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by

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## **Part II Successful Enemy-Centric-Plus Counterinsurgency**

### **Chapter 3 The Case Of Dhofar, Oman, 1965-1976**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Oman defeated a nationalist-Communist insurgency that enjoyed a secure cross-border base and external state support. It took 11 years and significant British and regional military and political backing. Oman, on the strategically important Strait of Hormuz, has remained a stable state and a Western ally ever since. How did it happen? The conventional wisdom on Dhofar says the rise of an enlightened leader brought fast economic and political development, gained the allegiance of the populace, and thus defeated the insurgency. This view supports the contemporary counterinsurgency (COIN) emphasis on a population-centric approach to success.<sup>1</sup>

Archival research and interviews with British officers who led the campaign reveal a more complex, less ambitious success. The COIN campaign began with the use of collective punishment and reprisals against the populace as a whole, but the British-led Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) only managed to fight the growing insurgency to a stalemate. The campaign entered a new phase under a new, British-approved sultan. Hard fighting reliant on superior firepower and mobility eventually defeated the insurgency

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<sup>1</sup> A number of scholars include Dhofar in the ranks of population-centric successes. See, e.g., Thomas R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency in the Post-Imperial Era* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1995) and Calvin H. Allen, Jr., and W. Lynn Rigsbee II, *Oman Under Qaboos: From Coup to Constitution 1970-1996* (London: Frank Cass, 2000, 2001 reprint).

militarily and established security, but the win was aided by narrowly targeted accommodations that brought guerrillas over to the state side, and by the eventual military provision of a few basic goods and services to the populace. Economic development followed the conflict, and political development and popular participation remain limited in autocratic Oman more than 30 years later.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, I analyze both phases of the Dhofar campaign, from 1965 to 1970 and from 1970 to 1976, and show that it was not, in fact, fought according to the population-centric model despite its classification as a population-centric success in the literature. What worked in Dhofar was a combination of high force and limited accommodations, as my model predicts. The military campaign weakened the insurgency and the accommodations won over guerrillas whose knowledge and fighting ability strengthened the state's military arm. The defectors served as a conduit for the exchange of information among the state, the populace, and the insurgency. The defectors used their abilities, including their ties to the populace and insurgency, to benefit the state in three ways. First, their irregular warfare skills, knowledge of the terrain, and language skills filled a significant gap in SAF's capabilities. Second, they gained information that helped SAF locate and fight guerrillas and their networks. Third, they persuaded friends and relatives of the benefits of cooperating with the state.

Dhofar displays significant within-case variation, contrasts to, and similarities with the other cases I analyze: The uses of force and accommodation changed considerably in the two phases; there were limited popular demands; the state was

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<sup>2</sup> Some observers note that participation and representation through the tribal system satisfies current political aspirations. Ian Gordon, major in the Muscat Regiment in Phase II, personal communication to author, November 27, 2009.

extremely weak; the case is typical in having outside support for both sides; the conflict had an ethnic component; there was significant variation in the level of great power backing for the state; and it is a typical case of limited great power intervention in that the intervener saw a core interest in the defeat of the insurgency but wished to devote as few resources as possible to reaching its goal.

In this chapter, I briefly lay out the observable implications of the two theories I compare, give some background on this little-known case, and analyze the two strategic phases of the conflict to show how and why the high force, limited accommodation campaign succeeded. In my conclusion, I develop the significance of my findings and discuss their policy implications.

To briefly recap the two models I apply to see which better explains this success: The four elements of a population-centric campaign are: 1) building the civilian arms of the state more than its military arms in order to provide good governance and gain broad popular support; 2) providing major reforms to gain broad popular support; 3) limiting the use of force to avoid civilian casualties that would reduce popular support; and 4) protecting the populace to build broad popular support.

In contrast, the four elements of the high force, limited accommodation or enemy-centric-plus theory of COIN success are: 1) building and professionalizing the military arms of the state to improve targeting and reduce the routine, casual abuse of the populace; 2) providing limited, targeted accommodations to political entrepreneurs whose cooperation strengthens the state's ability to target the insurgency; 3) targeting the insurgency directly, separately from the populace; and 4) targeting and controlling the

populace to restrict the flow of resources to the insurgency.<sup>3</sup> I define success as the creation or restoration of law and order within the state's territory. The chart below shows the role of this campaign in validating or invalidating each model.

**Chart 1 Conflict and Models: Results of Case Study Analysis**

<b>Conflict</b>	<b>Validation of Population-centric Model</b>	<b>Invalidation of Population-centric Model</b>	<b>Application of Enemy-centric-plus Model</b>	<b>Invalidation of Enemy-centric-plus Model</b>
<b>Dhofar</b>	No	Yes	Yes	No

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3 Political accommodations are generally less costly to the state than are fundamental political reforms. Reforms are more costly because they change the relative distribution of power and wealth within the state. The gamut from reform to accommodation is wide. At the high end, reform is major, permanent changes in structures and policies that govern the distribution and exercise of power within the state and affect everyone within it. Major reforms include increased political liberalization, i.e., holding free and fair elections, relaxing rules governing political expression, increasing respect for civil and political rights, developing a free news media, and making market-oriented adjustments in economic policies.<sup>3</sup> Less costly accommodations target specific individuals and groups, rather than all of society, to reach specific goals such as the acquisition of information, cooperation, or an alliance. A moderate level of accommodation addresses bread-and-butter popular concerns, e.g., provision of clean water or reduced routine, random military mistreatment of civilians, but does not address structural imbalances such as wide wealth disparities. Moderate accommodations delivered episodically (e.g., civic action) lie at the lower end of the accommodation-to-reform spectrum, while continued moderate accommodations lie farther along toward the high end.

**Chart 2 Cases and Strategies: Presence or Absence of Indicators in the Two Dhofar Cases Analyzed**

	<b>The Low Force, High Reform Model: Population-centric COIN</b>				<b>The High Force, Limited Accommodation Model: Enemy-centric- plus COIN</b>			
<b>Cases</b>	<b>Build civilian state</b>	<b>Major reforms</b>	<b>Limit fighting</b>	<b>Protect populace</b>	<b>Build, professionalize military</b>	<b>Limited accommodations</b>	<b>Target guerrillas separately from populace</b>	<b>Target, control populace discriminately</b>
<b>Dhofar 1965- 1970</b>					YES			
<b>Dhofar 1970- 1976 (Success)</b>					YES	YES	YES	YES

## BACKGROUND

The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman was once a great state. Sited on the southeastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, it rose as a naval power in the region. Its ships roamed the Indian Ocean and its people flourished from trading up and down the east coast of Africa and the west coast of South Asia in the 17th century.<sup>4</sup> The sultanate once owned Zanzibar in Africa and Gwadar in Baluchistan.

When the Dhofar insurgency began, the sultanate was ruled by Sa'id bin Taimur al Bu Sa'id, a traditionalist anxious to preserve his independence from his British patrons. He hoped to usher his people into the 20th century gradually.<sup>5</sup> Sa'id had taken the throne from his father in 1932, at a time when his father had amassed great debt and tax revenues were shrinking. Sa'id saw revenues plummet further because of the worldwide depression and World War II, when markets for export such as limes, dates, and Oman's prizewinning camels dried up and drought shriveled agricultural yields.<sup>6</sup> Sultan Sai'id's response to Oman's economic decline was parsimony. At the time, the Omani state consisted only of Sultan Sa'id and his advisors. Each province had a *wali* [governor] appointed by the sultan and a *qadi* [judge]. The sultan's British advisors ran the civil activities of the state from Muscat and controlled SAF, but Sa'id had his own circle of Omani advisors in Salalah, capital of Dhofar.<sup>7</sup>

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4 John Townsend, *Oman: The Making of the Modern State* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1977), p. 35.

5 Uzi Rabi, *The Emergence of States in a Tribal Society: Oman Under Sa'id bin Taymur, 1932-1970* (Eastbourne, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2006, 2007 reprint), p. 190; Brig. John Akehurst, Commander Dhofar Brigade 1974-1976, interview, October 14, 1992, Imperial War Museum (IWM) sound recording, catalog number 11156/5, reel 2.

6 Rabi, p. 6; Allen and Rigsbee, p. 8.

7 Allen and Rigsbee, pp. 21-22.

British interests in Oman had been formalized with a treaty of friendship in 1798. British strategic interests in Oman centered on the passage to India and, later, on Gulf oil and British credibility.<sup>8</sup> Oman lies on the Strait of Hormuz, passageway from the Gulf to the Arabian Sea for 40% of all traded seaborne oil.<sup>9</sup> Britain concerned itself with the Dhofar insurgency because it wanted to prevent further dominos falling after its withdrawal from Aden in 1967, and because it was committed to retaining its Royal Air Force base outside Salalah in exchange for continued RAF use of Masirah Island as a stepping-stone to East Asia.

The province of Dhofar, 500 miles south of the Omani capital of Muscat and about the size of New Jersey, was foreign to most Omanis.<sup>10</sup> Dhofar's population returned the favor in considering Northern Omanis outsiders. Dhofaris numbered at the time of the conflict about 50,000 out of a total Omani population of about 400,000.<sup>11</sup> The *jebali* [mountain-dwelling] population was about 30,000, the rest lived on the plain or migrated around the rocky highland behind the mountains.<sup>12</sup> Dhofar's populace included the descendants of African slaves, Zanzibari migrants, and South Asian businessmen, but the most numerous groups were the Arab tribesmen of the plain and the *negd* [the plain beyond the mountains], and the mountain-dwelling, non-Arabic-speaking tribes known as

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8 Ministry of Defense memo to Prime Minister, "British Military Assistance in Oman," December 4, 1973, The National Archives of the UK (TNA) Public Record Office (PRO) DEFE 25/312.

9 U.S. Energy Information Administration, [http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/World\\_Oil\\_Transit\\_Chokepoints/Hormuz.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/Hormuz.html).

10 David Smiley with Peter Kemp, *Arabian Assignment* (London: Leo Cooper, 1975), p. 28.

11 Townsend, p. 103.

12 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, draft Research Memorandum, "The Sultanate of Muscat and Oman," January 13, 1970, TNA PRO) FCO 51/138.



*jebalis*.<sup>13</sup> The crescent-shaped coastal plain in Dhofar stretches about 44 miles along the Arabian Sea, extending about 10 miles inland at its widest point.<sup>14</sup> The cliffs beyond rise up to 5,000 feet, and the mountains extend into a high plateau that becomes a rocky, dry highland merging with the Empty Quarter of Saudi Arabia.<sup>15</sup> The mountains are cut with a multitude of rugged *wadis* [valleys] and are thick with thorny brush in the east and center of Dhofar. The Western Area is a rugged no man's land. West lies Yemen.

The insurgency in Dhofar arose from the many needs of its people at a time when the benefits of oil wealth were increasingly visible in other Gulf states. In 1970, Oman's infant mortality rate was 75%. It had three primary schools, no media, and a literacy rate of 5%.<sup>16</sup> And Dhofar was poorer and hungrier than the rest of Oman. The pan-Arab socialist message of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser was reaching Dhofar, and Communist bloc support for the insurgency, starting in 1968, fostered an already strong, broad-based movement for autonomy or independence from the foreign oppression of the sultan and his British backers. Dhofaris thought they could do better for themselves than the sultan had done for them.

Sultan Sa'id's attitudes doubtless served as an excellent recruiting tool for the insurgents. "We do not need hospitals here," Sa'id told the British officer commanding SAF at the time of an uprising in Northern Oman in 1958-1959. "This is a very poor country which can only support a small population. At present many children die in

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13 Rabi, p. 16.

14 Rabi, p. 16.

15 Rabi p. 16; John Akehurst, *We Won a War: The Campaign in Oman 1965-1975* (Salisbury, Wiltshire, UK: Michael Russell, 1982), pp. 6-7, 11.

16 Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), pp. 286-287.

infancy ... If we build clinics many more will survive – but for what? To starve?”<sup>17</sup>

The insurgency began in the early 1960s as scattered attacks on oil company sites in Dhofar by a handful of men. After the violence escalated with growing support for the insurgency, a full SAF regiment was sent to Dhofar in 1965. SAF, commanded by a seconded British officer and led by seconded and contract officers, was poorly trained and equipped, outgunned and outmanned, short on information about the insurgency, the terrain, and the people, and facing an almost uniformly hostile populace. By 1970, when the insurgents controlled all of Dhofar but Salalah and a few of the coastal villages, the British lost all hope of pushing Sa'id to speed up development and undertake the political reforms that they thought would end the insurgency.<sup>18</sup> The British engineered a coup that replaced Sa'id with his son, Qaboos.

The new sultan was far more amenable to British influence. He was young, sheltered, inexperienced, and held little power, although Qaboos did take on an increasingly active role in the state as he matured. After the coup, the British seized the opportunity to build the capabilities of SAF and gain regional support.

At the same time, the insurgency's transformation from a nationalist organization to one dominated by repressive Marxists was alienating Dhofaris who wanted a better life but had no interest in changing their traditional, tribal lives or modernizing their outlook to condemn religion and support equal rights for women, as the Marxists insisted.

Disaffected guerrillas formed the nucleus of the state's Dhofari militias, which played an

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<sup>17</sup> Smiley, pp. 40-41.

<sup>18</sup> British Army Capt. C.F. Hepworth, seconded to the Northern Frontier Regiment in 1968, found that all the jebalis [mountain tribes] and most of the coastal Dhofaris supported the insurgency. "The Unknown War," *The White Horse and the Fleur de Lys* VI:6 (Winter 1970).

important role in both the military and political aspects of the winning campaign in Phase II.

### **PHASE I, 1965-1970**

In Phase I of the conflict in Dhofar, the state did not conduct any of the elements of a population-centric campaign, political or military. It used force indiscriminately against noncombatants and enacted no reforms. The state remained sultanistic, embodied in the person of the sultan rather than institutionalized. It also did not conduct a high force, limited accommodation campaign. The sultan did build the armed forces, but his parsimony only enabled SAF to retain its hold on the capital and a few coastal villages. He attempted to accommodate tribal leaders, but because the insurgency was not organized along tribal lines these attempts did not strengthen his position. Sa'id ordered SAF to target the guerrillas, but they lacked the necessary intelligence to do so, as well as the means to obtain it. SAF used force against civilians routinely, though it attempted to avoid killing them, because it lacked the knowledge necessary to apply force in ways that would attain specific goals such as reducing cooperation with the insurgency. Thus, the use of force against civilians fueled the insurgency rather than smothering it.

The two major changes in Phase I were, first, the large-scale entry of SAF into Dhofar in 1965 and its campaign against all the populace, and second, the growth of the insurgency from a handful of men considered a nuisance to the oil companies in 1962, to perhaps 200 individuals including 80 fighters in 1966, to about 5,000 individuals who had the full support of the *jebali* [mountain] populace in 1968. By 1970, the state controlled only a strip of land along the coast, where the capital and coastal villages were vulnerable to bombardment by insurgents in the mountains. An increase in outside support for the insurgency that began in 1968 meant more weapons and training, but the

militias and the hard-core fighters were Dhofaris and significant growth had already taken place. The state's increased military power only permitted SAF to fight to a stalemate.

***Phase I: State-Building: Civil Or Military***

The Omani state remained weak in its civil arms throughout Phase I. All executive and decision-making authority rested in Sa'id's hands. At the time of the 1970 coup there was little institutionalization despite persistent British pressure to build the state and deliver services to the populace.<sup>19</sup> Over the course of his reign, Sa'id had eroded the power of the traditional leaders of Oman to draw power into his own hands.<sup>20</sup> Sa'id's British advisors saw no satisfactory civil development in 1968, but reported some progress in Oman (not Dhofar) in 1969.<sup>21</sup> A coordinating secretary for development was hired because of British pressure, but after he arrived in Oman on August 9, 1969, he had no work to do.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, from 1965 until Sultan Sa'id was deposed by his son Qaboos on July 23, 1970, Sa'id did build the military.<sup>23</sup> In 1966, about 1,000 troops were posted in Dhofar, including a SAF regiment, the British Royal Air Force contingent at the small air

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19 Allen and Rigsbee, pp. 34-35.

20 Rabi, pp. 210-211.

21 Consul General D.C. Carden, "Sultanate Balance Sheet – Third Quarter 1968," October 22, 1968, TNO PRO FO 1016/790; Consul General D.C. Carden, "Annual Review 1968," January 12, 1969, TNO PRO FO 1016/790.

22 Consul General D.G. Crawford, "Sultanate Balance Sheet – Third Quarter 1969," October 13, 1969, TNA PRO FO 1016/791.

23 Sultan Sa'id survived an insurgent challenge in Northern Oman in 1958-1959 by agreeing to accept British military and financial assistance, and to reorganize his armed forces under British supervision, and to begin a civil development program, also under British supervision. Allen and Rigsbee, pp. 19-22. Sa'id also had an arrangement with Pakistan that included loan service officers and recruiting rights in Gwadar, Pakistani territory formerly owned by Oman. See Consul General D.C. Carden, annual report 1965, January 2, 1966, TNA PRO FO 1016/765.

station (responsible only for defense), and the motley tribal levies known as *askars* who guarded the palace, the perimeter of the capital, Salalah, and other static positions.<sup>24</sup> From 1967-1970, Sa'id kept one 600-to-700-man battalion in Dhofar.<sup>25</sup> By February 1970, SAF strength overall stood at about 2,500, led by 70 British officers, including the seconded British Army Commander of the Sultan's Armed Forces (CSAF), 30 British loan officers, and 40 British and Commonwealth contract officers, plus 40 Arab and Pakistani contract officers.<sup>26</sup> Four months later, SAF had grown to 3,800 troops, but only one regiment at a time served in Dhofar.<sup>27</sup>

SAF was not a heavily equipped or mobile force. The sultan ordered six helicopters in October 1969, along with 600 .303 Lee-Enfield bolt-action rifles (at a time when the insurgency was using AK-47s).<sup>28</sup> By 1970, SAF's armory included two .50-caliber Brownings and 81mm mortars, putting it roughly at par with the insurgency.<sup>29</sup> SAF officers increased training in basic infantry tactics, from picqueting the heights and

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24 Consul General D.C. Carden to Sir Stewart Crawford, British Resident in the Persian Gulf, October 8, 1966, TNA PRO FO 1016/766.

25 Lt. Col. Peter Thwaites, commander Muscat Regiment 1967-1970, mss lecture, "Dhofar 1967-1970," Peter Thwaites Collection, Box 2, Folder 2, King's College London, Liddell-Hart Center for Military Archives (LHCMA).

26 Brief, "Muscat and Oman – Dhofar," cover letter dated February 12, 1970, TNA PRO FCO 8/1415.

27 John Graham, *Ponder Anew: Reflections on the Twentieth Century* (Staplehurst, Kent: Spellmont Ltd, 1999), published privately on behalf of the author in a limited edition of 300 copies. John Graham Collection, Oman Archive (OA), Middle East Center, St. Antony's College, Oxford, p. 316.

28 Consul General D.G. Crawford, "Sultanate Balance Sheet – 3rd Quarter 1969," October 13, 1969, TNA PRO FO 1016/791; Ken Nutting, MOD, to D.J.S. Murray, FO, October 18, 1968, TNA PRO FCO 8/1091.

29 Peter Thwaites, Muscat Command (London: Leo Cooper, 1995), p. 85; CSAF 1967-1970 Corran Purdon, *List the Bugle: Reminiscences of an Irish Soldier* (Antrim, Northern Ireland: Greystone Books, 1993), pp. 191-192; Ian Gordon, personal communication with author, November 27, 2009.

camouflaging vehicles to night ambushes and locating sources of enemy fire.<sup>30</sup> Troops wore canvas gym shoes held on with string in terrain that ripped open leather boots. Missions were limited to five days by the water-carrying capacity of donkeys.<sup>31</sup> “There were no roads on the *jebel* [mountain] and few areas where it was possible to take a vehicle of any sort. Movement in any direction was inhibited by precipitous *wadis* [valleys], strewn with giant boulders and dense thorn, many of which took 24 hours to cross, many impossible even for donkeys carrying weapons, ammunition and water to negotiate.”<sup>32</sup>

SAF intelligence gathering was limited by tribal fragmentation, lack of knowledge of the *jebali* [mountain tribes’] language, and Sa’id’s prejudice against Dhofaris. Sa’id, like other Northern Omanis, disliked and distrusted the people of Dhofar. He was known for quoting an Omani proverb suggesting that if one comes across a Dhofari and a snake on one’s path, one should step on the Dhofari.<sup>33</sup> Although only a few major tribes inhabited Dhofar, they were splintered into groups as small as 25 and under little sheikly control, meaning that winning over Dhofaris to Sa’id’s side could not be achieved by persuading a few of the traditional tribal leaders to change sides.<sup>34</sup> The tribal structure also meant that individual Dhofaris would not necessarily have information about many other individuals.<sup>35</sup> The state’s intelligence system was ineffective. Sultan

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30 Thwaites, p. 70; Purdon, pp. 241, 245, 253-254.

31 Purdon, pp. 191-199.

32 Thwaites, 39.

33 Purdon, 244.

34 H.G. Balfour-Paul, Political Resident, Bahrain, to J.F. Ford, Joint Research Department, Foreign Office, December 6, 1967, TNA PRO FCO 51/41.

35 Consul General D.C. Carden, annual report 1965, TNO PRO FO 1016/765.

Sa'id fired SAF's intelligence officer for contact with Dhofaris.<sup>36</sup> Worse, Dhofaris had no incentive to help the state, only to see an end to Sa'id's repression.<sup>37</sup> The sultan had his own sources. He received photographs of insurgents slain in battle so he could identify them, but his sources were of little use to SAF.<sup>38</sup>

SAF was better trained, better equipped, and better led by 1970, but five years into the campaign its supply lines were tenuous and little medical care was available unless wounded soldiers could survive the jolting donkey-borne trip down the *jebel* [mountain] and the flight to Bahrain.<sup>39</sup> Offensive action cost casualties without military gain.<sup>40</sup> SAF outnumbered the insurgency's hardcore element in Dhofar by about a 2.5:1 ratio in early 1970 but could not hold its ground.

### ***Phase I: Reforms Or Accommodation***

The sultan instituted no reforms despite British pressure. Individual SAF officers attempted scattered efforts to distribute public goods and services, at the same time that they were using force against the populace as a whole. This mixed signaling and the minimal attempts to provide minimal goods and services did little to win cooperation or support. The British government and a number of British SAF officers would have preferred to mount a population-centric campaign that brought broad benefits to the populace, but Sa'id was not amenable.

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36 Purdon, pp. 237, 244.

37 Thwaites, pp. 52-53.

38 Oman Military Secretary Pat Waterfield to Thwaites, May 25, 1969, Thwaites Box 1, Folder 3, LHCMA; Consul General D.G. Crawford, Muscat, to British Residency, Bahrain, February 7, 1970, TNA PRO FCO 8/1415.

39 Consul General D.C. Carden, "Sultanate Balance Sheet – Third Quarter 1968," October 22, 1969, TNA PRO FO 1016/790; Consul General D.G. Crawford, "Annual Review -- 1969," December 30, 1969, TNO PRO FO 1016/791; Purdon to Thwaites, September 26, 1969, Thwaites Box 1, Folder 3, LHCMA.

40 Thwaites, p. 31.

In 1969, Sa'id agreed to allow SAF patrols to provide medical care, food, and cash in exchange for information (some SAF troops had been supplying ill *jebalis* [mountain tribes people] whom they came across with eye ointment and aspirin for months).<sup>41</sup> SAF troops attempted to push the boundaries by also providing cooked rations from regimental allotments, and medication as well.<sup>42</sup> These efforts did not win over large numbers of people. Indeed, small-unit operations became more dangerous. In 1968, operating in less than half-company strength, about 50 men, was forbidden as too dangerous.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Phase I: Protecting The Populace Or Targeting And Controlling Civilians***

In Phase I of the campaign, the Dhofaris were the enemy, not potential supporters of the state. SAF Commander Brig. Corran Purdon pondered the role of the Dhofaris going in and out of Salalah, the capital, selling their firewood and doing their shopping: “No doubt most of them were active rebels and presumably all bore with them intelligence as to what they had seen and heard of SAF and of the government.”<sup>44</sup> By 1969, according to another British officer, “the ordinary *jebali* [mountain tribes person]... was far from friendly and when challenged, would react like a trained soldier. ... [The description ] fringe supporter of the *adoo* [enemy] ... was progressively including the whole *jebali* [mountain] population.”<sup>45</sup> A single rifle shot was the usual civilian signal to the insurgents when SAF neared.<sup>46</sup>

Sultan Sa'id and many troops scorned the Dhofaris. Sa'id told one of his seconded

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41 July 1969, draft letter, Thwaites Box 1, Folder 3, LHCMA; Thwaites, 133-134.

42 Purdon to Thwaites, September 26, 1968, Thwaites Box 2, Folder 3, LHCMA.

43 Thwaites, p. 81.

44 Purdon, p. 200.

45 Thwaites, p. 96.

46 Thwaites, p. 101.



British officers that SAF should have burned down the entire village searched in a recent sweep, because *jebalis* [mountain tribes people] were “bad people.”<sup>47</sup> Sa’id’s prejudice against Dhofaris was common among the Northern Omanis and Commonwealth soldiers, including many Baluchis and other Pakistanis, who constituted most of SAF’s troops.

Operations typically targeted the populace as a whole. In 1968, a company of the Northern Frontier Regiment attempted to take a position at the village of Dalqut, on the coast near the Yemeni border, to interdict guerrilla supply lines. SAF withdrew after three days of taking fire from the *jebel* [mountain] above, blowing up the village wells on the way out.<sup>48</sup> Operation First Night involved shelling an area for 45 minutes to flush out any insurgents present before searching it. The contact report noted that civilian movement was seen but no casualties occurred.<sup>49</sup> Operation Final Fling included the burning of one in every five houses in a village after incriminating items were found and the villagers provided no information.<sup>50</sup>

SAF targeted the tribes to punish them and to deny insurgents access to resources,<sup>51</sup> but the insurgency was not tribally organized.<sup>52</sup> This ineffectual targeting

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47 Thwaites, p. 58.

48 Hepworth.

49 “First Night Contact Report,” April 11, 1969, Thwaites Box 2, Folder 4, LHCMA. Also see, e.g., Purdon to Thwaites, February 26, 1969, Thwaites Box 1, Folder 3; “MR Gp Op instr no. 3 Op Lance confirmatory notes of verbal orders,” May 20, 1969, Thwaites, Box 2, Folder 3, LHCMA; “Ops Dhofar Outline of Future Intentions,” June 10, 1969, Thwaites, Box 1, Folder 3, LHCMA; “Dhofar Ops (as of Jan 70), undated, Thwaites, Box 1, Folder 2, LHCM; Purdon, 272.

50 Thwaites, pp. 1-8, 12.

51 Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins (CSAF 1975-1977) interview with author, May 20, 2009, Great Bedwyn, Marlborough, Wiltshire, UK.

52 Front leaders, including Mussalim bin Nufl and his brother, Ali Sharfan bin Nufl, Mohammed Ahmed al Ghassani, and Amin bin Ghanim, did not belong to the same tribe or tribal faction. See Joint Research Department Memorandum, “The Dhofar Liberation Front,” October 26, 1967, TNA PRO FCO 51/41.

meant the SAF's use of force was indiscriminate and only prompted further popular violence against the state. The cycle of violence would begin with an insurgent attack such as the mining of a track. SAF's reprisals against the populace in the tribal area where the attack took place (usually capping or destruction of wells necessary for the *jebalis*' [mountain tribes'] survival) would lead to further attacks, imprisonment of additional members of the tribe in the area, and further destruction of wells.<sup>53</sup> With the increasing number and frequency of attacks in 1967, CSAF Brig. Corran Purdon decided to widen the practice of collective punishment and establish free-fire zones to inhibit movement. SAF imprisoned any able-bodied males it came across, fired on anyone with a gun, and blew up wells and paths to the Yemeni border, site of the insurgency's safe haven in the Communist People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.<sup>54</sup>

SAF attempted deterrence as well as punishment. After a British officer was shot and wounded during an operation in the Western Area, for example, SAF was concerned that the casualty would boost insurgent morale. In Operation Granite, SAF sent out two companies plus the CSAF's escort to return to the site and "give them a bloody nose." The bodies of the slain insurgents were displayed in Salalah "'pour decourager ... 'les autres' or sympathizers who might be inside the town."<sup>55</sup>

As early as April 1967 SAF recognized that it lacked the manpower and equipment to stay in enemy territory to protect civilians.<sup>56</sup> It made no attempt to base

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<sup>53</sup> Townsend, p. 99.

<sup>54</sup> Ranulph Fiennes, *Where Soldiers Fear to Tread* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), pp. 62-63.

<sup>55</sup> Purdon pp. 287, 290. Hepworth, op. cit., also notes that enemy corpses were propped up in the market at Salalah as a "salutary lesson to any would-be freedom fighters."

<sup>56</sup> Graham, p. 319.

troops within communities. It used bases away from villages, at least in part because the *jebel* [mountain] population was largely nomadic within their own tribal areas. Positions on the *jebel* [mountain] were established as patrol bases but had to be withdrawn as too dangerous to hold.<sup>57</sup> SAF's relationship with the populace worsened over time. In the summer of 1969, a reconnaissance platoon on a mission to provide food and medical aid to *jebalis* [mountain tribes] was fired on.<sup>58</sup> Villagers continued to warn guerrillas when troops approached, and SAF guides tipped off insurgents to SAF's operational plans.<sup>59</sup>

### ***Phase I: Limiting Fighting Or Targeting Guerrillas***

SAF did not limit its use of force in conducting broad sweeps and village searches. It did attempt to avoid civilian casualties, however; SAF's British officers were steeped in the population-centric tradition.<sup>60</sup> SAF's operations were as large as it could make them in order to increase the chances of enemy contact, but the small number of troops available, the terrain, and the lack of lift capability limited their size and scope.

SAF operations were often planned to elicit information from "bumping" the enemy, since the army lacked intelligence. One operation in the spring of 1969 encountered a group of insurgents traveling with a journalist; the journalist's account in the German newspaper *Das Bild* of what he had seen provided SAF with more information on the insurgency than any intelligence sources had.<sup>61</sup> Sick of operating

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57 Thwaites, p. 44.

58 Thwaites, p. 122; "MR GP Contact Report Nos 26 & 27," August 9, 1969, Thwaites Box 2, Folder 4, LHCMA.

59 Purdon, pp. 266, 291; Fiennes, p. 225.

60 Peter Thwaites, for example, often discusses in his memoirs and correspondence his concerns about the harm done by rough treatment of civilians. Other officers, including CSAF Corram Purdon, believed in the efficacy of a more forceful approach.

61 Thwaites, p. 99.

blindly, SAF went out and tried to find the enemy.<sup>62</sup> Large operations over large areas had the benefit of being more likely to bump into insurgents, but small units roaming the *jebel* [mountain] had the advantage of surprise.<sup>63</sup> Ten-to-15-man units had some success in mounting patrols and ambushes from positions established in the West to inhibit enemy movement.<sup>64</sup> But hapless patrols were themselves ambushed, increasing SAF's frustration at not being able to locate insurgents despite indications that there was a large base nearby.<sup>65</sup>

SAF also attempted to target the insurgency by setting up blocking positions to cut guerrillas' lines to their rear base in Yemen, but lacked troops and the equipment to do so.<sup>66</sup> In July 1967, SAF had only three rifle companies in theater. One and a half companies, about 150 men, was all that could be spared from defensive duty at Salalah and on the Midway Road, the sole land link to Northern Oman. That was too few to control the Western border area, or even to gather sufficient information to guide operations.<sup>67</sup> Hundreds of camel tracks were visible, but intercepting convoys was beyond SAF's abilities.<sup>68</sup> Patrols and ambushes did apparently keep insurgent fighters short of food and weapons late in 1967, however, since no large attacks were mounted in that

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62 Thwaites, p. 96.

63 Thwaites, pp. 96, 59-60.

64 Thwaites, p. 51.

65 Thwaites, pp. 100, 75.

66 Purdon to Thwaites, September 26, 1969, Thwaites Box 1, Folder 3, LHCMA; Lt. Col. John H. McKeown, "Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance," Dissertation for MPhil, Cambridge, 1981 (Reproduced by U.S. Army Command and Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth), OA, pp. 39-40.

67 Thwaites, p. 49.

68 Thwaites, p. 50.

period.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Salalah was surrounded by barbed wire and guarded, with all humans and pack animals searched coming and going to prevent the transmission of money and supplies to the insurgency.<sup>70</sup> Eventually the coastal villages were wired too.<sup>71</sup>

Static positions absorbed significant SAF resources. In 1969, for example, one company each of the Muscat Regiment (the one battalion in Dhofar) was deployed at two positions on the Midway Road; at Defa, to hinder insurgent movement in the Western Approaches near the insurgency's safe haven in Yemen; and at Um al Gwarif, to secure Salalah and the military base and serve as a reserve; while the reconnaissance platoon roamed the open desert north of the *jebel* [mountain].<sup>72</sup> By year's end, with increasing insurgent strength, the static *jebel* [mountain] positions were increasingly targeted by the insurgency and long-distance patrols were increasingly dangerous.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Phase I: Outcome***

The state built only its military arm in Phase I and its increased strength, used against the populace as a whole, strengthened the insurgency because the populace feared SAF's indiscriminate uses of force and the insurgency offered an alternative. Accommodations were scattered and reforms were non-existent. SAF did not limit its use of force, it relied on operations as large as it could make them and used all the firepower it had. Though it did attempt to avoid civilian casualties, it did not protect the populace. Its indiscriminate uses of force at a time when the insurgency provided an alternative

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69 Consul General D.C. Carden, "Annual Review 1967," January 5, 1968, TNA PRO FO 1016/790.

70 Purdon, p. 269.

71 Purdon to Thwaites, September 22, 1969, Thwaites Box 1, Folder 3, LHCMA.

72 Thwaites, p. 93.

73 Thwaites, p. 154; Consul General D.G. Crawford "Annual Review 1969", December 30, 1969, TNA PRO FO 1016/791.

force for civilians to turn to meant it got less and less cooperation from civilians.

This phase of the campaign was a failure, as both models predict. The population-centric model predicts failure because the lack of reforms and indiscriminate use of force did nothing to win popular allegiance for the state and away from the insurgency. The enemy-centric-plus model predicts failure because the state did not build a security arm strong enough to target the insurgency and did not provide limited, targeted accommodations to political entrepreneurs whose cooperation would enable SAF to locate guerrillas and further accommodate political entrepreneurs. Thus, Phase I did not incorporate the elements of either the population-centric or the enemy-centric-plus models. This changed in Phase II.

## **PHASE II, 1970-1976**

In Phase II of the conflict, the new sultan and the British employed the enemy-centric-plus approach. State military capability rose rapidly, but the civilian arms of the state did not develop. Increased military strength, including contributions from Oman's neighbors, gave SAF the capability to effectively target the guerrillas. The strategy was to push the guerrillas into the sparsely inhabited Western sector where they could be destroyed with relative impunity. The state did not protect the populace from insurgents, but it did attempt to avoid civilian casualties. The targeting of civilians continued, as did the punishment of civilians, especially in the first two years of the campaign, but to a lesser degree than in Phase I. Sultan Qaboos spoke of his vision for a more redistributive Omani state but actual changes occurred only in the form of the provision of very limited public goods in a few areas on the *jebel* [mountain]. More significant was the military's successful effort to gain the cooperation of political entrepreneurs, specifically guerrilla leaders and their followers. SAF announced the reestablishment of security in December

1975 with the military and political defeat of the insurgency.

The campaign focused on stabilizing the few villages still under the sultan's control on the coast, then on identifying and fighting for a few patches of tactically useful territory in the Eastern Sector, where support for the insurgency was weakest. SAF, the British Special Air Service (SAS), and the *firqats* [militias of guerrilla defectors and other Dhofaris] did not limit the use of force; they did not hesitate to use air power and indirect fires once they acquired them. Several years into the campaign, once SAF was able to stay on the *jebel* [mountain] year round, it began setting up outposts to use as patrol bases for targeting insurgents and also to provide medical care and clean water to the scattered *jebalis* [mountain tribes people] in the East while exchanging information with them. Also several years into the campaign, SAF was able to set up blocking positions across insurgent supply lines in the Central Sector. It used these positions as patrol bases and also as points of contact with the populace. Eventually SAF also established blocking positions in the thinly populated Western Area, where it destroyed the weakened insurgency as a fighting force.

The second phase of the effort in Dhofar was not a population-centric campaign, despite heavy British pressure for state-building and broad reforms. It did not involve building civilian institutions, providing good governance, protecting the populace, or limiting the use of force. British officials, advisors, and military officers all encouraged Sultan Qaboos to take the steps prescribed by the population-centric paradigm, but he did not do so. The development of the civilian state and the broad delivery of public goods and services followed the defeat of the insurgency and Oman remains an autocracy today. Recognizing the sultan's intransigence, the British kept the pressure on, but also went

ahead and designed a winning military strategy that took advantage of the human and geographic terrain of Dhofar.

### ***Phase II: State-Building: Civil Or Military***

SAF remained the sole institutionalized representative of the state until after the conflict. At the time of the coup, the sultan was the state. Afterwards, the British ran Oman through SAF, struggling to develop an Omani state and a military run by Omanis.<sup>74</sup> In November 1970, the British consul general characterized the government as “incoherent” and “inert,” and a year later CSAF Brig. John Graham said that SAF was the only “organized, disciplined and effective” entity in Oman with national scope.<sup>75</sup> In 1972, administration had not improved: The clinic staffers brought in to replace SAS medics quit because they were not getting paid.<sup>76</sup> In 1974, the only entity with any administrative capability was still the army.<sup>77</sup> In 1975, the ambassador reported signs of centralized control from the national capital, Muscat, but also a lack of skilled administrators and increasing corruption.<sup>78</sup>

Contrary to the expectations of the population-centric paradigm, the lack of a state significantly bolstered SAF’s effectiveness. Dhofar Commander Brig. John Akehurst

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74 Allen and Rigsbee, pp. 34-35.

75 Consul General D.G. Crawford, “Sultanate of Oman,” November 2, 1970, TNA FCO 8/1426; “CSAF Review for Bahrain,” July 1971, Graham Folder 3, Box 6, OA; Ambassador D.F. Hawley, “Impressions of Dhofar: The First and the Last,” August 5, 1971, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1837.

76 Graham diary, June 11, 1972, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA.

77 Ambassador D.F. Hawley, November 4, 1974, TNA PRO FCO 8/2216. Also see: Ambassador D.F. Hawley, “General Political Assessment,” February 26, 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 25/293; Ambassador D.H. Hawley, cover letter, January 14, 1973, TNA PRO DEFE 25/369. The British had seized the opportunity to strengthen SAF after the coup by raising the rank of the officer seconded as CSAF to brigadier, and increased the number of seconded and British contract officers. Perkins, interview.

78 D.E. Tatham “Dhofar: July 1975,” July 26, 1975, TNA PRO FCO 8/2456.



worked closely with Dhofar's knowledgeable *wali* [governor] to coordinate political and military efforts, and CSAF Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins was always able to arrange an audience with Qaboos.<sup>79</sup> The lack of state structure and institutionalized interests, including a bureaucracy, meant that the CSAF did whatever he needed to do, Perkins recalled: "I was the boss, met the sultan, and that was it."<sup>80</sup>

State military capability rose with increased spending by the new sultan, Qaboos, and additional help from abroad. From approximately 3,800 troops at the time of Qaboos' coup, SAF grew to about 7,500 in March 1972, 10,300 in June 1974, and 18,300 in December 1975.<sup>81</sup> SAF set up HQ Dhofar in July 1971 to enable local direction of the campaign, rather than running things from the SAF headquarters more than 500 miles away in Northern Oman.<sup>82</sup> Materiel additions were considerable, including armored cars, jets, heavy and light helicopters, and nearly 300 surrendered guerrillas and returned exiles formed into five *firqats* [militias]. The *firqats* [militias] were built around political entrepreneurs within the Dhofari community. With two battalions in Dhofar at a time, one on the plain and one on the *jebel* [mountain], SAF's strength about equaled that of the insurgency's fighting force but for much of the campaign was outnumbered if the

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79 Perkins, interview. Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins suggests that this degree of close military-political planning rested on the closely coinciding interests of Britain and Qaboos during the conflict, as well as on Qaboos' owing his position to Britain, and also his British education.

80 Perkins, interview.

81 Ambassador D.F. Hawley, "Memorandum Dhofar," cover letter dated March 7, 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 25/293; CSAF Maj. Gen. Timothy Creasey, "A Review of the Period 1 November 1973 to 30 April 1974," June 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 24/574; CSAF Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins, "Report Commander Sultan's Armed Forces to Chiefs of Staff 28 December 1975," TNA PRO DEFE 11/899.

82 "Training Guide," Graham Box 2, Folder 2, OA. Previously, the CSAF had directed the campaign from his base in Northern Oman in conjunction with the regimental commander on roulement in Dhofar.

guerrillas' supporters were included.<sup>83</sup> The 641 British officers involved included an SAS squadron, a signals detachment, and a Field Surgical Team.<sup>84</sup> By 1974, most SAF troops were finally being issued boots and uniforms, and receiving rations of meat or fish seven days a week instead of five.<sup>85</sup> At war's end, SAF was absorbing about two-thirds of Oman's gross domestic product.<sup>86</sup>

Outside support boosted SAF's strength. Additional British help quickly followed the coup. It took longer to persuade Arab states and Iran to assist. SAF was training in Jordan in 1972, and in 1975 King Hussein provided engineers, a SOF battalion for defense of the lone road into Dhofar, and 16 aircraft.<sup>87</sup> The Arab League sent a peace mission in 1974 and 1975, and Saudi diplomacy and cash payments to both sides led to a cease-fire with Yemen, which had been providing safe haven to the insurgency, in March 1976.<sup>88</sup> The single largest regional contributor to the campaign was the Shah of Iran. Late in 1972 the Shah offered a SOF unit; a 1,500-man battle group; three frigates; and helicopters (soon disarmed, as the Iranians "tended to shoot at anything that moved, including us," one British officer recalled).<sup>89</sup> The Iranians were a mixed blessing. They

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83 Brig. John Akehurst, Commander Dhofar Brigade 1974-1976, interview, October 14, 1992, Imperial War Museum (IWM) sound recording, catalog number 11156/5, reel 2.

84 Ministry of Defense Chiefs of Staff Committee, "The Principles Governing British Military Assistance to Oman," COS 13/74, May 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 24/574.

85 CSAF Maj. Gen. Timothy Creasey, "A Review of the Period 1 November 1973 to 30 April 1974," June 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 24/574.

86 Ken Perkins, *A Fortunate Soldier* (London: Brassey's, 1988), p. 154.

87 Graham diary, October 2, 1972, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA; Perkins, 130, 139. The Jordanians, like the Iranians, displayed a heavy hand with the populace. They relied on heavy firepower and fear, mounting search and destroy missions that included setting villages afire in order to kill insurgents. Perkins, interview.

88 Townsend, p. 110; Akehurst, p. 175.

89 Ian Gardiner, *In the Service of the Sultan: A First Hand Account of the Dhofar Insurgency* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Military, 2006 (2008 reprint)), pp. 148, 154, Perkins, p. 148.

opened the single road into Dhofar in December 1973, and they held it, freeing SAF troops for other operations.<sup>90</sup> But in November 1974 the Iranians had to be moved west, where there were fewer civilians to kill, wound, detain, or otherwise alienate.<sup>91</sup>

Intelligence improved, slowly. The SAS intelligence cell that set up shop after the special forces team arrived in the fall of 1970 began by getting information from ex-guerrillas living in the capital and from influential men who had fled the *jebel* [mountain] for safety.<sup>92</sup> The lack of information from Dhofaris was a serious concern in August 1971 because SAF lacked intelligence to find and attack the guerrillas.<sup>93</sup> By 1974, intelligence was coming from three sources: contact with the enemy (through the *firqats* [militias] formed around political entrepreneurs, as well as through military observation and clashes), through the *jebali*-speaking intelligence officer, and radio intercepts of guerrilla communications.<sup>94</sup> The single most useful continuing source of intelligence was the *firqats* [militias], discussed more fully below. These tribally organized militias were led by and included many guerrilla defectors. Their formation was made possible by their SAS handlers' recognition of growing divisions within the insurgency and identification of what behaviors would gain the cooperation of disaffected leaders (political entrepreneurs) within it. Their continued contact with the insurgency and with the populace made possible the three-way flow of information. The *firqats* gathered information from the insurgency and the populace, and spread the word about SAF plans

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90 Akehurst, p. 36.

91 CSAF Maj. Gen. Tim Creasey, "Appreciation of the Situation For His Majesty the Sultan," March 17, 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312.

92 Col. Tony Jeapes, *SAS: Operation Oman* (London, William Kimber, 1980), pp. 33-34.

93 Oman Military Secretary Hugh Oldman, "War in Oman," August 17, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; "Resume of Events January 1 to July 20, 1971," August 14, 1971, Graham Box 2, Folder 5, OA.

94 Akehurst, IWM 27184, reel 23.

for civic action and the sultan's vision of a more prosperous Oman.

Despite the addition of better-equipped troops, the campaign did not go well at first. In February 1971, seven months after the coup was supposed to have removed all of Sa'id's stumbling blocks, from his indecisiveness to his tightfistedness, CSAF Brig. John Graham assessed that the insurgency was outgunning SAF, was on the offensive, and had the freedom of the *jebel* [mountain].<sup>95</sup> In June 1971, top British officers agreed that SAF had to get up to the *jebel* [mountain] to win, but it lacked the skills and the morale.<sup>96</sup> In July of the same year, Oman's defense secretary, Hugh Oldman, concluded that Oman could not win as things stood and could not afford to raise more troops.<sup>97</sup> In August 1971, the British ambassador warned Whitehall that SAF had to at least secure the coastal plain, and the defense secretary warned that the British needed a plan in case Salalah fell.<sup>98</sup> More than a year later, 14 months after the coup, in September 1972, CSAF Maj. Gen. Timothy Creasey reported after his first 10 days in office that his troops were insufficient to hold the territory; two battalions did not provide decisive superiority over the insurgency's estimated 600 hardcore fighters.<sup>99</sup>

### ***Phase II: Reforms Or Accommodation***

The state made no reforms in this period. Relatively low level broad accommodations took place in the form of some minimal civic action. Civil development

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95 "Situation Assessment," February 1971, Graham Box 2, Folder 1, OA.

96 "Situation in Dhofar," June 21, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667.

97 "The Dhofar Rebellion – An evaluation by the Defense Secretary of the Sultanate of Oman, Colonel H.R.D. Oldman, OBE, MC," August 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667.

98 "Diplomatic Report #428/71 Muscat Ambassador Hawley to Secretary of State for FCA," August 5, 1971, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1837; "Record of Meeting Dhofar," August 7, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667.

99 CSAF Maj. Gen. Tim Creasey, untitled brief for Sultan Qaboos, September 28, 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 4/1831.

only took off after the insurgency was defeated, so it could not have been a driver of state success. Many Dhofaris saw little change in their lives throughout Phase II, and the changes that took place were achieved by the British officers of SAF and British Army contributions, not the civilian Omani state.<sup>100</sup> As late as 1974 – four years into the campaign -- portions of the Eastern Area were garrisoned but it was not pacified, and that was the area where support for the insurgency was weakest.<sup>101</sup>

CSAF Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins reported in December 1975 that the little civic action and civil development achieved so far in Dhofar was due to the Royal Engineers, and complained of the lack of government direction and prioritization.<sup>102</sup> A month after Sultan Qaboos declared the insurgency defeated, the visiting chief of the British General Staff found no grasp within the government of the need for civil development, and a British Ministry of Defense progress report found rising Dhofari dissatisfaction over the government's inactivity and maladministration.<sup>103</sup>

Civil development was slow even on the plain, the only area held by the sultan at the beginning of Phase II, and in June 1971 Dhofaris were disillusioned with Qaboos and gloomy about their future.<sup>104</sup> The sultan resisted his defense minister's suggestion that SAF distribute food in areas it had cleared and refused to let Dhofaris participate in the

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100 "Training Guide," Graham Box 2, Folder 2, OA.

101 Col. W.J. Reed, "Notes on Visit to Oman by Col GS MO2 20-24 January 1974," January 30, 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312.

102 CSAF Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins, "Report Commander Sultan's Armed Forces to Chiefs of Staff 28 December 1975," December 128, 975, TNA PRO DEFE 11/899.

103 Chief of Defense, "Notes on a Visit to Oman 19 – 22 January 1976," January 30, 1976, TNA PRO DEFE 25/371; Chiefs of Staff Committee Defense Operational Planning Staff, Progress Report on Oman," Draft, January 26, 1976, TNA PRO DEFE 25/371.

104 Consul General D.G. Crawford to Wright, Bahrain, April 18, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; Sir Geoffrey Arthur, Political Resident, Bahrain, to Muscat, June 11, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667.

provincial government he appointed.<sup>105</sup> Popular enthusiasm for Qaboos continued to decline.<sup>106</sup> By November, the CSAF complained, all of Oman saw the government as inefficient and corrupt.<sup>107</sup> The picture did not look much brighter at the end of 1972, when Whitehall wondered if there was any point in continuing military aid to Oman if no civil or economic development was taking place, and Qaboos' popularity was still declining.<sup>108</sup> In 1974, the British were near despair: The only driving force for development in Dhofar was the civil liaison officer, and he had been transferred to a position in the Royal Stables.<sup>109</sup> In 1976, after the insurgency was defeated, the Chief of the Defense Staff paid a visit to Oman from London and reported that Qaboos knew that civil development was important for stability, but preferred to spend his money on his military.<sup>110</sup>

There were constant complaints about the slowness of delivery of civic aid.<sup>111</sup> In December 1975, the month that the sultan declared the conflict won, civic action in the East had been consolidated, civic action in the Central Sector had been established, and

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105 "Record of Meeting Dhofar," August 7, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667.

106 Ambassador D.F. Hawley, "Impressions of Oman: The First and the Last," August 5, 1971, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1837; "Record of Points Made By Colonel Oldman, Defense Secretary to the Sultan, at a Meeting in Sir William Luce's Office on 17 August 1971," TNA PRO FCO 8/1667.

107 Graham diary November 14, 1971, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA.

108 Richard Lloyd Jones, November 6, 1972, TNA, PRO DEFE 24/831; "Defense Assistance to the Sultanate of Oman," Draft, November 17, 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 25/294.

109 CSAF Maj. Gen. Tim Creasey, "Review of the Situation by Major General T.M. Creasey OBE Commander The Sultan's Armed Forces December 1973 – May 1974," June 9, 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 24/574.

110 Chief of Defense Staff, report on visit January 19-22, 1976, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1874.

111 E.g., "Visit by DSAS to the Oman 3 – 10 November 1975," November 19, 1975, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1838; Chief of Defense Staff, "Progress Report on Oman," Annex D to DOP Note 722/75, February 1976, TNA PRO DEFE 25/371.

civic action in the West, where the hard fighting had been taking place, had only an initial presence.<sup>112</sup> Again, the timing indicates that civic action was not a key driver of state success.

What development that did take place meant significant improvements in the lives of a number of Dhofaris in the long term, but much of this work took place on the plain and the high plateau rather than in the rebellious mountains, so, again, it was not a driver of state success. By June 1975, 35 wells had been drilled, 155 miles of drivable track linked SAF's *jebel* [mountain] positions, and a graded highway had replaced the track that was the Midway Road, the only ground link to Northern Oman.<sup>113</sup> By September 1976, almost a year after the conflict ended, 29 schools had been built, nine government centers were open, and 54 boreholes had been dug.<sup>114</sup>

Accommodations planned or in operation in June 1974 – already four years into the campaign – were moderate. They focused on improving Dhofaris' daily lives and many only came to fruition well after the defeat of the insurgency. These plans included a civilian hospital in Salalah, a flying doctor service, an experimental farm and breeding program for improving the fodder and stock in Dhofar, a veterinary service, and a plan to buy bull calves from the *jebalis* [mountain peoples] to fatten them up for sale.<sup>115</sup>

One accommodation effort that eventually gained SAF useful information involved SAS troops.<sup>116</sup> The SAS moved into the coastal villages that were all that the

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112 CSAF Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins, "Half Yearly Report on the Armed Forces A Review of the Period 1st May 1975 – 31st October 1975," December 18, 1975, TNA PRO DEFE 25/371.

113 Jeapes, p. 209.

114 Jeapes, p. 228.

115 Jeapes, pp. 162-163; Akehurst, pp. 78-79.

116 In Dhofar called British Army Training Teams.

state still had under control at the beginning of Phase II. In the fall of 1971 there were four-man Civic Action Teams living in houses inside Taqa and Mirbat.<sup>117</sup> The SAS medical officer and veterinarian visited regularly. Over time, villagers and visitors from the *jebel* [mountain] became willing to go to the clinic. SAS men gathered information from their give-and-take with patients and other visitors who would not inform on the insurgency directly.<sup>118</sup> The SAS also put a team in the coastal village of Sudh after it was re-captured from the insurgency in February 1971.<sup>119</sup>

Three years into the campaign, there were still only three outposts on the *jebel* [mountain], and these were only in the Eastern Area, where insurgent support was weakest.<sup>120</sup> Also only in 1973 did SAF become strong enough to spend the entire year on the *jebel* [mountain].<sup>121</sup> That same year, Britain sent Royal Engineers to drill wells and bulldoze tracks into the *jebel* [mountain].<sup>122</sup> But it took until 1974 for buildings to be erected at just one of the four *jebel* [mountain] outpost.<sup>123</sup> SAF was also providing

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117 In Dhofar, civic action referred to the meeting of immediate popular needs though drilling wells and providing medical care and food. Civil development referred to longer term projects to build the economy, such as building ports and paved roads. Ken Perkins, "Oman: Year of Decision," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* 124:1 (March 1979): 38-45.

118 Jeapes, pp. 33-34, 40.

119 Jeapes, p. 101, Graham diary, February 24, 1971, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA.

120 A SAF battalion plus 60-70 firqats and one or two SAS troops, backed with artillery and air support, would take the territory, then the base would be wired and the perimeter mined. The defenses would come down as security improved. The Front never attacked these bases because they knew they had lost as soon as SAF took the territory. Maj. Gen. Tony Jeapes, interview with author, May 15, 2009, Warminster, Wiltshire, UK.

121 Jeapes, p. 164.

122 CSAF Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins, "Report Commander Sultan's Armed Forces to Chiefs of Staff 28 December 1975," TNA PRO DEFE 11/899; Chief of Defense Staff, "Notes on a Visit to Oman 19-22 January 1976," January 30, 1976, TNA PRO DEFE 25/371.

123 "Review of the Military Situation Since the 10th December 1973 to the 23rd January 1974," CSAF Maj. Gen. Tim Creasey, talking points, December 19, 1973, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312.



minimal public goods from the Dianas (artillery observation posts established on the crest of the *jebel* [mountain] to call in fire against attacks on coastal sites.<sup>124</sup> The key provision everywhere was water for livestock.<sup>125</sup> The populace also wanted medical care, mosques, schools, and shops, and eventually – most often after the defeat of the insurgency -- SAF supplied them.<sup>126</sup> These minimal goods and services are far from revolutionary, yet they sufficed.<sup>127</sup>

The most important targeted accommodation was an amnesty for guerrillas, which enabled the formation of the *firqats* [militias]. A driving force in developing the *firqats* [militias] were insurgency leaders Salim Mubarak and Mohammed Suhail, who came over in 1970, demonstrating the importance of political entrepreneurs in COIN success.<sup>128</sup> In many cases, guerrilla leaders who surrendered brought their followers with them. About 200 guerrillas surrendered in the first month of Qaboos' rule and became *firqats* [militiamen].<sup>129</sup> Their surrender was the result of insurgent missteps as well as the amnesty. The Marxists who seized control of the insurgency treated followers and the populace more and more brutally, and their challenge to traditional ways and the *jebalis'* [mountain people's tribal structure and religious faith did not endear them to the populace.<sup>130</sup> At the end of the war, in September 1976, 2,500 *firqats* [militiamen] were

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124 Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Future United Kingdom Defense Activity in Oman," COS 46/73, January 3, 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312.

125 CSAF Maj. Gen. Timothy Creasey, "A Review of the Period 1 November 1973 to 30 April 1974," June 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 24/574.

126 Jeapes, interview.

127 Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins suggests that these measures sufficed because Dhofar was so backward and its people in such great need. Interview.

128 Tony Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins: The Special Air Service, 1950 to the Gulf War* (London: Little, Brown, 3rd edition 1992), p. 185.

129 Akehurst, p. 19.

130 E.g., Jeapes, pp. 28, 36-37.

handed over to the civil government under the *wali* [governor] of Dhofar.<sup>131</sup> When a guerrilla came in to a government-held area to surrender, he was treated with honor. The fighter would hand over his rifle, and the SAS would ceremonially hand it right back to him. The SAS worked to make the man feel at ease, providing tea, cigarettes, and the opportunity to get some sleep.<sup>132</sup> Once surrendered fighters felt secure, they usually provided a flood of information and many joined the *firqats* [militias].<sup>133</sup>

*Firqats* [militiamen] were able to identify insurgent leaders and supporters, round them up, and even encourage them to publicly repudiate the insurgency.<sup>134</sup> The *firqats* [militiamen] could influence cousins and brothers with the insurgency, if it was in their interest to do so, and they could get information from them.<sup>135</sup> On the *jebel* [mountain], *firqats* [militiamen] warned their families that enemy activity in the area of the outposts would mean no more water.<sup>136</sup> The *firqats* [militiamen] also made SAF look less like an army of occupation. In providing employment for fighting-age men and in feeding these men's families, the *firqats* [militiamen] were an expensive insurance policy for Qaboos.<sup>137</sup> Payments to the *firqats* [militiamen] and bounties for insurgent weapons and ammunition continued after the conflict. Between August 1974 and August 1976, Sultan Qaboos paid out nearly a million British pounds.<sup>138</sup>

As fighters, the *firqats* [militiamen] were familiar with the ground and with guerrilla tactics and were good at what SAF was bad at, including reconnaissance, speed

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131 Jeapes, p. 227.

132 Jeapes, interview; Jeapes, p. 38.

133 Jeapes, interview.

134 Jeapes, pp. 64-65.

135 Perkins, interview; Jeapes, p. 78.

136 Akehurst, IWM 27184, reel 24.

137 Akehurst, IWM 27184, reel 24.

138 Akehurst, p. 178.

of maneuver, tactical awareness, and the ability to recognize trails and individuals on the *jebel* [mountain]. They were also better at intelligence collection and, unsurprisingly, at communicating with other Dhofaris.<sup>139</sup> Lacking military discipline, the *firqats* [militiamen] came into their own patrolling and ambushing in small groups from outposts.<sup>140</sup> The *firqats* [militiamen] were properly armed, properly trained, and properly supported. SAS teams worked with them at all times to assure that they stayed on the government side and to handle artillery and air support.<sup>141</sup> The SAS men working with the *firqats* [militiamen] suffered a casualty rate as high as 30%.<sup>142</sup> It turned out that mixing tribes within the *firqats* [militias] was a bad idea, they squabbled and the first-formed *firqat* [militia], which was intertribal, had to be broken up.<sup>143</sup>

The provision of goods and services did not win the allegiance of Dhofaris, contrary to the population-centric prediction. In December 1975, when the conflict was declared over, SAF found that civilians in the Eastern Area who had been the weakest supporters of the insurgency would still not disown the remaining guerrillas.<sup>144</sup> Efforts to get cooperation from the populace took years to bear fruit. It was more than a year into the campaign, February 1971, before SAF began getting more and better information on

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139 Gardiner, p. 159; Jeapes, p. 231; Akehurst, p. 96.

140 Jeapes, p. 123.

141 Jeapes, 48.

142 Jeapes, interview.

143 Jeapes, interview; Perkins, interview.

144 CSAF Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins, "Report Commander Sultan's Armed Forces to Chiefs of Staff 28 December 1975," December 28, 1975, TNA PRO DEFE 25/371, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1874. Eastern Sector civilians were also reported to be uncooperative in March, the ambassador reported to Whitehall. See Ambassador C.J. Treadwell, March 29, 1975, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1874. Maj. Gen. Tony Jeapes argues that the lack of cooperation in the Eastern Sector towards the end of the conflict was due to the lack of selective force and accommodation employed by the regimental commander, who distrusted the *firqats*, provided little medical aid to the populace, and relied on the heavy-handed anti-populace tactics summed up as bait-bashing. Jeapes, pp. 227-228.

the *jebel* [mountain], especially in the Eastern Area. The Central Area was still under firm insurgent control.<sup>145</sup> By January 1972, the guerrillas had a firmer hold than ever on the areas under its control.<sup>146</sup> Later in 1972, SAF began setting up temporary outposts in the East and Center.<sup>147</sup> Guerrilla surrenders rose in response, up to three or four almost every day; many men came in with their guns for the weapons bounty.<sup>148</sup> In November 1972, however, there was still no sign of a general shift in support to the state,<sup>149</sup> and in June 1974, all five government centers were still underused by suspicious Dhofaris.<sup>150</sup> In the 1974-1975 period, a dramatic increase in surrenders and information followed whenever SAF set up a *firqat* [militia] in its own tribal area, where it would provide the highly desirable goods of water and medical care.<sup>151</sup> The opposite held true as well: Surrenders fell between the 1974 monsoon (June-September) and February 1975 in the Central and Eastern areas, where there had been little provision of goods.<sup>152</sup>

## ***Phase II: Protecting The Populace Or Targeting And Controlling Civilians***

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145 Graham diary, February 5, 1971, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA; "Resume of Events January 1 to July 20, 1971," August 14, 1971, Graham Box 2, Folder 5, OA.

146 Ambassador D.F. Hawley, "Oman: Annual Review for 1971," January 3, 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 25/293.

147 Brig. John Akehurst, Commander Dhofar 1974-1976, "The End of the Dhofar War," draft speech on success in Dhofar, January 1977, TNA PRO DEFE 13/779.

148 Jeapes, p. 97. *Firqat* leader Mohammed Sa'id told SAF that every time troops went onto the *jebel* and left again, the Front presented it as a success for their side. Jeapes, p. 106.

149 Ambassador D.F. Hawley, "Impressions of Dhofar," November 5, 1973, TNA PRO DEFE 25/370.

150 CSAF Maj. Gen. Timothy Creasey, "A Review of the Period 1 November 1973 to 30 April 1974," June 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 24/574.

151 Akehurst, p. 77.

152 Chiefs of Staff Committee Defense Operational Planning Staff, "The Progress of Operations in Oman," Draft DOP Note 733/74, review of operational progress from December 1973 to February 1975, February 17, 1975, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1869.

SAF and the SAS set up a small number of military outposts as patrol bases and also as sites for the *firqats* [militias] to exchange information with the populace. SAF had no choice but to patrol on foot, given the rugged terrain. Only in 1974 did SAF get a mandate from Sultan Qaboos to win popular support, highlighting the degree to which the campaign was conducted to gain cooperation rather than allegiance.<sup>153</sup>

SAF found that it gained popular cooperation, but not allegiance to the state, with a long-term presence within communities. They were not, however, protecting the populace as the population-centric paradigm prescribes. The SAS teams living within the coastal villages eventually identified men from the *jebel* [mountain] who could be persuaded to join the state side and bring others with them, again underlining the importance of political entrepreneurs.<sup>154</sup> SAF troops conducted long patrols in the Western Area in 1971, but found the populace unwilling to provide information without a permanent presence nearby.<sup>155</sup> The same problem occurred in the Eastern Area after Operation Jaguar. Although *firqats* [militias] and their SAS teams distributed food and blankets as tokens of goodwill at the outposts they named Jibjat and Medinat al Haq, there was little sign of the state's commitment to remain on the *jebel* [mountain], and the populace remained wary.<sup>156</sup> As late as 1974, the populace was still fearful of approaching the outpost at Tawi Atair, in the Eastern Sector, without a commitment that SAF would

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153 Brig. John Akehurst, Commander Dhofar 1974-1976, "The End of the Dhofar War," draft speech on success in Dhofar, January 1977, TNA PRO DEFE 13/779.

154 Jeapes, p. 33.

155 SAF Sitrep, November 13, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1668 (Part B).

156 Jeapes, p. 139; Jeapes, email communication with author, December 15, 2009.

remain year-round.<sup>157</sup> Finally, by the autumn of 1974, civilians were in touch with SAF everywhere, and they were reported to be confident of their safety.<sup>158</sup>

### ***Phase II: Limiting Fighting Or Targeting Guerrillas***

In the second phase of the conflict, SAF began targeting insurgents directly rather than routinely acting against the populace as a whole. Punishment of civilians continued at a much lower level. SAF continued to try to avoid civilian casualties. It did not attempt to limit its use of force, however. It used air power and artillery in small and large operations, depending on the mission, including patrols and ambushes, sweeps of *wadis* [valleys] for arms caches, and helicopter-borne assaults to seize territory, and constructed a series of blocking lines to limit insurgent access to its safe haven across the western border in Yemen. The outcome was fewer and smaller insurgent operations.

Starting in 1971 SAF ramped up its offensive operations. This included moving out of static positions on the plain to mount offensive ground operations in the Eastern Area and airstrikes and artillery against enemy headquarters, supply dumps, and convoys.<sup>159</sup> By November, SAF was seeing a rising kill rate from aggressive patrols and airstrikes.<sup>160</sup> In August 1972, CSAF Brig. John Graham's concept of operations was

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157 Ambassador D.F. Hawley, October 16, 1973, TNA PRO DEFE 25/294; CSAF Maj. Gen. Timothy Creasey, "A Review of the Period 1 November 1973 to 30 April 1974," June 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 24/574.

158 Ambassador D.F. Hawley, November 4, 1974, TNA PRO FCO 8/2216.

159 Graham, p. 348; SAF activity report, January 22, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; Sitrep, March 23, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; Sitrep, April 4, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; Sitrep, April 13, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; Sitrep, April 20, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; Sitrep, April 27, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; Sitrep, May 4, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; Sitrep, May 11, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; weekly report [to May 17, 1971], May 1971, BT to FMHQBF Gulf, CAB, FCO, MODUK, etc., TNA PRO FCO 8/1667; Sitrep, May 25, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667.

160 Graham diary, November 3, 1971, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA.

twofold: Conduct offensive operations and interdiction.<sup>161</sup> That focus remained from November 1, 1973 to April 30, 1974: interdiction and aggressive mobile operations in the East to enable the SAS to set up a handful of outposts on the *jebel* [mountain].<sup>162</sup> Finally in 1975, the insurgency had been weakened sufficiently in the Eastern and Central areas to shift to attrition and interdiction in the Western Area.<sup>163</sup>

SAF used small and large operations and varied its tactics according to mission. One 1971 situation report notes patrols of one company plus *firqat* [militia] plus their SAS team; of one platoon plus *firqat* [militia] plus SAS; and two companies plus platoon plus *askar* [tribal levy militia] platoon.<sup>164</sup> Operation Jaguar in the East in the fall of 1971 took territory tactically useful for offensive operations, as well as land good for airstrips, wells, and grazing.<sup>165</sup> Operation Panther, in January 1972 and also in the Eastern Sector, used *firqats* [militias] to clear out a pocket of insurgents.<sup>166</sup> The outpost at Akoot, in the Western Area, was established late in 1971 and served to draw insurgent fire as well as providing a base for ambushes, artillery, a *firqat* [militia], and intelligence collection.<sup>167</sup> Smaller operations continued along with larger operations such as regular clearing on the plain and a major operation in October 1974 in the Eastern Sector to harass the enemy

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161 "Directive Commander Dhofar for August-September 1972," August 5, 1972, Graham Box 2, Folder 3, OA.

162 CSAF Maj. Gen. Timothy Creasey, "A Review of the Period 1 November 1973 to 30 April 1974," June 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 24/574.

163 CSAF Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins, "Record of Audience 1700 Hours Monday 10 February 1975," February 16, 1975, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1869.

164 SAF Sitrep, November 2, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1668.

165 CSAF Brig. John Graham, "CSAF's Assessment of The Military Situation in Dhofar as at 14 February 1972," 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 25/293.

166 SAF Sitrep, January 16, 1972, TNA PRO FCO 8/1846. This pocket again required military attention as late as May 1979. Ian Gordon, personal communication with author, November 27, 2009.

167 CSAF Brig. John Graham, "CSAF's Assessment of The Military Situation in Dhofar as of 14 February 1972," 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 25/293.

and open a section of the coast road.<sup>168</sup> Elements of SAF spent much of late 1974 and early 1975 searching *wadis* [valleys] for insurgent arms and supply stores, operating at up to battalion strength.<sup>169</sup> In December 1974, the Iranian battle group tried and failed to capture the guerrillas' massive supply cache in the far Western Sector. A second attempt by a battalion supported by SAS and *firqats* [militias] in January 1975 also failed, but SAF was able to set up guns covering the caves and prevent their use.<sup>170</sup> In February and March 1975, major operations in the Central Sector cleared out large enemy groups. These included Operation Himaar, in which two battalions routed the headquarters and elements of an enemy battalion in the vast Wadi Ashoq.<sup>171</sup>

Blocking insurgent supply lines and destroying storage caches was a major part of the attrition effort. Preventing the resupply of munitions while forcing the insurgency to burn up ammunition in battle and in firing on static SAF positions degraded the guerrillas' fighting ability. Blocking efforts took shape in 1971 with Operations Leopard, Puma, and Cougar, all meant to hinder the transfer of munitions and supplies from the Western Area into the Center and East. Eventually, completion of the Hornbeam Line plus the clearing efforts to the east cut off the insurgents in the West from 85%-90% of the populace and thus their resources.<sup>172</sup> Construction began on Hornbeam's 35 miles of mines and barbed wire in December 1973 and ended in August 1974.<sup>173</sup> British Royal Engineers began building the Line, and the Jordanians later joined the effort, which took

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168 Gardiner, pp. 140-141; Col. W.J. Reed, "Notes on Visit to Oman by Col GS MO2 20-24 January 1974," January 30, 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312; Akehurst, p. 77.

169 Jeapes, pp. 190-191.

170 Jeapes, pp. 196, 202-203.

171 McKeown, p. 89; Perkins, p. 130.

172 "Review of the Military Situation in Oman," November 26, 1973, account of meeting of ambassador, CSAF, and Chief of the General Staff, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312.

173 Akehurst, pp. 20-21.



place under enemy fire, up and down steep slopes, in temperatures rising above 86 degrees.<sup>174</sup>

As the blocking lines multiplied and were strengthened, they choked the flow of insurgent supplies from Yemen.<sup>175</sup> In February 1972, SAF considered that Leopard, Puma, and Cougar were responsible for the decline in the number of 3", 81mm, and 82mm mortars and rocket launchers in the Central and Eastern sectors.<sup>176</sup> A month later, declining insurgent activity on the Salalah plain was attributed to a reduction in supplies.<sup>177</sup> The insurgency was short of arms and all other supplies east of the Hornbeam Line in December 1973, and fewer mortars and shells fired at SAF positions early in 1975 suggested a lack of big ammunition due to the Hornbeam Line.<sup>178</sup> Shortages of supplies and constraints on movement reduced guerrilla morale and efficiency in the Eastern Sector between 1973-1975 and led to additional casualties.<sup>179</sup> The reduction in supplies and its cascade of effects also led to increasing numbers of surrenders in the Eastern Area.<sup>180</sup> Though Hornbeam was effective, it was not perfectly effective. An estimated two camel trains per quarter were getting through, and insurgents were

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174 Akehurst, pp. 20-21.

175 Chief of the Defense Staff, "Situation in Dhofar," brief for Secretary of State, December 15, 1971, TNA PRO DEFE 25/187.

176 CSAF Brig. John Graham, "CSAF's Assessment of the Military Situation in Dhofar as at 14 February 1972," February 17, 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 25/293.

177 Deputy Chief of the Defense Staff (Intelligence), "The Outlook for Oman – JIC (A)(72):1," March 10, 1972, (TNA PRO DEFE 24/1837.

178 "Review of the Military Situation Since the 10th December 1973 to the 23rd January 1974," CSAF Maj. Gen. Tim Creasey talking points, December 19, 1973, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312; Col. W.J. Reed, "Notes on Visit to Oman by Col GS MO2 20-24 January 1974," January 30, 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312.

179 Perkins, p. 126; Chiefs of Staff Committee Defense Operational Planning Staff, "The Progress of Operations in Dhofar," DOP Note 733/74, February 17, 1975, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1869.

180 Perkins, p. 146.

manpacking in supplies, but that was a significant reduction from the pre-Hornbeam rate of two camel trains a week.<sup>181</sup>

SAF also used population controls to weaken the insurgency. A food shortage on the *jebel* [mountain] in the summer of 1971 increased the importance of resources from the plain reaching the guerrillas, and a captured insurgent document confirmed that food controls and constraints on *jebali* [mountain peoples'] movements on the plain were cutting into popular support for the insurgency.<sup>182</sup> A total food ban was in place on the plain by February 1972.<sup>183</sup> On the *jebel* [mountain], food control was to be imposed as necessary as part of the civic action campaign.<sup>184</sup> The flip side of food control is its ability to increase the positive role of the state in the lives of its populace. Omani Defense Minister Hugh Oldman was eager to distribute food to *jebalis* [mountain peoples] in cleared areas in 1971, but Sultan Qaboos refused.<sup>185</sup>

Punishment and deterrence continued to play a role in Phase II, though a smaller one than in Phase I. CSAF Brig. John Graham made reference, for example, to using fire and metal to punish one group and deter many more from fighting.<sup>186</sup> The bodies of the insurgents killed in the insurgents' attack on the coastal village of Mirbat in July 1972

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181 Col. W.J. Reed, "Notes on Visit to Oman by Col GS MO2 20-24 January 1974," January 30, 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312.

182 "Captured Enemy Documents – Third National Congress of Rakyut June 1971," December 15, 1971, Graham Box 2, Folder 5, OA.

183 CSAF Brig. John Graham, "CSAF's Assessment of the Military Situation in Dhofar as at 14 February 1972," February 17, 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 25/293.

184 "Directive for Commander Dhofar for 1972, Update," March 3, 1972, Graham Box 2, Folder 3, OA.

185 "Record of Meeting Dhofar," August 7, 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667.

186 Graham diary, February 13, 1971, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA.

were put on display in Salalah along with captured weapons and ammunition.<sup>187</sup> Also in 1972, SAF Brig. John Graham ordered the Dhofar Brigade to continue punishing Dhofaris who helped the enemy, using the *firqats* [militias] whenever possible.<sup>188</sup> Sultan Qaboos several times expressed a preference for the use of force. In February 1971 Qaboos told SAF not to worry about wounding civilians in rebel-held areas.<sup>189</sup> In 1972, Qaboos urged SAF to drop a bomb on a tribe slow to join his side.<sup>190</sup> In September 1973 the sultan asked the British prime minister to do some bombing in Dhofar to dispel the regional belief that the UK was extending the war for its own purposes.<sup>191</sup>

Crop burning was done from the air to punish the populace and deny food to the insurgency. In the 1971-1972 period, SAF made so-called burmail bombs from discarded Burma Oil drums filled with aviation fuel and dissolved polyurethane, dropped from airplanes and fired by flares.<sup>192</sup> The CSAF from 1975-1977, Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins, denies personal knowledge of crop burning, but suggests that the immediate provision of other goods, or payment, might have consoled Dhofaris in unfriendly areas for the loss of

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187 "Marbat Incident Jul 1972," March 5, 1975, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1869; David C. Arkless, *The Secret War: Dhofar 1971/1972* (London: William Kimber & Co. 1988), p. 211. Interestingly, the bodies of insurgents killed during Operation Jaguar were not put on display. See Graham diary, October 6, 1971, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA. The difference may be due to the difference in operations and goals: Jaguar was an attempt to win popular cooperation, Mirbat was the Front's attempt to overrun a government-garrisoned community.

188 "Directive for Commander Dhofar for 1972 Update," March 3, 1972, Graham Box 2, Folder 3, OA.

189 Graham diary, February 12, 1971, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA.

190 Graham diary, June 10, 1972, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA.

191 "Record of a Conversation Between the Prime Minister and the Sultan of Oman at 5:15 P.M. on 11 September 1973 at No. 10," TNA PRO DEFE 25/370. Yet Qaboos recognized the political importance of seeming to protect the populace. He is quoted in a translation of an interview with a Lebanese newspaper as saying that he does not permit the aerial bombing of villages in order to protect the innocent, April 26, 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1837.

192 Arkless, p. 81.

their crops in the field.<sup>193</sup>

The greatest number of references to routine abuse of the populace appears in accounts of the 1970-1972 period, when SAF came close to losing the conflict.<sup>194</sup> “*Bait* [village] bashing” was common; troops would detain and question any *jebalis* [mountain tribes] they came across for lack of any intelligence that would enable them to target insurgents specifically. In July 1971, the British Ministry of Defense noted Dhofaris’ scorn for SAF and its random and routine use of force against the populace, and urged a shift from attempting to subjugate Dhofar to trying to ally with Dhofaris against the insurgency.<sup>195</sup> Much of SAF’s poor treatment of the populace was due to ethnic differences (the Northern Omanis and Baluchs considered Dhofaris to be “wild highlanders”) and to frustration, since SAF lacked the ability to identify insurgents.<sup>196</sup> There is little evidence of an increase in popular cooperation in the first two years of Phase II, when ill-treatment of the populace was routine.<sup>197</sup>

Officers became increasingly conscious of the potential political costs of routinely

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193 Perkins, interview. By 1974, SAF was removing tracer from GPMG links in the dry season whenever there was a threat of grass fires. Ian Gordon, email communication with author, November 27, 2009.

194 Col. Mike Harvey was replaced by Col. Jack Fletcher on July 31, 1972, Graham diary, July 31, 1972, Graham Box 4, Folder 1, OA. The CSAF’s first directive to Fletcher included a concept of operations focused on offensive operations, interdiction, and causing enemy losses, rather than on reprisals. See “Directive Commander Dhofar for August-September 1972,” August 5, 1972, Graham Box 2, Folder 3, OA.

195 Chiefs of Staff Committee Defense Operational Planning Staff, “The Military Facilities Likely to be Required in Oman in the Immediate Future,” DOP 530/71 final, July 20, 1971, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1835.

196 Maj. Gen. Tony Jeapes, in Dhofar as SAS squadron leader 1971, 22nd SAS regimental commander 1974-1976, email communication with author, September 11, 2009.

197 Intelligence reports from January 1971 to March 1972 make little note of political outcomes of operations, though the frequency increases in the spring of 1972, and there is little mention of information received from the populace. See intelligence summaries, Graham Box 2, Folder 5, OA.

and carelessly using force against the populace.<sup>198</sup> When SAF troops saw guerrillas moving with groups of women and children as cover they ordered aerial bombardment wide of the group and fire machine guns over the civilians' heads to scatter them, rather than targeting the group to kill the insurgents.<sup>199</sup> A training guide noted that SAF must not kill camels indiscriminately, but must consider in each case whether a camel train or convoy constitutes a legitimate military target.<sup>200</sup> Operational instructions for the Jebel Regiment's January 1975 move into the Central Area required clearance to fire in civilian areas unless troops were returning fire.<sup>201</sup> This care does not, however, indicate that SAF was conducting a population-centric campaign. It is equally important in both models to avoid the routine, casual use of force against civilians.

### ***Phase II: Outcome***

At the height of its military power, in 1970-1971, the Front had an estimated 2,000 full-time guerrillas, up to 4,000 part-time militiamen, and countless supporters.<sup>202</sup> In 1971, the Front controlled 9/10 of Dhofar.<sup>203</sup> Front fighters were increasingly better trained and led, with better field tactics than SAF, and operated against SAF in larger groups and with more firepower, including automatic rifles for all the hardcore fighters,

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198 This attitude became deeply enough inculcated that one example of SAF humor, focusing on the increasing problem of anti-personnel mines laid by the Front, noted that goat troops could be used to locate the mines, but the employment of livestock in this manner was not likely to enhance SAF's relationship with the goats' owners. See "Goat Troop – Dhofar Gendarmerie Annex A to OP5/D/20," September 14, 1971, Ashley Box 2, Folder 2/1, OA.

199 Arkless, p. 173.

200 "Anti-guerrilla operations in Dhofar training guide," Graham Box 2, Folder 2, OA.

201 "Operational Instructions for Move to Central Area," January 1975, Ashley Box 2, Folder 2/3, OA.

202 Akehurst, p. 30.

203 Graham, p. 347.

75mm rocket launchers, 82mm and 60mm mortars, and 122mm Katyusha rockets.<sup>204</sup> In October 1975 the Front began using Sam 7s and SAM 7bs. Their range of up to 12,000 feet threatened the aircraft that SAF had come to rely on for transport and resupply.<sup>205</sup> By 1972, SAF operations at less than company strength and without artillery support risked failure.<sup>206</sup> Well into 1974, estimates of insurgent strength varied between about 600 and 850.<sup>207</sup> As late as 1975 the British Ministry of Defense assessed that SAF and Iranian soldiers were no match for the Front on equal terms.<sup>208</sup> But as SAF's hold on territory expanded, as surrenders continued, and as fighters faded back into their old lives, insurgent numbers dwindled. An estimated 30 fighters remained in the Central Area in August 1975, and in January 1976 about 70 remained in the Central and Eastern sectors.<sup>209</sup> A small number of Yemeni regulars joined the fight against SAF in the

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204 Deputy Chief of the Defense Staff (Intelligence), "The Threat to Oman," May 20, 1971, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1868; Chiefs of Staff Committee Defense Operational Planning Staff, "The Military Facilities Likely to be Required in Oman in the Immediate Future," received July 21, 1971 TNA PRO DEFE 24/1835; Oman Defense Secretary Col. Hugh Oldman, "The Dhofar Rebellion," July 1971, TNA PRO FCO 8/1667. These contemporaneous accounts estimate a significantly smaller number of insurgents, from 400-1,000 hardcore fighters and 1,000 militia members.

205 Brig. John Akehurst, "The End of the Dhofar War," draft speech on success in Dhofar, January 1977, TNA PRO DEFE 13/779.

206 CSAF Maj. Gen. Tim Creasey, untitled review after 10 days as CSAF, September 28, 1972, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1831.

207 "Review of the Military Situation Since the 10th December 1973 to the 23rd January 1974," CSAF Maj. Gen. Tim Creasey, talking points, December 19, 1973, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312; Col. W.J. Reed, "Notes on Visit to Oman by Col GS MO2 20-24 January 1974," January 30, 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 25/312; Ministry of Defense Chiefs of Staff Committee, "The Principles Governing British Military Assistance to Oman," Annex A to COS 13/74, received May 29, 1974, TNA PRO DEFE 24/574; Maj. Gen. W.M.R. Scotter, Director of Military Operations, "DMO's Visit to Oman 19-22 Feb 75," received February 26, 1975, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1869.

208 Maj. Gen. W.M.R. Scotter, Director of Military Operations, "DMO's Visit to Oman 19-22 Feb 75," received February 26, 1975, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1869.

209 Ashley to Graham, August 16, 1975, Ashley Box 3, Folder 2/4, OA; Sitrep, January 27, 1976, TNA PRO DEFE 24/1874.

Western Area near the end, but their presence was insufficient to turn the tide.<sup>210</sup>

The campaign in Dhofar does not accord with the population-centric prescriptions for building the civilian state, instituting reforms, limiting the use of force, and protecting civilians.. Though the British would have preferred such a campaign, the sultan was unwilling. The British focused on what they could achieve in the military realm and through moderate accommodations of the populace as a whole and targeted accommodations to political entrepreneurs, largely guerrilla leaders. Despite the lack of population-centric measures, the state still won. A military campaign of attrition leveraged by limited accommodations sufficed to decisively defeat the insurgency in a case involving limited popular demands for change.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Dhofar case should be an easy one for the population-centric model to explain, but it does not do so. The state failed in Phase I, as both rival theories predict, and it succeeded in Phase II. But it did not succeed by building the civilian arms of the state, by instituting reforms, by limiting its use of force, or by protecting the populace. And it did not succeed by gaining the allegiance of the populace and thus marginalizing the insurgency. It built its army, fought a war of attrition against the insurgency, and used limited, targeted accommodations to leverage its military effort. It also gained popular cooperation through moderate accommodations. Together, these sufficed to defeat the insurgency. The state did take care to avoid civilian casualties in both phases, although it did not hesitate to use force against civilians for punishment and deterrence in Phase II and routinely used force against civilians in Phase I. This suggests that it is the calculated

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210 McKeown, p. 92.

targeting of civilians that is effective and the indiscriminate use of force that is damaging to the state's interests.

Of note is the iterative and interactive effects of the variables in the high force, limited accommodation effort that won the conflict. Increased military capability enables the effective use of force and accommodation, which elicits cooperation, which builds state capabilities and further enables the uses of force and accommodation.<sup>211</sup>

A number of implications for policy arise from these findings. First, building state military capability alone is not enough. SAF's increased strength in Phase I merely increased its ability to use force against the populace. SAF needed mobility and firepower to defeat the insurgency, but it also needed intelligence to target the insurgency.

Accommodations brought intelligence.

Second, COIN success does not hinge upon the limited use of force. The use of large operations and artillery and air power, and even punishment of civilians, did not prevent the state's victory, they fostered it. The need for different types of forces to conduct different types of operations in different areas, often concurrently, should not be underestimated.<sup>212</sup> Nonviolent interactions with the populace may be a way to gain

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211 In light of research on ethnic conflict, it is interesting that despite the ethnic differences between Omanis and Dhofaris, Dhofaris had no problem switching sides over the course of the conflict. See Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," *International Security* 20:4 (Spring 1996): 136-175; Stephen Biddle, "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon," *Foreign Affairs* 85:2 (March-April 2006): 2-10; and Stathis Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," *Comparative Political Studies* 41:8 (August 2008), pp. 1043-1068.

212 The officers leading small-unit operations, especially in the Western Approaches, were focused on force-on-force engagement rather than any consideration of politics. The relatively unpopulated nature of the area facilitated this conventional military focus, highlighting the patchwork nature of counterinsurgency, both in terms of type of effort and variety of military and political efforts across the area of operations. SAF Lt. Col. (ret) Donal Douglas, interview with author, May 19, 2009, London.



tactical intelligence, but force-on-force fighting is also important to COIN success. In Dhofar, SAF got far more information through the use of the *firqats* [militias] than it did by trying to talk to the populace itself. Local language skills, personal relationships, and pre-existing knowledge all played a significant role in the *firqats*' [militias] success in gaining and sharing information.

Third, the supply of quite little in the way of accommodation may achieve a lot. In Dhofar, the SAS successfully won over a series of guerrilla leaders and bands with respectful treatment and the promise and then the provision of regular pay. Further, the state's provision of basics like water and medical and veterinary care had a disproportionate effect on the populace that received them because the need was so great, popular goals were relatively modest, and the accommodation was designed to meet these specific needs. Had Dhofaris wanted a fundamental restructuring of the distribution of power, wells and blankets would not have placated them.

Further, the provision of a few goods and services was also acceptable to Sultan Qaboos because it did not threaten the status quo. Sultan Sa'id had seen accommodation differently, as a sign of weakness and capitulation. In a situation where the sultan had no interest in instituting major political reforms, the focus on limited accommodations kept the intervening state and the host nation unified.

At the same time, the lack of popular allegiance to the state even at conflict's end suggests that the provision of goods and services alone is insufficient to defeat an insurgency. Had accommodation alone been sufficient to gain the cooperation of the populace, surrenders would probably have peaked shortly after the 1970 amnesty was announced and then declined sharply, rather than following SAF operations.

Fourth, the physical protection of the populace from the insurgency is not always necessary to success.<sup>213</sup> SAF relied on the *firqats* ' [militias'] inside knowledge and relationships with the populace and insurgents. This is largely how SAF prevented the insurgents from attacking its outposts on the *jebel* [mountain]; it used the populace's desire for the continued provision of goods and services to end guerrilla activity in areas where it sited outposts.

Fifth, Oman as a state remained weak throughout the campaign, and this weakness served the intervening state's interests. SAF's British commanding officers longed for the day when the Omani state would work coherently, effectively, and efficiently, lessening their administrative burden, but the lack of proliferating individual and bureaucratic interests made directing the campaign much easier.

Finally, the Dhofar case suggests three more policy prescriptions regarding COIN that are unrelated to the efficacy of the two models in contestation. First, the congruence of goals of the intervening state and host made for the efficient use of resources and a clear focus, acting as a force multiplier. The unusually high level of shared goals between the British and Sultan Qaboos was due in part to the British recognition of the limited nature of their interests in Oman, as well as to the changing nature of their interests there and in the region. It was also due to the malleability of the young man whom they

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213 Jeremy Weinstein, in *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) argues that insurgencies reliant on the populace for resources have a less coercive relationship with civilians than do insurgencies without that dependency. It is possible that separation of extractive and coercive insurgencies from the populace is more important to COIN success than it is for insurgencies more rooted in the populace. Nevertheless, in Dhofar, although the Dhofar Liberation Front (renamed PFLOAG, the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman) became more brutal, the state still succeeded without physically separating the populace from the insurgency or protecting it, either.

installed as sultan in 1970.<sup>214</sup> Britain and Sultan Sa'id shared the goal of preventing a Communist takeover of Oman, but differed on the appropriate means and the timeframe for action. Once Qaboos took the throne that he owed to British action, he only developed his own locus of power in the mid-1970s. As SAF gained ground against the insurgency, lessening the threat to the sultan and the Strait, British leverage waned and Qaboos began to assert himself. But with technological changes that meant the RAF no longer needed Masirah Island as a landing site en route to East Asia, along with the rising need for British officers in Northern Ireland, and the realization that the British domination of SAF did not endear it to its Middle Eastern allies, the British were increasingly willing to leave Oman to the Omanis. At the same time, a fortuitous factor played into the British-Omani relationship: The rising oil prices of the 1970s allowed the sultan to spend more on his military at a time when the British needed to spend less.

Second, learning to take advantage of the political and military geography of the theater and training troops in appropriate tactics can significantly boost chances of COIN success. SAF commanders recognized the opportunity implicit in the terrain's canalization of insurgent supply routes, but only slowly gained the capability to seize it. SAF commanders also adapted their tactics to the physical and political terrain in planning a campaign that fought for and established positions in areas that did not strongly support the guerrillas, planned and built blocking lines to weaken the insurgency in the more populated areas, and conducted the heaviest fighting in the least heavily

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214 Thomas R. Mockaitis makes a similar point. See *British Counterinsurgency in the Post-Imperial Era* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 79, 89-91; and Walter Ladwig III notes the unitary command made possible under the sultan's rule. See "Supporting Allies in Counterinsurgency: Britain and the Dhofar Rebellion," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 19:1 (March 2008): 62-88.

populated area.<sup>215</sup> Though most armies today are probably far better trained and supplied than SAF was, the Dhofar campaign also emphasizes the importance of basic infantry tactics and the tactical use of terrain.<sup>216</sup>

Third, while U.S. doctrine stresses the importance of establishing security with a heavy troop presence, SAF used an oil-spot strategy. It established islands of influence village by village and later outpost by outpost, taking one and then another foothold first on the plain and then in *jebel* [mountain] territory that was militarily useful and where the insurgents' political hold was weak, clearing the province from east to west (and back again) while hobbling insurgent supply lines, and using the *firqats* [militias] to remain in contact with the other actors. This approach required significantly fewer troops than would have been needed to secure all of Dhofar at once, and it prevented exacerbation of the Dhofaris' perception that their land was occupied by Oman and Great Britain.

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215 Maj. Gen. Ken Perkins notes the strategic importance of the thinly populated Western Area, interview.

216 The British officers' best friend was the General Purpose Machine Gun, or "jimpy," whether they were taking territory, targeting insurgent operations, or defending outposts. Maj. Peter Isaacs, interview with author, May 16, 2009, London. On counterinsurgency and military capability, see Daniel Byman, "Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security* 31:2 (Fall 2006): 79-115. On the capability of Arab armies, see Kenneth Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).