

***The Marines Take Anbar:
The Four-Year Fight against al Qaeda,*
by Richard H. Shultz Jr.**

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This book is an odyssey of two Marine Air Ground Task Forces' (MAGTF) perseverance to defeat al Qaeda in Iraq's Anbar province. MAGTFs are combined arms task organizations of U.S. Marine Corps forces under a single commander structured to accomplish a specific mission. In *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps* by General Victor Krulak, USMC (ret.), the author augurs, "The war you prepare for is rarely the one you get." *The Marines Take Anbar* validates that warning. Another way to frame this wisdom is that it is important that strategy evolves and adapts to the organizational culture, and in turn, to contextualize the warrior ethos for a specific environment.

Professor Richard H. Shultz Jr. of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University is the author of *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias* and *The Secret War against Hanoi*. His new book captures how USMC leadership at the highest combat level responds to the enemy's use of improvised explosive devices (IED) and other emergent challenges in the course of navigating an unchanging tribal landscape in a new war. The U.S. Marine Corps rotation of MAGTF commands within the Anbar process, over a period of four years, further stressed organizational education and training factors of the environmental transition.

The crossover challenge for these MAGTFs was to navigate from a kinetic fight to one of postconflict insurgency management. The initial MAGTF, upon being assigned to northern Iraq, questioned the perceptions of the Coalition Provincial Authority's architectural foundation for governance, economic development, and rule of law. The authority was a transitional government following the invasion by the Multi-National Force-Iraq, which was formed to oust the

government of Saddam Hussein in 2003. The Coalition Provisional Authority, like Saddam and his Ba'athist-dominated regime, discounted the staying power of sheikhs and tribalism. The Authority initiated several ill-conceived, though well-intentioned, decisions. Their insensitivity to local ethics and culture provided a welcome mat for al Qaeda.

The marines at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in preparation for the MAGTF rotation, read the consequences of the Authority's actions witnessed by the Anbar MAGTF and developed educational programs tailored by Intelligence analysis orchestrated by General John Allen. The goal was training products to "penetrate the tribal membrane" and not perceive the tribes and sheikhs as a "speed bump" on the way to a new society. These new Intelligence-driven programs proved to be essential for attuning the Camp Lejeune-based young officers and noncommissioned officers for the Anbar deployment.

The initial on-the-ground MAGTF in Anbar did not envision the need to master tribal institutional behaviors, mental maps, norms, and values. That MAGTF's leadership in sharing Intelligence with their rotational replacements, however, provided the opportunity to change organizational behavior and use the appropriate application of counterinsurgency capabilities for their replacement MAGTF. The lesson here is the USMC culture used Intelligence to lift the fog of war in Anbar through understanding the role of tribalism, personalities of sheikhs, and the indigenous code of conduct by way of an educational and training campaign—and heeded the warning of General Krulak.

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