

This poem was published in [The Small Wars Journal blog](#) in April 2014. It is based on Fred Kaplan's book *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War* and how General David Petraeus and others re-wrote Army Counterinsurgency Operations. The veteran Army reviewers responded to Jack poetically. Their response is after Jack's poem.

The Insurgents

Jack McCourt – May 2013

SecDef and staff stormed into the room;
Three Generals stood, as SecDef's stern voice boomed;
 "I need unilateral consensus;
 Something not too contentious;
A warfare strategy that will keep us from doom."

 "As you know, tensions grow in Iraq.
The President demands a solid plan of attack;
 So to each of you three;
 Keep in mind WMD;
Give me your views, and please keep fiction from fact."

 The 1st General then boldly confided;
 This war is so clearly one-sided;
 Massive firepower I've found;
 With plenty of boots-on-the-ground;
Will end this war easily, he dismissively chided.

 "I see, SecDef snarled with derision;
 But your view, it lacks insight and vision;
T'would make the war unnecessarily costly;
 But what I detest mostly;
Is a lack of weapons with technical precision."

 The 2nd General, with a flair for sensation;
Said "I recommend we adopt a new transformation;
 JDAMs and stealth UAVs;
 Can find the enemy effortlessly;
And obliterate terrorists from this troubled 3rd world nation."

“I agree SecDef added with fanfare;
It’s simply a Revolution in Military Affairs;
Why, we could fire-and-forget;
And be one-hundred percent on target;
With a predator constantly armed in the air.”

Then the 3rd General clearly depicted;
“On this scenario, we are strategically conflicted;
In such an emergency;
I’ll say it, “Insurgency”;
We need new warfare guidelines, ones previously restricted.”

“To what I preach, do not recoil with hysteria;
But this war meets all the COIN criteria;
T’is not shock-and-awe;
Above all, not MOOTWA;
Think *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* by Lawrence of Arabia.”

“Are you serious, did I hear right,” SecDef cried;
“This is nothing like what you’ve described;
We want accuracy, speed;
That’s my motto, my creed;
On COIN strategy, this Dude will not abide.”

But long after all was said and done;
Not when the Prez said the Iraq War was won;
It was COIN disciples;
Those Galula archetypals;
Who lead us to this COIN reformation.

Of Petraeus, and Nagl and Crane;
Note their efforts were never in vain;
They persevered, sometimes fought;
Sometimes won, sometimes not;
But in the end, ‘twas for all of us, gain.

From the Army Reviewer

McCourt's doggerel is one big question mark,
Why do it? Because of a lark?
The book is by now pretty old,
King David still rakes in the gold,
But has SWJ finally jumped the shark?

Kaplan's tome is a fat load of twaddle.
E.g., it overlooks our Afghan boondoggle.
Petraeus is shown only in the best light,
A messiah! A god! No, a golden knight!
But he's really just a bony John Nagl.

Too bad Kaplan doesn't understand DIME,
American blood and treasure and time.
Like Tom Ricks, he penned a best seller,
Like Tom Ricks, it was more crap than stellar.
So tuck him, or some other verb that might rhyme

Now, before you say I'm hidden behind a mask,
Taking me and my anonymity to task,
I'll confess that I'm Carl Prine,
My words? Pearls before swine!
And, yeah, "The Insurgents" drove me to a flask.