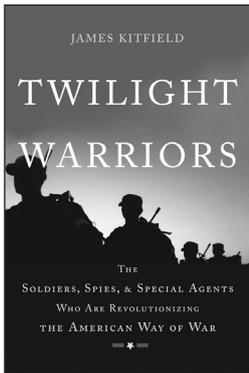


Book Review



Twilight Warriors: The Soldiers, Spies, and Special Agents Who Are Revolutionizing the American Way of War

James Kitfield

Basic Books, 2016, 416 pp.

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In the years after 9/11, top U.S. military and political leaders were heavily engaged in how best to successfully defeat Al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite the global launch of the war on terrorism, the passing of the U.S. Patriot Act, and the skyrocketing of budgets of all defense-related agencies, the terrorist insurgency networks still grew. Though there were initial counter terrorist victories, the insurgencies intensified as U.S. security agencies' synergy ebbed more than flowed. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey had his "black swan moment" in 2004 as the then First Armored Division Commander exclaiming he would never forget his shock at a Shiite uprising and the collapse of the Iraqi units his forces had trained. We had relied too heavily on technology instead of anthropology and sociology to understand what was "on the Iraqi minds" in the street. One of his junior officers had foreshadowed to be wary of "false positives."

Reminiscent of a Ken Burns' historical movie documentary, James Kitfield in his latest work, *Twilight Warriors*, braids an intriguing chronological story that begins in 1998. He draws on years of firsthand experiences and senior defense leader associations. A rendering of a tight-knit group of interagency leaders who would ultimately break down age-old stovepipes resulting in an "unprecedented level of networked counterinsurgency (COIN) and intelligence cooperation between traditionally distrustful U.S. conventional and Special Operations Forces - and - between military, intelligence and law enforcement agencies." Kitfield centers his book on four key players, three military generals and an FBI special agent.

Kitfield portrays West Point classmates, Generals Martin Dempsey, Stanley McChrystal and David Petraeus as "preeminent leaders who would form the definitive narrative of a new revolution in the American style of war." This model relied on unprecedented civ-mil coordination, and modern COIN operations as the "fastest way to drain the extremism swamp." COIN lessons and doctrine had been expunged from military school curriculum and Dempsey lamented that the masters of maneuver warfare had created a generation of officers conditioned to go by the "doctrinal book" and not seek innovative solutions.

Kitfield describes Petraeus as a hero of the Iraq surge. From his doctoral thesis at Princeton on

COIN, to his leading of the rewriting of the Army COIN manual, he was steeped in COIN warfare. On his headquarters entry was, “Will this operation take more bad guys off the street than it creates by the way it is conducted?” He emphasized that insurgencies were for political power and any effective COIN campaign requires a tightly coordinated civil-mil partnership.

McChrystal, served as the Special Operations Forces Joint Special Operations Command Commander. His intelligence chief was Michael T. Flynn who would later become the Defense Intelligence Agency Director and President Trump’s resigned National Security Agency director. Kitfield discusses how McChrystal and Flynn’s network broke down the walls of traditionally separated intelligence agencies, analysts and operators. They created Task Force 714, a multiagency joint task force, and intelligence fusion centers which combined all the military, intelligence and law enforcement agencies that had a piece of the counter terrorist mission and drove them to “mind meld” as one coherent team, a level of centralized command and decentralized execution by multiple agencies that had not been accomplished before. The team learned that some agency sources were “triple and quadruple dipping” as well as providing contradictory information. It takes a network to defeat a network.

McChrystal and Flynn were pivotal in pioneering the emergence of drones, a superstar in the network of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets, whether it be as high value target strikes or following known or suspected terrorists.

Another integral visionary leader Kitfield revealed was the FBI’s Brian McCauley, who led the network’s suicide bomber tracking using serial-killer profile techniques. Despite the FBI and CIA’s intense disagreements about interrogation, this led to the closest ever collaborations between the FBI, CIA and the military. McCauley, always seeking intelligence links to U.S. plots, was able to impact an extensive human source network overseas.

McChrystal dubbed the successful cyclic model against terrorist targets as F3EA or find, fix, finish, exploit, and analyze. Kitfield detailed how well it ultimately worked in Iraq and Afghanistan once the National Security Agency inserted its intelligence fusion system into the F3EA cycle. It was the “Amazon.com of counterterrorism.” By 2008, insurgent attacks had fallen over 80%. An Air Force chief boasted recon missions in 1991 Desert Storm required days to deliver pictures of questionable accuracy - to thirty frames per second to anywhere on earth within seconds. That was the power of the network.

Kitfield then devoted one third of his book gauging the network’s warfighting success against discrete global terrorist targets. Flynn had built on Joint Special Operations Command’s network centers and “shook up” the Defense Intelligence Agency by creating five intelligence integration centers and growing its clandestine services. The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) maintained a clearinghouse of suspected terrorists and groups with numerous links between intelligence community databases. “Over 40% of NCTC personnel were from other civilian and military agencies borrowing many pages from the F3EA playbook.” Terrorist plots quietly ended in arrests or kills. In 2013, Al Shabab terrorists enveloped an upscale Nairobi, Kenya mall. FBI’s McCauley dispatched a rapid deployment team that was in place by day two. The dramatically compressed intelligence-gathering and decision making cycle in the F3EA model was evident two weeks after the mall attack as U.S. commandos conducted simultaneous raids in Somalia and Libya.

Kitfield lamented how the State Department resisted network partnerships with civilian corporations. But in 2014, terrorists hijacked a ConocoPhillips ship with over one million barrels of oil and the network “chatter” was an impending environmental disaster in the Mediterranean Sea.

The USS Roosevelt sent a “special” team which boarded and captured the three Libyan hijackers.

Will this model continue to keep the U.S safe? Can our counter terrorist network keep pace with the rapidly evolving threat? Working with counter terrorist partners on the front lines of the Global War on Terror after 9/11 proved invaluable to keep the terrorist threat from crippling the U.S. Though the network had begun linking with industry, Kitfield unfortunately omitted discussion of other nation’s or NATO’s links to the network. Select allies and partners would truly make this a unified action network. A globe-spanning network of significant lethality may be the only way to proceed in the future.

Kitfield asserts the tempo of F3EA must continue to keep pace with the “Hydra headed” terrorist networks. It will be expensive. We should be very concerned when each agency is competing for scarce resources. Stovepipes can quickly build in a time of budget cuts or political partisanship. Kitfield also placed significant emphasis on agency collaboration and the “personal” relations between interagency leaders who are essentially now out of the picture. Scarce agency resources coupled with scarce interagency bonds presages a repeat of past challenges. Be wary of false positives.

Twilight Warriors is more than just a great book on recent U.S. counterterrorism matters and the leaders who battled it. Kitfield’s compelling accounting of the network and its global implications warrants it as a decidedly recommended reading for anyone, not just those interested in existing military, interagency, or civ-mil issues. **IAJ**