

# The Military Content of Security Assistance

By

Admiral W. J. Crowe, Jr., USN  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

[The following is a reprint of a statement presented in congressional testimony by Admiral Crowe before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on 18 February 1987.]

## INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I appreciate this opportunity to participate in your deliberations on the President's FY 1987 Supplemental and FY 1988 Request for Security Assistance.

You have received from the President a comprehensive report on our national security strategy and the role of security assistance within this strategy. Additionally, Secretary Weinberger has addressed global imperatives of the Security Assistance Program, threats and instabilities cutting across various regions where we have vital security interests, and disconnects between these interests and deep trade-offs required by Congressional action on last year's security assistance budget.

I fully support the President's and Secretary's views and join them in urging the 100th Congress to put the Security Assistance Program back on track.

Throughout, I believe that it is important for Congress and the American people to understand the military content of security assistance, i.e., how it meshes with our global military strategy and posture. I will take a few moments to discuss this side of the program.

## SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

To begin, security assistance has many characteristics not found in any other U.S. program.

It deals with the most politically sensitive issues confronting any nation--how to pick and choose allies, where to seek major military equipment, and when to share bases or facilities with the armed forces of another nation. For any *freely* elected government, there are great burdens and risks in making such decisions and even greater risks if the basic bilateral relationship begins to unravel.

The program requires a great deal of forward-looking planning, particularly when a recipient nation is considering a long-term investment of its own resources in military hardware or infrastructure. Although we are partners in the process, we are prevented from looking much beyond the current fiscal year. In fact, it has been said that, unlike any other undertaking by the U.S. Government, security assistance must have a budget before it can become a program. In that environment, about all any American administration can do is declare a "best effort" to follow through with its part of the bargain.

Various security assistance projects have wide structural, engineering, and technical content. When we acquire access to an overseas base, in return for economic or military aid to the host nation, that base becomes part and parcel of our global military posture, logistic support for our forward-deployed forces, and power projection capabilities to such distant areas as the Persian Gulf. As these bases are improved to support our people, forces, and modern-day weapon systems, the stakes become even higher. Today, this overseas base structure cannot be replaced--even if we could find a more suitable location--without five or ten years to lay the necessary political groundwork, seek the appropriations, design and engineer the new facilities, and actually accomplish the military construction.

The Suez and Panama Canals are also part of this global network of interests. Much of the world's commercial shipping is sized for these two key waterways which also facilitate the rapid movement of our naval combatants from one ocean to another. Thus, we want a local balance of military power conducive to peace and stability, and depend upon programs for Egypt, Israel, and Panama to support this objective.

Similar problems of a structural nature confront friends and allies who count upon U.S. support in maintaining and modernizing their defense establishments. Allied defense budgets are formulated. Priorities are identified among various pillars of their defense establishment--force structure, modernization, operations, maintenance, and so on. Plans of five years or longer are developed to gradually replace obsolete or unserviceable equipment and train the necessary manpower--often on the basis of an understanding that the U.S. Government will do its best to maintain a certain level of contributions under the security assistance program.

In sum, everything about the program stresses continuity as opposed to abrupt or radical changes in course.

## **LINKAGES TO MILITARY STRATEGY AND POSTURE**

Today, the unified commanders look at security assistance in a combined defense planning context and as a logical sharing of military burdens with friends and allies in semi-developed and developing parts of the world.

In *peacetime*, we are not able to be everywhere at once or to cover every trouble spot in the world simultaneously. Hence, U.S. global strategy stresses our strategic nuclear umbrella, maritime superiority, and strategically mobile ground and air forces. From the allies, we expect a minimum of self-defense capabilities, that is, whatever it takes to routinely patrol and protect their own territory, airspace, and coastal areas. Working together with our allies we can then protect our mutual interests.

That linkage is extremely important, particularly where we have firm security commitments. Often our smaller allies have the will and manpower, but not the resources, to defend themselves. If we do not assist them, we may well find ourselves confronted with a proliferation of local military crises, regional instabilities, conflicts we would much prefer to avoid, and a general snowballing of military burdens in the world at large.

Simply put, if America wants to maintain international peace and stability, without increasing substantially the global mission and size of its own armed forces, we must have a robust and reliable Security Assistance Program. In that sense, the program has long been and continues to be one of the most cost-effective pillars of our national security strategy.

## **PRIORITIES OF THE UNIFIED COMMANDERS**

Turning to program formulation, the unified commanders generally stress five themes:

- Stability of our overseas base structure;
- Continuity of allied force modernization plans;
- Challenges of "low intensity" conflict;
- Readiness and sustainability of forces in-being; and
- Benefits of the International Military Education and Training Program.

## OVERSEAS BASE STRUCTURE

Today, all of the CINCs are deeply worried about our access to overseas facilities tied, in turn, to pledges of U.S. support for economic development or defense improvements. As one of the CINCs noted, we are in a "damage limiting" mode.

Of particular concern are three countries where we have a substantial investment and stake in military facilities--the Philippines, Spain, and Portugal. All were left out of Congressional calculations on the FY 1987 security assistance budget. In turn, the administration was forced to make reluctant cuts in these and other base access countries simply to maintain a global program with insufficient funding levels. The irony of this trade-off is that, without base access rights, the global reach and deterrent stance of our military forces could be dangerously impaired.

How this will play out depends in part upon action by this Congress on the President's Supplemental FY 1987 request and the Foreign Assistance Budget for FY 1988.

## CONVENTIONAL FORCE MODERNIZATION

Moving on, conventional force modernization is a major concern to allies living under the shadow of Soviet military power or within the reach of Russian surrogates in Asia, Africa, or Latin America.

In the NATO arena, this includes Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey. The strength of these Southern Flank nations is instrumental to a successful NATO strategy and the security of the Mediterranean region. Similar problems confront Pakistan which is threatened by the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan.

What we see in the Third World is a vast increase in Soviet-surrogate military manpower since the early 1970s accompanied by more sophisticated hardware from the Soviet Union. Any nation located in the vicinity of Vietnam, Syria, Libya, Angola, Cuba, or Nicaragua must factor these developments into its national defense and force modernization planning.

The local military balance, of course, is not the only problem they and we worry about. Much more dangerous is the role of Soviet clients in promoting terrorism, subversion, and greater forms of aggression in the Third World. Much of Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America is exposed to this pervasive and persistent threat to regional peace and stability. In many parts of the world, the protection of U.S. lives and property clearly is also at stake.

## LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

In general, our friends and allies do not need a great deal of sophisticated military equipment to deal with the threat of "low intensity" conflict. They do require, however, things which will enable them to extend the reach of their governments and sustain themselves on a country-wide basis, like engineering construction and communications equipment, aircraft and patrol boats for surveillance, lightweight firearms, and mobile medical units. These capabilities can be equally effective in nation-building and in countering the traffic in drugs.

The need for such equipment is particularly pressing in Central America, the Eastern Caribbean, and Andean countries where our Rio Pact allies are confronted with a combination of depressed economies, external military pressures, widespread trafficking in drugs, and from time to time the ravages of nature. USCINCLANT and USCINCSOUTH are very much concerned about this array of problems and the downstream impact of recently mandated cuts in the security assistance budget. I share these concerns and urge a larger security assistance program for Latin America as a whole.

## **READINESS AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Over time, our Security Assistance Program also has placed heavy emphasis on the "total package" approach. It is not enough for friendly and allied military forces to have adequate manpower and equipment. They also must stress personnel, training, equipment maintenance, spare parts inventories, logistic support facilities, and the distribution of such consumables as fuel and ammunition. These items are the unglamorous but essential--and often costly--elements of maintaining any effective military establishment.

Unfortunately, when deep cuts are made in a defense program, readiness and sustainability often become the first victims. I saw this happen in our own military establishment in the late 1970s. The CINCs are seeing it happen again in some of the smaller, poorer countries hit hard by cuts in the FY 1987 Security Assistance Program.

## **MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Turning to International Military Education and Training, I have always believed that the program has a strategic military importance far exceeding the amount of money we spend on it.

- First, it capitalizes on one of our strengths--a superb network of military facilities and schools designed to train our own armed forces. Without any inconvenience to ourselves and minimal increases in basic overhead, we are able to share this opportunity with other allied military establishments.
- Second, it maximizes the effectiveness of equipment transferred under the aegis of the Security Assistance Program. Without proper training in operations, maintenance, and logistic support, much of this investment would go "down the drain."
- Third, it exposes allied military personnel of all ranks to our democratic values and traditions. They learn firsthand that there is a fundamental appeal built into the American system and often carry this message home to their own ranks and people.
- Fourth, the program produces over time national military leaders favorably inclined toward the United States--a solid track record in virtually every part of the world.

In sum, IMET is the door of knowledge about our values and skills for virtually every military establishment in the free world. We should do everything possible to keep this door open to present and future generations of allied military personnel.

## **SPECIAL INTEREST COUNTRIES**

When trying to maintain a Security Assistance Program with global reach, it is always difficult to single out countries requiring special consideration. This year, however, I believe that two of our allies--the Philippines and Turkey--do require such consideration.

Today, I do not know of any military establishment with problems as great or stressful as those facing the armed forces of the *Philippines*. Its military leaders are trying very hard to bolster the leadership of Mrs. Aquino. As servants of the government, the Philippine military also is caught between extremists wanting to return to the past or adopt more radical solutions to political, social, and economic problems confronting their nation. Cutting across this scene are the hit-and-run tactics of Philippine insurgents, the sheer difficulty of patrolling a large and sprawling archipelago, and unsettling aspects of Vietnam's military buildup. Yet, the Philippine security assistance program had to be cut by 50 percent in FY 1987. In my view, it was a serious mistake.

Next, *Turkey*. I count this country as one of our staunchest allies. It influences the Southern Flank of NATO, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the volatile Near East. Their military establishment has superb leadership, discipline within the ranks, and general know-how in operating and maintaining equipment acquired under the Security Assistance Program.

Additionally, this committee should bear in mind that Turkey has assumed some unique burdens in the Iraq-Iran war. By distributing oil (by pipeline) from the northern part of Iraq to Eastern Mediterranean terminals, the Turks have helped to stabilize the world oil situation. But this arrangement also has incurred the wrath of Iran and Islamic fundamentalists supporting the Khomeini government. This is no time to be shaving our support for Turkey.

## SUMMARY

To put all of this into perspective, security assistance is a vital pillar of our national strategy, collective security arrangements, and global military posture. We need a balanced and flexible program. Yet, Fiscal Year 1987 was extremely disappointing in terms of Congressional action on the program and deep trade-offs were required to stay within funding levels not fenced by the Congress. Despite a great deal of reprogramming and fine tuning, the administration was not able to shape a program which would support the full range of our global political interests and bolster our global military posture. On both fronts the program was spread too thin.

Moreover, in many developing parts of the world we are slipping dangerously behind the power curve in security assistance--simply not enough for smaller, poorer countries to protect their sovereignty, deal effectively with state-supported terrorism and subversion, and curtail the local trafficking in drugs.

In sum, I view this as a critical year in security assistance funding. This committee may decide in its own wisdom to continue the cut-backs despite the President's effort to get the program back on track. But I would caution you against repeating last year's legislation which skewed the program disproportionately toward the Eastern Mediterranean. Too much is at stake and risk elsewhere in the world.