, but the shrouding of exhausts proved more difficult, practically, and required adaptation for each aircraft type.[132] The Dakotas and, ultimately, Viscounts had their exhausts extended under the wings and out over the trailing edge of the wing; the helicopters had grills applied to their exhausts and dispersed the heat upwards into the rotor-stream as soon as it left the engine. The fast-jets were more troublesome and were not able to be effectively protected in this manner, although the paint and their speed proved to be protection enough.

In the final year of the War, Salisbury attempted universal recognition with the formation of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, yet the rate at which insurgents were infiltrating the country had risen, resulting in a greater pull on Security Forces' efforts. Accordingly, Fire Force operations grew larger into Jumbo Fire Forces and the Rhodesians increased their cross-border activity and its raids into Zambia and deep into Mozambique in an attempt to reduce the level of support offered by fellow insurgents, or supportive neighbouring governments. These operations enjoyed some success but the apparent indiscriminate use of violence by the Rhodesian Forces and the Rhodesian's increased disregard for world opinion at the time, as witnessed by the scathing reports coming from the British press, led to the potentially positive lessons of cross-border activity in a counterinsurgency being overshadowed and not repeated by Britain in any of its COIN operations.[133] Nevertheless, it is calculated that these

[128] Petter-Bowyer (2005), p.299
[129] Hoffman, Taw & Arnold (1991), p.18
[130] Nesbit & Cowderoy (1998), p.85
[131] *ibid*
[132] Petter-Bowyer, (2005), p.233
[133] Wood (2011), p.62

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increasingly fierce raids coerced the Nationalists to the negotiating table at Lancaster House, which culminated the country of Zimbabwe on 18 April 1980.[134]

The utility of denying external support to an insurgent should be obvious, yet the practicality of undertaking those operations, coupled with the political aspects, make that aim difficult and controversial to achieve. By 1979, the Rhodesians had few qualms about the international reaction, which is a position that the UK has rarely been able to contemplate. The US has cultivated criticism for its use of Remotely Piloted Vehicles to attack targets into Pakistan in an attempt to deny insurgents the sanctuary of an international border, much in the way that the Rhodesians acted, but the British have traditionally shied away from this option, largely because of the negative ramifications of collateral damage, both civilian and political.[135] According to Mumford, 'history has demonstrated that the British have displayed an inability to adequately suppress insurgencies that are in receipt of sizeable outside support', which must include all insurgencies that the UK has encountered in the period from 1965 onwards.[136] External support to an insurgency, especially in the post 9/11 environment of inter-linked movements must be expected, therefore the means to deny that support, whether through soft-power, or military operations, must be integral to future successful counterinsurgencies.

Two other notable lessons to be drawn from this last period are the UK's slow adaptation of the lessons of centralised command and, more tactically, the use of simplistic measures to counter the threat to aircraft of man-portable missiles systems. For the first lesson, in December 2011, the UK formed the Joint Forces Command, with an RAF four-star officer at the helm.[137] This had originated from the formation of the Permanent Joint Headquarters in 1996, which had been created to centrally control all of the UK's deployed operations, itself a result of the lack of a dedicated operational-level headquarters during the Falklands War and the 1991 Gulf War.[138] Parallels can be seen between the establishment of JFC and ComOps, 35 years previously. The head of JFC currently wears the same level of rank as the heads of the single services and the Chief of the Defence Staff, potentially giving rise to single-service vetoes. The JFC has also taken the ownership of Director of Special Forces, much the same way that ComOps controlled the Selous Scouts and Rhodesian SAS, although this disassociation from the parent formation has been the *de facto* position since the creation of the UK Special Forces directorate in 1987, so should cause less concern than it did in the Rhodesian case.[139]

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[134] Wood (2011), p.63
[135] Drone attacks in Pakistan are counterproductive, says report. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/sep/25/drone-attacks-pakistan-counterproductive-report, 29 Sep 12
[136] Mumford (2012), p.21
[137] Joint Forces Command. http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/DoctrineOperationsandDiplomacy/JFC/, 31 Aug 12
[138] PJHQ – History http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/DoctrineOperationsandDiplomacy/PJHQ/PjhqHistory.htm, 31 Aug 12
[139]United Kingdom Special Forces (UKSF) http://www.eliteukforces.info/uksf/, 29 Sep 12

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The RhAF was quick to realise the threat posed by the SA-7 arriving in theatre, as it had been widely, and publicly, used in the latter stages of the Vietnam War and during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War; they also understood that they could ill-afford to lose valuable aircraft to such a threat. The SA-7 missile, and its successors, is well suited for the COIN environment as it is portable, requires little training, is relatively inexpensive, and very capable.[140] Accordingly, the RhAF undertook the countermeasures described, with apparent success.[141] In Northern Ireland, 'IR jammers were introduced to Lynx and Puma from 1985', but of note, British helicopters only obtained a reasonable level of protection against IR missiles during the deployment to Saudi Arabia in 1990, with the addition of flare dispensers, and the RAF's Chinook fleet only got an adequate level of protection for its deployment to the Balkans in 1994.[142] Similarly, British helicopter forces were supplied with IR-absorbent paint in the mid-1990s, some twenty years after the Rhodesians; later still, in the US, it is reported that the Close Combat Survivability initiative 'is looking to lower the signature of…aircraft to IR threats through the development of special paint'.[143] The discussion, in the UK, is now whether to fit exhaust suppressors, as fitted to the RhAF Alouettes, to the new Chinook Mk6 and Puma Mk2 helicopters, despite the existing lessons from Rhodesia and that this particular defence is relatively inexpensive and requires little maintenance. The official report on Northern Ireland operations considers the effort expended in defending against IR missiles was well spent, but it would appear that the salient lessons learnt by the RhAF nearly 40 years ago have not been fully heeded.[144]

How Does Britain Learn its Counterinsurgency Lessons?

'The British write some of the best doctrine in the world; it is fortunate their officers do not read it'.[145]

This quote from General Rommel is a favourite of those who wish to highlight British reluctance to invest in learning doctrine and would appear true if referring to the 2009 JSCSC study quoted earlier. The question of whether Britain should, or could, have learnt lessons from Rhodesia is a moot one. As identified above, there are lessons that Britain could have learnt but there was no compunction to do so. Equally, Britain could have learnt lessons from the US in Vietnam and the French in Algeria, to name but two examples. The reason for the fact that they have largely chosen only to look internally, and not from as wide a range of examples until very recently, is what now needs addressing. The US, in compiling their latest counterinsurgency manual, FM 3-24, cite 'the words Algeria, France, French, and Galula (surname of a French officer and author frequently referenced in the manual)…at least 42 times', yet the equivalent British COIN manual, 'Army Field Manual Countering Insurgency Volume 1, Part 10', uses only examples of where British troops have been involved, with the

[140] Controlling the transfer of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems: A guide to best practice, http://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/MANPADS%20no%20footnotes.pdf, 31 Aug 12

[141] Petter-Bowyer, (2005), p.234

[142] Operation Banner (2006), p.6-5

[143] Skinner (2012), p.18

[144] Operation Banner (2006), p.6-5

[145] Rommel in Army Doctrine Primer (2011), p.i

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exception of one case-study into the Mozambique War.[146] Galula is especially important as his writing during the French campaign in Algeria stress the need for a coherent counterinsurgency doctrine.[147] Britain has had a long history of fighting counterinsurgencies and it could be argued, that the UK can afford to be introspective with its own wealth of experiences, yet history shows that its approach has been more casual in that it has largely only chosen to address the most recent lessons of past counterinsurgencies, when called upon to contemplate a new operation.[148] Going further, Mumford argues that the British usually fail to learn the correct lessons each time it is faced with a counterinsurgency, and that it fails 'to achieve a level of strategic cogency until after the insurgency has had time to flourish'.[149]

The British history of doctrine, especially COIN, is not a strong one, despite Rommel's view. The Army 'largely eschewed formal, written doctrine' instead, choosing to make 'a cult of pragmatism, flexibility and an empirical approach'; 'doctrine tended to be semi-formal at best, was centred around one individual commander or existed in a specific set of circumstances'.[150] Widely holding Malaya as the exemplar of how to conduct a counterinsurgency, the UK rested on its laurels, considering COIN, or Small Wars, as an adjunct to the Main Effort of the Cold War and that 'counter-insurgency was not deemed an appropriate or indeed relevant form of warfare that required significant thought or adequate training'.[151] Accordingly, it was left to individuals to hand down the lessons, thus the British Army finds its early Northern Ireland experiences heavily influenced by those of Aden, which ended two years before Operation Banner commenced, and by its commanders, such as Frank Kitson, who fought in Kenya, Oman and Cyprus.[152] More recently, the practices in Northern Ireland were transferred to Iraq, where the idea that street patrolling with berets was the way to reassure the population, with little regard for the differences in culture, despite the Army's own report into Operation Banner warning against repeating history.[153] This distillation of experiences found its way into doctrine only reluctantly. Kiszely explains that the immediate lessons from Malaya of an impartial police force were not transferred into the Cypriot campaign, nor into Northern Ireland, and that the conduct of the operation was largely based upon the commander's previous experiences, rather than the study of history.[154] This example characterizes the British Army's strength of retaining tactical knowledge within its regimental system, yet failing to capture this wisdom as an institution, a view supported by Sheffield, when he states that 'after 1945, the British Army…relied on best practice being passed on by regimental osmosis backed up by…some unofficial but influential writings'.[155] Sheffield goes on to say that the informal method of disseminating doctrine 'was a consequence of the historical structure of the British Army, as a loose federation of individual regiments and corps, which inhibited the imposition of ideas

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[146] Demarest (2010), p.19; Land Warfare Development Group (2010), p.5
[147] Galula (2006), p.64
[148] Mumford (2012), p.147
[149] *ibid*. p.1
[150] Sheffield (2010), p.E-2
[151] *ibid.* p.149
[152] Sheffield (2010), p.E-6
[153] Operation Banner (2006), p.1-2
[154] Kiszely (2006), p.17
[155] Rigden (2008), p.17; Sheffield (2010), p.E-5

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from on high'.[156] The latest British Army doctrine, 'Countering Insurgency' details the history of previous doctrine, which boils down to two documents, 'Keeping the Peace (1957, revised 1963) and 'Counter-Revolutionary Warfare', published in 1969 and rewritten in 1977.[157] As Mumford writes, this rate of update accords with an 'inherent aversion of the army to formalized doctrine', a view which is strengthened when Kiszely opines that the army has 'a tendency towards anti-intellectualism'.[158] The area where the British Army did show its strengths was in its preparation of troops prior to deployment to Ulster, through the Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Team. Whilst this produced a range of *aide-mémoires*, the updates failed to appear in official doctrine, reflecting, perhaps, the earlier point of tactical knowledge retention within the regimental system.[159]

Whilst this criticism is leveled at the Army, it could equally apply to the RAF, which possessed no indigenous doctrine between the withdrawal of AP1300 in the early 1970s, following its last re-write in 1964, and the first issue of AP3000 in 1990. Even then, AP1300 consigned counterinsurgency to the last chapter whilst AP3000, in its four editions, has no specific section on counterinsurgency. Indeed, the Fourth Edition uses the word 'counterinsurgency' only once.[160] This is slightly disingenuous as its sister publication, 'AP3002: Air Operations' goes into slightly further detail, but it wasn't until 2009 that the RAF's Air Warfare Centre published a document specific to air operations in counterinsurgency, the 'Counterinsurgency Primer', although this contains no historical analysis before 2001.

As can be seen, the UK has, until recently, had a *laissez faire* attitude to doctrine, and particularly that relating to counterinsurgency. With the publication of 'Countering Insurgency', the Army has gone a long way to redressing the balance, but its study of historical examples is limited and falls short when compared with the US's FM 3-24. The cherry-picking of historical examples, without understanding the true context means that we have largely chosen to assess counterinsurgencies that we have fought within the boundaries of a withdrawal from Empire.[161] These have largely been examples of where the British won or departed the colony before final defeat. Similar could be said of Iraq and of what might be if Coalition forces leave Afghanistan in 2014. In electing not to study Rhodesia, the British ignore lessons in what would have happened, should the UK have attempted to hold on to territory regardless of the strategic pressures; here there are parallels here with the French positions in Algeria and Indo-China, which the US in their counterinsurgency doctrine, now study in detail.

Were Rhodesian Lessons Deliberately Ignored by Britain?

There is little to suggest that there was a deliberate attempt by the British, at any level, to ignore the lessons of the Rhodesian War. As has been demonstrated, the British have been acutely poor in the past at studying any form of counterinsurgency lessons,

[156] Sheffield (2010), p.E-3
[157] Land Warfare Development Group (2010), p.CS1-3
[158] Mumford (2011), p.5; Kiszely (2006), p. 18
[159] Land Warfare Development Group (2010), p.CS1-3
[160] AP3000 (2009), p.46
[161] Rigden (2008), p.9

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so it comes as no surprise that Rhodesia does not form part of the required reading for current students of COIN operations. However, the historical context cannot ignore the fact that the declaration of UDI in 1965 was an embarrassment to the British, as was the early prosperity of independent Rhodesia, despite the imposition of sanctions. The maintenance of a minority rule was counter to Britain's decolonization process and counter to the values of the United States and the UN. When the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, it was eager to rid itself of the burden of the rogue state, and the early agreement at Lancaster House, six months after her becoming Prime Minister was a demonstration of its priorities. The election result of 1980, bringing Robert Mugabe to power, and his record in office since then, particularly his outspoken rhetoric against the former colonial power has further soured relationships between Britain and Zimbabwe. During the conduct of the Rhodesian War, heavy-handedness and brutalities took place on both sides. The killings of survivors of the first Viscount SA-7 shootdown by ZIPRA in 1978 and an attack by the Selous Scouts on a civilian bus in February 1980, in an attempt to make it look like a ZANLA attack, are two ready examples of atrocities on either side.[162] This conduct was far-removed from the British ideals of minimum use of force and a reason that could be cited for the UK to not draw lessons. However, this ignores the truth that throughout its counterinsurgencies, the British have also strayed beyond the bounds of decency, particularly with its treatment of the Mau Mau in Kenya, with Internment in Northern Ireland in 1972 and the death of Baha Mousa in Iraq in 2003.[163] Nevertheless, all of these examples must be studied within their particular context and to judge the earlier examples with 21st Century eyes is a mistake that runs the risk of ignoring other, relevant lessons. When the British of the Commonwealth Monitoring Force arrived in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in late December 1979, there was no shortage of antipathy from a sizeable proportion of white Rhodesian soldiers towards the arriving troops and police. Observations by those Rhodesians are often unkind toward the British, describing their deployment as 'truly ridiculous' and 'none of them had the slightest idea'; Croukamp is more scathing, stating that 'seeing the British blown away would have been good for me because they were indifferent to Rhodesia and had no compunction in betraying us.[164] These views, whilst extreme and far from universal, would appear to epitomize the general feeling of being sold-out by Britain at Lancaster House and, if true, would probably have left those British forces who came into contact with Rhodesians with an unfavourable view of them and their conduct of the war, thus formulating a sub-conscious belief that the war was not one worth dwelling upon; as the years progressed, some of those CMF troops would have progressed into influential senior positions in the military, thus perpetuating the belief. This attitude may have been further reinforced when Mugabe used his North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade to repress dissent in Matabeleland in the 1980s, at a time when the British had their training team in Zimbabwe.[165] With this as a background, achieving a neutral narrative is difficult; it is, therefore, that prospective commentators have probably shied away from this conflict and put it into the 'too controversial' box. Finally, with the British focus firmly in the northern hemisphere,

[162] Parker (1999), p.276
[163] Grob-Fitzgibbon (2011), p.278; Operation Banner (2006), p.2-7
[164] Parker (1999), p.299; Croukamp (2007), p.445
[165] Mugabe Aides Said to Use Violence to Get Amnesty http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/10/world/africa/10zimbabwe.html?pagewanted=2&_r=0, 30 Sep 12

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particularly during the Cold War and the spotlight on Central Europe, it may be that Rhodesia was discounted as geographically irrelevant.
Regardless of whether there were active steps to ignore the lessons from Rhodesia, the fact remains that it is little studied by the British, which given the shared history of the two countries is a noticeable anomaly, yet the study of this war could provide a useful foil to study an essentially British conflict without the ownership and implied criticism that often hampers a learning process. Kiszely notes that military organisations are proud and 'susceptible to feeling threatened by internal criticism' and 'potentially resistant to external criticism'; in electing to study the Rhodesian War, the British can avoid the ownership, making them more able to objectively study a 'British' counterinsurgency.[166] As this study would be only the second experience of studying an insurgency in sub-Saharan Africa, after Kenya, it would broaden the area of learning away from desert (Aden, Iraq, Afghanistan) and temperate, urban operations, as in Northern Ireland.

Conclusion

This paper has set out the historical context of the Rhodesian War in order to analyse the lessons that can be drawn from each phase of the war, from 1965 to 1980; these lessons have then been paralleled with British experiences of the time to see if there was applicability for the UK. In taking this approach, it can be seen that Britain did not study Rhodesia as it unrolled and only recently learnt some of the lessons presented. On the other hand, previous lessons that can be drawn were already understood by the British owing to its shared experiences in Kenya and Malaya, whilst others were learnt by independent experience. However, the overwhelming lesson to emerge is that Britain has had a poor history of studying, which it now realises and is taking great strides to rectify. It is easy, with hindsight and further experience of counterinsurgencies into the 21st Century, to see what went wrong with the Rhodesian campaign as, ultimately, the campaign was lost by Ian Smith's government's lack of appreciation of their strategic position and the untenable hold of white-minority rule. Lessons from this campaign, such as a unified command much earlier in the war, with the correct powers and freedom to act given by the politicians, an adequate Hearts and Minds campaign rather than token lip-service, and an aggressive approach to soldiering that too often ignored restraint and acted upon revenge, thus playing into the insurgents' hands, are not unique to Rhodesia but to an observer of this campaign, these now appear obvious and are basic lessons ignored, yet they can still add to the doctrine of nations. Most of the lessons could be drawn from study of other counterinsurgencies, but it is the unique similarities between the Rhodesian soldier and the British soldier that make this campaign worth studying over and above those of the French and Americans. In choosing Rhodesia, one must disassociate the racist policies of the government from the valid counterinsurgency struggle that the soldiers and airmen fought; it could be that the UK has had difficulties in separating out these aspects owing to its uncomfortable history. It has been the aim of this paper to highlight some of those lessons that the British could have assimilated. Most of the lessons have been learnt, albeit significantly later than they could have been, given the Rhodesian experience. In this category must fall the

[166] Kiszely (2006), p.18

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use of mine-protected vehicles, which only appeared in the UK's inventory 40 years later. Some of the lessons are more obvious than others and many are tactically-centred, but could have strategic importance, if not heeded, such as the incompatibility of military and civilian communications.
The reasons why Britain has chosen not to study Rhodesia almost certainly stem from its overall reluctance to study doctrine, as described earlier. If forced to study, then it had plenty of its own experiences such that it believe that it didn't need to investigate foreign wars. There was no corporate scheme to write Rhodesia out of Britain's history books, no matter how uncomfortable it had made us, it is just that Britain has a history of introverted study, at best, and this campaign did not fit into that pattern. This attitude is changing, and Britain's attitude to doctrine has become healthy, yet it has taken longer to embrace detailed, wide-ranging counterinsurgency doctrine, which has been mainly driven by the US out of shared failings in the early stages of the Second Iraq war. The publication of the US Army's FM 3-24 has gone a long way to shaping the content of our own counterinsurgency doctrine.
Ultimately, however, the Rhodesians lost their war because the goals and efforts of the military were not aligned with the strategic context and the political machinations of the Salisbury government; the military could boast that they had not lost any battles, only to be sold-out by the British and the South Africans. This unbreakable link between the tactical and the strategic is a key lesson for any insurgency and is one promoted by Galula in 1963, two years before UDI.[167] It is, therefore, not a new lesson and not one unique to Rhodesia, but it is one that applies to Rhodesia, as it did to Algeria and as it continues to do so with Afghanistan. No country that is serious in its approach to counterinsurgency can afford to ignore the lessons that the Rhodesia War tells us.

[167] Galula (2006), p.243

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