
The following is a statement by General John W. Vessey, Jr., USA, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on FY 1984 and 1985 Security Assistance before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on 9 February 1984.

Mr. Chairman and Members of this Committee:

Security assistance is an important instrument of US foreign policy and an essential component of the US coalition strategy. Effective and consistent security assistance relationships with allies and friends are fundamental to the achievement of our national security objectives. The success our Nation has had in helping other nations help themselves through the security assistance program is due to the support of the Congress and the Executive Branch. On behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I want to thank you for your support.

This Nation urgently needs to continue to support and enhance this crucial program. Further, our government needs to improve efficiency and flexibility in the management of the program. In doing so, we will more effectively improve the ability of our allies and friends to defend themselves and we thereby enhance our own security.

US STRATEGY

This is a dangerous world. Turbulence in Third World countries and direct threats to global stability by the forces of the Soviet Union and its friends threaten the security of all free nations. It is a world of growing economic, political and social interdependence. US security and well-being are inextricably linked to that of other nations -- to our friends, allies and trading partners -- as theirs is to ours.

We have a coalition strategy. In keeping with this coalition strategy, we maintain forward-deployed forces in key areas and a system of unified commanders with military responsibility for designated major regions of the world. To make our coalition strategy more effective, we are working to encourage our friends to do more in their own behalf or in cooperation with us in defense of our common interests. Security assistance stands among the most cost-effective means to achieve this.

The long-term influence of security assistance programs can be considerable. Security assistance programs were key ingredients in building the alliances we have today in Europe and in Asia. In the Third World, these programs have helped stabilize governments friendly to the United States, and they have helped contain the spread of Soviet imperialism. Professional military training has enhanced force development and influenced future military leaders who later serve in positions of leadership in many of the non-aligned nations.

GUIDELINES FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE

The Joint Chiefs believe security assistance is an important adjunct to other elements of our national power -- our diplomatic, economic and political influence in the world. Security assistance should and does complement our strategic military objectives. In this respect, the equipment, services, and training provided under the security assistance program should do three things:

-- Advance each recipient's ability to meet independently threats to its national security both from outside aggression and from externally-supported groups bent on violent internal change.

-- Foster the development of regional defense arrangements and cooperation that enable combined actions to deter or defeat regional incursions.

-- Enable recipients to develop forces capable of operating with US and allied forces in a collective security framework.

THE SOVIET CHALLENGE

The Soviet Union realizes the value of security assistance as a low-cost, low-risk instrument for achieving political objectives. To this end, the Soviet Union has substantially increased its assistance programs over the past decade. Between 1979 and 1982, Soviet arms deliveries exceeded those of the United States by a factor of 3:1 in tanks, 4:1 in supersonic aircraft and 7:1 in helicopters. The Soviet capability to deliver arms rapidly has kept pace with increasing sales. In 1982, deliveries were the second highest on record, and while all the data are not yet in, deliveries in 1983 promise to be as high. The Soviets clearly have established an influential role in military sales to the Third World.

The Soviets frequently use surrogates as conduits for arms transfers to fulfill political objectives. Aid provided by Soviet surrogates is designed primarily to support guerrilla activity in such areas as Africa, the Caribbean Basin and Central America. For example, among the many other arms and ammunition we found in Grenada were boxes from North Korea labeled "rice" but which contained ammunition. The Soviets are expected to continue to use direct and surrogate military assistance and arms sales to boost hard currency earnings and to gain influence and military access in Third World countries.

Soviet security assistance in the Mideast and Central America stands as a graphic example of Soviet use of such aid to gain geostrategic advantages, promote conflict, overthrow governments friendly to this Nation, and thwart US attempts to promote peace and stability. In Central America and Cuba alone, the Soviets provided military assistance deliveries in a six-month period through June of 1983 which outstripped our own by almost \$900,000,000. They provide this aid, as they do worldwide, on very easy terms. We saw in Grenada how their aid is being used to overthrow governments and intimidate others. I want to emphasize that, had the Soviets and Cubans been successful in Grenada, they would have been in a position to threaten safe passage to and from the Panama Canal.

US PROGRAMS AND LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

The Joint Chiefs do not suggest that we enter a security assistance race with the Soviets, or that this Nation emphasize, as do the Soviets, the military element of our influence at the expense of our diplomatic, economic, political and moral influence in the world. However, our adversaries place great emphasis on security assistance to achieve their objectives and there is a pressing need for assistance to our friends and allies. We should continue to emphasize diplomacy and economic influence as the preferred instruments of national influence. But, the US security assistance program has a strong connection to our national security strategy and is often a prerequisite to effective diplomacy and economic aid. Further, our security assistance to many countries is essential to gain the basing, transit and support agreements we need to respond rapidly to crises worldwide.

About half of our security assistance funds goes to Israel and Egypt, and seven countries account for over 80 percent of the program. In addition to Israel and Egypt, major recipients are Turkey, Spain, Greece, Pakistan, and Korea. We need to continue to help these countries for a combination of political and military reasons. Nevertheless, by the time these seven countries are provided for, we have few resources left for other important strategic areas if the overall levels are cut. The Joint Chiefs urge adoption of the balanced program contained in the Administration's Budget.

We must be concerned with the growing debt burden of developing nations. High-interest loans for security assistance exacerbate political, social, and economic problems on which revolutionary movements thrive. It is important to increase grant assistance substantially or ease the terms on which loans are extended. These better terms should be directed to nations whose survival and increased strength are in the US strategic interest but are also in economic difficulty. This year and for the foreseeable future, this concern applies to a growing number of nations in Latin America, the Mideast and Africa.

Increases in grant assistance or concessional terms are highly recommended for Turkey and Portugal, the poorest among our NATO allies, where military modernization is key to strategic defense commitments. NATO depends on Turkey as the linchpin of the Southern Flank against several potential adversaries along an extensive frontier. Of all the NATO allies, Turkey maintains the largest standing army; but much of its equipment is in bad shape and outdated. Increased assistance to Turkey to correct this deficiency is critical for the successful defense of Europe. In this regard, the Joint Chiefs support the Administration's "On-Budget" proposal in that it improves affordability of security assistance programs to our security partners.

The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program deserves the wholehearted support of the Congress. Training military personnel from allied and friendly nations is a very effective way of establishing and maintaining long-term cooperative security relationships with nations whose interests are closely linked to those of the United States. The program has a side benefit by giving a first-hand look at American life and democracy to future leaders from many different countries. Over the years,

such training here has paid real dividends for the United States. Thousands of foreign leaders have undergone training at senior US military schools during their military careers. For example, fully one-third of the foreign graduates of the US Army Command and General Staff School have attained general or flag rank. During one recently surveyed five-year period, 160 foreign graduates of US senior service schools had become cabinet ministers, legislators, or ambassadors, and over 1,800 foreign graduates had attained general or flag officer rank.

The extension of US influence also has a multiplier effect since US-trained foreigners train still others. We need to make wider use of training as a security assistance tool. One initiative the Joint Chiefs support would permit exchanges of training for individuals or units on a reciprocal no-cost basis. Many countries cannot afford US costs and the IMET budget can go only so far. This keeps both sides from benefitting from reciprocal training, and we need to correct that.

The Joint Chiefs also support changing the law so that there is a single, standardized cost for Foreign Military Sales (FMS) training of foreign personnel in US military facilities. A single FMS price would reduce confusion on the part of our allies, reduce fiscal impediments to formal US military training, and remove inequities in the current FMS pricing structure.

In the past, urgent requests from our friends necessitated a drawdown of US equipment and munition inventories to supply their time-sensitive needs in a crisis. Some of these actions had an adverse impact on US force readiness in that a large quantity of the materiel supplied was from inventory. Time was required to recover from these transfers. The Special Defense Acquisition Fund (SDAF) provides a limited buffer and will enable faster recovery for items already on order. The Joint Chiefs are confident the SDAF can be a useful tool when funded to the levels requested in this Budget. We encourage raising the obligation authority and increasing the capitalization rate so the SDAF can be more effective.

A number of other initiatives have been submitted to the Congress over the last two years, all of which the Joint Chiefs continue to support. I understand many received favorable action in the committee reports last year. We would appreciate your efforts to complete an Authorization Bill this year.

REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The United States is now helping vulnerable Central American countries achieve self-determination and economic and social development. Progress is hampered by the lack of necessary funds to develop adequate defense capabilities to meet threats to the security of the region, particularly in El Salvador and Honduras. Nicaragua continues to threaten Honduras and other countries with the largest military force in the region, and insurgency continues in El Salvador. Only through a comprehensive four-part approach, which includes development of economic, political, and social reforms as well as development of the indigenous military capability, will lasting stability be achieved. Grant assistance is most appropriate to achieve force development without further burdening the fragile institutions of the countries in the region.

About one-fourth of the funds for Central America are for Honduras, and about half for El Salvador. In El Salvador, we clearly need to provide economic assistance and the impetus for social reform. However, it would be fundamentally unsound not to provide also the means for that country to provide for its own security. Without a security shield, the Salvadoran government will be unable to prevent Marxists from destroying any economic or social progress made. As the National Bipartisan Commission pointed out, US military assistance programs require "greater continuity and predictability." The operational commanders and our advisors in the field report that, because of the sudden starts and stops of US military assistance there, Salvadoran forces must constrain their operations and thereby cede advantages to the guerrillas. The Joint Chiefs urge the Congress to provide more timely, predictable and adequate support to the Salvadoran forces.

In Grenada we saw how important cooperation among states in the region could be. We also saw that the self-defense forces of many countries are only small police forces which have only limited paramilitary capabilities. These police forces are not prepared to assume duties in low-intensity conflict. If current restrictions on the training of police forces are modified or lifted, the ability of the self-defense forces of Caribbean Basin nations and Costa Rica to maintain their nations' security could be enhanced.

In the case of Lebanon, public attention has been riveted on the role of the multinational force (MNF), of which our forces are a part. As we all know, the situation there is extremely volatile. Nevertheless, we should not be diverted from the larger issue of helping the Government of Lebanon restore Lebanese sovereignty throughout the country. One major portion of that effort is the development of strong Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to give breathing room to the political process. This Nation, in cooperation with the British, French and Italians, has been assisting the LAF. We were making progress in helping the LAF to forge a more effective force capable of assuming larger, more comprehensive control of its territory as foreign forces withdraw. As the national government of Lebanon reconstitutes itself, we will be prepared to continue to provide assistance in the hopes that our objectives can be eventually achieved.

CONCLUSION

The Administration has put forward a number of carefully thought-out proposals for funding the security assistance programs for the remainder of this fiscal year and for FY85. The Administration has also put forward important proposals to increase the flexibility and effectiveness of those programs.

I want you to know that the Joint Chiefs fully support the legislation placed before you. The legislative initiatives contained in this program and the funds and other resources sought are essential to support what the Joint Chiefs believe are necessary and sensible needs from friendly and allied governments. They look to us for assistance in a dangerous world. They also look to us for steadfastness of purpose. I urge your support for these programs.