Security Assistance and The Army–Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict

By

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The Army–Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict (A-AF CLIC) came into being as a result of a recommendation by an Air Force Innovation Task Force in February 1985. The Task Force mission was to explore ways of using all U.S. forces in low intensity conflict (LIC) and avoid losing lessons learned from the Vietnam experience. In July, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force proposed the idea of a joint Army-Air Force center to the Chief of Staff of the Army and, in January, 1986, the new organization was established with three people assigned.

The purpose of this article is to describe how the CLIC has attempted to set a solid course in seeking to examine those issues which shed light on the importance of security assistance, especially in the Third World and the low intensity conflict environment. The CLIC operates as a facilitator, attempting to build a bridge of professional relationships and respect within the interagency community, and to raise a constituency for security assistance in low intensity conflict. It welcomes comments and suggestions from SAOs and other security assistance community professionals.

An initial eighteen fields of expertise were chosen by planners as essential to the study of low intensity conflict (LIC), and these ranged from close air support to public affairs. Security assistance was not among the original choices, although the Center remained informed on the subject as two of its members had previous experience as Security Assistance Officers. The full significance of security assistance as a foreign policy instrument essential to LIC became clear in a statement contained in the Reagan Administration's formal publication, *National Security Strategy of 1987*, which states that "the principal military instrument in Low intensity Conflict is . . . security assistance."[1]

This language, repeated in subsequent 1988 and 1989 national strategy publications, gave direction and meaning to the formulation of the CLIC effort in security assistance. It was already clear that no constituency existed for security assistance in LIC because little was known about potential security assistance applications within the LIC environment. Education, therefore, became an essential part of the CLIC strategy. The ideal vehicle for establishing such a constituency was the *interagency conference* which could bring together Washington experts and concerned professionals from the field.

In an attempt to enlarge the scope of interest in this subject, the CLIC decided to include professionals from disciplines not directly associated with security assistance or LIC. This was promulgated partly by another key statement, this one from the *Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense to the Congress, FY 1990*, which called LIC "a major threat to our political and economic interests and moral values well into the 21st century."[2] Hence, the initial selection was made to hold a conference canvassing SAOs and political officers with security assistance experience stationed in U.S. embassies.

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[1]*National Security Strategy of the United States*, January, 1989, p. 33.

[2]The Honorable Frank C Carlucci, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense to the Congress, FY 1990*, p. 43.

The first conference sponsored by the CLIC was the "Forum for Operational Planning and Security Assistance in Low Intensity Conflict," conducted in Hampton, Virginia, in August, 1988. The keynote speaker was the Director, Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD-SOLIC), who described the complex Washington bureaucracy as it relates to the functions of security assistance. The highlight of the conference was a panel convened of Washington experts from agencies which included the following: ASD-SOLIC; Department of State; Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA); Department of the Navy Office of Technology Transfer and Security Assistance (NAVOTTSA); Department of the Air Force Policy and Management Division (AF/PRIM); Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM); and the Services. This opportunity for face-to-face interaction resulted in a remarkably frank dialogue. That was the starting point.

A second gathering was held in the form of a large workshop as a part of an overall LIC conference co-sponsored by the CLIC and J5 of the Joint Staff. Called "Joint Staff/J5 and A-AF CLIC Planning and Policy in Low Intensity Conflict," this workshop gave further opportunity for members of the joint and interagency community to examine mutual requirements arising from approved national LIC strategy. The keynote address was given by the Director, The Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs at the Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State. This provocative and informative talk posited that the national security policies of all societies are reflected through their cultures. In this way, American foreign policy, too, reflects the long-standing myths and values which unite Americans, and which they generally hold to be true. This insight helps to illustrate security assistance, not only as a set of program, but as an important foreign policy instrument rooted in American ideals.

In May, 1989, the CLIC sponsored another conference, "Security Assistance: Cornerstone to Collective Security." The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Special Operations Command (USCINC-SOC) presented the keynote address, pointing out the significance of security assistance programs for the Third World, and the role of USSOCOM. A panel of experts was again convened, many of whom were present at the first CLIC conference. This panel, however, was enhanced through the appearance of a professional Congressional staffer knowledgeable in security assistance and the law. Directly answering questions on existing law and explaining the constraints under which the Congress must act, he also explored the relationship between the Congress and the Executive Branch. Credibility is very important to the Congress, and the legislative branch demands truth from those who report to it and it should not be misled. These were key points in understanding the position from which Congress operates. The CLIC hopes to continue to involve Congressional representatives in its conferences.

The CLIC effort has not stopped here. For example, other topics under consideration include the problem of non-standard parts, and the importance of understanding the role of culture as it applies to security assistance and low-intensity conflict.

Recent refinements regarding the problem of non-standard parts include, for example, the proposed formulation of a non-standard parts catalogue by the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), and the CLIC's own efforts in briefing Washington and the CINCs on this subject. The CLIC believes that initiatives of this type may break new ground in producing simple, rugged, and inexpensive equipment for the Third World. This can be accomplished within the existing legal framework, and without major change to the existing security assistance process.

Similarly, further development in the field of cross cultural relations is critical to evaluating the positions from which other countries operate. Understanding the cultural basis from which decisions emanate goes further than knowing, for example, which hand should be used for eating in a certain culture. Knowledge of this type is at the level of basic manners only, and does not include the more significant cultural forces at work in a given society which are important for

decision makers to know. When dealing with security assistance programs such as International Military Training and Education (IMET), it is crucial to understand, at least superficially, how underlying forces such as mythology and religion, operate and determine societal attitudes.

In conclusion, the CLIC security assistance initiative continues to address the key issues at play as the United States moves toward the year 2000. It seeks to continue to develop existing relationships at the interagency and service levels, and to present information in a provocative manner. Many of the comments and suggestions which continue to be received by the CLIC have helped to give meaning and direction to its strategy, and to formulate the beginning of a new vision toward the developing world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Paul Belbutowski is currently assigned to the Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict. Born in Bristol, England, he has had a variety of special military assignments, including service as a U.S. Army Advisor in the Strategic Hamlet Program in Vietnam, and duty in U.S. Army Special Operations. Prior to his present assignment, he served with the Defense Intelligence Agency. Mr. Belbutowski holds M.A. degrees in Humanities and in History and Criticism of Theatre, and is currently a doctoral candidate in Philosophy at American University, Washington DC.