

---

## SECURITY ASSISTANCE: PLANNING FOR LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

By

DR. MICHAEL W. S. RYAN

### Challenge and Response

In an article before his abrupt removal as the Chief of Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces, Marshal Ogarkov wrote of the possibility of converting a "counterattack" against an enemy's vulnerable salient into a series of counterattacks against many salients and thereby overwhelming and routing the enemy. Ogarkov was ostensibly writing about military lessons learned in World War II, but the words are said to have implications for present-day politics also. The U.S. and the West have a number of military-political-economic salients around the world. Should a large number of these or even a few key areas come under attack, the U.S. would be hard pressed to confront them simultaneously at a conventional level.

The threat of widespread Soviet troublemaking becomes even more problematic when one realizes that the Soviet Union does not need to commit its own forces to prosecute the small wars that have become the hallmark of the latter half of this century. In the Middle East, Russia profits in hard currency from the arms it supplies in opposition to U.S. interest; in Latin America, the illicit drug trade could obviate the need for foreign financial assistance for various left-wing insurgent groups; and in Africa and South East Asia, surrogate or proxy forces replace or augment Soviet forces in pursuit of Moscow's foreign policy goals.

Few crises for U.S. foreign or security policy have a clear Soviet origin. The USSR has not shown itself so adroit in dealing with the Third World. On the other hand, most crises are potentially exploitable, and many may never have begun without a direct or indirect Soviet role. A 1982 study by the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College documented that out of 65 examples of crisis in the Third World, the Soviet Union exploited instability and conflict in 47 that it did not cause.

How do we meet this challenge? In purely military terms the answer would vary. Each region has its own requirements. The demands of terrain, political culture, and distance from the U.S., are all crucial to what strategy and tactics would best meet the threat. I would argue that the U.S. would be best served by a strategy that aims at the indirect approach, one that if successful would not require a commitment of U.S. combat forces.

The purpose of this paper is to describe a strategy for optimizing the use of security assistance in coping with low-intensity conflicts, specifically those involving insurgency in the Third World. It does not address the doctrine and tactics necessary to win such conflicts, whether U.S. troops or local forces alone are involved. The focus is on a prior problem: how to win

support in the U.S. for security assistance to threatened nations which are considered important to the security of the U.S.

Security assistance ideally provides these friends and allies the means to deter or defeat threats to their own security without direct U.S. combat involvement. Often, the military content in low-intensity conflicts is low, at least initially, while the political content is high. The military content is crucial, nevertheless. Critics of military assistance in an area such as Central America often refer to the root cause of the insurgency, which is invariably economic and political. These critics, if they offer a solution, conclude that economic assistance would take care of the problem. The difficulty with this well-intentioned position is that the leadership of an insurgency movement develops a political agenda of its own. Usually, the economic infrastructure is a key target of the insurgents. Economic assistance alone without a military shield can not be delivered. Often the military shield itself needs aid to be effective.

Another standard criticism that finds its way to the heart of security assistance is the "military-as-the-real-culprit" approach. Again, this criticism is often well-intentioned and, in an untidy world, the critics can usually point to real abuses in most Third World conflict situations. These critics usually have no empathy for an overtaxed and possibly desperate Third World military, ill-equipped and ill-trained for the challenge it faces and which is often held accountable for economic problems that its lowest ranks share fully with the insurgents and the people who may support them. In the confused reporting usually associated with crises provoked by insurgencies, the military is sometimes charged with the crimes committed by the insurgents themselves. The military is often heavy-handed with the local populace, in any case.

U.S. security assistance is broad enough to address these critics and the real problems that their criticism reflects. The Economic Support Fund (ESF), administered by the Agency for International Development (AID) under the direction of the Department of State, can address the key economic problems in the Third World countries in which the U.S. has important national security or political interests. Often ESF, in loan or grant form, complements development programs that may already be underway. Ideally in an insurgency or pre-insurgency situation, ESF or development assistance should be directed at the proximate causes of discontent among disaffected citizens. A key theme of this paper is the complementarity of economic and military assistance in an integrated approach to security assistance.

Security assistance can help meet the "military-as-the-real-culprit" charge by using the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET), as well as through training given under the Foreign Military Sales Program (FMS) and the grant Military Assistance Program (MAP). Through IMET the Department of Defense provides training and training support to foreign military personnel as grant assistance. Training stressing sound civil-military relations and respect for human rights can help diminish abuses in the field. Unfortunately, this is a difficult problem to overcome in some cultures and countries with a long history of civil violence and cult of revenge. The U.S. can avoid becoming associated with crimes committed in such situations by avoiding becoming involved at all, but this is an unacceptable alternative in areas of important national interests. In general, U.S.

security assistance can help dampen the worst excesses of an undisciplined Third World army by helping create a more professional military which would be less likely to resort to random violence opposed by the local political leadership.

### Hostility to Security Assistance

For every small war in which the United States has a direct or indirect involvement, at least two parallel struggles exist: the regional war and the bureaucratic/political "war" in the U.S. itself. The bureaucratic war, in which no lives are lost, although reputations are sometimes ruined, is arguably the crucial conflict. Except for a very few scenarios involving the sudden insertion of proxy or surrogate forces, low-intensity conflicts usually take years to develop. This is both fortunate and unfortunate for U.S. policy. It is fortunate, because the strategy that I propose also takes years to develop, but it is also unfortunate because public support for U.S. involvement in these small wars is highly perishable. The successful implementation of a security assistance program requires careful planning and constancy, qualities that are difficult to achieve and maintain in the face of fractious political support.

A key problem with implementing a security assistance strategy to cope with low-intensity conflict (especially where we do not have the firm base of an existing program) is the unpopularity of foreign aid in general and of military aid in particular. What is true of military aid in peacetime is especially true when that aid is intended for one side in a "nasty little war." Some people believe military aid to be immoral, others think of it as a giveaway program, while many believe it to be a futile waste. Congress reflects the public's view. Even the military, at least in the middle and lower ranks, frequently complain that security assistance is too often a direct drain on the armed forces because of the diversion of equipment in times of crisis from U.S. units to the armed forces of Third World countries. Recent studies, however, indicate that higher levels of government leaders, both civilian and military, appreciate the role that security assistance plays as one of the few effective tools available for the implementation of foreign policy. Moreover, most diversions are paid back eventually.

Currently, there are three opposing views of security assistance and foreign policy in the U.S. The first view is represented by a group, which could be termed "Cold War nationalists." This group is characterized by strong opposition to Soviet expansionism in any form, viewing opposition to this expansionism as the chief foreign policy goal of the U.S. Cold War nationalists recommend the use of security assistance as well as the other tools of foreign policy, including direct, if limited, military force to achieve this primary goal. The second attitude is held by those who could be termed "post-Cold War internationalists." This group, while expressing concern for Soviet expansionism, believes that U.S. interests are best served by using other foreign policy tools not associated with the military to confront the problems of the Third World. The last group, which could be termed "post-Cold War nationalists," are neo-isolationists concerned primarily with domestic affairs and the economy. While this group is generally suspicious if not hostile to the Soviet Union and communism, it advocates a strong domestic

policy as the key to strength and is unsympathetic to a foreign policy that it sees as leading to foreign entanglement.

Although security assistance programs can maneuver through the shoals of these attitudes from year to year without directly confronting them, low-intensity conflict in the Third World has a polarizing effect, which make such maneuvers doubtful. In fact, any prolonged U.S. effort intensifies the need not only for bipartisan support but the support also of conservatives and liberals regardless of party affiliation. Such support, after all, is nothing short of the support of the American public, which has proven to be a sine qua non of success in American involvement, direct or indirect, in low-intensity conflicts.

The difficulties facing policymakers attempting to cope with small wars in Third World areas, such as Central America, are many and great, but they are not overwhelming. Despite all the opposition, the current Administration has received over 90 percent of its annual requests to Congress for security assistance program funding. Even in the highly contentious case of El Salvador, Congress granted about 80 percent of the Administration's request for FY 1984, and nearly the entire request for FY 1985.

### Security Assistance Planning

Security assistance can be implemented in a hurry during a crisis, but speeding up the normal process can impair the absorption of delivered equipment and make rational choices about system buys more difficult. Economic assistance normally cannot be absorbed on an accelerated basis, and accelerated military assistance delivery does not address the economic and social roots of an insurgency. In addition, such deliveries may involve diversions from U.S. units. To do the job right takes extensive planning and long, careful implementation.

The focal point for security assistance within DOD is the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA). DSAA takes policy guidance on regional issues from the International Security Affairs (ISA) and International Security Policy (ISP) organizations within DOD, and overall policy direction from the Department of State, which has ultimate authority over all foreign aid programs. The Secretary of Defense, through DSAA, advises on the availability of defense goods and services. The Director of DSAA generally delegates case management to the military services. Other important components of the security assistance community in Washington are the Office of Management and Budget and, to some extent, the Treasury Department. The Agency for International Development is involved in the budgeting of the Economic Support Fund, which is also considered part of security assistance. Finally, Congress allocates the funds to execute programs requiring Foreign Military Sales Credits (FMSCR) or military grant aid (MAP or IMET). Two readily apparent phenomena result from this complex arrangement. The first is that the process of planning, implementing, and managing U.S. security assistance is a bureaucratic black box to many who do not understand it, let alone appreciate what it can and has accomplished. The second result of this black box is that the overall program is discussed and coordinated throughout the Administration, and in the end, most interested parties to foreign policy and national security have had some input.

policy as the key to strength and is unsympathetic to a foreign policy that it sees as leading to foreign entanglement.

Although security assistance programs can maneuver through the shoals of these attitudes from year to year without directly confronting them, low-intensity conflict in the Third World has a polarizing effect, which make such maneuvers doubtful. In fact, any prolonged U.S. effort intensifies the need not only for bipartisan support but the support also of conservatives and liberals regardless of party affiliation. Such support, after all, is nothing short of the support of the American public, which has proven to be a sine qua non of success in American involvement, direct or indirect, in low-intensity conflicts.

The difficulties facing policymakers attempting to cope with small wars in Third World areas, such as Central America, are many and great, but they are not overwhelming. Despite all the opposition, the current Administration has received over 90 percent of its annual requests to Congress for security assistance program funding. Even in the highly contentious case of El Salvador, Congress granted about 80 percent of the Administration's request for FY 1984, and nearly the entire request for FY 1985.

### Security Assistance Planning

Security assistance can be implemented in a hurry during a crisis, but speeding up the normal process can impair the absorption of delivered equipment and make rational choices about system buys more difficult. Economic assistance normally cannot be absorbed on an accelerated basis, and accelerated military assistance delivery does not address the economic and social roots of an insurgency. In addition, such deliveries may involve diversions from U.S. units. To do the job right takes extensive planning and long, careful implementation.

The focal point for security assistance within DOD is the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA). DSAA takes policy guidance on regional issues from the International Security Affairs (ISA) and International Security Policy (ISP) organizations within DOD, and overall policy direction from the Department of State, which has ultimate authority over all foreign aid programs. The Secretary of Defense, through DSAA, advises on the availability of defense goods and services. The Director of DSAA generally delegates case management to the military services. Other important components of the security assistance community in Washington are the Office of Management and Budget and, to some extent, the Treasury Department. The Agency for International Development is involved in the budgeting of the Economic Support Fund, which is also considered part of security assistance. Finally, Congress allocates the funds to execute programs requiring Foreign Military Sales Credits (FMSCR) or military grant aid (MAP or IMET). Two readily apparent phenomena result from this complex arrangement. The first is that the process of planning, implementing, and managing U.S. security assistance is a bureaucratic black box to many who do not understand it, let alone appreciate what it can and has accomplished. The second result of this black box is that the overall program is discussed and coordinated throughout the Administration, and in the end, most interested parties to foreign policy and national security have had some input.

Linear ideal planning for security assistance is probably impossible in the real world. Rational models would have at least the following stages:

1. Determination of national strategy.
2. Division of strategy into regional strategies.
3. Identification of countries critical to strategies.
4. Determination of country military and economic needs
5. Computation of required levels of financial assistance.
6. Compilation of country plans into a budget.
7. Submission of budget to Congress with strategic justification.
8. Congressional allocation of funds based on successful strategic and fiscal argumentation.

To some extent these components do exist, but the adjustments made for the fiscal and political realities, including dealing with countries, may make the execution of some of these steps less than ideal. Despite the problems involved in every stage, let us examine the above model as it could apply to planning for low-intensity conflict in the mythological Republic of Strategistan, which is engaged in a low-intensity conflict involving an ambiguous insurgency campaign, i.e., one in which the affiliation of the insurgents is unclear, while at least some of the imperfections they claim to be opposing in the incumbent government are undeniable.

In our ideal model, the process of aiding Strategistan is fairly simple if somewhat lengthy. The model assumes that the national strategy is fairly clear and universally supported within the bureaucracy; it also assumes that we know exactly where Strategistan ranks in national priorities and that this ranking is somehow fixed; and, finally, it assumes that the threat has been identified and that after extensive consultations with the Strategistan government, a rational procurement plan is developed, financing arranged, and resources are identified, obtained, and delivered.

The real world is infinitely more complex. Strategy can never envisage all minor contingencies. Intelligence information can never be complete. The decision-making apparatus in Strategistan may be incapable of relating or relating well to the American decision and planning process. Equipment may be expensive and complicated. Lead times for equipment may create an implementation and delivery process that would resemble a doctor telling a patient that he can not deliver the needed medicine until the patient will be cured or already dead. Strategistan's problem may not catch the public attention necessary to energize a security assistance program for it; it may be too small, too unimportant, or its threat too remote. On the other hand, the U.S. and Strategistan together may proceed ideally through all the steps necessary to implementing a rational security assistance program, but falter in the Congressional presentation stage because of the ambiguities associated with the insurgency.

Perhaps, the greatest reason for joint military planning is the need to make defense procurement decisions based both on funding limitations and on local conditions and local constraints, which may be misinterpreted or ignored in a plan developed solely in the U.S. We may want a country to change its strategy and tactics, but we will not succeed without beginning with a thorough exploration of the current strategy and thinking of that country. This can not be accomplished in a few meetings, but must be developed over

years. The strategic dialogue must be pursued week by week at the country team level, although regular Joint Military Commission meetings (or their equivalent) have a galvanizing effect on planning and coordination on both sides.

A continuous bilateral strategic and defense procurement dialogue benefits both the U.S. and the foreign nation. The foreign nation enhances its ability to defend its territory, to promote stability, and to lobby for what it conceives to be sensible defense decisions. The U.S. may benefit by achieving greater influence through a stronger, more personal relationship, as well as possible access to facilities, promotion of force cooperation, and perhaps regional cooperation with U.S. objectives. Constant dialogue also helps both sides choose equipment suitable to needs within the financial realities of the individual case. Joint planning also helps with the problems of protracted lead times by anticipating needs and avoiding the need for diversions from U.S. forces.

In-country planning in most instances will be accomplished by the Security Assistance Organization (SAO). The SAO, assisted by Mobile Training Teams (MTTs), Technical Assistance Teams (TATs), and Technical Assistance Field Teams (TAFTs), is best able to advise on the absorption of existing equipment, and on such areas as manpower, training, maintenance, and supply. The SAO also should work with the country to select new projects which are consonant with the stage of overall modernization of the country's armed forces. Such new projects may be geared to the simple replacement, expansion, and achievement of new capabilities, or to helping a mature force improve its operations. In some cases, the SAO will make recommendations that influence the development of force structure. The SAO's recommendations on these matters are captured in the Annual Integrated Assessment of Security Assistance (AIASA), a report which forms the basis for planning country programs and the security assistance budget. These interagency discussions ultimately result in a budget request and Congressional presentations in some form or other.

For many countries, planning with the U.S. means the development of a five-year plan. This plan may be the first such plan the country has produced. Great initial problems and a myriad of misunderstandings are inevitable. Typically, the initial input to a five-year plan consists of a massive wish list. Many people are against the development of five-year plans because they may raise country expectations (despite all disclaimers U.S. officials make) that the U.S. will fund or finance the entire program. Critics claim that five-year plans cause more problems than they solve, creating disenchantment instead of mutual understanding.

A good case for long range planning can be made despite these problems. Five-year plans allow countries to develop an appreciation for lead times and the limits of financing. In short, they force a country to develop a planning apparatus to deal with the American system. There is a difference between countries that have dealt with the U.S. over a protracted period and those that have not. Planning in the U.S. system requires a degree of staffing sophistication and coordination among governmental elements that is unusual in a Third World nation and difficult to achieve even in the U.S.

Countries with sophisticated planning have instruments for close coordination between Ministries of Defense and Finance. They are able to distinguish between funding needed for the support and sustainment of existing forces and that needed for modernization. Further, lead times are taken into account and the need for training and the rationalization of the logistics system is recognized. New procurements are made on the basis of strategic and tactical needs rather than parade-mentality prestige. Sophisticated planning is flexible and capable of prioritizing to allow for changes in available financing by the substitution of sensible alternative procurement.

Some Third World countries have approached this high level of sophistication. Some are still at the primitive level where the wish list mentality predominates. Most, of course, inhabit the middle ranges of sophistication.

One of the clear collateral advantages of a sophisticated five-year plan, in addition to the obvious military advantage of rational modernization, is the clarity with which one can justify a nation's military requirement to Congress. In some cases a five-year plan may not be possible, especially early in the bilateral military relationship and where the U.S. cannot project budget requests for that country beyond the present year. But, even a short range plan that is carefully programmed can represent a rational "presentable" approach to the intractable problems often associated with low-intensity conflicts.

#### Congressional Approval: El Salvador

Congressional suspicions and in some cases overt hostility to security assistance is such a daily fact of life that it often obscures the helpful role Congress plays in performing its responsibilities. Few cases have generated so much initial opposition as security assistance to El Salvador; yet, the Administration received almost 80 percent of the funding requested for FY84, although achieving this result required one continuing resolution, one supplemental request, and one emergency supplemental request. A more modest figure was approved easily in the FY 1985 Continuing Resolution. No single factor determined the outcome, but a well-thought-out procurement plan which is not capriciously changed, together with constant briefings and responses to serious Congressional concerns, must be considered a necessary part of the successful campaign.

It is useful to review how the El Salvador case was presented to illustrate two key points: 1) Congress can and should be actively engaged; 2) the process can actually enhance the military effort. Congress serves for the American people, and any successful prosecution of a limited war in the American system, either through security assistance or with direct U.S. combat involvement, requires Congressional support.

The issues and arguments concerning El Salvador are complex, but the history of vocal Congressional opposition is fairly clear. In the July-August period of 1984, additional funding for security assistance for El Salvador was in serious doubt. Conventional wisdom both inside and outside government advised that any attempt to convince Congress to accede to the Administration's proposal would be futile. Nevertheless, the Administration developed

a plan and a set of arguments and proceeded with a series of formal and informal briefings.

The problem of funding was addressed on a regional basis, and supplemental funding for FY 1984 and the annual request for FY 1985 were treated together. These requests were originally submitted to Congress in February, 1984, on the basis of the Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, better known as the Kissinger Commission. The Administration's emphasis in late summer was on the FY 1984 supplemental request, because time was running out on the fiscal year, and the FY 1985 program, which was based on an integrated procurement plan, depended on funding at the level requested for FY 1984.

The key themes of the Administration's argument responded to much of the criticism directed at U.S. foreign and security policy in Central America. Economic assistance is the largest component of the U.S. regional assistance program. In FY 1984 the ratio of requested economic to military assistance was 2/1, but for FY 1985 the ratio had increased to 4/1. A synergism exists between economic and military assistance. Naturally, El Salvador has the greatest military requirements and accounted for about two-thirds of the FY 1984 supplemental request for military assistance. Of the \$400M regional request for supplemental economic assistance for FY 1984 about three-fourths was for ESF. Other economic and development programs aimed at improving food supplies, education, health, social services and private agriculture needs. The ESF portion addressed such basic economic needs as balance of payments, infrastructure, the stimulation of exports and export industries, and economic stability in general.

The military portion of security assistance for El Salvador addressed the traditional concerns of an armed forces tasked with a counterinsurgency mission: mobility, supplies, training, infrastructure, and fire support. The Administration's main argument was that the El Salvador Armed Forces needed the capability to sweep areas for guerrillas, protect crop planting and harvests and allow schools to remain open while providing an atmosphere of security. All of this is in support of democracy, a fact attested to by the free elections that brought Duarte to power, a man Congress grew to respect.

The effort was successful in Washington and in the field. The situation is fragile in both places and the future is far from assured, but optimism is at least possible. Elsewhere in Central America success of U.S. security assistance may never be noticed. No newspaper will trumpet a headline in 1990 declaring that stability and incipient prosperity have broken out in the region. But The Economist of 22 December 1984 did juxtapose the following two statements about El Salvador.

First, in 1980:

El Salvador was on the brink of an all-out war between extremes of right and left, which seemed likely to end in a guerrilla victory.

Then, in the beginning of 1985:

In El Salvador, under the threat of a withdrawal of American aid, the army held a not-too-messy election in 1982. The assembly thus

elected drafted the constitution under which demonstrably-pretty-clean presidential and parliamentary elections were held last spring . . . The Salvadorean army, after a crash programme of American training, gradually became more efficient, keeping the guerrillas from striking into the big cities, although failing to chase them out of their mountain strongholds.

The Economist emphasized the fragility of the gains in El Salvador as well as the successes in other parts of Central America. The subtitle of the articles that I have quoted tells the story however: "Sea-changes happen slowly; but compare the start of 1985 on that bloody isthmus with how things were in 1980."

The point here is not that one program has been a success. All of it could go sour tomorrow and there are other programs that are not going so well. Rather, the point is that Congress played a vital role in what happened in this program. Negotiating with a foreign country, even a weak one, is a terribly difficult endeavor. In this day and age, threats and overt pressure do not often bear results. The robust independence of Congress, however, ensures that the negotiations have an objective standard to use in its discussions. Congress acts in advance as the conscience of the American people. Whether it is misinformed or biased is irrelevant. The people, by and large, will probably follow their representatives' lead.

It is difficult for Congress to play a leading role in the formulation or implementation of foreign or national security policies. As a natural consequence of its legislative tasks and composition, Congress can never develop a coherent strategic view--a task difficult enough for even the most harmonious Executive Branch. Congress does not work by consensus, but by majority vote on proposed laws. It does not have day-to-day responsibilities and contacts with foreign governments. What is needed, if not consensus, is at least a strong bond of trust between the Executive Branch and the Congress. In the atmosphere of institutional opposition, this delicate balance of trust is crucial for a credible foreign policy that allows the Executive Branch the latitude to address the complex demands of international political engagement. The only way to forge this bond of trust is early and continuing consultations between the Executive and Legislative Branches, especially considering the difficult and potentially divisive issues involved in low intensity conflict.

Properly approached, the relationship between the Administration, Congress, and foreign governments is potentially a vitally healthy and dynamic one. Congress pronounces its views, which have the power of the purse strings behind them. The Administration reflects these views to the foreign nation and urges its government to accommodate these views; and finally, the Administration comes back to Congress to report on how its views have been addressed. The result of this synergism is that the course of policy tends to track with the public view. Even when Congress is implacably opposed to an Administration's policy, the Administration can take its case to the people. If the people respond favorably, Congress will back off. If the people are not convinced by the arguments, a wise Administration has heard a verdict of sorts. It is important to emphasize that I am speaking about security assistance only. Operations, because of the need for secrecy, may demand a totally different approach. Security assistance can never remain a secret long enough to achieve final results.

By now the importance of getting to Congress early with our best arguments should be clear. Silence accompanied by leaks and inevitable rumors breeds only suspicion. Early discussions with Congress may obviate the need for a defensive posture later. These discussions should be in closed hearings, formal or informal, but complete. Furthermore, any Administration must go into such discussions with the idea that it might be asked to change certain aspects of its plan.

A final aspect to this approach is the possibility of dealing with a drastic downturn in events. If we need to commit our own combat forces to an area under the conditions enunciated recently by Secretary Weinberger, it would be advantageous to be able to argue and to have Congress realize that every step short of that ultimate commitment had been taken.

### Conclusion

The achievement of support for the security assistance program for El Salvador is a dramatic example of the well coordinated and persistent efforts of several major Departments of the Executive Branch. Mostly, the business of security assistance is accomplished on a more routine basis. In this case, a major effort to achieve Congressional support was undertaken because of the concerns that Congressional antipathy towards the Administration's Central American policies would result in the disastrous curtailment of security assistance to that region. Despite the unique character of this effort, however, several generally acceptable lessons can be learned from it.

Although conventional wisdom proclaims that all decisions concerning foreign aid on the Hill are politically motivated, Congress will not knowingly work against U.S. interests. Surprisingly greater consensus exists about those interests than is often recognized. Many of the most serious disagreements in the U.S. system are actually about means and not ends. Hostility to security assistance can be overcome in most instances, but only when the case is made in a clear, complete, and forceful fashion. The great corrosive is suspicion and the one way to curtail suspicion is through the early and continuing engagement of key Congressmen, Senators, and staff.

Security and economic assistance are not dichotomous, especially in low-intensity conflict situations. Careful planning is required to strike the proper balance between the two. This apportionment is something that we occasionally do well in high priority cases, but we probably need to enhance our efforts in more routine cases, if only to prevent them from becoming high priority.

Careful planning with the recipients of security assistance is essential, not only to the success of the program in the field, but even to the success of the effort to obtain funding for the program in the first place. Such planning is almost always most difficult where most needed. Countries fully capable of sophisticated planning can prevent low-intensity conflict from becoming a crisis without special attention from the U.S. Sophisticated planning considers not only military requirements, but also the availability of funding and/or financing. Because of the nature of our system, moreover, lead times and absorption rates for sophisticated equipment must be factored

into any long range planning. Where possible, five-year plans should be developed despite the difficulties involved.

Political realities in Washington must be considered as well as the realities in the field. Congressional requirements and concerns, considered during planning, do not become overwhelming problems when the programs are presented to Congress.

After presenting an optimistic outline for achieving a viable security assistance program for a country faced with an active insurgency, I would caution that grave problems still confront security assistance programs in areas of Third World conflict. Taking an early reading of the feasibility of achieving a fully funded program, however, may help us decide which cases are truly vital to U.S. interest and which are merely desirable. In areas of vital interest we must be able to judge when security assistance is not enough and more direct involvement of U.S. forces is necessary. The proper use of security assistance should reduce the occasions of this more serious requirement.

#### ENDNOTE

Most of the ideas contained in this article were generated by conversations with Dr. H. H. Gaffney, Mr. John T. Tyler, and Dr. Andrew K. Semmel. The most useful document on the relation between politics and security assistance was: Ernest Graves and James R. Hildreth, U.S. Security Assistance: The Political Process, (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1985). Information on security assistance programs in Central America were taken from the unclassified version of the unpublished Administration Briefing to the Congress on FY 1984-85 Request for Central America (July-August 1984).

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Michael W. S. Ryan is currently the Chief of the Analysis Division in the Plans Directorate of the Defense Security Assistance Agency. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University. Since joining DOD in 1979, Dr. Ryan has written numerous classified studies and briefings, primarily dealing with political-military affairs in the Middle East.