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LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT: NOT FULDA, NOT KOLA

Komer, Robert W., Maritime Strategy or Coalition Defense?,  
Abt Books, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984. UA23.K746

One should open this book with the understanding that the title is less a question than a quest: once more an old warrior who still believes in rationalization, standardization, and interoperability has charged at a windmill of national strategy. I too am an ancient knight of the Pentagon (albeit less long of tooth than Blowtorch Bob), and like him I remain a true believer in the proposition that the ultimate purpose for all armed force is control of land and people. Moreover, I hold that the cultural forms with which Komer and other American strategists are burdened --our several navies, our disparate air forces, our many armies-- are but means to that end. Like Admiral Harry Train, former SACLANT, I believe that even a very good navy is unlikely to win a war, but that an inferior navy can lose one. Like Komer, I deplore propensities to march boldly into the 21st Century enlightened by concepts attuned to the technology and politics of the 19th. And I concur that if future defense budgets will be constrained --and you can bet they will be, Sancho-- then unbalanced multiyear commitments to shipbuilding will inevitably cut into the annually disposable monies needed to underwrite the strategy the U.S. ought to pursue in a world of growing interdependency.

I need not add my feeble lance to Ambassador Komer's. But I feel obligated to express one dissent, and then to submit an ameliorating corollary:

Continentalist Komer, in his eagerness to get off a salvo at the new navalists, wrote:

*... "Loss" of Cuba, Angola, Ethiopia or Nicaragua cannot be said to have undermined our strategic position, however much these losses may have inconvenienced us (!) This is not to suggest that the United States should ignore third-area conflict, only that our commitments should not be allowed to outrun our interests, as happened in Vietnam. Indeed the legacy of Vietnam*

*has been to make it more difficult for the U.S. Congress and public to contemplate limited interventions than a major U.S.-Soviet conflict(?)...*

The exclamation points are mine. Angola and Ethiopia I am prepared to accept as inconsequential, but Cuba and Nicaragua are quite different matters, for what happens in the Caribbean Basin affects our national interests directly and significantly.

Allow me to cite five such interests:

### **1. Support for Democracy**

The United States has an interest in preserving democracy among its immediate neighbors. It does make a difference whenever societies so close geographically, culturally, and ethnically to our own are forced to depart from the norms of participatory democracy, the rule of law, and respect for basic human rights to submit to authoritarian government. It is not easy for Americans to countenance the same relationship with such a government as we maintain with those who patently share with us our trust in popular sovereignty. And this is not a matter of preference alone. It is a reflection of our appreciation that, historically, it is difficult to cite much of permanent value that authoritarian governments have achieved in this hemisphere, and easy to trace economic and social tragedy to interventions in the political process by individuals or small groups whose claim to power rested on the possession of guns. Unfortunately, in the United States today many citizens do not understand that the struggle in Central America is fomented by those who believe in force rather than franchise, in bullets rather than ballots, who strive to impose by arms their will upon resisting peoples. In this sense the present strife resembles struggles of the past. But today to that problem of generations in Latin America there has been added the threat of Communist neocolonialism.

The U.S.S.R. pours \$4 billion into Cuba each year, much of this to create a huge military establishment capable of furnishing forces for Soviet clients in Africa. Nicaragua over the past three years has received over \$500 millions in economic aid, and more than \$500 million worth of military equipment and military construction.

During those years, under constant Cuban tutelage, the

Sandinista comandantes have:

- \*Renewed traditional Nicaraguan claims to the territory of their neighbors.
- \*Supported armed subversion against Honduras and El Salvador.
- \*Imposed universal conscription, and raised armed forces of over 100,000, of which half are kept under arms.
- \*Altered fundamentally the arms balance in the region with an armored brigade strike force of over 100 tanks, as many armored personnel carriers, 50 large artillery pieces, numerous multiple rocket launchers, anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, and a profusion of motor transport.
- \*Trained pilots to fly high-performance fighters, and allowed Cubans and other foreigners to install radars and to build air bases in Nicaragua --one of which, Punta Huete, will soon be capable of supporting both jet fighters and the heaviest transports in the Bloc inventory.

The long-standing unanimous rejection by the American nations of subservience to extra-hemispheric powers, which faltered with the conversion of Cuba into a Soviet dependency, now threatens to dissolve altogether. It is a tragedy of our times that many in North and South America alike seem prepared to tolerate the consolidation of a Marxist-Leninist garrison state in Nicaragua in the image of Cuba: dominated by Cuban cadres, militarized to a crushing burden on the people, and economically and politically puppeted by the Soviet bloc. It is a tragedy of our times that the victory over the clumsy oppressions of Somoza has been betrayed, without much understanding or protest in the United States, into the hands of a small committee of venal men who have ignored their pledge to restore democracy to their people, and have instead mortgaged the future of their country to Russians, Bulgarians, East Germans, Cubans and Libyans.

The lessons of modern history are clear: once a society is dominated by a Marxist-Leninist party, democracy is dead. The new totalitarian governments of the world have been no more successful than the older Fascist states in meeting the aspirations of their people in either a material or a moral sense. The present danger is greater than that posed by

Fascism. Alexander Solzhenitsyn said it well:

*Communism is something new, unprecedented in world history...  
Communism is unregenerate...  
It stops only when it encounters a wall, even if it is only a wall of resolve...  
It will always present a danger to mankind...*

A Marxist-Leninist state is what it professes to be: authoritarian and totalitarian. Society is closed; dissent is not tolerated; the state is all encompassing. And Marxists ruthlessly maintain themselves in power. In contrast, Latin military governments have been transitory phenomena. Both are an affliction of the body politic, but while recovery from the latter is possible, the former are invariably fatal. In this hemisphere, Marxism-Leninism of the Castroist variety is distinctly militarist, and aggressively expansionist. My countrymen who abhor, as do I, military intervention in domestic politics, should remember that the Sandinista Army, the largest, most elaborately armored military force in Central America, is under direct control of the political party which exercises exclusive power over what may accurately be called a garrison state. It is very much against the interests of the United States that Nicaragua continue its course toward Cubanization, and very much against the interests of its democratic neighbors as well.

## 2. Prosperity

It is also contrary to the interests of the United States that the Caribbean region remains depressed and debt-ridden. It is the fourth largest market for U.S. goods and services--coming after the European Economic Community, Canada, and Japan--and when the Caribbean Basin is impoverished, workers in the United States lose jobs. The United States has just posted a record \$25 billion trade deficit. Moreover, banks in the United States hold debts of over \$130 billion from the Caribbean region. Prosperity for the region, then, is very much an interest of the United States.

## 3. Regulating Migration

Political violence is, of course, inimical to prosperity. But instability and poverty militate against the interests of the United States in another way: they cause migrations. One out of every two new Americans today is an immigrant, nine of ten coming from the Caribbean region, most from Central America, and most illegally. The present violence in Central America has prompted at least 1,000,000 people to immigrate to the United States. Among the American Republics today, there are only four nations with a greater

Hispanic population than the United States; by 1990 there will be only one. Many U.S. citizens are concerned whether their community can continue to absorb immigrants at the rate they have been coming from the south. But in other, less fortunate countries, refugees place unprecedented demands on social services already overtaxed by high birthrates: Costa Rica harbors Nicaraguan and Salvadoran refugees; Honduras has Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans; Panamanian leaders have talked about a "population bomb" in referring to the migrants entering their country; Mexico, Guatemala, Belize all have uprooted people in significant numbers. It is in the interests of the United States that these displacements be regularized by the restoration of peace and mutual respect among the nations of the region.

#### 4. Control of Narcotics

The latest generation of North and South Americans share a problem different from any in the past: narcotics trafficking. Today consumers in the United States spend between \$50 and 80 billion each year on illegal drugs, something like \$350 per capita, approximating the total annual per capita personal income for many nations of the region. U.S. importers of illicit drugs pay out at least twice as much as all our coffee importers. One single Caribbean nation, Colombia, furnishes one half of these illicit substances to the United States' market, as measured by putative value; by volume, more than three quarters of the cocaine sold in the U.S., three quarters of the marijuana, and much of the methaqualone comes through Colombia. It used to be commonplace to hear Latins blame those U.S. importers and consumers for this phenomenon, saying that they made it exclusively a U.S. problem. But we have all learned that large-scale narcotic rings perforce attack the moral fiber of a nation, that any nation which tolerates drug traffickers in its midst commits societal suicide, and invites the suborning of democratic political institutions, the corruption of public officials, and the devastation of education for the young. Moreover, the traffickers in drugs are conduits for subversion. It is very much in the interests of the United States to curb these vicious criminals, and to cooperate with Latin nations willing to attack narcotic distribution systems at their sources.

#### 5. U.S. National Security

The Caribbean Basin engages serious, still-compelling military interests of the United States: The Panama Canal remains a strategic defile which our security--as well as our treaty obligations to Panama--dictate that we defend. The sea lines of communications through the region carry half the peacetime commerce of the United States. In the event of an attack on NATO, 50% or more of the planned reinforcements of

18-Sep-84

men and materiel would transit the Caribbean; in a major war in the Far East, 40% would pass through the region. In this era of electronic warfare and cruise missiles, the security of the United States is substantially impaired by the Soviet air and naval facilities, listening posts, and potential jammers in Cuba, and would be further impaired were these positioned on the continental land mass.

Concerning the present violence in Central America, I agree with the report of the National Bipartisan Commission, which reached the conclusion that "...even in terms of the direct national security interests of the United States, this country has large stakes...They include preventing:

- \*A series of developments which might require us to devote large resources to defend the southern approaches to the United States, thus reducing our capacity to defend our interests elsewhere.*
- \*A potentially serious threat to our shipping lanes through the Caribbean.*
- \*A proliferation of Marxist-Leninist states that would increase violence, dislocation, and political repression in the region.*
- \*The erosion of our power to influence events worldwide that would flow from the perception that we were unable to influence vital events close to home..."*

I am keenly aware of critics who perceive that U.S. policy and presence in the region overly emphasizes military undertakings. But like the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, I see no way of separating political and economic from security measures on behalf of our interests.

But our interests are congruent with the interests of most, if not all, nations in the region: freedom, prosperity, stability, narcotics-suppression, security. Acting alone the United States can assure none of these. What we need today as never before is a regional coalition to protect those interests. At the very least, we must together build what Solshenitsyn called a "wall of resolve".

The United States can and should contribute not only resolve, but its political leadership, its wealth, and its

18-Sep-84

military power. Democracy is ascendant in Latin America, patently preferred to Marxism by most Latins. It is now time for the United States to abandon its perennial cycle of insouciance and intervention, to become involved and remain influential. The National Bipartisan Commission has recommended some \$8 billion in economic and security assistance over five years. I strongly support such a commitment, but I believe we will have to go further: we must restructure our armed forces to play their proper role in protecting such an investment. General Maxwell D. Taylor wrote in 1981 that U.S. forces "must be capable of unchallenged military superiority in the Western Hemisphere and its air-sea approaches..." U.S. military superiority in the Caribbean Basin is being directly challenged. Our friends, especially Honduras and Costa Rica, are threatened with military attack; communist-sponsored subversion is rife. Hence, I want to submit a corollary to Komer's theorem:

It will not be enough for the National Command Authorities(NCA) to decide --as Ambassador Komer suggests--between a maritime strategy based on large capital ships, and a coalition strategy based on alliances with continental powers.

The NCA will have to decide how to deal with threats to national interests less conventional than those which might be countered by bombing the Kola Peninsula or counterattacking in the Fulda Gap.

Low intensity conflict, the proper name for those threats to our interests, requires different kinds of policy instruments, and especially, different kinds of armed forces than those we have readied for contingencies like the Kola or Fulda.

The Ambassador, like the maritimists he deprecates, centers his attention on a main-force war between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. which does not involve the use of nuclear weapons. I regard such a war as improbable, not only because the forces we have structured and readied are likely to deter such an event, but because Soviet options for damaging our interests and advancing theirs without recourse to conventional confrontation are so ample that the risks and costs of the latter must seem to them comparatively unremunerative.

I trust Komer's book does not signal his alliance with the emerging "go for the jugular" school of strategy which claims to be the antithesis of that which we pursued in Korea and Southeast Asia. As a historian, and as an author-editor of the so-called Pentagon Papers, I have found this revisionism without much merit. But allow me to make the point that the 19th Century theorists so frequently quoted by that school (I hasten to report that the Ambassador is blameless in this respect) were themselves certain that nations should structure forces for lesser as well as major wars. Mahan was an enthusiast for what he termed "torpedo boats", capable of waging a guerrilla war at sea. Peter Faret said of Clausewitz that his theoretical acceptance of gradations of violence was his most impressive intellectual and psychological achievement. (Cf., Clausewitz and the State, p.380). To quote the general himself:

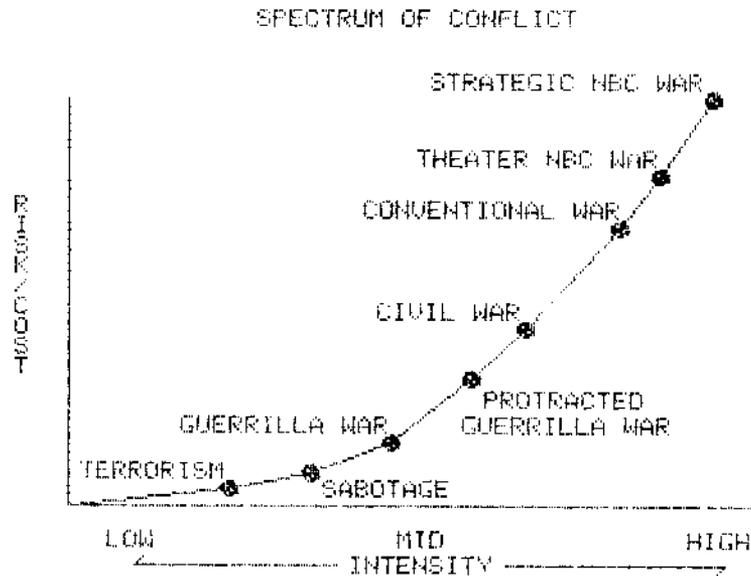
*Generally speaking, a military objective that matches the political object in scale will, if the latter is reduced, be reduced in proportion; this will be all the more so as the political object increases in predominance. Thus it follows that without any inconsistency wars can have all degrees of importance and intensity, ranging from a war of extermination down to a simple armed observation...Once this influence of the political objective on war is admitted, as it must be, there is no stopping it; consequently we must also be willing to wage such minimal wars, which consist in merely threatening the enemy, with negotiations held in reserve..(On War, Chap.1, Chap.8)*

Hence, it is classical to suggest that strategists should consider the full spectrum of war, and the force structure germane to dealing with political violence of varied intensity, risks and costs. The issues raised by Ambassador Komer demand such consideration.

Reflect for a moment on how a Soviet strategist might evaluate the events in Lebanon in recent months. While the U.S. forces there were engaged in "simple armed observation", they none the less constituted a formidable conventional presence, and a maritime presence at that. They were ejected at the cost of the lives of two fanatics, each willing to drive an explosive-laden motor vehicle against a building occupied by Americans. Moreover, since no linkage has been established with the U.S.S.R., the incidents entailed low risk. It might be logical for such a strategist to array

18-Sep-84

possible uses of political violence of varying intensity against associated risk or cost, as a kind of calculus of strategic opportunity for the Soviet Union. Were he to do so, his spectrum of war might look like this:

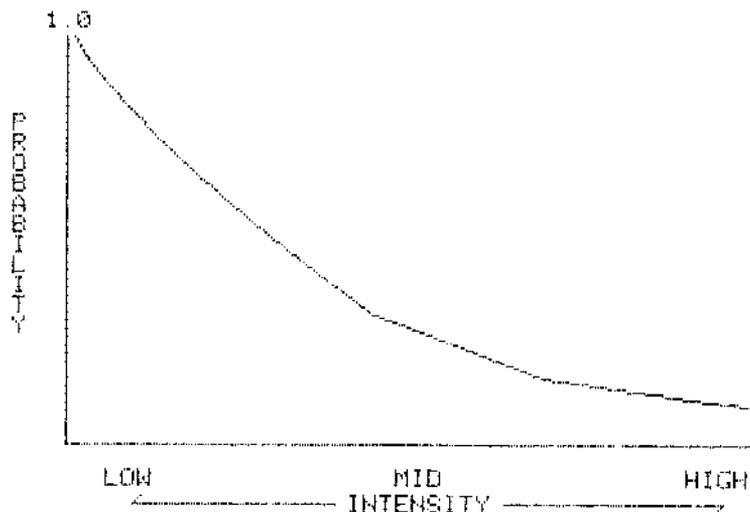


The message for our opposition is evident: if political objectives can be achieved by recourse to low intensity conflict, that is the preferred course of action.

An analogous diagram for an American strategist, who cannot contemplate aggression, should encompass the concept of probability or likelihood. I have suggested the following construct, which takes the form of the function  $I=1/P-1$ , in which Probability (P) is plotted on the ordinate, and Intensity (I) on the abscissa --N.B., the latter reflects risks and costs as well.

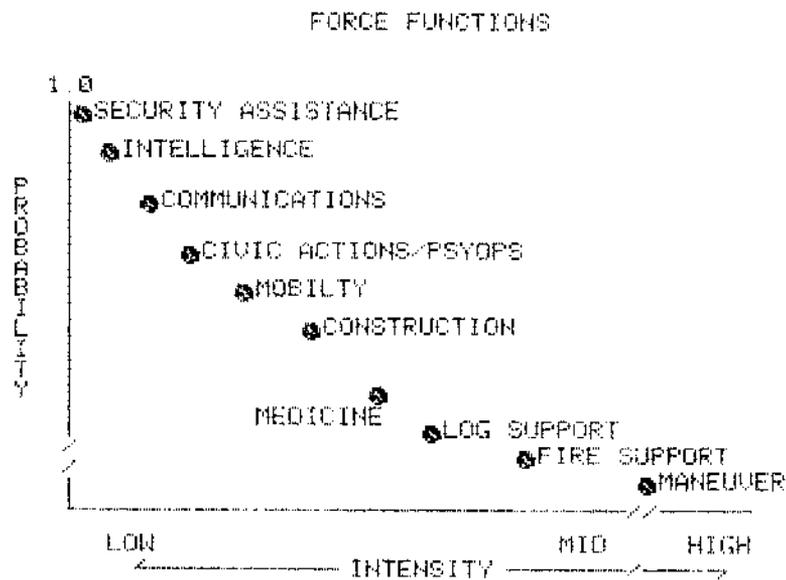
18-Sep-84

## PROBABILITY vs INTENSITY



Let me hasten to say that this diagram is not intended to illustrate what Ambassador Komer labels *the likelihood fallacy*. I agree with him that the United States cannot afford to structure or posture primarily for the most likely contingencies at the expense of the most critical ones, which he avers, is what the maritime school would have us do. His argument should have been that even very flexible sea power --read carrier battle group or Marine division/wing-- is unlikely to meet our needs in many Third World situations where U.S. interests are challenged today. And the same could be said of an armored division or an F-15 wing. No, the problem is that all or most of our armed forces are poorly structured, unready for their most probable missions, and that this mal-structuring constitutes, in my view, a grave strategic vulnerability.

To illustrate this last point, I drew up a list of force functions in low intensity conflict, arranged roughly in the order these might be called into play as the intensity of conflict were raised. Plotted on the *Probability-Intensity* paradigm, these look like this:



### SECURITY ASSISTANCE

In most situations involving low intensity threats, the U.S. response will be Security Assistance. Note that this function continued after the withdrawal of USMC forces from Lebanon, and that it is our mainstay in El Salvador. But what a weak reed! Encrusted with bureaucracy, encumbered by law, handled by the services as a *ho-hum*, *ad hoc* function for which they make few if any provisions in program, it is scarcely a deft instrument of policy. Critics of military assistance have consistently made the point that the equipment developed and procured for U.S. forces is frequently ill-suited to Third World nations, yet after four decades of experience, we persist in foreclosing the use of Department of Defense research and development funds for projects intended for foreign use. Moreover, Congress insists that grant aid recipients buy American, from service stocks. Security Assistance is highly politicized, so that seeking aid for a country with a strong domestic constituency is intrinsically different from seeking help for a Third World little-known. Many Americans, given the furor in Congress over security assistance for El Salvador, are surprised to learn that over the last ten years, that country has been voted 1.2% the amount provided Israel. Our present difficulties over the Administration's self-imposed limit on the number of American trainers in El Salvador illustrate well the constraints on the Commander-in-Chief in using funds even if they be voted. But even more important from the strategic point of view, most Security Assistance is paid out to allies as rent for American bases --e.g., Portugal, Spain, the Philippines-- or as incentives to lay aside enmity for a

neighbor --e.g., Israel and Egypt, Greece and Turkey. When these purposes are served, precious little is left, less than 20% for Fiscal Year 1985, to deal with other problems worldwide. Latin America as a whole, for example, is allocated about 3% of the total.

### INTELLIGENCE

We must have accurate intelligence to persuade Congress to provide Security Assistance, or to support other U.S. actions in low intensity conflict. Intelligence is access and influence for U.S. Ambassadors and military officers. Knowledge is literally power. Intelligence can be used as a strategic or tactical support for an ally, and our superior collection means will often be the sole recourse of a foreign government seeking to acquire an advantage in sentience over an adversary, especially if the latter employs the clandestine methods taught by the Soviets or Cubans.

But the best U.S. intelligence units are manned and equipped to collect against Soviet targets, and are often inept --especially limited by linguists-- in dealing with cultural peculiarities of Third World targets. Too, units designed to operate as part of a larger force in mid-intensity conflict are often awkwardly robust and expensive to support, politically as well as logistically, in the austere theaters of low intensity wars. This is as much true of maritime forces as of others --the day of the rust-bucket intelligence ship is long gone, and any activity which is patently USMC, now an especially attractive terrorist target, requires extra vigilance. Moreover, Army and Air Force units with missions in the Third World are often issued older, less capable, more manpower-intensive equipment, which creates problems for host nations and U.S. commanders who wish to minimize the visibility and maximize the security of intelligence collectors. Very little DoD R&D has been directed at this problem, with the result that military intelligence, which could be a decisive response to low intensity threats, remains only marginally useful.

### COMMUNICATIONS

Communications are *sine qua non* for dealing with low intensity warfare. For foreign governments under attack, access to modern communications technology can be a force multiplier. For the United States, it is essential if the plethora of U.S. government agencies in the several regional Country Teams are to be advantaged by intelligence, and are to act separately in concert with Washington, or within a region, with each other. DoD satellite relays have enabled secure voice and facsimile transmissions using portable equipment anywhere in the world. But usually U.S. embassies

do not possess such equipment, and some Ambassadors actively resist its installation. Too, our better military communications equipment is reserved for "major contingencies", and often readiness for these is cited in denying requests to support low intensity conflict.

### CIVIC ACTION AND PSYOPS

Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations units have all but disappeared from the active forces. The Army, which possesses most of these, now has 98% of its Civil Affairs, and 61% of its Psyops personnel in the reserve components. Active or reserves, these are conceptually and technologically obsolescent, bypassed by the age of television. Nonetheless, the skills called for in such units are useful in prosecuting low intensity warfare: civil-military relations, and ways and means of addressing and appealing to terrorists or insurgents. While it is true that any kind of unit can and should engage in civic action and psyops, the possibility of error is such that having trained Civil Affairs and Psyops personnel on hand would be a comfort to any commander. But men and women with these skills must be prepared to deal with specific cultures. There's another rub: few units are targeted on Third World nations. For example, despite growing manpower resources among Hispanic minorities, the services have only a handful of units with personnel capable of assisting in Latin America.

### MOBILITY

It has become almost axiomatic that tactical mobility is a prerequisite for low intensity conflict. Whenever a foreign government faces a low intensity threat, one of the first items for which it is likely to ask is helicopters, and helicopters are one of the first things a U.S. Ambassador is likely to offer. But as Security Assistance, U.S. military helicopters are expensive to acquire and to own. U.S. military trucks are no bargain, either. In any event, fixed wing intra-theater airlift might provide an equally important boost to mobility, but here the Security Assistance options are even fewer and more expensive --the U.S. services have no contemporary transport smaller than the C-130 HERCULES, which is for many countries too big, too expensive, and too complicated to fly and maintain. For example, the U.S. abandoned the C-7 CARIBOU short-take-off-and-land transport in favor of the more "efficient" C-130, an aircraft limited by available runways in Central America to only 20 to 30 airfields, vice the 1000 or so available for C-7's. Similarly, we seem to have forgotten that in most Third World countries, population clusters on coasts and rivers, where a "brown water" capability built around small boats and landing craft would be useful.

As for capabilities of U.S. services, our "brown water" maritime units are at minimal strength, and their equipment is outdated. The U.S. MARKET TIME experience in Southeast Asia is all but dissipated. In the air, despite the range and navigational aids provided for modern helicopters, we have seldom seen fit to equip them with fuel reserves or airborne refueling capabilities so that they could self-deploy over strategic ranges. Our structuring for wars where ports are commodious, and airfields are big and plentiful has provided redoubtable capabilities to deliver cargoes to those foreign countries which have the seaports for RO-RO and container ships, and the long runways and parking aprons to accommodate our C-5A and C-141 behemoths. But since most Third World nations are strapped for such facilities, getting to one of the latter is not easy, and moving onward is even more difficult. Building ports and dirt strips for use by C-130s is an option, but that takes time, and is usually beyond the engineering capability of the locals. Hence, engineers might play a crucial role in mobility, especially for intra-theater airlift.

### CONSTRUCTION

There is suprising recognition in the Third World of the value of military engineer units, with the equipment and discipline to undertake construction tasks in remote areas where security may be questionable, or in a natural disaster zone, where operations by commercial contractors is unlikely. And in any less-developed country, military engineers can dig wells, build water distribution and flood control systems, and construct the roads and bridges essential to economic progress. There is a concomitant demand for U.S. expertise in organizing and training such units. Too, given the proliferation of Soviet armor all over the world, U.S. military engineers are in demand for counter-mobility engineering. As far as force structure is concerned, 68% of U.S. Army engineers are in the reserve components -- a fact which calls into question less their readiness for low intensity conflict (many are highly skilled construction tradesmen in civil life) than their availability.

### MEDICINE

There is a comparable demand for U.S. military medics. Like our military intelligence, communications, and engineering, our military medicine is respected, even venerated, for its sophistication. Any Third World country which has a bloody war thrust upon it is likely to find that its medical establishment is unequal to the challenge of providing stabilizing treatment to soldiers when they are wounded, and evacuating them to hospitals fast enough to save lives. El Salvador is a good example: the mortality rate in

Salvadoran hospitals is commendable, but one out of every three soldiers wounded dies before he reaches a hospital; mortality overall more than three times what U.S. services would consider tolerable. Most countries have never considered seriously the concept of a medical service corps trained and equipped for the field. Here U.S. ideas and techniques can exert powerful leverage on manpower. But again, 55% of U.S. Army medics are in the reserves.

### LOGISTIC SUPPORT

If Third World notions of military medicine are outdated, their approaches to logistic support are ante-deluvian. Shortsightedness, limited managerial skills, corruption, and simple lack of organizational know-how often produces logistics which are more shambles than system, and lead to such dysfunctional practices as troops foraging on the peasantry, or commanding officers being paid cash based on unverified muster rolls. Standard field rations, bandages, batteries, boots, uniforms, load-bearing equipment and rain gear, which often could be manufactured within a given country from indigenously produced materials, usually do not exist, and there is therefore no alternative to buying expensive U.S. products, or continuing with traditional makeshift means. Here again, relatively simple production and quality-assurance technology, or such inexpensive upgrades as mini-computers for material or personnel management, usually await a U.S. assist.

### FIRE SUPPORT and MANEUVER

Finally, in this construct we have come to a use for naval power. To be sure, Navy Department personnel and materiel could and probably would have figured in all the activities described above. Navy intelligence collectors, small boat squadrons, SEALs, CBs and medics are active today in Central America. But not until one is addressing a situation warranting the commitment of U.S. combat forces do the CVBGs and MAFs become relevant. I understand, of course, the importance of "presence" and "showing the flag," and appreciate that a deployment of naval force can provide powerful reassurance or deterrence. But there is little evidence that carriers off the coast have much deterred guerrillas anywhere. More importantly, were the United States so to structure its forces that carriers and MAFs were all we had to send, we would have opened a whole range of unchallengeable violence to our adversaries. Force structure aside, Congressional apprehensions over "another Vietnam" reflected in the War Powers Resolution and the latest changes to the Foreign Assistance Act and the Arms Export Control Act, as Ambassador Komer points out, constrain the President's freedom of action when it comes to providing fire support and maneuver. But as it is, he labors with

18-Sep-84

limitations imposed not only by the Hill, but by DoD and the services, whose strategic and structural lacunae have severely limited his options at the lower end of the spectrum of war. We need more light land and air forces, more strategically mobile, and better fitted to support other nations in defending themselves.

As the recent Grenada expedition amply demonstrated, one of the very best fire support weapon systems in the armed services is the AC-130 SPECTRE gunship --tactically flexible, precisely discriminate, powerful, and strategically mobile. But we have only a handful of such left, there having been no development of the system after 1972, when the demand fell off in Southeast Asia. A project then underway to develop a "minigunship" for Third World allies was dropped. We need to do much better.

The strategy and force structure for which I argue would allow the United States, in concert with allies, to prepare the battlefields of low intensity conflict to help counter the full range of threats that adversaries pose to our national interests. For me, the need to prepare the theater of operations in advance was one of the strategic lessons I learned in Viet Nam. In the summer of 1971 I stood on a hill overlooking the Ashau Valley in northern I Corps with General Creighton Abrams. COMUSMACV had been prompted to visit me because of my insistence that the North Vietnamese were building a road through the jungle out of Laos pointed straight toward the city of Hue. The road was being advanced at such a pace, and trellised, ditched, and crowned with such lavish manpower as to establish it as a project of strategic significance. My medium artillery had blasted away enough of the camouflage to expose a segment of the road, which is what Gen. Abrams came to see. When he asked me what it meant, I told him that it was designed to permit rapid forward positioning of towed artillery, and the swift introduction of truck-borne infantry and possibly tanks. He asked when I thought such an attack might come. I replied that my estimate was Tet (lunar New Year) 1972. He agreed, and remarked that American officers needed to understand that the North Vietnamese ran their force projection sequence precisely the inverse of ours: where we stormed in with bayonets and then brought up our fire support, and finally our combat service support, they insinuated their logistic system first, even preparing the battlefield to the extent of engineering it, as we were witnessing. When the battlefield was fully prepared, and only then, would they introduce fire support. Maneuver forces would come last. Incidentally, we were proved wrong: the attack came not at Tet, but on Easter, 1972. We had the rest of it right. PFG June, 1984