

Supporting allies in counterinsurgency: Britain and the Dhofar Rebellion

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From 1964 to 1975 a small group of British officers, advisors, and trainers guided the forces of the Sultanate of Oman to victory in their conflict with the Marxist insurgents of the People's Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG). This campaign provides a clear example of how to effectively support an ally's counterinsurgency efforts with a minimal commitment of men and material. In particular, the critical assistance provided by the British consisted of experienced leadership and skilled technical support personnel as well as a viable strategy for victory. However, more important for the ultimate success of the counterinsurgency campaign was the emergence of new progressive leadership with the accession of Sultan Qaboos. The most important lesson from this study is that while security assistance can reinforce positive political efforts, it is not enough on its own to bring about a victory in an unfavourable political environment.

In prosecuting what has come to be known as the 'long war' against extremism, American strategy has emphasized development of allied security forces to combat insurgents and terrorists abroad. The March 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* emphasizes the need to work with allies to develop capable indigenous security forces to combat terrorist and insurgent threats. Anticipating a significant role for future security assistance the Department of Defense's 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) states that, 'helping others help themselves is critical to winning the long war'.¹ To facilitate these assistance efforts, the QDR puts increased importance on the expansion of US Special Operations Forces to advise, train, and support foreign counterinsurgency forces.²

A 2005 RAND Corporation study on the conduct of operations in Iraq emphasized that the overwhelming organizational tendency within the US military is to not absorb historical lessons when planning and conducting counterinsurgency operations.³ In their search for lessons on how to conduct security assistance to allied nations in the midst of an insurgency, many defense academics have turned their attention to Vietnam.⁴ However, in focusing on this large 'small war' they are overlooking a host of cases where foreign allies with a minimal footprint provided effective aid to a host nation's counterinsurgency operation. One such case is the British security assistance effort to Oman during the 'Dhofar Rebellion'. From 1964 to 1975, the British-backed Sultanate of Oman waged an ultimately successful counterinsurgency campaign against Marxist rebels belonging to the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG). Like the US experience in El Salvador, the Dhofar Rebellion was a case where, due to political

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constraints, only a small number of British officers and Special Forces trainers were dispatched to train and advise the host nation's armed forces in resisting a foreign-backed insurgency. Though little studied outside the United Kingdom, the Dhofar Rebellion has been praised as 'probably the best conducted counterinsurgency campaign ever fought'.⁵ The lessons from this successful effort to provide security assistance to a Muslim nation in the midst of an insurgency could have value for US military leaders and policymakers alike.⁶

This paper is divided into six sections. The first section provides a discussion of the physical and political situation in Oman during the period in question. This is followed by a brief overview of the insurgents, particularly the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf. Section three discusses in detail the composition and many shortcomings of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). The British assistance effort to Oman is taken up in section four. After an outline of the British-assisted Omani counterinsurgency campaign in section five, the paper concludes with an assessment of the British efforts and notes several points that have broader applicability for security assistance in smaller-scale counterinsurgency campaigns, such as contemporary operations in the Philippines and the Horn of Africa region.

Geopolitical context

The late 1960s and early 1970s were a dynamic period for the geopolitics of the Persian Gulf region. In January 1968, the Labour government of Harold Wilson surprised the world by announcing its intention to withdraw all British forces from the Gulf by 1971. This news had a profound regional impact as Britain had been the traditional guarantor of regional stability east of Suez. Wilson's decision was primarily motivated by the sterling crisis of November 1967 which badly damaged the British economy and indicated to some that Britain could no longer afford to be a world power. However, the near simultaneous collapse of the British presence in Aden was also a contributing factor to the decision to drawdown British forces in the region.⁷

From a Western perspective, Wilson's decision could not have come at a worse time. The United States' involvement in an increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam reduced its ability to take on military commitments in other parts of the globe in order to fill the void left by the British, while concurrently the Soviet Union and China appeared to be expanding their influence around the world. At the time, the Gulf was an increasingly important source of the world's oil, with 30% of world production and 60% of proven reserves occurring in the region.⁸ Moreover, as a major source for Western markets, Gulf oil provided more than 60% of Western Europe's oil and nearly 90% of Japan's.⁹

Throughout the Gulf, traditional rulers were being challenged by the forces of Arab nationalism and radical Marxism. After the British withdrew from Aden in November 1967, the area rapidly fell under the control of the Marxist-oriented Front for the Liberation of South Yemen, which founded the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). This new Yemeni government, which received backing from both the Soviet Union and China, aimed to spread its revolution throughout the region in order to destroy all of the dynastic states of the Gulf.¹⁰ Both British officials and alarmed local rulers foresaw the possibility of an Arab version of falling dominos where the Yemeni revolution could sweep through Arabia and the Gulf in the wake of British withdrawal as it had in Aden.¹¹ Not only would such an occurrence threaten Western access to Gulf oil, but it would throw British plans to withdraw from the region into chaos. With its announcement of the withdrawal policy, Britain had already been accused of a 'shameful and criminal' breaking of pledges

to the rulers in the Gulf, implementing that policy in the face of a threat to the political stability of local governments would be a complete abdication of responsibility.¹² As Yemeni influence began to extend into southern Oman, the British took action to create a firebreak against the further spread of revolutionary ideology in the region.

The physical and political environment

If your path is blocked by a snake and a Dhofari, kill the Dhofari first.

Northern Omani saying

Situated in the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, the Sultanate of Oman is bordered by the United Arab Emirates on the north, Saudi Arabia on the west and Yemen to the southwest. Oman is strategically located adjacent to the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz – the vital waterway through which oil from the Gulf makes its way to market. Part of the deep water channel through which oil tankers transit the strait actually lies in Omani territorial waters.¹³ With a population of nearly half a million in the mid-1960s, the majority of Omanis lived in the northeast of the country on a coastal plain that included the capital of Muscat. While most of the population in northern Oman was Arab, a sizeable minority of Baluch settlers from Gwadar in Pakistan (which was owned by the Sultan of Oman until 1958) lived in Muscat and the coastal areas.

Five hundred miles southwest of the main population centre of Oman lies the province of Dhofar. Linked to Muscat by a single graded but unpaved road, Dhofar has been described as an island, with the Arabian Sea to the south and a vast expanse of desert that eventually links to Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter to the north. The only major towns in Dhofar, including the provincial capital of Salalah, are located in a tropical coastal strip 37 miles long and nine miles deep that is capable of sustaining vegetation due to the monsoon that visits the area between June and September.

Separating the lush coastal plain from the desert is a 150-mile-long plateau known as the Dhofar Jebel. The most significant geographic feature in Dhofar, the Jebel rises steeply from the coast to a height of over 3,000 feet in some locations. The Midway Road, the only route linking Dhofar to the rest of Oman in the early 1960s, ran across the Jebel. Despite its forbidding geography, the Jebel was inhabited by nearly 10,000 nomadic herders who made their homes there according to the season. Ethnically distinct from both Northern Omanis and the coastal inhabitants of Dhofar, and speaking a language closer to Aramaic than Arabic, the Jebelis were an independent people with little regard for the Sultan of Oman. Life on the Jebel was difficult and tribes living there constantly fought each other for access to water and grazing land for their herds. In Jebeli society, all men carried rifles both 'as a badge of masculinity and status as well as for protection'.¹⁴

From a military standpoint, the environment of Dhofar made operations in the province extremely difficult. As a British Political Resident once noted, the region was 'the best guerrilla country in the Middle East'.¹⁵ The annual monsoon, combined with the lack of finished roads, hindered the mobility of the Sultan's forces and prevented the use of air support nearly four months out of the year.¹⁶ A side effect of the monsoon was a heavy rolling surf along the entire coast of Dhofar that made it nearly impossible to land boats on the shore, even outside monsoon season.¹⁷ The rough terrain of the Jebel became the primary battleground for the insurgents as many of the advantages that the Sultan's conventional forces possessed in open terrain – such as superior mobility, employment of heavy weapons, and the ability to concentrate forces – were ineffectual on the high plateau. On the Jebel itself, the hunt for water dominated most aspects of life. The need for

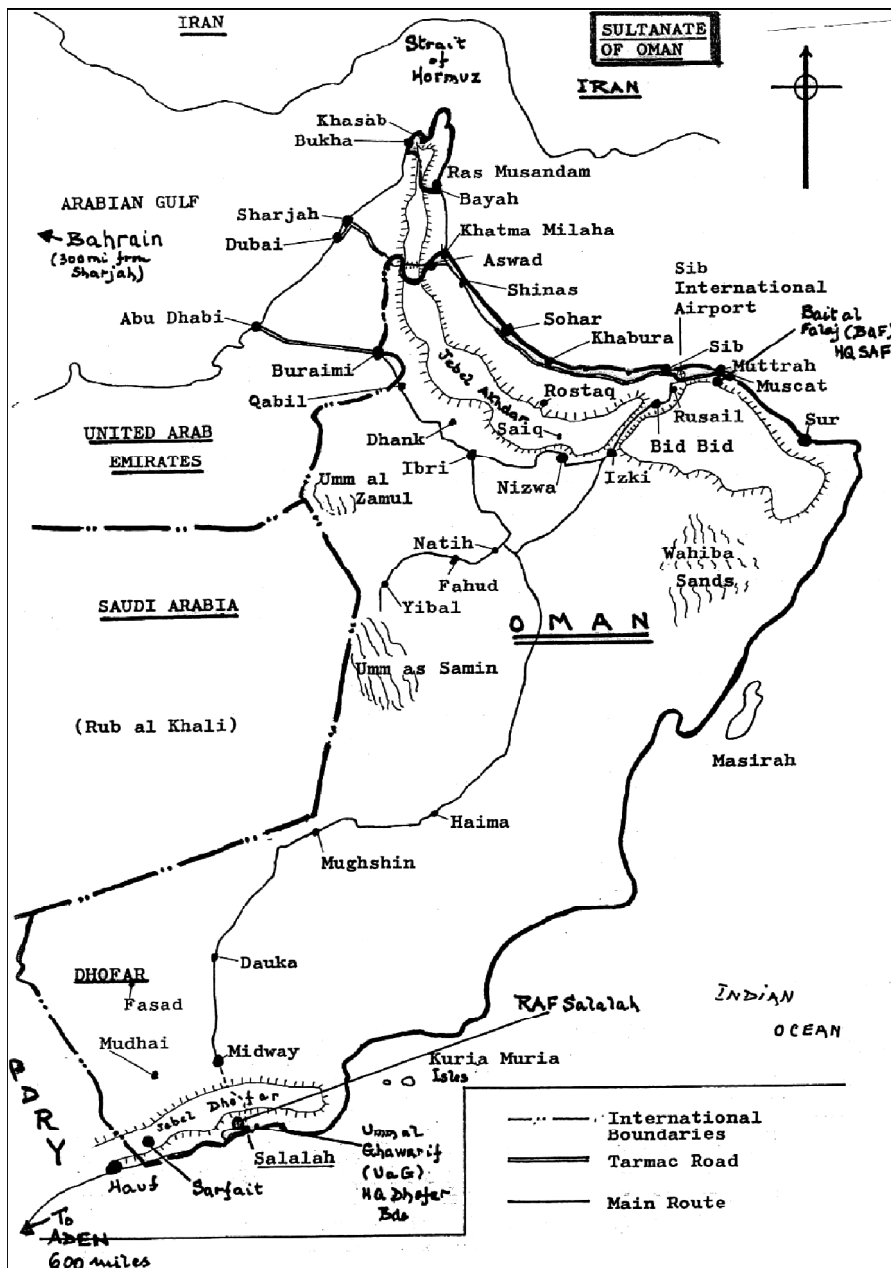


Figure 1. Commander Sultan's Armed Forces' map of Oman circa 1970 from the papers of Major General J.D.C. Graham.

water limited the mobility and flexibility of the Sultan's forces: The scarcity of potable water sources limited the number of available base camps, while the range of patrols was constrained by the amount of water that could be carried.

The political environment of Dhofar was as daunting for a counterinsurgency campaign as the physical environment. Oman of the mid-1960s could charitably be called a medieval state. Basic health care and education were lacking. The country's single

hospital struggled to treat endemic malaria, trachoma, and glaucoma while none of the three state-run schools in Oman offered an education beyond the primary level.¹⁸ The Sultan of Oman, Said bin Tamur, ruled like a feudal lord: No Omani was allowed to leave the country, or even his home village, without the Sultan's explicit permission. He banned all symbols 'of the decadent twentieth century... from medical drugs and spectacles to books and radios' and he flogged his subjects for adopting Western dress.¹⁹ Dhofar was the Sultan's personal domain, where he resided in seclusion year round, despite the fact that the nation's capital was 500 miles north in Muscat.²⁰ Although he took a Dhofari wife, who was the mother of his son, the Sultan disliked and distrusted his Dhofari subjects, the Jebelis most of all.

The Sultanate's diplomatic relations with the outside world were limited to Britain, America, and Pakistan.²¹ Of these three, the most notable relationship was with the United Kingdom. Contacts between the Sultans of Oman and Great Britain date to 1646. Throughout the 1700s and 1800s Oman served as a waypoint for commercial trade between India and Europe, the Royal Navy patrolled Omani waters and the British Army occasionally came to the aid of Sultans in defending against external aggression. Unusually for the region, British agreements with the Sultans of Oman were concluded with a high degree of equality for both parties, creating a 'special relationship' rather than a protectorate status.²² As part the agreements governing relations between the two countries, the British Royal Air Force had access to the strategically important airfield on the island of Masirah in return for maintaining and operating an air base at Salalah in Dhofar.

The Sultanate faced challenges to its external and internal security in the decade leading up to the Dhofar Rebellion.²³ The Sultans of Oman had warred with Wahhabists on the Arabian Peninsula for centuries, most recently in a border dispute with Saudi Arabia (the successors of the Wahhabi) over control of the Buraimi Oasis. Having been defeated in their attempts to seize the disputed territory in 1952, the Saudis looked for any opportunity to undermine the Sultanate. That opportunity was not long in coming.

In 1958 the Imam Ghalib bin Ali, the traditional spiritual leader of the tribes of the interior of Oman, and 600 of his armed followers launched a rebellion against the Sultan. Occupying a strategic mountaintop position that allowed them to dominate all of Northern Oman, the Saudi-backed insurgents were only defeated thanks to the intervention of the British. However, the defeat of the Imam did not end the threat of rebellion in northern Oman. Many of the Imam's supporters escaped to exile in Saudi Arabia, while Sultan Said's reliance on British support earned him the enmity of proponents of Arab nationalism such as Egypt.²⁴

A hijacked revolution

The subsequent uprising in Dhofar was a classic example of a nationalist rebellion, based on legitimate grievances, that was taken over by radical Marxists for their own purposes. The revolt against the Sultan began in 1963 when Mussalim bin Nufl, a disgruntled former member of the Sultan's household, led a group of fellow Dhofari tribesmen in an attack on the camp of MECOM oil – an American firm exploring for oil in the desert north of the Jebel. After destroying a vehicle and shooting a local security guard, the group fled to Saudi Arabia – but not for long. Having received arms and supplies from the Saudis and military training in Iraq, bin-Nufl and 50 of his followers returned to Oman in 1964 as the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF), dedicated to freeing 'Dhofar for the Dhofaris'.²⁵

Over the next few years, the DLF staged a number of operations, including mining the Midway Road, attacking MECOM facilities, destroying vehicles belonging to the RAF

base at Salalah and – most daring – organizing a failed attempt to assassinate the Sultan.²⁶ Belatedly recognizing the threat that revolutionary groups such as the DLF posed to ‘traditional monarchs generally’, King Faisal cut Saudi support to the insurgents.²⁷ Despite their ability to operate unhindered on the Jebel, without external support the DLF lacked the strength to decisively defeat the Sultan’s forces in Dhofar. By 1967, the situation in Dhofar appeared headed for a long-term stalemate. However, the state of affairs quickly changed due to events in neighboring Yemen.

Inspired by their apparent success in driving out the British, the new Yemeni government turned its attention to next door Oman. Through a support base established in the coastal Yemeni village of Hauf, large amounts of Chinese and Russian weapons flowed to the Dhofari insurgents. With them came advisors, support, and an enthusiastic cadre of true believers dedicated to spreading Marxist revolution throughout the Gulf. Chinese agents provided training and indoctrination while 250 regular soldiers from Yemen operated in the border region.²⁸

By late 1968, the nature of the insurgency in Oman had changed dramatically. Bin Nufl and his nationalists were forced out of the leadership and the movement was renamed the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG).²⁹ Expanding its goal beyond Oman, this new organization sought to unify all the Arabian emirates into a single socialist state.³⁰

The military wing of PFLOAG was capable of putting 2000 fighters into the field for offensive operations and had another 3000 militia members on the Jebel capable of defending the insurgents’ ‘liberated areas.’ Altogether, the number of armed insurgents in Dhofar eclipsed the total number of men under arms in the Sultan’s forces throughout Oman.³¹ Many of the Dhofari insurgents were experienced fighters, having previously served abroad in the Kuwaiti Police or the Trucial Oman Scouts (the security forces of the neighbouring United Arab Emirates). The best among them were sent to China for specialized military training at the Anti-Imperialist School in Beijing.³²

The insurgents divided Dhofar into three zones – East, West and Centre – and each had an under-strength regiment of fighters. The basic operational unit was a company-sized grouping of 100 men with organic heavy weapons. Lavishly equipped by their Communist patrons, PFLOAG riflemen carried Kalashnikovs, while fire support consisted of machine guns, 60 mm and 81 mm mortars, RPG-7 antitank grenade launchers, 122 mm Katyusha rockets and SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles.³³ Man-for-man the insurgents were easily the equal of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF). As a former British brigade commander recalls, ‘with anything like fair odds [the insurgents] would usually come off best in contact with the SAF’.³⁴

By the spring of 1970, the PFLOAG had established itself across the Jebel and had successfully cut off the Midway Road, severing the only link between Dhofar and the rest of Oman. Those Dhofari civilians who were not actively supporting the insurgents showed no affection for the Sultan. The Sultan’s forces were forced off the Jebel and the insurgents were regularly able to shell the RAF base at Salalah with impunity. In the words of one understated senior British officer, ‘the outlook was not encouraging’.³⁵

An unready military

To understand how and why the British assistance effort was so successful, it is necessary to first catalogue the deficiencies of the Sultan’s military. The Sultan’s Armed Forces of the 1960s were in no position to defeat the insurgency in Dhofar. Following the suppression of the Imam’s uprising in 1958, the SAF had been reorganized to conduct

internal defense missions in the north of Oman. A force of 2,000 men under arms, the SAF consisted of two infantry battalions and a small gendarmerie that patrolled the border with Abu Dhabi. The SAF was not equipped or prepared to conduct operations in Dhofar across 600 miles of desert, nor was it allowed to: The Sultan had decreed that security in Dhofar would be provided solely by the Dhofar Force, a company-sized private bodyguard led by a Pakistani lieutenant-colonel.

Inadequacies abound

After the conclusion of the 1958 campaign, the British agreed to the Sultan's request to provide a limited number of seconded and contracted British officers to lead the SAF. At the highest levels, command of the SAF was convoluted. The forces themselves were led by the Commander Sultan's Armed Forces (CSAF), a seconded British officer to whom the commanders of the Sultan of Oman's Air Force (SOAF) and the Sultan of Oman's Navy (SON) were subordinate. However, the Sultan residing in Dhofar remained the Commander-in-Chief of all armed forces in Oman. He communicated orders and instructions to the CSAF via his Military Secretary, a retired British brigadier based in Muscat, who spoke to the Sultan once a week on the radio-telephone.³⁶

The composition of the SAF itself was multinational. The rank and file was a mix of locally recruited Omani Arabs and Baluchs with an equal number of Makran Baluchs recruited from Gwadar in Pakistan. Due to the Sultan's reluctance to provide educational opportunities for his subjects, the majority of soldiers were illiterate upon enlistment.³⁷ Platoons were commanded by Arab or Baluch staff sergeants who had been promoted from the ranks. A very small number of locals were promoted to officer ranks, but these men were not allowed to command troops and were prevented by law from rising above the rank of lieutenant.³⁸

The lack of Omanis with sufficient military or educational training meant that the Sultan's Armed Forces had to rely heavily on expatriate officers. British officers commanded the infantry battalions, as well as units such as the nascent artillery and signal troops, while all battalion headquarters were assigned four British staff officers.³⁹ Each rifle company had three British captains, but a combination of sickness, wounds and leave usually left only two available for operations at any one time. As former CSAF Major General J. D. C. Graham recalled, 'rifle companies tended to operate in two halves, each commanded by a single British officer who among his other preoccupations had to control the mortar and artillery fire and air strikes'.⁴⁰

Support functions for the SAF, such as supply, transport, and clerical duties, were carried out under the supervision of junior commissioned officers seconded from the Pakistani Army. Technical support for intelligence, signals and mechanical functions were supplied by seconded British and Pakistani non-commissioned officers.⁴¹

Equipment for infantrymen in the SAF was basic and of low quality. Most gear was unsuitable for the rough conditions of Dhofar: cheap desert boots cracked within days and clothing rotted away during the monsoon season. Uniforms with 'the seats of their trousers and backs of their shirts worn through' and canvas gym shoes 'torn and out at the sides and virtually held on by string' were the norm for the enlisted ranks.⁴² Moreover, the SAF uniforms, with their sandy khaki colour intended for operations in the deserts of northern Oman, were said to 'stand out a mile' on the green and brown terrain of the Jebel.⁴³

SAF riflemen were armed with .303 bolt-action British Lee-Enfield rifles and fire support consisted of World War II-era Bren light machine guns, 3-inch mortars and obsolete 5.5-inch medium artillery pieces. 'In terms of range and weight of fire,' the SAF infantry were outgunned by their PFLOAG opponents.⁴⁴

Air support by the Sultan of Oman's Air Force (SOAF) consisted of a small number of strike aircraft and four Beaver cargo planes with a capacity of less than a ton – with the majority forward deployed at RAF Salalah.⁴⁵ Ten Royal Air Force (RAF) officers seconded to the Sultan's service made the Air Force run. In the early stages of the war, systematic air support for infantry operations did not exist.⁴⁶ Unlike their seconded infantry counterparts who attended ten weeks of colloquial Arabic training prior to arriving in Oman, RAF pilots did not attend language courses before joining the Sultan's service. As a result, since few of the Omani Arabs and Baluchs spoke English, if ground troops were in contact with the enemy without a British officer present, there was no way to coordinate Air Force fire support.

The SAF's medical care was also woefully inadequate. The SAF had a single surgeon, seconded from the Pakistani Air Force, but he had no facilities for surgery and his contract forbade him from deploying into areas with active combat operations. Oman's sole hospital was in Muscat, 600 miles from Dhofar. Moderately wounded SAF personnel could be sent to the capital for treatment, evacuated either by a three-day drive across the desert or by aircraft if one was available.⁴⁷ For severely wounded soldiers, the best the SAF medical staff could do was keep them alive with drugs and blood plasma until they could be transported to a surgical facility, the closest being the British Forces Hospital in Bahrain. Due to the scarcity of transport aircraft in the SOAF, requests had to be made to the RAF to transport serious casualties from Dhofar to Bahrain.

The lack of helicopters in the SOAF resulted in the most primitive system of casualty evacuation. Case in point: while on a patrol, Major Richard John was shot and severely wounded. It took 12 hours to evacuate him, by donkey, to the nearest flat plain where he could be extracted by aircraft, but the morphine supply on hand lasted only for three hours. After receiving a field dressing for his wound, he was 'loaded on to an RAF plane and finally received the first necessary surgery some 900 miles and 36 hours after being wounded'.⁴⁸

By late 1964, the insurgency in Dhofar had grown to the point where the Sultan was forced to reverse himself and order the SAF into the province. Since operations outside Northern Oman had never been part of the SAF's responsibilities, it was not prepared for the task. The first armed reconnaissance of Dhofar, an area the size of the State of New Jersey, had to be conducted without proper maps of the province.⁴⁹ Colonel A. D. Lewis, CSAF from 1964 to 1967, recounts the scope of the challenge:

I was therefore faced with a problem far greater than any military staff college could invent. I had been asked to move a force by an unknown route across 600 miles of desert to a country also unknown to us, as big as Wales but of worse terrain. I was to search out a rebel force that lived in the inhospitable Jebel country north of the Salalah plain about whom I knew nothing.⁵⁰

Detailed information on Dhofar was slow in coming. A British officer operating in the province four years after the initial reconnaissance recalls being issued 'a set of maps of the mountains, quite unlike any maps I had seen before, being 0.63 inches to the mile. There were very few place names and most of those that were had the words, 'Position Approximate' or simply a question mark, in brackets beside them.'⁵¹

These difficulties were further compounded by a lack of any useful intelligence assets. There was no police force in Dhofar, and therefore no Special Branch (political intelligence) to provide detailed local knowledge to the Sultan's forces.⁵² Furthermore, the SAF did not contain any Dhofaris. With its British officer corps and large component of overseas Baluchs, the Sultan's Army was viewed by much of the local population as 'a virtual army of occupation'.⁵³ The Sultan did not help matters when he ordered the CSAF

not to bring any intelligence officers to Dhofar. This order was wisely ignored and a small intelligence cell was established in the province, but useful information was hard to come by.

Stumbling towards defeat

Despite the urging of his British advisors to respond to the insurgency with a policy of reconciliation, amnesty and development in order to win public support and secure the defection of rebels to the government side, Sultan Said refused to sanction any program that showed leniency towards his rebellious subjects.⁵⁴ The only tool to be employed by the SAF against the insurgents was repression. Under the Sultan's orders, wells were cemented over, homes of suspected insurgents were burned, and civilians from the Jebel were denied access to the markets in the towns on the plain where they traditionally sold their livestock. The execution of these measures virtually forced the uncommitted Dhofari population into the rebels' arms.⁵⁵

In order to meet the insurgent threat, Sultan Said's British advisors urged him to expand the SAF, but he refused. More troops cost more money and Sultan intended to end the conflict while spending as little money as possible. In the first few years of the war, the SAF was able to deploy only two companies in Dhofar at any one time. As a result, sweep operations designed to harry the insurgents gained little of long-term value as the Sultan's forces lacked the manpower to secure the swept areas.

In addition to the lack of numbers, forces deployed to Dhofar were limited by two other factors. The first was the inability of the SAF logistical system to support any more troops in the rough terrain of Dhofar. As Colonel Lewis recounts:

The two companies were dispersed widely into six locations which had to be supplied by the two Beavers [cargo aircraft] we had to give them on this occasion. Jerricans of water, boxes of ammunition, food and radio batteries were free-dropped at low levels using our own primitive methods of padding these items to prevent them from bursting upon impact with the ground. Soldiers had to exist on half a gallon of water per day, as in the Western Desert in World War II.⁵⁶

The second limitation was imposed by the Sultan. Paranoid about the prospect of another uprising in northern Oman, he mandated that at least one battalion of the SAF remain in the north at all times.

Units were deployed to Dhofar for nine months and then spent 18 months in the north on garrison duty. The problem with this arrangement was that most contract officers were only committed to 18-month tours with the SAF, while seconded officers served the Sultan for 24 months. As a result, officers with combat experience in Dhofar were not necessarily still with a unit when it returned to Dhofar a year and a half later. The lack of continuity in many command positions led some to comment that the SAF did not have six years of experience in Dhofar, rather it had one year of experience six times.

By 1970, the only parts of the province under the Sultan's control were the coastal towns of Taqa, Salalah and Mirbat.⁵⁷ An internal SAF assessment of the situation highlighted shortcomings in the government's strategy in Dhofar:⁵⁸

SAF OVERALL AIM Purely military: TO KILL THE ENEMY. No political aim aside from unconditional surrender, therefore no political or civil aids to the war. None of the established civil measures for counterinsurgency exist.

- a. No police or Special Branch
- b. No resettlement of the population
- c. Scant food control
- d. No surrender or amnesty terms

- e. No psyops or propaganda
- f. No hearts and minds
- g. No civil govt on the Jebel
- h. Comparatively little intelligence

Sultan Said's fears of a northern uprising proved justified. In June 1970, a group of Omani exiles calling itself the National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf attacked several northern towns. Although they were quickly defeated, the revolt made it clear how isolated and unpopular Sultan Said was. On 23 July 1970, with the assistance of a group of British officers, Qaboos bin Said, the Sultan's Sandhurst-educated son, overthrew his father in a bloodless coup.⁵⁹ Across Oman, Sultan Qaboos' accession was instantly met with great rejoicing.⁶⁰ After the coup, the character of the counterinsurgency campaign changed decisively.

Assisting counterinsurgency

Although Britain had treaties of friendship with the Sultan of Oman dating back to the early 1800s and the British Army had been providing officers to the SAF since 1958, significant military assistance did not occur until after Sultan Qaboos overthrew his father. Requests for assistance that had previously been stonewalled in London were quickly approved to support the new reform-minded Sultan. Politically, British assistance to Oman faced constraints. The Labour government of Harold Wilson, in power during the first part of the rebellion, had no desire to be seen as engaging in a neo-colonial enterprise, particularly on behalf of someone as repressive as Sultan Said. Edward Heath's Conservative government, elected a month before the coup, was more inclined to intervention, but soon found that increasing unrest in Northern Ireland was draining available political and military resources. As a result, even at its height, the entire assistance team in Oman remained fairly small: 150 active duty officers seconded to the SAF, another 300 contract officers, and two squadrons of the Special Air Service (SAS) that operated under the pseudonym of the British Army Training Team (BATT).⁶¹

The guiding principle of the British support strategy was to provide 'breathing room' for the Sultan's forces to develop to the point where they could win against the PFLOAG. Britain would not win the war for Oman, and under no circumstances would regular British combat troops be deployed. Furthermore, with the exception of the SAS, whose participation was shrouded in secrecy, 'formed units' were not directly deployed for service in Dhofar. British personnel were seconded or deployed as individuals.

Close coordination between the Sultan's Forces and the British government occurred at the country team level. The Commander of the Sultan's Forces met daily with the British embassy's defense attaché, and weekly on an informal basis with the British ambassador. This system was adopted to deflect criticism that the British CSAF meeting daily with the British ambassador was a clear indication that London was really running the show in Oman.⁶² However, the ambassador spent time visiting the Sultan's units in the field and was a keen advocate with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence on the SAF's behalf.

In their support to Oman, the British provided assistance in four key areas: developing a plan for victory; training and expanding the Sultan's Armed Forces; providing experienced leadership and technical skills; and equipping the SAF for counterinsurgency.

Victory plan

When it became clear in 1970 that British involvement in Oman was going to increase, the commander of the 22nd Special Air Service Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel John Watts, conducted a survey of Dhofar and was shocked by the heavy-handed tactics employed by Sultan Said against the Dhofaris. Based on past British experience with successful counterinsurgency operations in Malaya, Watts created a five-point plan for victory in Dhofar:

1. A medical campaign to provide basic medical and dental care to Dhofaris, including those living on the Jebel.
2. A veterinary campaign to increase agricultural yields and provide fresh water for the Dhofaris' livestock.
3. An organized intelligence operation.
4. An information campaign designed to counteract Communist propaganda and to persuade rebels to change sides.
5. The recruitment and training of Dhofari soldiers to fight for the Sultan.

Civil assistance tasks were purposefully given precedence over military tasks in Watts' formulation. He also emphasized that the past practices of indiscriminate reprisals against civilians on the Jebel had to end.⁶³

This strategy was embraced by Sultan Qaboos and money began to flow from the royal treasury to civil development projects in Dhofar. Between the costs of civil aid and military operations, the war in Dhofar was soon consuming 50% of Oman's GDP.

To help execute the civil development aspect of Watts' strategy, the Special Air Service helped form Civil Aid Teams (CATs) that sought to provide the civilian population with tangible benefits that could win them to the government's side. CAT efforts ranged from the provision of simple medical care to the creation of a model farm that taught Dhofaris how to improve crop and livestock yields.⁶⁴

Training and Expanding the Sultan's Forces

Upon assuming power, Sultan Qaboos set about expanding the Sultan's Armed Forces. He authorized the raising of new infantry regiments as well as guard units that could undertake static protection missions. Additional resources were provided for the artillery regiment and the armoured car squadron, and additional aircraft (including helicopters) were purchased for the Air Force. Before the coup, in 1970, the SAF numbered 3,000 men under arms; less than two years later that number had passed 10,000. Tripling the size of the SAF required additional personnel for the SAF Training Regiment, so an experienced training officer and eight NCOs were detached from British battalions stationed in Bahrain and Cyprus and sent to Oman.⁶⁵ Rather than deploy trainers on a rotating three-month basis – as had happened in the past – these instructors were seconded on a longer-term basis, which allowed continuity in the training efforts and permitted the trainers to develop further language skills.⁶⁶

SAF recruits received six months of basic training that included instruction in rudimentary reading and writing in Arabic. Training schemes for Omanis in technical functions such as medicine and mechanical engineering were also established within the SAF.⁶⁷ Given the widespread illiteracy in Oman, a boys' school was started to provide a source of educated recruits for the SAF's technical support branches.

With an eye towards the future, the British trainers assisting the SAF helped develop proper professional training courses so Omani (Arab and Baluch) officers could progress

beyond the rank of lieutenant.⁶⁸ Practical training programs in map reading, small unit tactics, signals, and unit administration were created to prepare local officers for promotion to the ranks of captain and major.⁶⁹ A proper career structure for Omani officers was also established. The first group of 21 Omani officer candidates was commissioned in late 1971, and by the end of 1972 almost 100 Arab and Baluch officers had been commissioned or sent to attend military academies in Britain or Jordan.⁷⁰

Training support was not supplied just for new recruits. The SAS, acting as the British Army Training Team, conducted exercises and drills for the rifle companies of the battalions preparing to deploy to Dhofar. Six years of indecisive clashes with the insurgents, who inflicted casualties on the SAF while appearing to grow in strength, combined with an inability to hold territory on the Jebel, had infected a number of junior officers and enlisted personnel with 'Jebelitis' – a defeatist belief that the Jebel could not be conquered. To counteract this attitude, 40 SAS trainers provided extensive programs of live fire exercises, close quarter battle drills, night patrolling and other techniques required for 'fighting in bush country'.⁷¹ Emphasis was put on instructing the Omani NCOs, who were the platoon leaders, in the command and tactical handling of infantry sections.⁷²

One of the most significant contributions made by British support elements was the raising of irregular militia from among the tribes of Dhofar, known as the *firqat*, to fight on behalf of the Sultan. Previous attempts to recruit Dhofaris into the Sultan's service were met with such a degree of failure that one CSAF remarked, 'The Dhofari seems reluctant to volunteer for any service or employment whatsoever. He is considered by many of us to be the most selfish, idle and volatile creature we have ever encountered'.⁷³

An amnesty announced by Sultan Qaboos promised any Dhofari fighting for the insurgents a cash grant and full immunity if they surrendered to the government. Many of these surrendered fighters were subsequently incorporated in the *firqat*. The *firqat* were platoon- to company-sized units of tribal fighters that were built around a core of six to ten SAS personnel who provided command and control functions as well as medical aid, organic fire support (machine gun and mortar), and coordination with the artillery and air strikes. Drawing their membership from some of the very same tribes that were supporting the PFLOAG, the *firqat* provided a critical source of local knowledge and intelligence for an army that contained few Dhofaris, let alone Jebelis.

Regular SAF personnel did not possess the temperament or the training to manage the *firqat*, who could be tenacious fighters when they wanted to fight, but had social customs that were not in keeping with traditional military discipline: They did not like to operate outside their own tribal areas; they felt they had the right to vote on any major decision (including electing their unit leaders); and they saw nothing wrong with refusing to take part in an operation or comply with an order with which they did not agree.⁷⁴ However, the SAS, with their experience in employing indigenous irregular forces in Malaya and Borneo, were able to turn the irregular *firqat* into first-rate soldiers. Eventually numbering over 2000, the *firqat* functioned not only as scouts and guides for SAF operations, but also as 'home guards', consolidating and defending tribal areas on the Jebel after they had been swept clean of insurgents by the SAF.⁷⁵

Leadership and Technical Skills

The expansion of the SAF increased the demand for company-grade British officers to provide small-unit leadership. Continuing the role they had played since 1958, contract and seconded British officers filled these leadership roles. Both the British Army as a whole, as well as a number of the individuals assigned to Oman, had experience in leading

non-Western soldiers – particularly Arabs and Baluchs. Methods of command suited for the British Army required modification for the Sultan's forces: It required 'careful handling and encouragement blended with the occasional tough word to get the best from Omani and Baluch soldiers'.⁷⁶ The presence of experienced officers who knew how to adapt themselves to the customs of the local troops eased the potential problems of commanding a multi-ethnic force such as the SAF.

The provision of additional officers allowed the Sultan's Army to improve its command and control in Dhofar. A permanent SAF headquarters unit was established at RAF Salalah and it was given operational control over all SAF units, including the Air Force (SOAF) and Navy (SON), assigned to the province. For the first time, the counterinsurgency operations in Dhofar had continuity of leadership.

The meagre ability of the armed forces to treat battle casualties was bolstered by the deployment of a British Field Surgical Team (FST), consisting of two surgeons and an anaesthetist who were assisted by a team of nurses and technicians, to RAF Salalah to treat battle casualties in theatre.⁷⁷ Not only did the FST transform the recovery rate for wounded SAF personnel, but also the mere presence of skilled surgeons in Dhofar had a significant impact. As a former commander of the Dhofar headquarters noted, 'Their contribution to the morale of the whole force was beyond price. The knowledge that anyone who was hurt would be flown to Salalah for expert surgery and resuscitation, usually within half an hour of being hit, must have been a factor in the bravery shown by so many people.'⁷⁸ The FST also provided treatment to Dhofaris at a new public hospital opened in Dhofar as part of Colonel Watts' counterinsurgency strategy.⁷⁹

The supermajority of Dhofaris, particularly Jebelis, earned their livelihood from agriculture. In an effort to both improve the lives of the population, as well as penetrate the closed Dhofari society, the SAS established a model farm on the plain outside Salalah. Effective techniques for the husbandry of cattle and poultry were demonstrated as well as the cultivation of root vegetables.⁸⁰ As General de la Billière emphasized, 'we tried to teach the people to get better value out of the crops and animals which they had, rather than seeking to change their habits'.⁸¹ The SAS even went as far as to send soil samples back to London for analysis by government agronomists and to import thoroughbred Hereford bulls (by RAF transport) to improve the local breeding stock.⁸²

Intelligence support to the SAF in Dhofar was provided by an SAS intelligence troop. Establishing themselves in the major towns in the province, 25 SAS intelligence personnel went to ground among the locals and employed their training to cultivate native contacts and information sources.⁸³ Disparate pieces of information from across Dhofar were fed back to the two NCOs of the coordination cell.⁸⁴ Within a few months of arriving, the intelligence troop was able to assemble 'an enemy order of battle showing unit names, boundaries, personalities and re-supply routes in unprecedented detail', information that had eluded the SAF for the first six years of the conflict.⁸⁵ As the *firqat* bands grew, and more and more Dhofaris came over to the Sultan's side, the level and detail of information provided by the intelligence troop expanded as well. In their spare time, the members of the intelligence troop trained SAF personnel to take over intelligence-gathering responsibilities.

British psychological operations experts developed a propaganda campaign designed to isolate the nationalist Dhofari insurgents from the Communist 'true believers' by emphasizing Sultan Qaboos' civil development projects in Dhofar as well as the Marxists' hostility to Islam. A printing press and broadcasting equipment from Britain allowed the Sultan's information services to begin operation. Radio Dhofar broadcast news updates about the government's plans and actions to the people of the province. To ensure that

these broadcasts were received, subsidized transistor radios were put on sale in markets across Dhofar.⁸⁶ Guided by British advice, Radio Dhofar presented the news without spin or fabrication, in direct contrast to the insurgents' exaggerated propaganda broadcasts which, over the course of the conflict, claimed to have killed three times the actual number of soldiers in the SAF.⁸⁷

The SAF lacked combat engineers and the low state of education in the country meant that local skill in this area was unlikely to be forthcoming. Elements of the Royal Engineers provided invaluable support in Dhofar, assisting the execution of the Watts plan by drilling wells in the Salalah Plain and building schools and clinics in the major settlements.⁸⁸ The engineers also assisted military operations by building roads and constructing obstacles to hinder insurgent movement.

With the Chinese and the Russians providing longer range mortars and Katyusha rockets to the PFLOAG, the joint RAF/SOAF base at Salalah became extremely vulnerable. In many cases, the insurgent mortar men were able to 'shoot and scoot' before the SAF could respond. The deployment of a Royal Artillery counter-battery team with advanced ground defense radar and an RAF mortar detachment with skilled spotters (collectively known as the 'Cracker Battery') provided an important defensive capability that the SAF could not easily supply. A squadron of security personnel from the RAF Regiment was also deployed to provide perimeter security – freeing the SAF from an important static protection duty.⁸⁹

Updating equipment

As the SAF expanded and improved its forces, Britain was the primary equipment supplier. Infantry weapons were upgraded from the old .303-inch Lee-Enfield to the semi-automatic *Fabrique Nationale* L1A1 rifle then in use by the British Army. The British General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG) was also introduced to the SAF. With a range of 1,800 metres and a more powerful 7.62 mm bullet capable of penetrating the undergrowth on the Jebel, the GPMG became the workhorse of the Sultan's army.

SAF equipment requests reflected practical needs: Night firing devices, armored cars, field radios, entrenching tools and so forth were all procured from British Army stores. When the British were unable to supply items sought by the Sultan, such as the Bell Augusta helicopters used by the SOAF, Foreign and Commonwealth Office personnel acted as intermediaries to approach third countries on the Sultan's behalf.⁹⁰

In equipping the SAF, the British used their influence to focus the Sultan on materials that were directly applicable to the counterinsurgency campaign being waged. They deliberately avoided steering the SAF towards 'expensive and sophisticated equipment' and when necessary, the British were not afraid to tell their client 'no'.⁹¹ At one point, Sultan Qaboos asked the British to supply his Air Force with napalm because he felt that the fragmentation bombs then in use did not have a large enough blast radius. Concerned about the effect the use of napalm would have on uncommitted civilians on the Jebel as well as international public opinion, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office rejected his request on the grounds that the political repercussions far outweighed the military benefit.⁹²

No free lunch

While the British provided a wide spectrum of direct and indirect support to the Sultan's Armed Forces, there was one catch: All of it came with a price tag. Initially, the Sultan was charged for every bit of aid received, including equipment provided from existing British

Army stores. The RAF even charged the Sultan for cargo flights chartered to deliver materials to Oman.⁹³

'Pay for Support' also extended to personnel. The Sultan was billed for all British servicemen deployed to Oman. In recognition of the important operational experience gained in Dhofar, for some units, such as the SAS and the Field Surgical Team, he was charged only for 'extra costs,' the difference between maintaining the unit at its home base and its deployment in Oman. However, for the large majority of British personnel, including all of the seconded British officers, the Sultan paid the full cost of salaries and benefits. At one point, the cost of seconded officers alone approached \$9.9 million per year in today's terms.

While the practice of charging a host nation for security assistance is not unheard of, at that time, unlike many of the emirates to the north, Oman was not an oil-rich country. In 1971, Oman's gross domestic product was the modern equivalent of \$850 million. As the cost of prosecuting the conflict began to reach an unsustainable level of 50% of GDP, the SAF began objecting to the high cost of British support. Seeking to reduce the burden on its ally, the British provided a one-time grant of \$8.6 million worth of ammunition, equipment and SAS support.⁹⁴ Concerned that they were 'pricing themselves out of the market', by 1973 the British began subsidizing half of the cost of the seconded personnel in the Sultan's service.⁹⁵

Other support

Despite the expansion of the SAF, Oman still lacked enough ground troops for the operations required to defeat the insurgents. London had made it clear that the deployment of British combat troops was not an option, so Oman had to look elsewhere for help. Under the guidance of his British advisors, the new Sultan took steps to end Oman's diplomatic isolation – joining the United Nations and the Arab League as well as establishing diplomatic relations with anti-Communist regimes in the region such as Iran and Jordan.⁹⁶

Diplomacy paid off as both Iran and Jordan provided troops to Oman. The Shah of Iran had no desire to see a revolutionary government controlling the other side of the Strait of Hormuz.⁹⁷ To support Oman, in late 1973, he dispatched a battle group of 1,500 soldiers backed by fighter aircraft, helicopter troop carriers and artillery.⁹⁸ While this heavy force was not well-suited to small-unit counterinsurgency operations, it was very able to hold territory and to defend static positions. For its part, Jordan sent Oman several intelligence officers to bolster the SAF's information gathering network, as well as combat engineers.⁹⁹

Defeating the insurgents

With an expanded force, as well as material and diplomatic support from abroad, Sultan Qaboos was finally ready to reclaim the Jebel. With the RAF providing security to the airbase at Salalah and the newly formed guard units (the equivalent of two battalions) protecting secured areas, the expanded SAF was able to maintain two infantry battalions, as well as supporting artillery and armoured car units, in Dhofar at any one time – a force equal in size to the entire pre-coup SAF.¹⁰⁰ These ground units were supported by a strike squadron configured for ground support and a helicopter squadron for enhanced mobility and resupply.¹⁰¹

Efforts to permanently clear the Jebel of insurgents followed a regular pattern that was reminiscent of the 'New Village' strategy employed during the Malayan Emergency. As a former commander of Dhofar headquarters describes:¹⁰²

1. A SAF operation in strength supported by a *Firqat* secures a position of the *Firqat*'s choice which dominated its tribal area.
2. Military engineers build a track to the position giving road access, followed by an airstrip if possible.
3. A drill is brought down the track [to bore a well for the local civilians] followed by a Civil Action Team [who set up a] shop, school, clinic and mosque.
4. SAF thins out to the minimum to provide security.
5. Water is pumped to the surface and into the distribution systems prepared by military engineers to offer storage points for humans, and troughs for animals.
6. Civilians come in from miles around and talk to the *Firqat*, SAF and Government representatives. They are told that enemy activity in this area will result in the water being cut off.
7. Civilians move out in surrounding areas and tell the enemy not to interfere with what is obviously 'a good thing'.
8. Enemy, very dependent on civilians, stops all aggressive action and either goes elsewhere or hides.
9. Tribal area is secure.
10. All SAF are withdrawn.

As the PFLOAG fighters were denied easy access to civilian support, they were forced to choose between fighting government forces simply to acquire enough provisions to sustain themselves, or breaking into smaller units that were less effective militarily.

At the same time, the SAF sought to cut off the insurgents' supply lines. All PFLOAG supplies were transported overland from their secure supply base at Hauf in Yemen. Not only did clothing, ammunition and money flow into Dhofar along this way, but it was also the means used to evacuate wounded and move units back to a sanctuary for rest and retraining.¹⁰³

With the assistance of combat engineers from the United Kingdom and Jordan, the SAF established a series of fortified lines consisting of obstacles, mines and barbed wire, similar to the *barrages* used by the French in Algeria.¹⁰⁴ Manned by SAF and Iranian troops, these fixed lines were designed to interdict the insurgents' supply routes. As popular support for the PFLOAG lessened due to *Firqat*/CAT operations and the reduced flow of supplies weakened the insurgents, interdiction lines were built to box in the rebels from all directions. In the end, the only escape for the remnants of the PFLOAG and the PDRY troops who were supporting them was to flee under the cover of night, across the border into Yemen.

On 11 December 1975, Sultan Qaboos announced that order had been restored in Dhofar.¹⁰⁵ Even with Sultan Qaboos's reforms, a viable counterinsurgency strategy and allied support, it had required five years of fighting after he took power to bring the conflict to an end.

Assessment

The successful campaign in Dhofar was one of only a few instances where an active Marxist insurgency was defeated by a Western-backed power during the Cold War. That fact alone makes the British support effort to Oman of interest to historians. However, there are lessons to be drawn from this case about the organization and conduct of security assistance to an ally's counterinsurgency operations that have implications for future security cooperation efforts in peripheral conflicts.

Proper vision

Ensuring that the host nation's plan of action is sound is one of the most important elements in supporting counterinsurgency. Sultan Said did not have a viable strategy for defeating the PFLOAG: applying repression and military force to what was essentially a political problem. On the other hand, the British provided the Sultanate with a real strategy, in the form of the Watts plan, which was based on their years of experience in several 'small wars'. The counterinsurgency plan properly focused on the people of Dhofar and emphasized the roles that the government (including the SAF) could play in improving their lives.

The British also had a proper vision of their own role in the conflict. Aid and support was merely a stopgap measure until the Omanis could develop the capacity to handle the situation themselves. The training of Omani soldiers in technical fields and the creation of career paths for native officers in the SAF are examples of implementing this vision.

Consistency of support

To be effective, support to a host nation must be consistent. Once committed to assisting Oman, the government in London remained dedicated to that task as a national policy and cultivated the image that they were 'there to stay'. Even after the Labour Party came back to power in 1974, they continued the previous government's policy of supporting Oman despite the fact that it may have antagonized segments of their left-leaning political base.

The reality of counterinsurgency operations is that they are long, drawn-out affairs. Even some of the most successful counterinsurgency operations in history have lasted a decade or more. Rarely is a 'quick win' possible against an irregular opponent. Although it is contrary to the nature of most political leaders, the focus of planning and efforts in counterinsurgency must be on the long-term outcome. Only with a sustained vision will the necessary reforms and policies be undertaken that will allow a government to overcome its internal security challenge. When support is sporadic and unpredictable, the host nation is more likely to make short-term tactical choices in response to such changes rather than sticking to a long-term strategy.¹⁰⁶

Targeted deployment of skilled personnel

Specialist personnel can provide an invaluable supplement to the armed forces of a developing nation. The most significant assistance rendered by the British was the provision of experienced officers and technical support personnel. Given the widespread lack of education in Oman and the absence of professional military training, these capabilities could not be obtained domestically. British officers commanded the Sultan's forces at all levels from company commander to supreme commander. The multi-unit combined-arms operations that characterized the second half of the campaign required the kind of training and operational experience that the British possessed. Dhofar has been called a 'company commander's war' and throughout the conflict it remained the case that, 'the fighting capability of any sub unit is as good or bad as the standard of its British officer'.¹⁰⁷

The technical support rendered by British personnel was also noteworthy. For example, the impact that the 14-man Field Surgical Unit had on SAF morale was disproportionate to its size. Similarly, the RAF pilots, ground defense radar teams, and Royal Engineers employed skills and equipment that were beyond the Omanis'

capabilities. Deployment of British specialists also had the important effect of freeing up SAF units for offensive action. For example, withdrawal of the 'Cracker Battery' would have meant the withdrawal of all Omani artillery officers supporting operations in Dhofar in order to defend RAF Salalah, stripping SAF infantry of necessary fire support.¹⁰⁸

The Special Air Service, with its experience in unconventional warfare, filled a niche that neither Omanis nor regular British soldiers could provide. Their ability to raise and lead the *firqat*, as well as the Civil Assistance Teams, was a prime reason that Sultan Qaboos was able to regain the upper hand from the PFLOAG.

The training that the SAS provided to the infantry regiments of the SAF was also important. Overcoming the morale-sapping 'Jebelitis' required the kind of tough, realistic training only the SAS could provide. As British counterinsurgency practitioner Julian Paget notes:

No troops can operate efficiently in undeveloped country in small numbers without experience and the confidence that springs from it. Ultimately the will to master the terrain and the enemy is the decisive factor which gives the infantryman his mobility in action. This precious quality can only be acquired by hard training; it cannot be issued like a piece of equipment.¹⁰⁹

Secondment

Attaching officers directly to the host nation's service provides an alternative to the standard 'advisor model'. The manner in which most British officers were deployed to Oman, not as advisors but as integral parts of the units they served, had several advantages. Rather than having to persuade the man with power to issue an order, they were empowered with executive authority. In carrying out their duties, they provided an example for Omani junior officers and NCOs on how to plan, conduct and sustain operations. Living and working with the Omanis on a daily basis allowed the British to develop a detailed understanding of their units' capabilities and their requirements.

Making themselves part of the SAF's force structure, and therefore ultimately under the Sultan's command, sent a strong message to Omanis that the government in Muscat, not London, was calling the shots. Seconded officers took their duty to the Sultan quite seriously, and there are accounts of high-ranking seconded officers withholding information from London about impending operations, particularly those against Yemen, because the British government might have political objections to the proposed action.¹¹⁰

The success of secondment in Oman is interesting because it runs contrary to the current conventional wisdom about assisting foreign military forces.¹¹¹ Most contemporary studies of security assistance echo T. E. Lawrence's admonishment 'Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them.'¹¹² By contrast, in Oman, skilled British personnel 'did' all sorts of tasks for the Omanis. Detailed exploration of this apparent contradiction will have to occur elsewhere, however one possibility is that Lawrence is partially mistaken: It might not be so critical that indigenous forces 'do' for themselves, as that they are *perceived* to 'do' for themselves. In Oman much of the direct aid was in combat service support functions such as medical, intelligence and so forth where the British could provide necessary assistance without being seen to do so by the broader Omani populace.

Much of the ability of the British officers to lead Arab and Baluch troops is a product of the long history of cooperation between the UK and Oman as well as British traditions of colonial soldiering which imparted cultural awareness, regional knowledge and local language skills. These dynamics cannot necessarily be recreated today, but some of the same effects could be achieved by employing embedded advisors in the companies

and battalions of the host nation's forces. However, achieving a high degree of success in an embedded role requires an ability to speak the local language as well as understand the country's culture and people.

No regular combat troops

In a counterinsurgency, the armed forces of the host nation should bear the brunt of the fighting. In providing personnel, the British kept that point in mind as they focused on supplying capabilities and expertise lacked by the Omanis. Despite the need for large numbers of combat troops, the British declined to provide regular soldiers for combat operations in Oman. This had two effects. First, it required Oman to provide its own soldiery, which it did by tripling the size of the SAF between 1970 and 1972. Second, when this proved insufficient, Oman reached out to regional allies. The deployment of combat troops from a Muslim country like Iran was far more politically acceptable than British troops would have been. Tangible support from Jordan and Iran also helped deflect criticism, particular from the Soviets and the political left in Britain, that the British were engaged in a neo-colonial enterprise or that Oman was simply a puppet state.

Scale and structure of support

When providing assistance, particularly during an active conflict, it is important that the host nation is made as self-reliant as possible. Careful planning should be undertaken to ensure that foreign support does not exceed the host nation's ability to absorb and employ it effectively. Despite complaints from SAF officers that the British should have supplied more aid, this case illustrates Sir Robert Thompson's principle that 'the less aid given and the more the threatened country is compelled to rely on its own resources, the more effective the results will be'.¹¹³ The goal is to assist the host nation in key areas, not make them dependent on external support.¹¹⁴

While the diplomatic staff at the British embassy in Muscat and many officers in the Sultan's service objected to charging Oman for support, this approach had positive aspects. Equipment procurement was focused on very practical items. When the British did provide direct aid, it was in the form of grants of supplies and services rather than straight budget transfers. The logic behind the British approach is fairly straightforward. To paraphrase economists Milton and Rose Friedman, when you spend your own money on yourself, you are motivated to get what you *need most* at the best price. When you spend other people's money on yourself, you get what you *want most* but price does not matter. It was not until the tail end of the war, when oil prices were through the roof, that the Sultanate began to shop for expensive military toys such as top-of-the-line jet fighters and sophisticated air defense systems.¹¹⁵

Coordinated support effort

The supporting nation must speak with a single voice, be well coordinated with the host nation's decisionmakers, and avoid overshadowing the host nation's own efforts. The British ambassador was the point man for the assistance effort in Oman. Daily meetings between the CSAF and the defense attaché, as well as weekly meetings between the ambassador and the CSAF, ensured that the British were well acquainted with the campaign progress. Despite the fact that the CSAF briefed the British general staff from time to time, all inter-governmental communications and official requests for aid flowed through the embassy in Muscat. This ensured that the British delivered a consistent

message to the Omani government, and that the country team was not bypassed by officials in London who could potentially send conflicting signals.

When an outside power supports a host nation against an insurgency, it is critical that the host government appear to be in charge, with the ally in a supporting role. As counterinsurgency practitioner General Sir Frank Kitson noted:

The way in which an ally's help is delivered is as important as the help itself . . . If there is the slightest indication of the ally taking the lead, the insurgents will have the opportunity to say that the government has betrayed the people to an outside power, and that they, the insurgents, are the only true representatives of the nation.¹¹⁶

The ambassador and his staff conscientiously took steps to project the public image that they were the supporting power. As former British Ambassador to Muscat Sir Donald Hawley recounts: 'Frequent contact between Ambassador and CSAF was obviously vital. It was, however, neither appropriate nor necessary that we should meet too often at the Embassy or elsewhere'.¹¹⁷

Host nation structure for coordinating counterinsurgency

Without a structure to control and coordinate the host nation's civil and military efforts, no amount of aid or advice will achieve the desired result. The reciprocal of the previous lesson is that the host nation government itself must be properly organized if the support effort is to be put to good use. In the case of counterinsurgency, this means an effective integration of the host nation's civil and military powers.¹¹⁸ Oman represents an extreme example as Sultan Qaboos' position as head of state and Commander-in-Chief, backed by his ability to rule by decree, created a level of unity between the civil and military aspects of the government's counterinsurgency campaign that is not likely to be found in other settings. Unlike his father, Qaboos did not interfere with military decision-making or use his position as Commander-in-Chief to the detriment of military efforts. The CSAF's position as commander of all land, sea and air forces in Oman allowed the military aspects of the counterinsurgency campaign to be carried out without the inter-service rivalries and bureaucratic conflicts that can be found in other militaries.

Timing of intervention

In planning to support a foreign counterinsurgency campaign, careful attention must be paid to the domestic political situation in the host nation. British officers serving the SAF, including a former CSAF, Major General Corran Purdon, have criticized the British government for failing to provide timely aid to Sultan Said. As Purdon wrote, 'if they gave us what we asked for straight away – very little at the time – we could crush the rebellion. They had to support SAF with far more aid and consequent expense later. The old principle of "Firm and Timely Action" had to be learned yet again at the expense, as always, of lives and limbs'.¹¹⁹ Such sentiments are understandable, particularly when expressed by soldiers on the ground.

As important as the British support was, however, it only succeeded because of a favorable change in Oman's political environment. Without the accession of Sultan Qaboos and his approval of the reforms and civil development efforts that undercut the popular support for the PFLOAG, the war would probably have been lost. The fundamental contest in Oman was one of legitimacy. Sultan Said's neglect of Dhofar lost him the moral right to govern the province. As a result, a rebellion based on legitimate grievances emerged that was then co-opted by radicals for their own purposes.

Sultan Qaboos' actions allowed him to establish a legitimate government (by local regional standards) that was able to gain support of Omanis and external allies. Enhanced aid and support to Sultan Said would only have prolonged a failing effort. There is no evidence that after 1970 he would have reversed course and spent the money for more troops or undertaken the political reforms necessary to defeat the insurgents. If anything, increased aid would have caused him to resist change all the more, while closely associating the British government with his autocratic rule.¹²⁰

Without downplaying the importance of the other lessons previously discussed, the most significant finding from this case is that while security assistance to a foreign counterinsurgency campaign can reinforce positive political efforts, it is not enough on its own to bring about a victory in an unfavorable political environment. An outside power must carefully assess the domestic political environment of an allied nation before committing itself to support counterinsurgency operations there. If there is little prospect for reform or political accommodation to accompany military action, a nation should be wary of undertaking an open-ended support mission. If the stakes are high enough to compel involvement despite the unfavorable political circumstances on the ground, the supporting power must make maximum effort to alter the political situation. Assistance plans should be specifically structured to encourage reform or modify the host nation's strategy. The supporting nation needs to commit itself to the mission, not a specific ruler or government. Sultan Said had been a close ally of Britain for nearly four decades, but when his rule became more of a hindrance than a help, the British did not attempt to prop him up out of some misguided sense of loyalty.

Conclusion

There are several elements that make the Dhofar Rebellion a unique case. First, the overall scope of the conflict was quite small, with brigade-size units being the largest military formations employed. Furthermore, the sparse population of the Jebel allowed a greater freedom of action, with less concern for collateral damage than might be found in other settings. Finally, unlike in Vietnam, where American troops had to fight a television war, operations in Oman were conducted outside the media's glare as most foreign journalists were not permitted into the country.

Those caveats aside, the British experience in Dhofar demonstrates one method by which a small number of Western officers and special forces trainers can lead an indigenous force to victory in a counterinsurgency. While this approach entails important pre-conditions, the most significant of which are the political developments in the host nation, it can be a way of achieving success in smaller-scale conflicts. This method may not be appropriate for larger-scale insurgencies, such as the on-going operations in Iraq, but could provide a useful framework for assistance efforts in the 'Long War' ranging from the Philippines to the Horn of Africa. As US national security strategies put increased emphasis on the training of foreign security forces to combat terrorists and insurgents, it would be wise for political and military leaders to pay attention to important lessons learned in Dhofar.¹²¹

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Notes

1. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 11.
2. For a discussion of this point, see Kagan, 'A Strategy for Heroes: What's Wrong with the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review'.
3. *Iraq: Translating Lessons into Future DoD Policies* (Santa Monica, Calif: RAND Corporation, February 2005), 7.
4. For example, see Andrade and Willbanks, 'CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future'; Biddle, 'Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon'; Cassidy, 'Back to the Street Without Joy: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam and Other Small Wars'; or Melvin R. Laird, 'Iraq: Learning the Lessons of Vietnam'.
5. Jeapes, *SAS Secret War: Operation Storm in the Middle East*, 1. In the literature on the conflict, full length treatments primarily consist of autobiographical accounts of involvement in Dhofar. In addition to Jeapes, works in this category include, Akehurst, *We Won a War: The Campaign in Oman 1965–1975*, Arkless, *The Secret War: Dhofar 1971/1972*; Fiennes, *Where Soldiers Fear to Tread*; and Thwaites and Sloane, *Muscat Command*. The Dhofar campaign also features in the biographies of several senior officers involved, most notably De la Billière, *Looking for Trouble: An Autobiography – from the SAS to the Gulf*, 259–89 and Purdon, *List the Bugle: Reminiscences of an Irish Soldier*, 187–306. SAS involvement in Oman is covered by Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins: The Story of the SAS 1950–1992*, 178–205, Jeapes, *SAS Secret War* and Kemp, *The SAS: The Savage Wars of Peace*, Chapter 8. Finally, chapter length studies of the campaign can be found in Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists*, 208–18; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency in the Post-Imperial Era*; O'Neill, Heaton, and Alberts, *Insurgency in the Modern World*, 213–23 and Pimlott, 'The British Army: The Dhofar Campaign, 1970–1975'.
6. On the importance of learning lessons in counterinsurgency, see Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*.
7. According to Louis, the Wilson government was focused on rescuing the economy and preserving the welfare state. All other issues, including the British presence in the Gulf, which cost £12 million annually, could be compromised in pursuit of those twin goals. WM. Roger Louis, 'The British Withdrawal from the Gulf, 1967–71', 82–3.
8. Barger, 'Middle Eastern Oil since the Second World War', 34.
9. Hurewitz, 'The Persian Gulf: British Withdrawal and Western Security', 107.
10. Louis, 'The British Withdrawal from the Gulf, 1967–71', 92.
11. In early 1967, Saudi King Faisal had requested that the British not withdraw from Aden. At the same time, the rulers of Qatar, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi and Dubai offered to subsidize the cost of maintaining British forces in the region. Wilson's government rebuffed both requests. Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's Relinquishment of Power in Her Last Three Arab Dependencies*, 149; Kelly, *Arabia, the Gulf, and the West*, 49–50.
12. The quote by former Colonial Secretary Iain Macleod appears in Louis, 'The British Withdrawal from the Gulf, 1967–71', 83.
13. 'The Sultan's Dhofar War', *The Economist*, 8 March 1975, 52.
14. Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins*, 180.
15. Sir Geoffrey Arthur to FCO, 19 April 1971, FCO 8/1572, National Archives of England, Wales and the United Kingdom (hereafter referred to as NAUK).
16. O'Neill, Heaton, and Alberts, *Insurgency in the Modern World*, p. 219.
17. Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 6.
18. See Pimlott, 'Dhofar Campaign, 1970–1975', 27; Joyce, *The Sultanate of Oman: A Twentieth Century History*, 87 and Address given by HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said on Radio Oman, Muscat, 23 April 1971, Graham Collection GB165-0327, Box 3/3, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford (hereafter referred to MECA).
19. See, Pimlott, 'Dhofar Campaign, 1970–1975', 27 and Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 73.
20. Joyce notes that Sultan Said did not visit his capital once between 1958 and 1961. Joyce, *Sultanate of Oman*, 96.
21. 'Muscat and Oman: Half Sovereign?' *The Economist*, 18 October 1969.
22. Joyce, *Sultanate of Oman*, xii–xiv.
23. Kemp describes Oman has being in 'a state of almost constant rebellion somewhere in the territory, inspired both by tribal feuds and by outside interference'. Kemp, *The SAS: The Savage Wars of Peace*, 92.

24. Even conservative Arab rulers despised Sultan Said for his non-Arab attitudes and for favoring Britain and India (the old Raj) over other Arab states. Townsend, *Oman: The Making of the Modern State*, 63.
25. Ibid., 98. Beasant, *Oman: The True-Life Drama and Intrigue of an Arab State*, 100–4 and Peter Thwaites, 'The Dhofar Campaign, 1967–70', *Sultan's Armed Forces Association Newsletter*, no. 38 (March 1989), 22.
26. Lewis, 'The Story of the Sultan's Armed Forces 1964–67', 35; Joyce, *Sultanate of Oman*, 95.
27. British troops across the border in Aden also broke up a DLF support network there that had been smuggling weapons into Oman. McKeown, 'Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance', 32.
28. Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 156.
29. In 1971, the group again changed its name to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf.
30. O'Neill, Heaton, and Alberts, *Insurgency in the Modern World*, 217.
31. C.C. Maxwell, *Sultan's Armed Forces Association Newsletter*, no. 2 (April 1969), 3; Beasant, *Oman*, 108.
32. McKeown, 'Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance', 36. As an illustration of the international support network for the insurgents, Joyce provides the example of Salim al-Ghazi, who received guerrilla training in China, then traveled to Algeria 'to complete formal military studies', and finally joined the Iraqi Army where he trained Omani exiles dedicated to overthrowing Sultan Said. Joyce, *The Sultanate of Oman*, 104.
33. O'Neill, Heaton, and Alberts, *Insurgency in the Modern World*, 222–4.
34. Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 24–5.
35. Graham, 'The Sultan's Armed Forces: March 1970 to September 1972, Part I March to July 1970', *Sultan's Armed Forces Association Newsletter*, no. 31 (June 1983), 53–4.
36. Lewis, 'The Story of the Sultan's Armed Forces 1964–67', 28.
37. Sultan's Armed Forces Headquarters, Bait-al-Falaj, Muscat, 'A Brief on Muscat and Oman' June 1965, Thwaites Collection GB 0099, Box 2/2, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London (hereafter referred to as LHCMA.)
38. McKeown, 'Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance', 52.
39. Headquarters, 'A Brief on Muscat and Oman', For a discussion of HQ staff, see Purdon, *List the Bugle*, 195.
40. Graham, 'The Sultan's Armed Forces: March 1970 to September 1972, Part I March to July 1970', 52.
41. Headquarters, 'A Brief on Muscat and Oman'.
42. Purdon, *List the Bugle*, 195.
43. Jeapes, *SAS Secret War*, 65.
44. Graham, 'The Sultan's Armed Forces: March 1970 to September 1972, Part I March to July 1970', 52 and Lewis, 'The Story of the Sultan's Armed Forces 1964–67', 28.
45. Lewis, Ibid.
46. Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins*, 184.
47. Lewis, 'The Story of the Sultan's Armed Forces 1964–67', 32.
48. Thwaites, 'The Dhofar Campaign, 1967–70', 75. Richard John's story is also mentioned in Fiennes, *Where Soldiers Fear to Tread*, 13.
49. McKeown, 'Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance', 23.
50. Lewis, 'The Story of the Sultan's Armed Forces 1964–67', 31.
51. Fiennes, *Where Soldiers Fear to Tread*, 61.
52. Sultan's Armed Forces Headquarters, Bait-al-Falaj, Muscat, 'The Dhofar Lessons', Section 8, Some Misconceptions on Dhofar, 1972, Graham Collection GB165-0327, Box 2/2, MECA.
53. McKeown, 'Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance', 46.
54. Beasant, *Oman*, 104.
55. For examples of SAF tactics under Sultan Said see Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins*, 182 or Thwaites, 'The Dhofar Campaign, 1967–70', 7–8.
56. Lewis, 'The Story of the Sultan's Armed Forces 1964–67', 33.
57. Pimlott, 'The Dhofar Campaign, 1970–1975', 30.
58. SAF Report, 'Dhofar Ops as of Jan 70', Thwaites Collection GB 0099, Box 1/2, LHCMA.
59. British involvement in the coup is conventional wisdom, however the British government's actual role in Sultan Said's overthrow remains unclear. By 1970 it had become clear to London

that Sultan Said was an obstacle to victory in Dhofar, and therefore the overall plan to withdraw forces from the region. At the same time, it was recognized that no change of government would occur in Oman without the acquiescence of the British officers seconded to the Sultan's service. As Qaboos became increasingly vocal in his criticism of his father, it appears that expatriate officers were instructed by the British government not to stand in Qaboos' way if he sought to takeover power. There is no question, however, that Qaboos received active assistance from British officers including the SAF's Senior Intelligence Officer (who had been a classmate of Qaboos' at Sandhurst) as well as other expatriates such as Hugh Oldman, the Military Secretary. The degree to which these local personnel were acting of their own accord is uncertain. Nevertheless, from London's point of view, such a controlled change of government was deemed superior to a genuine overthrow of Said by a popular uprising. Townsend, *Oman*, 73–5. This level of complicity falls short of active endorsement or the claims of some that Said was brought down by a conspiracy hatched in Whitehall. For the latter view, see Beasant, *Oman*, 112–19. For evidence that British officers in Oman knew that some kind of planning was underway in the period before the coup, see Fiennes, *Where Soldiers Fear to Tread*, 25.

60. 'The Salalah Coup', Graham Collection GB165-0327, Box 3/5, MECA.
61. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 72. An article in *The Economist* from the period puts the number of British servicemen in Oman at 750 with '300 RAF and Royal Artillery regulars guarding the air base at Salalah, 160 officers seconded to the Sultan's armed forces, about 170 more on contract to the Sultan and about 100 men of the Special Air Service'. 'The Sultan's Dhofar War', 52. The small size of the force committed to Oman should not be taken as an indication that the conflict was viewed in London as a matter of little importance. Success in Oman was critical to British foreign policy goals in the region, but that success would have to be achieved subtly. As an example of the importance attached to Oman, take the deployment of the two squadrons of the SAS. This force accounted for nearly half of the entire regiment at a time when their specialized skills were also needed in Germany, Northern Ireland and elsewhere.
62. Donald Hawley, 'Recollections of Muscat, Part II', *Journal of the Sultan's Armed Forces Association*, no. 43 (April 1994). Accessed on CD-Rom at MECA.
63. Hereford 22 SAS HQ, 'An Outline Plan to Restore the Situation in Dhofar Using Special Air Service Regiment Troops', 6 April 1970, FCO 8/1437, NAUK. For a further discussion of the strategy of 'Operation Storm' see Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins*, 183–4 and Jeapes, *SAS Secret War*, 31–3.
64. De la Billière, *Looking for Trouble*, 269–70.
65. J.D.C. Graham, 'The Sultan's Armed Forces: March 1970 to September 1972, Part II Autumn 1970 to Spring 1971', *Sultan's Armed Forces Association Newsletter*, no. 32 (December 1983), 50.
66. 'SAF Training Regiment', *Sultan's Armed Forces Association Newsletter*, no. 9 (June 1972), 26.
67. *Ibid.*, 37.
68. *Ibid.*, 26.
69. Sultan's Armed Forces Training Regiment, 'Framework for Omani Officers' Promotion Exams', 15 March 1972, Graham Collection GB165-0327, Box 1/4, MECA.
70. Graham, 'The Sultan's Armed Forces: March 1970 to September 1972, Part II Autumn 1970 to Spring 1971', 50.
71. Jeapes, *SAS Secret War*, 30–1 and Memo by A.A. Acland, 'SAS in Dhofar', 1 February 1971, FCO 8/1688, NAUK.
72. Letter from Lt. Col. W.M.L. Adler, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to J.H.A. Thompson, Ministry of Defence, 'SAF Build-Up', 8 July 1970, FCO 8/1437, NAUK.
73. Umm al Ghawarif Camp (HQ Dhofar Brigade), 'CSAF's Review of the Situation in the Sultanate, July 1971', 17 July 1971, Graham Collection GB165-0327, Box 3/6, MECA.
74. Jeapes, *SAS Secret War*, 53–4.
75. Townsend, *Oman*, 102.
76. Ranulph Fiennes, 'Under a Foreign Flag', *Daily Telegraph Magazine*, 23 April 1971, 32.
77. Author correspondence with Bill de Bass, who served with the 55 Field Surgical Team (FST) at RAF Salalah.
78. Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 37.
79. A discussion of the medical strategy can be found in Arkless, *Secret War*, 64–5.
80. Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins*, 185.

81. De la Billière, *Looking for Trouble*, 270.
82. Ibid.; Geraghty, *Who Dares Wins*, 185.
83. Acland, 'SAS in Dhofar'.
84. Jeapes, *SAS Secret War*, 36.
85. Graham, 'The Sultan's Armed Forces: March 1970 to September 1972, Part II Autumn 1970 to Spring 1971', 51.
86. Jeapes, *SAS Secret War*, 164.
87. McKeown, 'Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance', 70.
88. Graham, 'The Sultan's Armed Forces: March 1970 to September 1972, Part II Autumn 1970 to Spring 1971', 51.
89. Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 32.
90. Telegram no. 1 from Washington to Consulate General Muscat, 'Helicopters for Muscat', 20 October 1969, FCO 8/1091, NAUK.
91. Defence Policy Staff, 'United Kingdom Defence Activity in Oman During 1973, Appendix 1: Guidelines for UK Defence Activity in Oman', 31 October 1972, FCO 46/835, NAUK.
92. See the various communications between the Ministry of Defence, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Embassy in Muscat contained in FCO 8/1687, NAUK.
93. Letter from Mr J.F. Rickard, Ministry of Defence, to Lt. Col. W.M.L. Adler, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 16 May 1969, FCO 8/1091, NAUK.
94. Letter from Tom Bridges, Prime Minister's Office, to Anthony Acland, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 22 August 1972, FCO 8/1857, NAUK.
95. Note from F.A. Heaton, Treasury, to A.E. Davidson, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'Military Assistance to Oman', 6 February 1973, NAUK.
96. Donald Hawley, 'Recollections of Muscat, Part I', *Journal of the Sultan's Armed Forces Association*, no.42 (March 1993). Accessed on CD-Rom at MECA; Townsend, *Oman: The Making of the Modern State*, 87.
97. Under the Nixon Doctrine, the United States had provided significant amounts of military equipment and training to Iran in order to bolster its ability to police the Gulf region and protect American interests in the area.
98. *New York Times*, 31 December 1973.
99. McKeown, 'Britain and Oman: The Dhofar War and Its Significance', 70.
100. Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 33–4.
101. Headquarters, 'The Dhofar Lessons', Section 7, Own Forces in Dhofar.
102. Akehurst, *We Won a War*, 63–4.
103. Ibid., 28.
104. Jeapes, *SAS Secret War*, 164.
105. Ibid., 230.
106. Cf. Waghelstein, 'Ruminations of a Pachyderm or What I Learned in the Counterinsurgency Business', 360–78.
107. Sultan's Armed Forces Headquarters, Bait-al-Falaj, Muscat, 'Assessment of the Situation by Major General Tim Creasey Commander Sultan's Armed Force', 16 October 1972, FCO 46/835, NAUK.
108. Ibid.
109. Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning*, 165.
110. Purdon, *List the Bugle*, 218.
111. I am grateful to Dr Richard Steward of the US Army Center for Military History for pointing this out.
112. Lawrence, 'Twenty-Seven Articles'.
113. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 163.
114. There was a genuine concern among some British soldiers on the ground that if too much modern equipment was transferred to Oman, it would have the effect of making the local soldiers 'soft' and less effective as they became more reliant on technology and orthodox Western military practices rather than the native techniques that were deemed more appropriate to the terrain and region. This concern particularly applied to the irregular *firqat*. De la Billière, *Looking for Trouble*, 267.
115. See the discussions contained in 'UK Arms Sales to Oman' FCO 8/2234, FCO 8/2235, and FCO 8/2236, NAUK.
116. Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 57.

117. Hawley, 'Recollections of Muscat, Part I'. Accessed on CD-Rom at MECA.
118. For a discussion of methods of coordinating civil and military efforts in counterinsurgency, in the context of the Malayan Emergency, see Ladwig, 'Managing Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Malaya'.
119. Purdon, *List the Bugle*, 276–7.
120. For a general critique that external aid simply maintains the status quo in a developing nation by entrenching the position of those already in power, see Bauer, *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion*, 100–110.
121. For example, *The National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, issued in November 2005, identifies the building of Iraqi security forces as a key step to defeating the insurgency there.

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