

AVENGING 9/11: DEFEATING A NEW KIND OF ENEMY

Copyright 2002 By Chuck de Caro

The 9/11 attacks on the New York and Washington were neither criminal acts nor cowardly ones; they were brilliantly-conceived, meticulously-planned and courageously-executed **acts of war** against the United States. The attacks and the subsequent and continuing US reaction have demonstrated the hard reality that the United States is engaged in a new kind of guerrilla war whose main proponent is the stateless ex-Saudi terrorist Usama Ben Laden. The success that UBL has achieved is simply put: One individual, primarily self-supported, has managed to engage a superpower with various large scale acts of violence now including the death of thousands of Americans and billions of dollars, and that after a decade of cat-and-mouse and almost another year of active US military and covert operations, that man is apparently still alive and his cause is growing!

This inability to stop UBL stems from US insistence on using Cold War legacy systems and even more archaic thinking in dealing with an asymmetric enemy who has totally adapted himself and his operations to the Infosphere; he is in effect a **virtual guerrilla** whose area of operations is **global and four dimensional**. His adaptation to the terrain of the Infosphere (of which cyberspace is a subset) gives him and his organization the advantage of amorphousness to appear and disappear at will.

Thus this stateless millionaire, whose operatives and supporting body politic constitute a **virtual nation**, has been able to conduct a new kind of guerrilla war on a global scale with attacks against American interests from the Middle East to Africa to the Philippines and now to the once sacrosanct shores of the United States itself.

Ben Laden has demonstrated distributed and dispersed intelligence and command functions. He has used global television to greatly magnify the size and scope of his attacks and create a kind of cult following based on the amplification of his alleged charisma. He has used cyberspace to conduct operational simultaneity in his attacks as demonstrated at the embassies in Africa, and has demonstrated a desire for global power by his seemingly one-man onslaught against the United States.

The US has heretofore inadvertently worsened the situation by attacking visible tactical targets from Afghanistan to the Philippines. But this conventional methodology is much like the way an inept mechanic deals with an engine warning light: He makes the symptom go away by cutting the wires to the light! The same mentality applies to simply killing, or capturing and trying a terrorist. **The problem is in the engine!** And the **engine** here is the body politic and virtual body politic that support Ben Laden through contributions of money, personnel, intelligence, operational assistance and political support. And this virtual body politic is hiding in an amorphous form within the larger Islamic culture consisting of some 1.65 billion people.

To end the problem the US must affect those bodies politic and support mechanisms which allow Ben Laden to carry on his operations. **Thus, the US must adapt to the Infosphere and attempt to out-guerrilla**

the guerrilla.

This can be done by a new-age adaptation of Sun Tzu: Attack his strategy, then attack his alliances and finally, attack his army.

While the US at the strategic level may be aware of Sun Tzu's trilogy, the only visible arm of the trilogy that has been used in the past is attacking the army: kinetic Industrial Age attacks, using extremely expensive Cold War legacy systems such as cruise missiles, smart bombs, stealth bombers used to destroy mud huts, cave openings and the occasional guerrilla unit stupid enough to be caught in the open. Even the use of Special Forces, has been tied to massive US bombing and lots of high technology.

A New Age Information Warfare based-approach using Sun Tzu's trilogy would proceed in the following manner:

Attacking his Strategy: What is Usama Ben Laden's strategy? Various western sources described it as the desire to throw the Israelis into the sea; to give the Palestinians a state; to attack the great enemy of Islam, who defiled the sacred soil of Saudi Arabia, the Great Satan of the United States. The new-age view is that these are only fragmentary subsets of his goal. Ben Laden's strategy can be best surmised from the name of his front organization: **The Jihad (Holy War) Against Jews and Crusaders.**

Crusaders were defeated in the Holy Land by a **unified Islam under one leader: El Saladin.** Is it so far fetched that a multi-millionaire with an enormous ego would fancy himself the new El Saladin with the same goal: unification of the Moslem World?

What is also misunderstood in the west is that Islam is not a middle eastern religion, but an Asian religion...there are more Muslims in Indonesia alone than there are in all of the Middle East. And that region which until recently contained an Islam inspired by the trading ship rather than the sword, has become more militant due to economic chaos. As proof of this note that Ben Laden has had for years, cells of Islamic fundamentalists operational in the Philippines.

The common denominator in attacking his strategy is getting to the diffuse bodies politic upon which Usama depends.

ATTACKING THE STRATEGY:

The first step is to evaluate Ben Laden's telecommunications and media methods and overall strategy in each of several regions in which UBL has cells. Thereafter, each zone should have the demographic traits of UBL's target population analyzed to create a marked counter programming effort to erode UBL's preferred demographic and thus his zonal body politic.

The first step in this campaign is to evaluate the regions in which UBL has support or is trying to enlist support and create a kind of "cartography" to determine the nature of regional television and its programming vulnerabilities. The recent hour UBL TV program that produced and satellited out of facilities in Qatar is an excellent

example. Dissecting the program could provide a wealth of information, include the company or companies who produce his message which is used to magnify his image and cause.

The second step is to quietly measure UBL's audience in each zone in terms of their knowledge of him and his cause and their attitudes toward it. This mechanism will also work to measure the effects of the countervailing message upon the target audience. Once initial measurements are in, it will be possible to create counter-programming to erode the system that UBL has created. In many cases this may include the use of Special Operations Forces to create events that will give ignominious defeat to UBL's forces and ideas.

The third step is to create programming that continues to erode the UBL's target audience over time.

ATTACK THE ALLIANCES

Building on this initial effort, methodologies should be developed for attacking Ben Laden's alliances by sampling the demographics of UBL-friendly nation states, non-state actors, non-government organizations and disaffected populations, as well as unwitting supporters such as banks, telecom companies, and logistics providers. Once the demographic plan is in place an information campaign can be put in place to erode or deny their support.

Using variants of the methods above, it would be possible to create for example, an ego clash between UBL and Saddam, or UBL and Khadaffi, or perhaps leveraging existing schisms within UBL's purview. The famous Saddam "party videos" (short films of fanatical Iraqis impaling themselves for the greater glory of Saddam, among other things) and their target audiences would be a good starting point for demographic evaluation and audience enlargement.

ATTACK THE ARMY

When UBL's various bodies politic show a demonstrable decline, Ben Laden's force organizations can be targeted to erode the recruiting and retention of personnel or encourage their desertion or defection.

Moreover, at this stage there is the possibility of creating a kind of rapid counter programming entity for use after a kinetic attack by UBL's followers. A rapidly deployable television production system could be used to create a counter-information wave so as to deny the surrender of the global television audience to video created by UBL's actions.

The Al Jazeera superstation, which has been co-opted by UBL and Al Qaeda can be countered by a US government rapidly-deployable television dissemination system that would in effect be a sort of information pump for local regional and global media simply by providing production and uplink facilities to dilute the unilateral AL Jazeera video flow. More video, more rapidly, and of the highest quality, would tend to mitigate any one aspect of a story and thus negate the maximum propaganda value of an action by UBL.

CONCLUSION: WE NEED A FOUR DIMENSIONAL MILITARY

Usama Ben Laden is a classic guerrilla leader in the Information Age adapted in four dimensions clashing with US forces which Machine Age in organization and operate in three dimensions. What is needed is a four dimensional military force that operates equally well on land, sea, or the Infosphere; a force that is doctrinally guided by an integrated Information Warfare plan with kinetic adjuncts and not the current Kinetic plan with IW adjuncts. Until such a new force and doctrine are created and utilized by the United States, America will remain an ungainly Goliath, unquestionably vulnerable to a more nimble David, waiting for the fatal stone to strike it squarely between the eyes.