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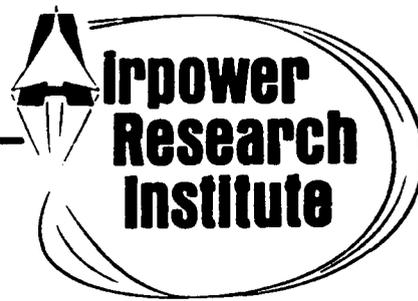
**POLICY AND STRATEGY  
 FOUNDATIONS  
 FOR  
 LOW-INTENSITY WARFARE**

CENTER FOR AEROSPACE DOCTRINE, RESEARCH, AND EDUCATION  
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**POLICY AND STRATEGY FOUNDATIONS  
FOR LOW-INTENSITY WARFARE**

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## ABSTRACT

In deciding when and how to apply force against terrorism and insurgency, the Defense establishment understandably seeks "some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress," but public support begins with public understanding. Instructive policy guidance is a crucial first step in creating a well-informed nation as a safeguard against inappropriate action or lack of action at the decision-making level. It is in our vital interests to establish a correct policy framework that clarifies for the general public and decision-making body alike the principles, objectives, and potential impact of terrorism and third world insurgency.

A policy framework focusing on the internal dynamics of revolution should also serve as a foundation for the development of future defense strategies, doctrines, and force structures for this type of conflict. A US strategy for counterrevolutionary warfare should include security assistance training and advisory efforts that carefully integrate military operations into the social, economic, psychological, and political initiatives of host nations. The United States and defending regimes should consider the possibility of assembling single, integrated security defense task forces from appropriate elements of the joint services and other executive agencies, departments, and independent establishments of their respective governments.

# POLICY AND STRATEGY FOUNDATIONS FOR LOW-INTENSITY WARFARE

## Introduction

I want to express my sincere appreciation to the Club Condorcet in Paris and to the National Strategy Information Center in Washington for inviting me to speak on this important subject, and it is an important subject. Our meeting here was prompted by our mutual concern over the origins, manifestations, and implications of dark war, those types of conflict that we refer to in the United States as Low-Intensity Warfare. For my own part, I want to contribute to this meeting by discussing with you the foundations for policy and strategy development in the low-intensity realm. These foundations, by whatever means they are derived, will ultimately play a crucial role in defining our national priorities and in ultimately shaping our defense postures for countering the low-intensity threats of insurgency, revolution, and terrorism.

I want to emphasize here that my opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States government, the Department of Defense, or the United States Air Force. In addressing these issues, I am only relating to you the results of my own research into a national security problem that often escapes the understanding and sympathy of the general public.

## Insurgency and Revolution

The internal dynamics of revolution and its potential impact on the strategic interests of free world democracies are only dimly perceived by a voting public who must ultimately bring to power their decision-making bodies. Accurate, instructive policy guidance is a crucial first step in creating a well-informed people who will understand and willingly support the difficult decisions that face us in the future. In the United States, the defense establishment understandably seeks "some reasonable assurance that we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in the Congress"; and public support begins with public understanding. That understanding is something we all are reaching for in this conference and in other conferences around the world. It is in our vital interests that we establish the foundations for a correct policy framework, clarifying for the general public and the decision-making body alike the principles and objectives of insurgency and counterinsurgency. As applied to policy formulation, that clarification should also function as a foundation for the development of future defense strategies, doctrines, and force structures. I want to emphasize here that the strategies and doctrines I'm talking about are not just those of the military. I'm talking about nationally and even internationally coordinated efforts to combine the specialized capabilities of civilian and military agencies. As I will explain in a

moment, the problems of insurgency and revolution are multi-dimensional; and so are the solutions.

### Terrorism

Our reaction to nonterritorial, international terrorism seems to be more aggressive than it is for countering insurgency and revolutionary warfare, though opinions differ over the best way to counter the terrorist threat. The threat of international terrorism is more clearly perceived than it is for local, internal conflicts in seemingly remote corners of the world. Terrorism, after all, touches each one of us in an awful way because it targets innocent citizens (with no warning) anywhere in the world. For many of us in the industrialized west, revolution and insurgency do not pose this type of threat, at least not yet.

While the terrorist threat is understood by the public in far more concrete terms, its causes, motivations, and future directions are very obscure to most of us, and this is where the problem begins. Terrorism is commonly understood as criminal activity by crackpots and radical splinter groups whose initiatives are aimed primarily at embarrassing the United States and her allies and at extorting limited concessions from government agencies and multinational corporations. This view of terrorism is correct as far as it goes, but it is superficial. It lacks the critical insights that must be applied to the understanding and support of national policies and

strategies to defend our future security interests against terrorism. It is a view that fails to recognize the fact that international terrorism is rapidly assuming the proportions of protracted warfare and even revolution itself. Again, it is in our vital interests to establish a policy framework, clarifying for everyone the causes and motivations of terrorism within the sociopolitical context of those regions where this type of conflict originates.

### The Threat

The foundations of policy and strategy for low-intensity warfare begin with a realistic assessment of the threat. During the remainder of this presentation, I will limit my remarks to one aspect of the threat--the guerrilla warfare stage of insurgency and revolution. I have limited myself for three reasons. The first reason is, of course, the time restraint. Secondly, there is general agreement at the Department of Defense level and among professional writers on this subject that insurgency is the most likely form of armed conflict threatening US security interests overseas in the foreseeable future. Finally, insurgency is characterized at the low-intensity level by guerrilla warfare. Insurgencies are multistage affairs that can proceed from an initial organization, recruiting, and training phase through guerrilla offensives to some form of limited conventional warfare. Even limited conventional wars can be fought at the high-intensity level through the

traditional techniques of fire and maneuver, and that level of conflict is not on our agenda today.

Guerrilla warfare is an important stage of insurgency, a prelude, in some cases, to conventional operations that will ultimately be launched to crush or seize the main forces of an incumbent regime. It is the crucial opening move that secures the time, the physical maneuvering space, and the additional resources for a much larger, more destructive war. It is a major aspect of those conflicts that are most likely to threaten our strategic and economic interests in the emerging nations. Some insurgencies will be born of revolution. Others will bear the distinct imprint of professional cadres operating outside the revolutionary mandates of public support. Many of these insurgencies will be politically grounded in Marxist-Leninist principles. Some will find their origin in Arab socialism, Islamic fundamentalism, and ethnic confrontations. Many of them will be Soviet inspired and supported. Almost all of them will occur in the lesser-developed nations. When these insurgencies are successful, most of them will alter the system of global alliances in ways that are generally detrimental to the United States and her remaining allies.

## The Soviet Role

The Soviet role in third world revolution should be clarified at the outset because it has an important bearing on the development of correct policies and strategies for countering this type of conflict. Modern insurgencies that possess, or aspire to, a revolutionary foundation are not purely manifestations of Marxist-Leninist ideology. The wellsprings of revolt run far deeper than bare ideological theories. Insurgency is the violent means of either forcing or preventing changes that impinge on the perceived values of human life. Typically, insurgency is the means of accelerating the processes of political change, cultural development, and modernization. In such cases, revolutionary movements are aimed at eliminating economic, social, and political disparities in social orders that have not completed the modernization process. In other instances, insurgency may be the only means of defeating the processes of modernization that threaten cultural autonomy and traditional ways of life. Many of these insurgencies will occur with or without Soviet inspiration or help, and some of them will succeed even if the Soviets are not actively involved. Even without the presence of insurgency, the revolutionary aspirations of many lesser developed nations (those that seek modernization) will be carried forward, and in some instances, realized under the influence of expanding communications, education, and technology. The process is probably inevitable, but only as a social

phenomenon; the inevitability has nothing to do with Lenin's political theories or the highly questionable metaphysics of determinism, dialectical materialism, and classless societies in Marxist philosophy.

One of the great tragedies of our time, however, is that modern revolution finds its most willing support and encouragement in totalitarian models of Soviet origin. By providing the inspirational catalyst and material resources for revolution and by furnishing political-ideological models for revolutionary discipline and organization, the Soviets have attempted to align themselves with the side that will eventually prevail, indeed, would have prevailed anyway given enough time. This is called "picking a winner." In many cases, the Soviets have hitched the red star to forces of change that could eventually draw the third world into the modern era. We can not deny forces of change. We can, however, look for democratic alternatives to Marxist-Leninist models, and by doing so, deny the Soviet projection of power into geographic areas that are vital to our security interests.

Unhitching the red star from the forces of revolutionary change is a critical objective. It should not, however, be the key issue in strategy development for counterinsurgency. If we focus our operational strategies too narrowly on the Soviet role in revolutionary conflict and fail to address the internal dynamics of revolution

itself, the threat of Soviet-oriented domination of the third world by Marxist-Leninist regimes will only increase. That threat is already significant.

#### Diplomatic, Economic, and Psychosocial Pressures

Revolutionary warfare cannot be defined or characterized in terms of military actions alone. In addition to even highly specialized military actions, there are diplomatic, social, economic, political, and psychological dimensions to revolution and counterrevolution that place this type of conflict outside the realm of traditional military responses. One might argue that diplomatic, social, economic, political, and psychological pressures are inherent components of all conflicts involving force projection; and indeed, they are. As components of revolutionary warfare, however, these pressures bear a different relationship to the use of force. In revolutionary warfare, they characterize the basic nature of the conflict itself. They are the primary weapons used in achieving the overall revolutionary objectives. In revolution-counterrevolution, the Clausewitzian "center of gravity" for both the insurgent and the defending government shifts from the defeat and destruction of the enemy armed forces to the capture of the sociopolitical system. The primary objective is political mobilization.

## Insurgent Strategy

The insurgent fights a different kind of war, one that falls outside the accepted norms or "rules of engagement" for democratic societies. Political action is the ground upon which the insurgency stands or falls. In most cases, the insurgent must win politically if he is to win militarily. Conversely, effective countermeasures require sufficient domestic and international political backing to sustain the application of military force.

Political and military actions of the insurgent movement are likely to be inextricably combined into a single-minded enterprise that uses psychological pressure to gain major advantages. By applying psychological pressure through an international political campaign, the insurgent movement may even gain its objective without winning a military victory. Such unity of political and military effort is not characteristic of our own approach to warfare. The structure of bureaucratic institutions and the traditional perceptions of war in open, democratic societies do not easily accommodate themselves to such an approach; and it is difficult for us to respond in kind. I would not suggest an alternative that undermines the democratic foundations of our governments, but we must understand the basic strategy of Marxist-Leninist-led revolutions.

In almost all cases, revolutionary violence directed against allied and friendly nations of the third world is accompanied by an intense psychological and political effort

that only increases in effectiveness when the United States attempts to intervene or assist with military force, particularly at the higher levels of intensity. The insurgent's "battlefield" extends from the cane fields of Nicaragua and El Salvador to the international media and various front organizations in the free world, from the back alleys of Beirut to the assembly room of the United Nations. His weapons are deception and disinformation, polite euphemisms for a highly evolved system of institutionalized psychological warfare. His purpose is to influence the actions of democratically elected governments by manipulating the political and moral sensitivities of the people who bring these governments to power. If, for instance, the insurgent is opposed by a regime or group supported by the United States, he carries the conflict into the international arena in an effort to adjust free world sentiment to create a political climate that forecloses the option of US economic and military assistance. In the United States and in many other countries, public opinion has a major influence on the provision of economic and military assistance, particularly in regard to third world conflicts where political-military objectives are poorly defined and highly ambiguous. Clearly, only well-informed opinions can serve our nations. This is one of the main reasons why it is necessary to develop an appropriate policy framework for open, declaratory statements that educate the

people of the free world on the reality, nature, and long-term impact of modern insurgency. The public should understand how guerrilla warfare in remote corners of the world fits into the whole scheme of insurgency and how that type of conflict can lead to larger, much more destructive wars that will eventually touch each one of us. They should be told how the Soviets and their client states turn our moral convictions and perceptions of "just wars" against us and why the loss of third world nations to Marxist-style regimes will eventually degrade the security of the entire free world.

#### An Operational Strategy for Counterrevolutionary Warfare

A strategy for counterrevolutionary warfare must be founded on the stark realities of this type of conflict. One of these realities is that a government's inability to satisfy the social, economic, and political needs of its people is a major aspect of the threat. A second reality is that decisive military actions at the low-intensity level will be conducted on the ground as an adjunct to a much larger security defense program involving multiple government agencies. An operational strategy for security defense operations in a counterrevolutionary setting must include more than warfighting capabilities. A purely military approach, in fact, is unlikely to achieve a successful termination of hostilities in a revolutionary conflict that can move from a recruiting, training, and

organizing stage to guerrilla warfare, then to conventional warfare and back through the preceding stages as the situation demands. The point I want to make here is that the reversible, multistage progression of revolutionary war must be understood as more than a mere continuum of violence from which we simply read off varying degrees of intensity along a so-called spectrum of conflict.

Insurgent warfare differs so fundamentally from other types of conflict that effective countermeasures often lie outside the range of conventional response. In countering insurgency at the low-intensity level, we are not dealing with a form of conflict that we can respond to in the same fashion as conventional warfare only with fewer assets and more restrictions on the use of deadly force. Revolutionary warfare is a different type of conflict demanding a set of highly specialized responses that treat the armed conflict phase as only one manifestation of the far deeper and more complex problems of revolution itself. Eliminating armed insurgents is not, in itself, a "solution" to revolutionary war. If you defeat the insurgent at the level of conventional war, he simply reverts to the guerrilla warfare stage. If you defeat him at the guerrilla warfare level, he moves into the shadows of underground life; and the revolution lives on. The application of military force must be aimed at promoting and protecting the host government while it eliminates the social, economic, and political tensions that may have caused the revolution in the first

place. If social, economic, and political reforms are required, the counterinsurgency strategy should be aimed at holding the conflict to the lowest possible level of violence while these reforms are being established. If the reforms are, in fact, established, the host government has a chance of winning. If the reforms are not established, the chances of winning against a insurgency that has a strong revolutionary foundation are poor at best.

I have specified a "strong revolutionary foundation" here because not all insurgencies are underwritten by a broad, revolutionary mandate. A modern insurgency might, for instance, be dominated by Cuban-trained, Soviet-backed professional Marxists whose military operations are underwritten by specific minorities seeking political power or autonomy. The political-military cadres that lead this type of insurgency want reform, but they want it their way. What they seek is revolt and the establishment of a Marxist-Leninist regime.

We must not, however, assume that a successful revolution depends on the disaffection of multitudes rising in support of the cause, for it does not. And we must not discredit, without good cause, the possibility of a revolutionary foundation in any insurgency. A successful counterinsurgency strategy will take this possibility (or fact) into account. Revolutionary warfare involves at least some degree of support by the people, and this is where the

interests of the insurgent and the government merge. Each side must attempt to win as much of that support as possible. The people are the center of gravity. This is why it is often said that insurgent warfare is essentially political. It is the reason why we should speak of winning the revolution, not defeating it. It is also the reason why military operations are only a necessary adjunct to the social, economic, and psychological dimensions of what is basically a political struggle. Military actions against an insurgent movement will probably not succeed unless those actions fit directly into a strategy aimed at manipulating what Edward Luttwak calls the "political variables." For it is these variables that ultimately determine the opponent's will and material means to persevere during the military phase of the conflict.

Manipulating the political variables is a crucial aspect of the host country's security defense planning. At the low-intensity, guerrilla warfare level, the insurgent is fighting a politically oriented psychological operations war on multiple fronts. He must somehow win (or control) the population within his immediate area of operations. He must, in some cases, acquire outside political and logistical support, and he must eliminate similar support to the defending regime. If he fails on any one of these fronts, his chances of progressing to the conventional warfare stage are reduced considerably. If he wins the political war on all three fronts, his chances of success

are almost assured. Likewise, applying a purely military "solution" to the insurgent threat will probably fail. The insurgent must be engaged on all three political fronts as well as the military front with the full force of a nationally coordinated security defense program that serves the combined social, economic, psychological, political, and military needs of the host country.

A broadly based security defense program that politically isolates the insurgent during the critical opening stages of the conflict is probably the cheapest, most effective, low-risk option we can devise. The object is to neutralize the basic cause and justifications underlying his revolutionary ambitions. To bring such a program into reality, the defending regime should consider the possibility of assembling a single, integrated security defense task force from appropriate elements of the military and other executive agencies, departments, and independent establishments of the government. Integrating the plans and operations of these agencies should be established as a lead element of operational strategy for counterrevolutionary warfare.

#### A Strategy for Security Assistance

In mounting a defense against armed revolution, the host country and its supporting allies will be entering a protracted conflict where victory may be possible only through a process of social, economic, and political change

that is just as revolutionary as the revolutionary ambitions of the opposing side. Assuming in good faith that such a process is possible and that it will eventually occur, economic and military assistance (if it is required) should be directed towards encouraging and supporting an internal solution that captures the political initiative from the revolutionary movement. Providing specialized security assistance designed to help others help themselves is probably the best means of buying time for this process to take place. At the level of guerrilla warfare, it may be the best means of protecting the host government while it works on a convincing answer to the problems that lie deep within the revolutionary foundations of the conflict.

The initial thrust of outside assistance to nations under siege by revolutionary guerrilla forces should include training and, where possible, advisory efforts that lead to the careful integration of military operations into the host nation's social, economic, psychological, and political initiatives. The military effort should never stand outside these initiatives or be divorced from them in any way. The social, economic, psychological, and political implications of military actions, particularly those requiring the use of deadly force, must be clearly understood and correctly exploited by the defending government; and it is, moreover, the defending government that must ultimately carry the counterinsurgency effort to a successful conclusion.

With appropriate security assistance that leads to a coordinated national defense program, the armed forces of the host nation are likely to be more suitable than outside intervention forces for dealing with insurgents who operate among local population groups, at least at the low-intensity level. It is unlikely that outside assistance or intervention forces acting alone will succeed against indigenous, "terrain-wise" guerrillas in a foreign setting. In that setting, outside intervention forces are aliens whose presence may not be understood, and may be resented, by local population groups upon whom the counterinsurgency forces must depend for intelligence and other forms of support. A military assistance force must, therefore, possess extraordinary skills in coordinating military means with political objectives and must be capable of imparting these skills to foreign nationals.

The problem of helping other nations devise multi-dimensional operational strategies that incorporate social, economic, psychological, and political initiatives as well as military actions may find part of its solution in the development of basic strategies for security assistance by outside support agencies. Integrating the security assistance plans and operations of the various military services and civilian agencies is one of the possibilities worth considering. Incorporating this unified effort into basic security assistance strategy would provide general guidance for the subsequent development of more specific

operational strategies for particular countries and conflict situations. Such a move would also establish a guiding foundation for developing appropriate organizations and force structures to deal with insurgent conflicts at the low-intensity level. From this general reference point, specific strategies will be more apparent, and it will be much easier to respond to the needs of others at the right time with the right kinds of assistance.

### Summary

Today, many of us are looking for the ways and means to counter the threat of guerrilla insurgency in the third world. In developing our approach, we must look for solutions that will extinguish the revolutionary fires that burn in the heart of insurgency. In some cases, we must seek opportunities to penetrate the guerrilla's world with social, economic, and political programs that will help local population groups achieve a robust sense of national identity. In a guerrilla war, countermeasures taken by the host government and outside support agencies alike should be taken at the earliest possible opportunity to decrease the likelihood of the conflict escalating to higher levels of violence. For it is only prior to or during the early, low-intensity stages of the insurgency that effective countermeasures can be applied through social, economic, and political means. If that opportunity is missed, there will be little chance of moving the revolution back to a less

violent stage and recapturing it. Countermeasures by both the host government and outside support agencies must minimize the political risks of active military involvement and avoid the application of force at levels that are both politically unacceptable and tactically inappropriate. In all cases, we must look for local or regional solutions and design our assistance programs accordingly. Finally, the success of these assistance programs will depend upon the wisdom contained in our defense policies and strategies. That wisdom, I believe, will be supported by the people if they are properly informed.

In this brief presentation, I have attempted to indicate some of the general foundations for policy and strategy in one of the most important areas of low-intensity conflict. The challenge of revolutionary war is a matter of serious concern to all democratic societies, and I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss this issue with you. Thank You.

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