

5th Generation Warfare?

By Frank Borrelli

Just in the past few days I received an email - via one of the server lists I'm on - that made me think about all aspects of the current war on terror and how they could apply as much here in the United States as they do in the "war zone" of Iraq or Afghanistan. The email section that I quote is this: *"Obtain a translated copy of the following: "How to fight alone," and "New Methods in Today's Battle," by Muhammed Khalil al-Hakaima. He has outlined how to take this war to the cities. Note: He urges the study of the human anatomy in order to identify vulnerable areas and take up martial arts and exercise; utilize tactics such as stabbings, arson, car bombs and cutting the brake lines on automobiles; how to use narcotics such as cocaine and heroin as weapons and how to use easily available poisons as well. How to conduct intelligence/counterintelligence against the police and how to infiltrate local police departments. This war is evolving into 5GW. Make sure you are prepared."*

What caught my attention was the comment about, "This war is evolving into 5GW" meaning fifth generation warfare, and how that directly followed an entire sentence about operations against the police. Things that make you go, "Hmmm..."

I recently had a gentleman on my range who just come home from Iraq. He's a national guardsman who serves in a light infantry unit but was put on a security detail while on active duty. One thing he consistently comments on is how often the insurgents target the Iraqi police and, as a side affect, the American military police that are training them.

Before I go any further I have to make a few statements so that you, the reader, can understand my perspective.

- 1) Some folks would consider me a right-wing extremist. I am a firm believer in the 2nd Amendment Right to Keep and Bear Arms and believe that education is the answer to reducing gun violence - not legislation.
- 2) I believe that here at home - that is inside the borders of the United States - the uniformed law enforcement professionals who Protect & Serve every day are our first line defense against any type of armed invasion. In essence they are our front line soldiers - even though they aren't soldiers in the strictest sense of the word.
- 3) I believe that any citizen who has the courage to pick up a gun and fight against an invading force in our country is also a soldier and should be properly empowered as such.

All that said, let's take a look back at a few wars the United States has been involved in and take a very specific look at some of the characteristics of those wars:

The Revolutionary War:

At best, third generation warfare. Fought with firearms but not repeating arms or self-

loading arms. To insure a high rate of fire and any decent percentage in hits, strict discipline had to be enforced in force structure. What I mean is that the ranks and columns of soldiers - lined up across from each other in any given relatively flat space - were necessary if those very same soldiers wanted to cause casualties. Someone had to shoot. Someone had to reload. One rank knelt while the column behind them stood. In doing so they were able to fire two columns at a time. Then those guys had to move quickly and start reloading while the next ranks took position and fired. Muskets are not historically known for their great accuracy. Battles were fought at close distances. When no more powder or shot was left... or when the distances had closed to the point where reloading would allow your enemy to close and attack you hand to hand... then hand-to-hand battle was joined. Swords, sabers and bayonets were the next weapon used. In this type of warfare - 3GW - GROUPS of men fought against GROUPS of men. The only hope they had of generating enough fire to inflict high casualties was by the use of dense and well disciplined shooting structures.

Move forward about a hundred years...

The Civil War

Third Generation Warfare with the beginnings of some detachment from the actual battle field. While cannons provide some stand-off from the field of battle it's not a great stand-off and carnage is still first hand. But we Americans learned a very valuable lesson that both sides used to their advantage in the Civil War: War has few (if any) rules. Why stand in ranks, lined up and trading bullets? Hide in the bushes. Fight from ambush. A very few skilled rifleman could deplete a squad of the enemy and escape without taking a single casualty. That use of small unit tactics to attack larger fighting units was the beginning of fourth generation warfare - but only in one sense of the term.

The "sense of the term" that I'm most interested in is the part that affects how combatants face each other; attack each other; defend against one another; defeat each other. In each generation of warfare there is an attached political strategy / outlook that is also employed to maximum effect, but from my point of view the political and propaganda maneuverings only result in a harder or easier fight for the soldier in the trenches. Remember, as far as I'm concerned, here in America, we police are the "soldier in the trench".

Move forward almost another hundred years...

The Vietnam "Conflict"

A war we fought, as a relatively new reality for us, in cities and villages as much as the jungles and open fields. Fourth Generation Warfare showed its full potential. Politics hampered and hurt our soldiers almost as much as the measured reality of casualties caused by the enemy. And who was the enemy? Was it the North Vietnamese soldiers in uniform? What about those who didn't wear uniforms? We're not the only people on the planet to learn lessons of combat. How many American soldiers were killed by non-

uniformed combatants from ambush? How many soldiers were killed by children unknowingly carrying improvised explosive devices (IEDs)? How many soldiers were killed investigating the remains of a booby-trapped dead enemy?

And the thing that catches my mind as I consider the evolution of each consecutive generation of warfare is this: in Vietnam America learned the value of small unit maneuvering. Ambush is preferred to any "straight up" fight. *"If you find yourself in a fair fight, you failed to properly plan beforehand."* *"A fair fight means all my Marines come home."* Quotes that show the learned mindset. Sure; war has rules. But few of them involve fighting by the Queen's rules. In an ambush you aim for the knees so that your enemy is at best crippled and at worst falls into your line of fire to die. But my biggest point is this: the inter-personal violence that was required in Vietnam simply to stay in the fight was evermore brought to the small unit level. Sure, battalions fought. Companies fought. Platoons fought. But more and more the squad or fire-team sized unit was used to strike unexpectedly and to move away quickly. Additionally, our Special Forces personnel were used to educate indigenous peoples; to inculcate them in our way of thinking; to offer our support, training, materials and supplies; to create a new soldier - one not necessarily recognizable as such by the enemy. The war grew more personal...

Step up to modern day...

Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) is a larger consideration than ever before. Virtually every space our soldiers fight in today - except for open desert - is a MOUT environment. Even if it's a cave that has been modified or equipped for human use, it's a MOUT environment. MOUT doesn't require a built structure. It doesn't require walls. All of the tactics applied in Mout - at the squad and fire-team level - apply to virtually every place a human operates, lives or sleeps. If it's a multi-story environment then you have to think in a 720 degree fashion: all the way around you on both axis: horizontal and vertical. That said, let's consider...

The war on terror

Some call it the Fourth World War because they consider the Cold War the 3rd World War. I call the War on Terror World War III because the lines have been drawn; enemy soldiers have been killed; civilian casualties inflicted. Additionally, more countries today battle terror than fought in either of the first two world wars. So, WWIII is joined. What was the opening shot? The shot that would compare to that "heard round the world"? If we had our eyes open and were paying attention it was the first bombing of the World Trade Centers in the early '90s. If not that then pick any one of the attacks Americans have suffered around the world since then. At the very latest recognize that the attacks we suffered on [nine-eleven](#) marked our entrance into WWIII. Four teams - four groups of men fire-team in size - hijacked four commercial jetliners and used them as guided missiles to attack our economic, executive and military heads of government.

In that specific attack, the inter-personal violence was committed - AT FIRST - by individuals against individuals. The fight that took place on Flight 93 to retake the plane

was fought between a small group of determined citizens and the terrorists who had taken the plane. Fire-team size... four to five people.

Now, go back to that beginning message: *"He urges the study of the human anatomy in order to identify vulnerable areas and take up martial arts and exercise; utilize tactics such as stabbings, arson, car bombs and cutting the brake lines on automobiles; how to use narcotics such as cocaine and heroin as weapons and how to use easily available poisons as well."*

What we are seeing in the warzone of Iraq - and still in Afghanistan to some extent - is the next evolution of warfare. Fifth Generation Warfare will involve individuals attacking individuals. They will be practicing "martial arts and exercise" so as to be better personally equipped to take on those less so. They will be utilizing attacks that involve "stabbings, arson, car bombs..." etc. This is an extension of the tactics they've already displayed involving IEDs, Vehicle Born IEDs, Homicide Bombers (inaccurately called suicide bombers), and more. Look at the mandate on using narcotics and other available poisons. And then reread the line: *"How to conduct intelligence/counterintelligence against the police and how to infiltrate local police departments."*

What called my attention to this the most - and why I had to stop and think about the evolution of warfare - is that this information specifically indicates the terrorist determination to bring the war to our shores. Once here they know that law enforcement professionals are the front line soldiers. My company's motto of "On The Front Lines At Home" wasn't by accident. All law enforcement professionals... and indeed any citizen willing to stand up against terrorism - is on the front lines in the United States. Thankfully our front lines haven't been tested much... YET. When it happens it will come from someone we don't recognize as a terrorist; someone who has been living here for awhile; someone who may not look middle-eastern; someone who may not have an accent; someone who has been going to a Christian church and belongs to the PTA at the local school.

5GW is going to involve seemingly spontaneous and anonymous attacks against random citizens and/or law enforcement professionals with no more goal in the mind of the terrorist than to cause confusion and fear. The purpose of terrorism is to cause terror. Don't forget what TWO shooters did in the Washington Metropolitan area. Sure, we all went about our business, but I know plenty of folks who were a lot more alert when they were pumping gas or going into grocery stores. 5GW will make us doubt the security of our own country and will be overlaid with the propaganda material encouraging us to doubt our leaders - at all levels. Some will believe. Some citizens will think that if we could just quit fighting terrorism they'll leave us alone and those citizens will become supporters of terrorism - even though they won't mean to.

Be alert. Stay vigilant. Remember that Officer Survival is a 24/7 job. Being a contemporary warrior is a way of life. And take faith in the fact that we have about 900,000 law enforcement professionals in this country. That's more soldiers than the United States has been able to field in the War against Terror so far. There is strength in

our numbers. We CAN be an unbeatable force - but we have to be prepared for it in every way.

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