

SECURITY ASSISTANCE PERSPECTIVES

Commitment to Freedom:

Security Assistance as a U.S. Policy Instrument in the Third World

[The following is extracted from an analytical research paper, titled as above, which was published by the Working Group on Regional Conflict and presented on 25 May 1988 to the Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy. This Commission was mandated by the Secretary of Defense and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and was co-chaired by Fred C. Ikle, then Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) and Albert Wohlstetter, a leading theorist of military strategy. Preliminary findings of the Working Group were published in the Commission's initial report, *Discriminate Deterrence*, extracts of which were published in *The DISAM Journal*, Summer 1988, pp. 74-76. The present report focuses on 12 basic reforms to the security assistance program which the Working Group recommends and which are summarized below. For more details, see the complete study.]

MAIN POINTS

The Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy observed that:

Nearly all the armed conflicts of the past forty years have occurred in what is vaguely referred to as the Third World: the diverse countries of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and the Eastern Caribbean. In the same period, all the wars in which the United States was involved--either directly with its combat forces or indirectly with military assistance--occurred in the Third World. Given future trends in the diffusion of technology and military power, the United States needs a clear understanding of its interest and a military role in these regions.

Calling for a "national consensus on both means and ends" to protect our national interests in the Third World, the Commission identified security assistance as the most important means to preserve free peoples against violence that could "imperil a fledgling democracy (as in El Salvador), increase pressures for large-scale migration to the United States (as in Central American wars), jeopardize important American bases (as in the Philippines), threaten vital sea lanes (as in the Persian Gulf), or provide strategic opportunities for the Soviet Union and its proxies."

The security assistance programs of the United States--referring to funds, goods, or services this country sent overseas to bolster the security of a friend or ally--have underwritten American foreign policy for 40 years, and are regarded worldwide as tangible evidence of American commitment to national independence and peaceful development. The Marshall Plan, which Winston Churchill characterized as "the most unsordid act in all of human history," extended a broad range of assistance to nations struggling to recover from the trauma of World War II. Every U.S. Administration since then has pursued a strategy of providing combined economic and security assistance to help nations of the Third World help themselves.

The needs of the recipients of our aid have changed less over time than we who have given it. In the years since the wars in Southeast Asia, the government of the United States has adopted legislation, policy, and procedures that have severely limited the flexibility and utility of its security assistance. While U.S. military aid served Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson as a mainstay of policy, Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan were increasingly

constrained in its use. The next President will find that instrument a weak reed, less a pillar of national strength for supporting strategy in a violent and changing world than a wand-like symbol of domestic political sentiments and alignments, so encumbered with legal and administrative tendrils as to deprive it of credibility either here or abroad.

The United States is likely to suffer grievous setbacks unless future Presidents are provided with improved means for protecting U.S. interests in the Third World. Current security assistance programs, variously legislated as Economic Support, Military Assistance, Foreign Military Sales Credits, or International Military Education and Training, are seriously underfunded for pursuing an integrated, long-term strategy, and too micromanaged by Congress to enable any Administration to deal with crises.

The strategy advocated by the Commission requests that the 101st Congress provide more security assistance funds with fewer restrictions. Also, it must legislate 12 basic reforms of security assistance methods and means:

- Provide multiyear appropriations.
- Appropriate more funds for foreign aid and reallocate funds among aid claimants to provide more for developing nations threatened by low intensity conflict. It should recategorize such nations so that they may be treated in budget actions separately from Israel, Egypt, and the base rights countries.
- The current security assistance pricing system, based on no monetary loss, must be scrapped in favor of pricing based on strategic gain. If Government accountants cannot dispense with surcharges for non-recurring costs and program administration, the DOD should pay these as a "cost of doing business." Congress should authorize a LIC (low intensity conflict) catalog establishing favorable, fixed prices for U.S. goods and services for especially threatened developing nations.
- U.S. law should permit, even encourage, more liberal leasing rather than purchase of major equipment.
- Laws should provide security assistance recipients the opportunity to claim a trade-in allowance for worn-out or damaged equipment. Further, the damaged or worn-out equipment should be replaced at once.
- Security Assistance Offices for Third World countries should be reconstituted, and laws and policies should provide the U.S. Ambassadors and the regional Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs) with personnel capable of discharging planning and representational responsibilities, as well as administering security assistance. DOD should revamp its methods of fielding trainers and technicians to the Third World to provide better for teamwork and continuity.
- The CINCs must be more thoroughly involved with security assistance planning and operations, and with explaining and defending the program within the Executive Branch, with Congress, and with the public.
- DOD training exercises should be used to help allies and friends in the Third World.
- Congress must forego the conditionality that cripples International Military Education and Training (IMET) for potential leaders in Third World nations.
- Congress should lift the prohibition on security assistance for police training.

- The United States should tailor improved support for countries fighting insurgency.
- Congress should authorize use of security assistance funds for procurement of foreign-manufactured equipment.

The implementation of any of the foregoing reforms will require extraordinary political leadership. But without such reforms, our richer, more capable allies and friends will not be encouraged to invest more of their resources in assistance programs in the developing world, in support of common interests; the United States will not invest systematically in the research and development of technologies responsive to the foreseeable security requirements of Third World friends and allies; and U.S. Ambassadors and CINCs will continue to be frustrated by the tangle of security assistance laws and regulations that enmesh strategy, rather than support it.

The security assistance system--including all responsible departments and agencies in the executive branch, and the many oversight committees and staffs in the legislative branch--is quite unlikely to reform itself. In fact, aspects of the system that are dysfunctional for U.S. strategy among developing nations are now embedded in the bureaucracy that administers the system. Reform will require a painful realignment not only within that bureaucracy, but also within all Government departments and agencies concerned with the formulation and execution of foreign policy and national strategy. Hence, the Secretary of State, through his Assistance Secretaries in charge of Third World regions should provide the interagency leadership to reinstate security assistance as a powerful instrument of policy, and to integrate it with other elements of our national strength.