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A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON  
**LOW-INTENSITY  
CONFLICT:**

TOTAL WAR AT  
THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

by  
**Reynaldo Ty y Racaza**

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**by  
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The author claims sole responsibility for his comments and opinions expressed herein.



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## **A Global Perspective on Low-Intensity Conflict: Total War at the Grassroots Level**

THERE IS A SPECTRE THAT IS HAUNTING THE THIRD WORLD TODAY --- the spectre of Low-Intensity-Conflict (LIC). It is the United States' new plan of war for global hegemony; a plan of war that nevertheless is not "war" as popularly understood. In fact, low-intensity conflict involves the least use of direct United States military might, and U.S. troop commitment is turned to only as a last resort. This spectre developed from bitter lessons of Vietnam that United States Military involvement in any foreign area outside Europe was recognized as likely to create suspicion and provoke domestic political restiveness, which can easily lead to serious internal political opposition to U.S. policy.

LIC strategists acknowledge that commitment of U.S. ground troops in the Third World is likely to be counterproductive because such intervention erodes domestic and international support for US foreign policy and can spur increased internal resistance.

International organizations monitoring human rights situations in the world have documented in vivid details the atrocities perpetrated by the so-called civilian self-defense or vigilante groups against the civilian populations in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Western Europe.<sup>1</sup>

### ***The Concept of Low-Intensity Conflict***

While the Low-Intensity Conflict doctrine includes many of the instruments of the counter-insurgency strategy developed in the 1960s -- such as civic action, inter-agency coordination, pacification, special operations, internal civil defense, military assistance and training -- the new doctrine calls for the combat deployment of US troops only as rear guard action. This new U.S. global defense strategy in the developing countries relies more on Rambo-style raids, mopping-up operations like the one in Grenada, support for anti-communist "freedom fighters", and "counter-terrorist strikes".

Low-intensity conflict is what the U.S. military refers to as operations that fall short of conventional or nuclear war: "dirty little wars" that are unconventional, undeclared and probably permanent, and which are taking place in the different continents of North and South America, Africa, Europe, and Asia. In Latin America, LIC is largely applied in the countries of El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Chile; in Africa, An-

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<sup>1</sup>See for example the July 1987 external document of the Amnesty International, "Philippines: Alleged Human Rights Violations by 'Vigilante Groups'", (Amnesty International, Index ASA 35/05/87)



gola, and South Africa; in Western Europe, Northern Ireland; and, in Southeast Asia, the Philippines.

As a leading North American LIC theorist put it, what primarily distinguishes LIC from the popularly conceived notion of warfare is the character of the conflict, rather than the level of intensity or the specific number of forces involved.<sup>2</sup>

"LIC evolves primarily from revolutionary and counter-insurgency strategy and causes, and therefore, includes unconventional operations, protractedness, and high political and psychological content directly linked to the political-social milieu of the indigenous area."<sup>3</sup>

Low-intensity conflict, as a high-ranking US military officer explains, is not simply a "scaled-down" version of conventional war.

"This kind of conflict is more accurately described as revolutionary and counter-revolutionary warfare. The term "Low-Intensity Conflict" is misleading, as it describes the level of violence strictly from a military viewpoint, when in fact it involves political, economic and psychological warfare, with the military being a distant fourth in many cases ... *It is total war on the grassroots level.*"<sup>4</sup>

There is no such thing as total victory by force of arms in low-intensity conflict. "Body-counts", real estate, and prisoners taken are not the true indicators of success or progress.<sup>5</sup> The goal of reasserting US hegemony by recovering territory lost to the "free world" can best be carried out, under the LIC doctrine, by launching what has been most candidly described as "total war on the grassroots level."

### ***The Shift to Low-Intensity Conflict***

Following the humiliating defeat of the United States in Vietnam, another development in the world political scene came about which prompted a complete reevaluation and overhaul of US counter-revolutionary strategy: the triumph of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua in 1979, combined with the resurgence and growing strength of national liberation movements in other parts of the Third World. With the recognition that "the roots of insurgents are not military in origin, neither will they be military in solution,"<sup>6</sup> proponents of LIC called for rethinking traditional tactics, and implementing "total war" on economic, social, political and psychological fronts, instead of relying on conventional armies to deal with unconventional and revolutionary conflicts. US National Security, for them, required not only a major build-up of US con-

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<sup>2</sup>Dr. Sam C. Sarkesian, "Low-Intensity Conflict: Concepts, Principles and Policy Guidelines," in *Air University Review*, Jan.-Feb. 1985, reprinted in *Current News* (Special Edition), 3 April 1985, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid

<sup>4</sup>(Underscoring mine) Col. John Waghelstein, Commander of the Army, 7th Special Forces, quoted in Sarah Miles, the *Low-Intensity Conflict: US New Strategy in the Third World*, reprinted by the Socio-Pastoral Institute (SPI) under the same title in Special Issue, Series 5, Year 5.

<sup>5</sup>Sarkesian, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Secretary of the Army John Marsh, quoted in Miles, p. 3.

ventional and nuclear power, but also the development of a new capability and an effective strategy for fighting revolutionary forces in the Third World.

### ***The Ideology Behind Low-Intensity Conflict***

The assumption of the US presidency by Ronald Reagan in 1980 marked the beginning of a new era of United States Cold War Politics. Signifying the end of détente during the Ford-Carter years, Reagan's leadership provided the heyday for the Right, led largely by members of the intelligence community who saw in the two immediately preceding administrations an insufficiently anti-communist perspective which, for them resulted in the "loss" of the Third World from the orbit of the United States.

Under the Reagan doctrine, faced with a decline of US hegemony, the United States must once again project its power abroad through a "global offensive against communism at the fringes of the Soviet Empire."<sup>7</sup> Although Low-Intensity conflict as fully developed under the Reagan Doctrine has many of the features of the old pacification and counter insurgency campaigns of the United States in the previous decades, the doctrine proceeds from a consistent ideological framework and consolidates the institutional support needed to effectively run multi-agency programs. The Reagan Doctrine blends older, often inconsistent, approaches to popular Third World movements into a new whole. On the other hand, previous administrations viewed revolutions as having been brought about exclusively by either internal causes (such as poverty, social and economic inequality) or external causes (world communism or Soviet-Cuban agitation). Kennedy's Alliance for Progress in combination with aggressive military moves provided the first stab at dealing with both aspects. However, under Johnson, Vietnam had intervened.

The Reagan administration can thus be said to have picked up where the Kennedy experiment had left off, by providing a synthesis of approaches to both internal and external causes of national uprisings. But with low-intensity conflict, Reagan offers an innovation: openly backing para-military insurgencies to attack Third World governments, while simultaneously waging counter-insurgency campaigns against incipient popular movements.

This twist to counter-revolutionary warfare is based upon recommendations on low-intensity conflict made by prominent military strategists who maintain that the LIC Doctrine should comprise three major categories of action: counter-insurgency, assisting anti-communist insurgency, and "counter-terrorism". In assisting insurgency situations, for example, they recommend 1) using accessible para-military "assets" to weaken communist regimes; 2) exacerbating dissidence in regimes hostile to the US government; 3) initiating action to encourage the ouster of a specific leader; 4) supporting para-military

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 6.



forces which would appear benevolent and ameliorative; and 5) using CIA and Pentagon resources to assist indigenous, surrogate forces.<sup>8</sup>

Another group of experts with very familiar names also had their recommendations on low-intensity conflict. The Special Warfare Advisory Group counts among its members General Edward Lansdale (Former Head of pacification programs in the Philippines and South Vietnam), General John Singlaub (Chief of Joint Unconventional Task Force in Vietnam and former head of the World Anti-Communist League), Thomas Pickering (US Ambassador to El Salvador) and Edward Luttwak (Associate for Center for Strategies and International Studies.<sup>9</sup> The group recommended that the US apply lessons learned in Southeast Asia to the Central American conflict and urged that the United States move away from conventional warfare toward more civic action, psychological warfare, and small-unit operations.

### ***The Components of Low-Intensity Conflict***

Low-intensity conflict is a radical concept of warfare partly because it calls for internal changes within the system itself. And history has chosen Central America -- more particularly El Salvador -- to be the principal test case and most important laboratory for testing advanced models of low-intensity conflict. Nevertheless, our own country, the Philippines, being of great strategic and economic importance to the United States, has not been spared the LIC bloodbath, although in the enumeration to follow, of the manifestation of the conflict, the components of counter-insurgency program will be recognized. This identity has been explained before-hand.

While the Philippines is of special importance to US for obvious reasons, a cursory inspection of El Salvador's experience with LIC is probably more significant as it is there where the comprehensive approach to low-intensity conflict is unfolding. El Salvador's case is exceedingly compelling, as it is in that country where the United States has best succeeded in assembling the essential ingredients: a strong political commitment from the US administration with bipartisan congressional support, an astute civilian figurehead in the person of President Jose Napoleon Duarte, a consolidated core of pro-US military officers "professionalizing" the armed forces, and a near black-out of the entire matter in the US media.<sup>10</sup>

A comparative case study is doubly significant if we consider that there are striking similarities in the objective conditions obtaining between the two countries<sup>11</sup> although some writers vigorously disagree.<sup>12</sup> At all

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<sup>8</sup>A Plan of War for Central America (Resources Bulletin, 1986, p. 2.)

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Paul Martin, "Total War at the Grassroots level," in *Low-Intensity Conflict: US New Strategy for the Third World* (QC. SPI, 1987) p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>See for example Marty Villalobos, "Parallelisms: Yesterday El Salvador, Today the Philippines?" in *Philippine Collegian*, September 16, 1986, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup>See for example P.N. Abinales, "Lessons from El Salvador," in *Diliman Review* (Vol. 34, no. 4, 1986), pp. 23-30.

events, the following are the components of low-intensity conflict and how they have been used in the Third World.

### ***Close Inter-Agency Coordination***

LIC calls for an integration of military science with all other aspects of government policy. This implies a new form of coordination among the Department of Defense (DOD) or the Pentagon, the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US Information Agency (USIA), the National Security Council (NSC), and other civilian agencies. The distinctions of the roles among these different entities become blurred. For example, the Pentagon has a new Office for Humanitarian Assistance, while the State Department has created a Counter-terrorism Office and an Anti-terrorism Assistance Program. The DOD and the AID cooperate in the formulation and implementation of pacification plans in El Salvador even as the AID supports the Guatemalan army's civic action program and also pacification efforts. In addition to the military's enlarged psychological operations capacity (psyops), there is a complementary expanded role for psychological warfare through the United States Information Agency, CIA, and American Institute for Free Labor Development.<sup>13</sup>

With regard to the Philippines, a US State Department paper, called the National Security Study Directive (NSSD), was presented in 1984 to high-policy-making bodies for consideration regarding short and medium-term US policy toward the country. In its introduction, it emphasized that "the United States has extremely important interests in the Philippines," and goes on to outline political, military, and economic recommendations.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Surrogate Forces***

LIC includes developing "third party" countries -- including Israel, Taiwan, and South Korea -- into reliable instruments for supplying both hardware and training abroad. LIC strategists propose the increased use of surrogates by the United States. This practice of using surrogate forces to defend perceived US interests is not a new one. Washington has long backed governments with its economic and military aid so that those regimes can carry out US foreign policy. The US military even has a term for this practice which it calls "surrogate infrastructure" referring to the formation of local structures used to combat insurgency and make use of US military assistance.

The US has also made use of surrogate guerrilla forces, notably CIA-backing of certain tribespeople in Laos and South Vietnam during the Vietnam War and its support of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion by Anti-Castro exiles in 1961. Under the Reagan administration, anti-communist surrogate forces have assumed a prominent place in national policy. In

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<sup>13</sup>A Plan of War for Central America, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>National Security Study Directive: US Policy Toward the Philippines--Executive Summary, reprinted in *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. 1, no. 1, 1985, p. 47.



Central America, El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica serve as US proxy forces, and the Nicaraguan contras are the prototypical US surrogate forces. The recently discovered Iran-Scam revealed how military aid, in this case covert, was channeled to the Contras from the profit derived from US arms sales to Iran; all these activities despite a congressional ban precisely to that effect.

We recall that the Philippines has been a long-standing "third party" ally for the United States, supplying both personnel -- as in the case of the Philippine Expedition Forces to Korea (PEFTOK) during the Korean conflagration in the early 1950s and the Philippine Civic Action Group (PHILCAG) to the Vietnam conflict in the mid-1960s -- as well as hardware, (although unwittingly, since the logistics at Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base were the ones used) -- from as early as 1900 when a US military contingent was sent from their military facilities here to the Boxer Rebellion in China to as recently as the Vietnam War when those bases served as an essential logistics hub throughout the strife from 1957 to 1967.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the Philippines, like El Salvador, has been an important staging area for United States intervention.

### **Research and LIC Think-Tanks**

The concept of low-intensity conflict is also radical because its comprehensive approach reflects a wide-ranging study of the different elements of conflict -- and very few of them are strictly military. Many researchers at think-tanks and universities attempt to analyze and mimic the politico-military structures of revolutionary movements. Some proponents study the "backwards" tactic of guerrilla warfare, or delve into anthropology and social psychology.<sup>16</sup> Other LIC theorists begin by lecturing on the nature of revolutions, which, at best, betrays the utter lack of understanding on the part of the US military establishment of the causes of nationalist movements, at worst, the complete contempt of US cold warriors at the idea of national self-determination and popularly-determined development. Consider the following excerpt from such concept paper:

"Revolutions are a fundamental challenge to the existing political order and to those holding power in the system. The essence of such conflicts is in gaining control of the governing structure. Although all wars are political in nature, revolutionary wars are unique in that they center on the political-social system as the main battle area, rather than on the armed forces ... What makes revolution so complex is the fact that it usually occurs in Third World systems that are *already struggling with serious problems* of political change and economic modernization...

"The nature of revolution is such that it creates a morality and ethics of its own. These do not necessarily conform to the democratic norms NOR do they follow established rules of

<sup>15</sup> Roland G. Simbulan, *The Bases of our Insecurity* (Quezon City: Balai Fellowship Inc., 1983) p. 185.

<sup>16</sup> Miles, p. 5

Western warfare ...

"The American democratic value system includes concern for or belief in the sacredness of life, individual autonomy, freedom of choice, justice and a government that serves individuals. *These values usually conflict with the character of revolutions ...*

"Part of the education (of the American public) must focus on an understanding of the nature of the Third World -- *its non-democratic character ... Americans must understand that certain systems are aggressively anti-thetical to democracy and Western interests ...* (We) must recognize that *American national security interests ARE DIRECTLY LINKED with a number of Third World states* because of their geographical importance and resources."<sup>17</sup>

If these passages come from what the US defense establishment reveres as a leading scholar on low-intensity conflict, then we can imagine the level of understanding of that entire establishment. The reasoning employed by the theorist is reminiscent of the logic of the classroom teacher in the American propaganda film shown here before the war who pontificates to her young Filipino wards that the greatest contribution of America to the country was democracy, and that those Filipinos who had fought the Americans would never understand "democracy" because they did not want to be taught what it is. Or the American G.I. who characterized Filipino *insurrectos* as having no better understanding of what "independence" was than a shepherd dog, because, he said, they probably thought it was something to eat.<sup>18</sup>

But while the quoted material reveals some logical self-contradiction and may seem amusing, it also tells us that the United States is deadly serious about winning the low-intensity conflict bloodbath.

### **Private Sector Initiatives**

Low-intensity conflict draws on the resources, the ideological convictions, and the power of the "private sector" to aid the complete government apparatus. When advocates of low-intensity conflict say that LIC means "total war", they do not mean an unlimited war or high-intensity conflict. They mean a coordinated effort that brings together all military and civilian resources in an offensive against communism and terrorism. A report prepared for the Pentagon frankly admitted that right-wing groups have been pressuring the Defense Department to step-up its non-military role in the fight against communism.<sup>19</sup> As a result, there is presently a coordination of US military plans with anti-communist mercenary groups and private right-wing organizations like the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) and Friends of the Americas.

In 1984, for example, the Pentagon began transporting supplies collected by these organizations of reaction, such as the Conservative Caucus and the National Defense Council to Central America. The Office

<sup>17</sup> (Underscoring mine) Sarkesian, pp. 2, 9, 11.

<sup>18</sup> See Stephen R. Shalom, "The United States and the Philippines: Sentimental Imperialism or Standard Imperialism?" in *Third World Policy Studies* (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1985) October, 1985, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> A Plan of War for Central America.



of Humanitarian Assistance, under the DOD, transports these goods to Central America, where they are often destined for the Honduras-Nicaraguan border or civic action programs of the Salvadoran and Guatemalan governments.<sup>20</sup> A new legislation enacted in 1985 provided US \$7.5 million in "humanitarian assistance" for Nicaraguan Indian refugees who live along the Nicaraguan border in Honduras and are closely tied to the Contras.<sup>21</sup>

In 1984, facing a congressional ban on CIA backing of the contras, President Reagan approved a secret plan to replace CIA funds with assistance from US citizens and US allies like Israel. The White House selected John Singlaub as the chief fund-raising contact and coordinator for this campaign which has been overseen by the National Security Council. Now that the NSC's Lt. Col. Oliver North has been found out, the shocking truth has been revealed that a major source of such funds has been profits from covert arms deals with Iran.

John Singlaub, formerly WACL chieftain, has also done business with his gang of new Right Humanitarians in the Philippines. Since October last year, he and Dr. Ray Cline, like him an ex-CIA deputy director and one of Reagan's political advisers, have been refurbishing and expanding the WACL network in the Philippines. They have set up offices in the country and have been contacting political leaders, military officers, church officials and representatives of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other mass organizations.<sup>22</sup>

One specific objective of the WACL is to ensure the smooth renewal of the Military Bases Agreement (MBA). This will call for, among others, funding of media establishments and private volunteer organizations (PVOs)<sup>23</sup> expected to undertake the pro-bases and anti-communist campaign in an organized manner.<sup>24</sup>

Recently, in a show of humanitarian concern, the United States hospital ship USNS Mercy docked at Davao City for a free medical assistance to the residents. Although the hospital ship's staff had treated more than 2,000 patients, local doctors boycotted the mission as part of a protest spearheaded by the Health Alliance (HEAL)-Mindanao. The militant doctors dismissed the humanitarian missions as "an act of hypocrisy which can hardly make a dent on the health problems of the country," and merely "intended to reduce anti-American sentiments of the Filipinos in a campaign called 'low-intensity conflict', a new approach used by the Americans to keep nationalism at bay among countries under their sway."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Rene Ofreneo, "Coups, Counter-Insurgency and Anti-communism," in *Philippine Currents*, March 1987, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup>For a listing of Private Volunteer Organizations (PVOs) and an investigation of how they provide counter-revolutionary aid to El Salvador, Guatemala and the Nicaraguan contras, see Resource Center, *New Right Humanitarians*, 1986.

<sup>24</sup>Ofreneo, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup>*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 19, 1987, p. 9.

## Economic Aid

Economic aid and humanitarian assistance are potent weapons in low-intensity conflict. Where we have shown how Private Volunteer Organizations -- the New Right Humanitarians -- have contributed greatly to the effort to win the low-intensity conflict bloodbath, we shall see shortly how the United States government has been a leading partner in this regard.

The drive to integrate economic and humanitarian aid into LIC strategy is occurring on three separate fronts: 1) closer coordination among the US military, CIA, and AID in LIC situations; 2) increased involvement of the DOD in non-military assistance; and 3) enlistment of private resources.<sup>26</sup>

As most advocates of LIC view the AID as having been caught up in the Vietnam syndrome, they propose that the agency should place more of its resources at the disposal of counter-insurgency campaigns and US-backed insurgencies. During period of the 1960's, when LIC was in its seminal form as counterinsurgency, the AID was less discreet about employing military aid directly for overt military uses. In that decade, AID directly funded 30% of the Pentagon's military civic-action programs in Latin America. At the Vietnam conflagration, AID worked very closely with the US military in its pacification and counter-insurgency campaigns and even openly teamed up with the CIA in supporting anti-communist tribal mercenaries.

The increasing trend to integrate more fluidly AID in US military operations has shown a considerable degree of success in the Central American LIC laboratory. AID's management of pacification campaigns in El Salvador and its projects along the Nicaraguan borders of Honduras and Costa Rica are but examples of the agency's willingness to participate in military-related operations.<sup>27</sup>

This reality is fully supported by a prominent LIC proponent. In what he calls the "defensive phase" of United States military involvement in LIC, he maintains that, during this period, "standard US policies of military and economic assistance may be appropriate, providing a mix of military and civilian personnel with the requisite financial and material wherewithal to support and assist the existing system."<sup>28</sup>

The humanitarian thrust of LIC received a big boost in 1984 when a special task force created to study the value of humanitarian assistance to the over-all LIC effort made recommendations which were approved by Defense Secretary Weinberger. The task force addresses five possible categories where the Pentagon could increase its involvement in humanitarian assistance: civic action, transportation, international disaster assistance, surplus property disposal, and medical programs.<sup>29</sup> However, since humanitarian assistance is not covered by the laws which define the funding and functions of the DOD, and is therefore not among its usual functions, there is a growing clamor to enact laws so that humanitarian assistance may become an authorized function of the

<sup>26</sup>Resource Center Bulletin, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Sarkesian, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup>Resource Center Bulletin, p. 3.



Pentagon.<sup>30</sup>

This vigorous, if renewed, interest on the uses of humanitarian assistance does not depart even slightly from the relative importance of humanitarian concern as a motive for foreign aid recognized in the halls of United States policy-making centers in the 1950's. A high-level committee in 1957 took as part of its "first general assumption" that "aid is extended to foreign countries in support of a national policy, first, to halt the spread of communism, and second, to bolster the internal strength of (US allies)."<sup>31</sup> A senior economist in the Rand Corporation, an Air Force-funded think-tank, wrote, in 1960, that "humanitarian objectives are not, nor do they appear likely to be prominent, among the continuing objectives of US foreign aid."<sup>32</sup>

In the Philippines, AID has figured significantly in the LIC strategy, in its original form as pacification campaign as early as the 1950's, through programs implemented here under the agency's auspices and funding, such as the Public Safety Program, Rural Development Programs, the failed Land Reform Program, the Green Revolution, and other "humanitarian" undertakings as Food-for-Peace (Public Law 480).<sup>33</sup>

AID controls all "official development assistance" from the US government to the Philippines, including the Economic Support Fund (ESF) which has been given the status of development aid instead of rental payment for the US military bases in the country. Final approval of the Philippine government's use of this development assistance is given by AID, based on its Country Development Strategy Statement (CDSS) which is in turn formulated by the US State Department. A review of US AID projects will reveal that its assistance has been concentrated in rural areas since 1972, primarily to provide the social palliatives to counter the growth of the revolutionary movement.<sup>34</sup>

Recently, in mid-1986 US congressional approval of a \$500-million aid package was obtained. As a result of President Aquino's state visit to the US in September, 1986, the US congress, moved by her stirring speech before its joint assembly, approved a supplementary aid package of \$200-million for 1987.<sup>35</sup>

### Military Aid

While naked US military might is professed to play a low-key role in low-intensity conflict, even so, US armed forces has reared its ugly head, and low-intensity conflict is certainly not "low" from the point of view of its victims. In Central America, the war has already killed over 120,000 Central Americans, uprooted one in five inhabitants of the region, and

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Stephen Shalom, *The United States and the Philippines: A Study of Neocolonialism* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), p. 111.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>see Ibid., pp. 103-144.

<sup>34</sup>Juan Picas, "Two Faces of the Same Coin: Militarization and "Psy-War" - The Blunt and Subtle Sides of Counter-Insurgency," in *Liberation*, November, 1986, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup>Renato J. Henson, "Whither the Nerp?" in *Philippine Currents*, March 1987, p. 13.

involved more than 70,000 US soldiers.<sup>36</sup>

An indispensable component of LIC is a consolidated core of pro-US military officers in the host country "professionalizing" the armed forces. This is done through the implement of US military aid, including the sending of US military advisers, and the provision for military training. As a case in point, the head of the Joint United States Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) in the Philippines testified in 1969, that, through military aid,

"we are not trying to provide the Philippines with a force that could be used elsewhere or a force that expects an invasion from some outside conventional power. Our concern in the Philippines is the security of our bases and the security of the people of the Philippines against insurgencies."<sup>37</sup>

Military aid has an avowedly political function, "As a general rule," noted the CIA as early as 1959, "the flow of improved military equipment helps to assure the loyalty of the armed forces to the regime which secures such equipment."<sup>38</sup> The CIA also noted that to the extent that military aid helps keep regimes in power, it does so not so much because of its directly military uses but as one of several manifestations of broad US support for the recipient government.

Of late, US policy makers have been extremely critical of the way the Philippine government under the leadership of President Aquino has handled the insurgency situation. They view the new liberal democratic government as having "regretably failed to develop a comprehensive counter-insurgency plan that integrates military, political, economic, and social programs."<sup>39</sup> Aquino was angered by these statements and shot back that the Philippines has "asked our military ally for the hardware to achieve these objectives, but they have given advice instead."<sup>40</sup>

The timing of the polemic could not have been more appropriate. Following the withdrawal of the rebel National Democratic Front (NDF) from the negotiating panel that forged the preliminary ceasefire agreement in protest over the massacre of peasants affiliated with the militant Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) in January of this year near the gates of the Presidential Palace, a bomb planted at the grandstand of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) by right-wingers in the military exploded, killing four people, just four days before Aquino was to address the military school's commencement exercises.

The stage was thus set perfectly for her proclamation that efforts at peaceful resolution to the 18-year old insurgency had failed, and that "the answer to the terrorism of the Left and the Right is not social and

<sup>36</sup>Miles, p.2.

<sup>37</sup>(Underscoring mine) Shalom, p. 109.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Richard Armitage, US Assistant Secretary for Defense and International Security Affairs, quoted in "Guerrilla War Will Inevitably Get Worse," in *The Observer*, March 23, 1987, p.3.

<sup>40</sup>"Aquino Vows to Crush Foes", in *The Observer*, March 23, 1987, p. 1.



economic reform but police and military action."<sup>41</sup>

Despite the appearance of even-handedness, however, there was no doubt in anyone's mind, that Aquino's target is the Left.

As a result, press reports claim that President Reagan had signed an intelligence funding authorizing an increase in personnel aid and an additional \$10-million for CIA operations in the Philippines.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, the Pentagon has slashed Mrs. Aquino's request for additional US helicopter gunships -- delivering only 10 instead of the 45 she had asked for.<sup>43</sup> US military officers contend she would do well to deploy her ground forces against the insurgents and the Pentagon complains her government ignores US military advice.

The stage is set for a firmer grapplehold by low-intensity conflict hawks on internal Philippine matters.

### **Military Training**

One form of military aid has been especially valued by US officials: the training of foreign military personnel. This is an important component of LIC, whose strategists spurn the use of large US military divisions in LIC situations and instead rely on three categories of military forces: 1) surrogate forces (both client states and anti-communist guerrillas); 2) US forces trained for unconventional operations and rapid development (mostly US Special Operations Forces); and 3) demonstration of conventional US military strength through war games and threatening naval presence.<sup>44</sup>

Military training of foreign troops is funded through the International Military Education Training Program (IMET). The Pentagon also trains foreign troops through in-country training courses taught by Mobile Training Teams (MTTs). Instruction goes beyond strictly military subjects, like jungle warfare to include courses in civic action, psychological operations, national economic development.

The main trends in military training in the last several years have been: 1) increased use of MTTs for in-country trainings; 2) more IMET for El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica; 3) an increase in the proportion of enlisted to personnel students; 4) in-country training of Civil and Rural Guards in Costa Rica; 5) more courses in civic action and humanitarian assistance.<sup>45</sup>

The benefits of the training program transcend the military field.

"These students ... are to become instructors when they return home. *They are the coming leaders of their countries* ... The greatest return on any portion of our military assistance investment -- dollar for dollar -- comes from the training of selected officers ... They are the coming leader of their nations. It

<sup>41</sup>Bruce Occena, "Aquino Government Shifts to the Right," in *Frontline*, April 13, 1987, p. 11)

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>"NPA Expects Foreign Aid," in *Midday*, April 28, 1987, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup>Resource Center Bulletin, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

*is of inestimable value to the men.*"<sup>46</sup>

A more candid assessment of the value of the training programs is that "one must reckon with the possibility -- indeed probability -- that the Officers Corps, as a unit, may accede to the reins of government as the only alternative to domestic chaos and leftist takeover."<sup>47</sup>

In the Philippines, between 1950 and 1971, Philippine military personnel numbering 13,588 received training from the United States, including 8,729 within the continental US. One hundred fifty-three senior officers attended US command and general staff schools.<sup>48</sup>

### **Civic Action**

Civic action programs aim to improve the image of military forces and extend their influence. While such programs can result in some improvement in rural conditions, they never confront the society's main socio-economic problems.

Military civic action programs are experiencing a strong comeback in Central America. They form part of the counter-insurgency response to rising popular resistance in the region. Recent military interest in civic action also results from the growing acceptance of LIC doctrine which calls for economic and psychological measures along with military ones to combat insurgency.

Current civic action operations fit into one of these broad categories: 1) programs carried out separately by US military personnel; 2) programs jointly implemented during combined exercises with other nations; and 3) programs managed by the local government and army.<sup>49</sup>

In El Salvador, since 1980, prodding from the US has resulted in the Salvadoran Army's adoption of a sophisticated pacification program that incorporates civic action and psychological operations. Virtually, all these operations, which are mostly the combined work of the army and the civilian government, are funded by the US government through AID, DOD or private US organizations.

Civil-military action in El Salvador has two forms. In some cases, the military seizes a contested piece of territory, or part of a rebel-controlled zone, and construction or health crews funded by AID come rushing in behind them. The civilians in the area are put to work for AID (often on road construction projects which in turn facilitate military transportation. Health personnel administer some sort of rudimentary medicine.

Such actions include these objectives: 1) mobilize the population to assist in holding a disputed piece of land; 2) subject civilian labor to military authority; 3) monopolize the population's access to information; and 4) control the population's movement.<sup>50</sup> In order to receive food, for example, recipients must first be identified. If they do not wish to be

<sup>46</sup>(Underscoring mine) Former Secretary of Defense Robert MacNamara, later World Bank head, quoted in Shalom, p. 106.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>49</sup>Resource Center Bulletin, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup>Paul Martin, "Total War at the Grassroots Level in El Salvador", in the *Low-Intensity Conflict: US New Strategy in the Third World* (QC: SPI, 1987), p. 11.



identified, they are assumed to be guilty of collaborating with the guerrillas.

In practice, however, the army often cannot hold an area long enough to make the action meaningful. The method which is now increasingly favored is to invade a rebel zone of control, "rescue" the civilian population, and pack them off in military helicopter to official refugee camps and AID-administered projects.<sup>51</sup>

When the Salvadoran army does roll into a village, it is prepared to give a show. Planes drop propaganda leaflets in the area, and the commander presents a speech about the evils of communism and the virtues of the current regime. Food, toys, medicines, and clothing are handed out to villagers gathered in the plaza. Some battalions have their own soldier-clowns who provide entertainment. Frequently, it becomes a multi-media affair when the army Psyops team presents an anti-communist film from the United States, Army barbers cut hair, doctors give vaccination, and dentists pull teeth.<sup>52</sup>

Civic action project sponsored by the US bases in Honduras take the form of public relations projects. On their thanksgiving on July 4th, the base sponsors festivities in the area. Plans are underway for US soldiers to rebuild the town's church and central plaza, and each of the units at the base have been assigned to assist local schools and community centers.

In the Philippines, the US military advisers of JUSMAG give advice to the AFP regarding civic action. For the JUSMAG in the country, civic action has four functions: 1) it uses under-utilized military forces in a socially productive way; 2) it improves relations between the military and the population; 3) it provides security to the population; and 4) it opens up sources of information to the military on insurgent activity.<sup>53</sup> US officials consider civic action to be a valuable counter-insurgency measure because it provides a subtle means of placing troops in a strategic position. In an area where insurgency threatened, a battalion could be sent in and should devote at least part of its time to useful labor; it could secure needed intelligence and discourage potential insurgents without antagonizing the uncommitted.

Indeed, US civic action training teams have been sent here to conduct joint exercises with Philippine troops. Between July 1966 and February 1969, for example, six such exercises were held in Central Luzon; from July 1971 to December 1972, seven civic action exercises were conducted.<sup>54</sup>

While civic action constitutes one of the many carrots of low-intensity conflict, direct military strikes are the sticks wielded by the AFP for faster, more effective counter-insurgency results. For example, the new "Oplan Kappia" (Ilocano word meaning "peace") has gone full-blast, literally, and the opening salvo has been fired in the Cagayan Valley - an

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Resource Center Bulletin, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup>Shalom, p. 105.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. p. 106

operation which has been described by the armed and clandestine revolutionary forces as the biggest.<sup>55</sup>

### **Paramilitary Units**

Superficially, civil-defense structures, where civilians are armed and organized into right-wing paramilitary outfits, are designed by a government faced with a widescale nationalist uprising to enhance local peace-and-order situations and involve civilians in the defense of their own communities, thus freeing up soldiers to take the offensive against the revolutionary forces. More importantly, however, the program is intended to drive a wedge between the rebels and the civilians, denying the former local bases for support. Guerrillas are then left with the uncomfortable choice of leaving an area under the regime's control or causing "civilian" casualties.

In El Salvador, civil defense structures were established decades ago by rich coffee growers to ensure labor peace on their vast landholdings. This structure, known as Orden, went underground in the 1980's to become the feared "death squads", which gradually lost importance as the war acquired an increasingly conventional character.<sup>56</sup> But with the LIC strategy, civil defense is back.

This time, however, US military personnel are directly in charge. The program is the personal domain of one US adviser, who refers to himself as the "priest" and to whom the most motivated soldiers are sent.<sup>57</sup> The indoctrinees are dispersed throughout the countryside to become the nucleus of local civil defense units in targeted areas.

In 1985, the potent use of civil defense units in El Salvador not only for military purposes but also for psychological operations as well, was demonstrated. The underground revolutionary forces - the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front) - attacked a civil defense unit in the town of Santa Cruz Loma, hitting several of its members. A house where the unit stored ammunition was mortared during the fire-fight. When the fighting has ceased, however, the majority of the charred bodies found inside the mortared house were found to be those of several women and children, apparently family members of the civil defense forces. The regime rushed a helicopter to the site, carrying not reinforcements but former US Ambassador to the United Nations Jeanne Kirkpatrick, one of the most avowedly reactionary lieutenants of President Reagan, who used the occasion to pontificate to the international community on leftist "terrorism" in El Salvador.<sup>58</sup>

In Guatemala, civilians are organized into a *Patrullas de Autodefensa* (PAD). The authorities there maintain that these patrols were voluntarily formed by local villagers to defend themselves against guerrilla attacks. However, Amnesty International, the international human rights organization, has found that Guatemalan villagers were forced to form these patrols under military orders and acted under military supervision as

<sup>55</sup> "New Oplan Batters Cagayan" in *Liberation*, November 1986, p. 14.

<sup>56</sup> Martin, p. 9

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 10.



adjuncts to the regular army.<sup>59</sup> Amnesty International has also reported similar circumstances behind the formation of these "spontaneous" self-defense forces in Chile, known as *Accion Chileno Anti-Comunista* (ACHA).<sup>60</sup>

Currently, with express authorization from President Aquino, right-wing vigilante groups have been formed in the Philippines, such as the Alsa Masa of Davao City, the Nakasaka in Davao del Sur, the Citizens-Against-Communism Army (CACA) and Tadtad of Cebu province, the 4K in South Cotabato.<sup>61</sup> No different from the Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF) first organized under the ousted Marcos regime, these rightist paramilitary units sow terror in the communities where they have been formed and have figured prominently in the national news for their notorious violations of human rights.

Among the most notorious of these armed civilian "defense" units is the Alsa Masa and the Nakasaka. The Alsa Masa's phenomenal growth is attributable in part to Davao City radio commentator Jun Porras Pala, the gun-toting and grenade-brandishing anti-communist who threatens and summarily dismisses as NPA sympathizers city residents who refuse to submit to Alsa Masa-style law and order.<sup>62</sup> The fascist mentality of the Alsa Masa was captured unflickingly by the Davao City PC-INP Metropolitan Chief Maj. Frank Calida who boasted that "there are almost no communists left in Davao City today ... just the priest and nuns, and we'll go after them next."<sup>63</sup>

Nakasaka, meanwhile, drew mixed public reactions of fear, disbelief and outrage when the newspapers printed a picture of a militiaman from such vigilante group holding the head of a decapitated suspected NPA guerrilla whose blood was reportedly drunk by them.<sup>64</sup>

Recently, an international research team led by former US Attorney-General Ramsey Clark was in the country to study operations of such rightist vigilante groups. The international visitors warned that government officials who have endorsed the formation of anti-communist paramilitary units are "committing a very serious mistake ... and are preparing for their own destruction in a right-wing coup."<sup>65</sup>

"If the government does not effectively addresses the roots of the communist insurgency like the land problems and urban poverty, people will continue to flock to the left.

*"As the situation further deteriorates, the military will then dismiss the civilian government as weak and may stage a right-*

<sup>59</sup> *Guatemala: The Human Rights Record*, (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1987), p. 98.

<sup>60</sup> *Chile: Amnesty International Briefing* (Kent: Amnesty International Publications, 1983), p. 11.

<sup>61</sup> See Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) "A tentative listing of rightist vigilante groups," in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 13-15, 1987.

<sup>62</sup> Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace (EMJP), *Fact-Finding Mission Report: Davao City and Davao del Sur* (unpublished), March 1987, pp. 2-4.)

<sup>63</sup> Occena, p. 11

<sup>64</sup> *Malaya*, April 22, 1987, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> Jose Logarta, "Spread of Vigilante Groups a Mistake," in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 24, 1987, p. 1.

*wing coup with the help of the vigilantes under the atmosphere they have created ... A real bloodbath will follow.*

*"(We) have sufficient evidence indicating the involvement of the CIA in the Philippine counterinsurgency problem. The CIA connection is obvious"*<sup>66</sup>

A prominent nationalist economist and political commentator has said that the World Anti-Communist League (WACL), whose former head John Singlaub was recently in the country, relies upon these armed right-wing groups in conducting provocations against the left and nationalist groups.<sup>67</sup> Sure enough, no less than retired Maj. Gen. John Singlaub himself has his direct role of provocation. He was recently reported to have passed himself off as a German journalist in order to inquire about the internal structure of the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), a nationalist church-founded human rights group which specializes in documentation of human rights violations. The TFDP staffer who entertained Singlaub says that the WACL ex-head and LIC proponent visited their offices on February 9 of this year and that he only recognized Singlaub when he saw the latter's photograph in the newspapers a week later.<sup>68</sup> Singlaub has been subpoenaed to appear before the US congressional committee investigating the Iran-Contra scandal involving the sale of arms to Iran and the diversion of profits to the Contras in Nicaragua.

Even while the visiting international research team has said that "there is no doubt about Aquino's commitment to human rights."<sup>69</sup> President Aquino has given her imprimatur to the reactionary political impulse by praising anti-communist village foot-patrols in the Philippine countryside, ironically, as an extension of "people's power."<sup>70</sup>

### **Psychological Operations**

This is perhaps the most successful component of the LIC strategy in Central America, particularly in El Salvador. With assistance from the Reagan administration, the CIA, and Venezuelan specialists, what had been a primitive and ineffective operation in El Salvador has mushroomed into a campaign spearheaded by an entirely new government propaganda ministry - the Ministry of Communications and Culture - which, along with the Defense Ministry, is charged with coordinating the effort.<sup>71</sup>

The most obvious work involves the steps the regime has taken to systematize control of traditional information on channels. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, the regime controlled the press through assassinating journalists critical of the regime and repeatedly bombing the of-

<sup>66</sup> (Underscoring mine) *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>67</sup> Ofreno, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Logarta, p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> Former US Attorney-General Ramsey Clark, quoted in Nimfa A. Rueda, "Vigilantes a Step Toward Military State, Iletto Warned," in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 26, 1987, p. 10

<sup>70</sup> Occena, p. 11.

<sup>71</sup> Martin, p. 13.



fices of dissident newspapers and radio stations. Now that the regime has been "reprogrammed" to the new way, more subtle methods are being applied.

The message incessantly broadcast through the state-controlled media outlet invariably involves variations in one theme: all opposition to the regime is masterminded by the FMLN; opposition equals terrorism equals destruction equals death. The state and military, conversely, are presented as representing peace, humanitarianism and patriotism.

To reach those in the countryside, beyond the range of electronic media, government planes fly over rural areas dropping leaflets. In one recent case known as "Operation Mike", 335,000 leaflets were dropped over rebel zones of control in one week with messages from one Miguel Castellanos, a former FMLN commander who was captured and turned collaborator.<sup>72</sup>

Perhaps the most sophisticated operations involved a series of trial army forays into the countryside to round up rebel collaborators. When the terrified victims were taken back to the garrison expecting to face torture and death, they were instead given shower, fed better than they usually eat, and shown slick video tapes claiming that the guerrillas living in their midst are commanded by Soviet and Cuban agents.<sup>73</sup>

Much of the regime's propaganda is reportedly being produced by a shadowy media outfit called the Venezuelan Institute for Popular Education (IVEPO). IVEPO runs an impressive operation in the country, with 73 employees and its own television studio. According to the Washington Post, the CIA used IVEPO to channel hundreds of thousands of dollars to Salvadoran President Jose Napoleon Duarte's 1984 presidential campaign.<sup>74</sup> Capitol Hill sources say that the CIA told congressional committees that they are running a covert "media relations" operations in El Salvador, though IVEPO was not specifically mentioned.

Low-intensity conflict strategy targets not only leftist guerrillas and socialist states but also US and Third World residents. To ensure the success of US sponsored LIC, its proponents support psychological operations aimed at the US public and the Central American population. "I think the most critical special operations mission we have today is to persuade the American people that the Communists are out to get us", warns J. Michael Kelly, Assistant Deputy Secretary of the US Air Force. "If we can win this war of ideas early, we can win anywhere else."<sup>75</sup> Likewise, George Tanham, former president of the Rand Corporation, says, "One most pressing problem is not in the Third World, but here at home in the struggle for the minds of the people."<sup>76</sup>

A prominent LIC theorist fully agrees that just as important a battlefield for low-intensity conflict is the American public's mind.

*"For many Americans, involvement in low-intensity conflict can hardly be justified ... Many Americans are convinced neither*

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>75</sup> Resource Center Bulletin, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

that low-intensity conflict are threatening to the United States nor that US involvement is essential ... The perception and policy gap between American support for major wars and lack of support for low-intensity conflict is wide; and it has its political and psychological counterparts within the military. *It can seriously affect America's capability...*

*"(There is) an underlying concern, probably produced by the Vietnam experience, that the military cannot long operate in a foreign area without substantial support from the American people - a necessary component of staying power ... For many Americans, revolutions are perceived to be internal affairs that must be allowed to run their course...*

*"... an effective American (public) response must be developed. It will not be easy because (revolutions) are complex, contradictory and ambiguous in nature. (Thus) American policy may support non-democratic regimes in the name of democracy ... (However) many of the indigenous systems involved in low-intensity conflict are non-democratic; basing US policy on the presumption that only democratic systems can be supported precludes American involvement in many parts of the Third World..."<sup>77</sup>*

And because "media access to the conflict area, the American freedom of information tradition, the public's right to know, and the technological capabilities of a wide variety of information sources make it extremely difficult to isolate American military operations from the outside world, even when official US policy is deliberately designed to do so,"<sup>78</sup> press access to the Salvadoran countryside, for example, has been sharply curtailed. Permission from the armed forces is necessary to move in most of the country. Last year, several journalists who had permission to go to a particular area were fired at with mortars and automatic weapons. On the other hand, the armed forces press service of El Salvador is playing a more active role in pre-packaging news into press kits, prearranged interviews, and complementary photos.<sup>79</sup>

As early as 1954, the US National Security Council (NSC) had put a premium on psychological operations when it secretly called for the intensification of covert and psychological actions to strengthen the orientation of, among other Southeast Asian countries, the Philippines, "toward the free world".<sup>80</sup>

### **Intelligence**

The "total war" concept of low-intensity conflict doctrine involves:<sup>81</sup> 1) mobilizing the supportive sector of the population; 2) controlling the largest possible sector of the opposition with the least amount of coercion; and 3) annihilating that sector which cannot be controlled. The en-

<sup>77</sup> (Underscoring mine) Sarkesian, pp. 7-10, 12-13.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>79</sup> Martin, p. 14.

<sup>80</sup> Shalom, p. 103.

<sup>81</sup> Martin, p. 17.



ture strategy thus rests on the ability to identify which sector is being dealt with, and that means intelligence.

In the Salvadoran countryside, aerial intelligence is being provided on a regular basis by US spy planes being flown out of Panama and Honduras.<sup>82</sup> On the ground, rebel sources say that they have detected an increasing use of infiltrators. In the Philippines, intelligence work of the AFP includes the planting of informers and Deep Penetration Agents (DPAs; also known as "zombies" among the underground forces) in revolutionary zones and organizations.<sup>83</sup>

LIC strategists argue that human intelligence is generally most valuable.

The most dramatic example of the value of intelligence work under LIC in El Salvador is the civic action military operation in March 1985 in FMLN-held Guzapa volcano.<sup>84</sup> The volcano is located only a few kilometers outside the capital city. Several thousand Salvadoran government troops moved into the area after it had been "softened" by artillery and aerial bombardment. Despite the mine fields laid by FMLN for such an occasion, the advancing troops were spared casualties caused by landmine explosions by conveniently moving around them. Even more dramatic was the discovery and dismantling of perhaps the most elaborate clandestine clinic run by the Salvadoran revolutionaries in the entire country. Not only were the soldiers able to locate the well-organized underground installation, but arrived with such surprise that the clinic was still occupied by nurses and patients.<sup>85</sup>

In El Salvador's cities, intelligence capacity also appears to be on the rise, as evidenced by the many guerrilla agents captured last year. The US may have had a hand in this as well. AID supplied the regime with \$11 million earmarked for "judicial reform" following US congressional criticism of the judicial system's failure to prosecute suspects in the cases of 4 US churchwomen and 4 US land reform advisers murdered in 1980.<sup>86</sup> The money was spent on the creation of a forensic lab and the training of a Special Investigative Unit.

In theory, both laboratory and training could allow the security forces more real criminals. But the fact that no "death squad" members have been arrested, while the rate of capture of union activists is increasing, indicates the way these facilities have been subsumed in the "total war".

In addition, the US congress has rescinded a ban on direct US aid to Latin American police forces in the wake of FMLN's execution of 4 US marines in the capital in June, 1986.<sup>87</sup> While it has long been believed that the CIA was working with the security forces despite the ban, the change indicated by the US Congress now makes such work legal.

In fact, prominent LIC proponents complain that US intelligence work may not be efficient enough in operation because of "legalistic guidelines". Gripes one of them,

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Picas, p. 13.

<sup>84</sup> Martin, p. 12.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

"The nature of democracy limits and constrains intelligence agencies. Congressional oversight and an inherent American fear of secret activities establish boundaries for the intelligence establishment, albeit these boundaries are at times unclear to both intelligence agencies and the American public. Pressures on the executive branch as well as on congress tend to create political legalistic guidelines for most intelligence activities. Moreover, many Americans are uncomfortable with the necessity for maintaining a wide-ranging intelligence establishment. As a result US intelligence agencies are bound by democratic perceptions of proper behaviour and legal strictures even when dealing with a protagonist not similarly bound. This is not to deny "dirty tricks" by US intelligence agencies: but regardless of activity, officials are held accountable.

"The more important issue, however, is the ability of intelligence agencies to undertake activities in support of US counter-revolutionary policy. Although the intelligence establishment has more leeway than other political-military instruments, it is not free to engage in certain kinds of activities that might be essential for successful counter-revolutionary operations. Further, even when intelligence agencies do an effective job, their information and analyses are often ignored by those in the field and those at the national command level."<sup>88</sup>

Now, while the above passages reveal that LIC advocates wave the flag of democracy when it suits them such that they complain when they are "bound by democratic perceptions of proper behavior and legal strictures," it also underscores the great importance LIC strategists place on intelligence activities as a major component of low-intensity conflict.

### **Urban Psyops and Repression**

While civil defense through the formation of paramilitary vigilante groups and civic-military actions are designed, in LIC parlance, to "coerce and control" the rural population, different but comparable measures are being developed in the urban centers of Central America where labor and student groups are particularly militant.

In El Salvador, a sophisticated combination of "limited firepower" and "population control" is being applied in stark contrast to the crude "death squads" campaign of former years which shocked the world, isolated the Duarte regime, and created damaging controversy in the US.<sup>89</sup> The "new" repression is just as brutal, though, once a target is selected. The terror is now used to achieve sophisticated political objectives rather than as a means of physically eliminating opposition leaders.

There are also preparations underway for "controlled" urban repression on a much larger scale. Two special SWAT teams of about 80 men each have recently been trained by the US, reportedly with CIA participation. At about the same time, some 180 long-distance sniper rifles

<sup>88</sup> (Underscoring mine) Sarkesian, p. 11

<sup>89</sup> Martin, p. 15.



were reportedly imported from the US roughly equal to the number of personnel trained.<sup>90</sup>

A most insidious method of urban repression, albeit not carried out exclusively in the urban centers, is abducting known or even suspected activist figures and making them disappear without a trace. The Chilean human rights community has coined a most *apropos* term for the victims -- *detenidos desaparecidos* (literally, "prisoners who have disappeared") for people who were picked up by government agents and were never seen or heard from again.<sup>91</sup> Since the first incident of disappearance was reported in Guatemala in 1954, the Working Group of Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance of the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) has reported that instances of "disappearances" have been recorded in as many as 30 countries.<sup>92</sup> The Philippines is one of them.

Cases of involuntary disappearances in the Philippines, for example, fall under four categories.<sup>93</sup>

In the first category, a political detainee, arrested under circumstances where there are no witnesses, or witnesses cannot positively identify the arresting persons, is never found again.

The second category is a variation of the first. Political detainees are reported by the military as having been "released" but are nowhere to be found.

In the third category, a political detainee, normally arrested without an appropriate warrant, is held incommunicado for a period ranging from weeks to several months before getting surfaced in one detention center or another. The family, during the period of isolation, cannot locate the detainees' whereabouts while the military denies having the person in custody.

In the fourth category, bodies of political prisoners are found, apparently victims of foul play. The prisoner is often heavily tortured before being "salvaged," a homegrown catch-all word for extrajudicial execution.

Various Latin American countries also have their share of "desaparecidos". In Argentina, for example, seven years after the overthrow of Isabel Peron, more than 25,000 cases of disappearances were reported.<sup>94</sup> In Chile, the continuing rule of Gen. Augusto Pinochet has left the cases of thousands of persons who "disappeared" under his regime unresolved.

In Guatemala, "disappearances" have been regularly reported by successive governments. As a result, a total of 35,000 Guatemalans have so far been abducted and reported missing.<sup>95</sup>

Other Latin American countries have also their share of political "disappearances", notably in Bolivia, Columbia, and Peru. The extreme

gravity of the situation has moved the relatives of the "disappeared" to hold the First Latin American Congress of Relatives of the Disappeared in January, 1981, in San Jose, Costa Rica.<sup>96</sup> The participants of the Congress unequivocally condemned the military governments of Latin American nations and equally held accountable the US government, its criminal intervention in several cases, and its practice of destabilizing popular democratic governments struggling for self-determination.

The picture of repression through enforced disappearances would not be complete without a report from El Salvador, the primary LIC laboratory in Central America. A report recently issued by the Salvadoran Christian Legal Aid office showed 1,655 civilian deaths recorded in 1985, along with 777 arbitrary arrests. The regime's prisoners simply "disappeared" at an average rate of three each week.<sup>97</sup>

### Counter-terrorism

The US State Department defines terrorism as "the threat or use of violence for political purposes."<sup>98</sup> But the target of the mounting counterterrorism campaign is almost exclusively violence that can be categorized as revolutionary or communist. The Reagan administration variously calls Nicaragua "a command post for international terror" and a "country club for terrorists" while other Central American countries like El Salvador and Guatemala where death squads and military terror abound are lauded for their democratic principles.<sup>99</sup> We can only remember too well what will probably go down as one of the classic statements of the Reagan years, what Vice-President George Bush, formerly CIA chief, said when he toasted Ferdinand Marcos after the dictator's "victory" in rigged presidential elections in June 1981: "We love you, sir ... We love your adherence to democratic principles and democratic processes."<sup>100</sup>

Leftist guerrillas are uniformly labelled terrorists while the Contras are praised for being freedom fighters.

LIC proponents say that United States need to respond offensively to the scourge of terrorism. No longer should the United States passively defend its institutions and citizens against terrorist attacks but instead should mount an aggressive campaign against terrorism that would include preemptive and retaliatory strikes.

Although US commitment to counter-terrorism has not gone far enough for many advocates of low-intensity conflict, the concept has quickly advanced in recent years. In April, 1984, President Reagan signed a National Security Study Directive (NSSD-138) which endorsed the principle of preemptive strikes and reprisals against terrorists in other

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>91</sup> "Without a trace," in *Philippine Human Rights Update*, November 15-December 14, 1985, p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> "Desaparecidos", in *Philippine Human Rights Update*, November 15-December 14, 1985, p. 5)

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Paul Martin, "The Disputes for the Masses: The Popular Movement in El Salvador," in *The Low-Intensity Conflict: US New Strategy in the Third World* (QC: SPI, 1987), p. 34.

<sup>98</sup> Resource Center Bulletin, p. 2.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Walden Bello et al., *Development Debacle: The World Bank in the Philippines* (San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1982) p. 2.



countries.<sup>101</sup> NSSD-138 established the framework for the counter-terrorism component of low-intensity warfare.

On the other hand, "Narcoterrorism" is a term used by US officials to describe the "terrorist/insurgent link to drug trafficking organizations."<sup>102</sup> Cuba and Nicaragua, whose leaders have been described as cocaine dealers by President Reagan, are primary targets for the low-intensity war against narcoterrorism. The dictator of the Office of Counterterrorism told Congress: "Cuba and Nicaragua have been active in narcotics trafficking as well as terrorism, since both activities weaken the social and political structures of democratic governments in the Western Hemisphere."<sup>103</sup>

Ironically, it may be the White House which is really the nest of drug traffickers. The Iran-Contra scandal has unmasked the connection between the White House and drug trafficking. A document drafted by aides of Democratic party Senator John Kerry based on investigations concerning the Nicaraguan Contras showed that suppliers of weapons to the Somocista bands were simultaneously involved in smuggling cocaine and other drugs into the United States.<sup>104</sup> According to that report, part of the infrastructure designed to move men, funds, supplies and ammunitions from the United States has been used in drug smuggling and these traffickers have significant ties to all the top contra echelons. The operation was simple: transport planes loaded with weapons arrived at Honduran and Costa Rican airports teeming with Nicaraguan contras and were then loaded with cocaine and marijuana bound for the United States.

The Kerry report further revealed that Lt. Col. Oliver North, Reagan's National Security Council (NSC) adviser who is currently under investigation by the US Congress for his alleged involvement in the IranScam, may have had knowledge of the drug deal as he had a liaison with the contra leaders in the person of Robert Owen, who was always on hand at the airports close to the Nicaraguan border to meet the planes loaded with weapons and the loading of the drugs step-by-step.<sup>105</sup>

In October last year, North ordered the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to drop its inquiries into Southern Air, which used to belong to the CIA and was the airline carrying the weapons for the Nicaraguan contras.<sup>106</sup> One of the Southern Air's pilots had previously been murdered in February 1986, apparently by drug dealers. The American pilot, Barry Seal, before he was killed used to fly the same C-123 transport plane that later, in October last year, was shot down by the Sandinistas who captured one of the US mercenaries on board, Eugene Hasenfus.

White House links to drug trafficking are not confined to Reagan's "national hero" North, for subsequently a leading US magazine reported that the Nicaraguan contras paid for part of the weapons with the pro-

ceeds from sales of cocaine illegally shipped into the United States with CIA and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) assistance.<sup>107</sup> In fact, two drug dealers currently in prison in Miami, Florida testified that they smuggled drugs from Central America into the US with full CIA and DEA knowledge and support.

If the drug-trafficking connection is confirmed to lead up to the White House, the national scandal it will most certainly create will rock the United States more than the Iran-Contra Scandal or even Watergate has. It would thus seem then that the US-engineered low-intensity conflict warfare, to paraphrase one of its leading proponents, has "a morality and ethics all its own."<sup>108</sup>

### Special Operations Forces

The most visible public manifestation of all this new interest in low-intensity conflict has been the promotion of Special Operations Forces (SOFs) - a concept that built on the counter-insurgency mission of the US Army Special Forces (Green Berets), the Navy SEALs (Sea, Air, Land Elements), and irregular warfare units from other services. Since 1981, old units have been revitalized and expanded by at least a third; these Special Operations Forces now number 14,900 (32,000 including reserves).<sup>109</sup>

The original purpose of SOFs was to carry out psychological operations and unconventional missions behind enemy lines during wartime. But in the last 25 years, SOF units have also been called upon to perform clandestine operations in peacetime and to aid counter-insurgency campaigns. Recently a new use of SOFs has emerged: to lead counter-terrorism strikes.

An excerpt from the work of a prominent LIC advocate will allow us a glimpse into the thinking behind the necessity for Special Operations Forces.

"During the defensive phase (of low-intensity conflict), standard US policies of military and economic assistance may be appropriate ... *Beyond (these), Special Operations Forces personnel may be involved in both training and operations.*

"The final part of the defensive phase occurs when indigenous forces are unable to stop the revolution. If the United States continues its involvement, it must be prepared to inject ground forces into, a combat role in conjunction with indigenous forces. *This kind of operations requires capabilities beyond those of Special Forces units..*

"The offensive phase (of low-intensity conflict) will require *specialty-trained units* and a mix of civilian and military forces (Special Operations Units and other personnel trained in special operations) *Such operations are generally covert, at least initially, and better suited for civilian agency operations. Later*

<sup>101</sup> Resource Center Bulletin, p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Juan Marrero, "Drug Traffickers, Nest in the White House," in *Philippine Currents*, March, 1987, p. 16.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 17

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Sarkesian, p. 3

<sup>109</sup> Miles, p. 6



counter-insurgency offensive operations may require a more visible military effort ..."<sup>110</sup>

Albeit Special Operations can be used at any level of the conflict, and most SOF training prepares for LIC situations, LIC advocates would tend not to quickly "Americanize" the war. Further, SOFs provide "a rapid surgical response capability when US citizens or facilities overseas are threatened by dissidents."<sup>111</sup> The US army says that SOF operations "can ameliorate situations inimical to US interests without US involvement in large-scale armed conflict and with minimal cost in lives and resources."<sup>112</sup>

Authorized SOF operations include:<sup>113</sup>

- unconventional warfare;
- training and supporting foreign military and paramilitary forces;
- conducting humanitarian operations;
- terrorism counteraction;
- conducting deception operations;
- support of guerrilla forces;
- supporting foreign internal defense;
- providing clandestine support of other operations;
- strategic psychological operations; and
- civic action initiatives.

In the Philippines, as early as 1973, US Special Forces were spotted operating in Zamboanga province in Mindanao.<sup>114</sup> These SOFs also operated in 1981 in support of Philippine Marines in operations in six towns in Bataan near the US bases.<sup>115</sup> Other reports say that crack troops of the Special Warfare Unit One and the elite Special Operations Squadron are now clandestinely housed in Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Base.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, a training camp for SOFs has been sighted in Nueva Ecija as well as several joint war exercises in Bicol and Subic.<sup>117</sup>

In El Salvador, when the FMLN guerrilla forces had gained decisive victories in the latter half of 1983 by overrunning a strategic hydroelectric dam, levelling the largest military garrison in the country, and destroying the last bridge linking the western and eastern halves of the country, the revolutionary movement was at the threshold of a "war of immediate definition."<sup>118</sup> But even with the SOFs failing to shore up the strength of Salvadoran government troops and material, the FMLN had to make a sober assessment of its chances against US troops that would surely come storming into the country when the regime falls. The FMLN

realized that the large presence of US military advisers and SOFs was but a step removed from direct US troop commitment to the Salvadoran conflict.

To complement the SOF concept under low-intensity conflict, proposals for a "light infantry" have been made to suit US militaristic objectives under unconventional or revolutionary warfare. In the meantime, the intelligence community has rehired hundreds of covert action experts lost to the CIA during the Carter years.<sup>119</sup> The CIA has also developed what is virtually a secret, unconventional army of soldiers and guerrilla warfare specialists, vastly expanding its own paramilitary assets.<sup>120</sup> These assets, together with third-country resources from "friendly" allies, permit the CIA to go far beyond intelligence gathering or limited technical operations.

An interesting addition to the military build-up in Central America, aside from the more militarily effective SOFs, is the unprecedented use of US National Guard and reserve units in military maneuvers and civic actions. Between 1981 and the end of 1986, guard units from over 35 states of the American Union will have trained in the region.<sup>121</sup>

Participation by the Army Reserve in training exercises in Central America was virtually unheard of before 1983 but in recent years, the isthmus has become a favorite training spot. In early 1986, the Department of the Army said that Central American locations are now regularly used to train reservists and that "Army Reserve participation in Overseas Deployment Training exercises in Central America is projected to grow."<sup>122</sup>

Thus, while the concept of low-intensity conflict involves the employment and deployment of all the resources of the US government in order to reassert more surely its global hegemony, with the premium being put on the economic, political and psychological aspects of warfare, with the military aspect a distant fourth, it does not mean for a moment that the US has not already started lining up the troops as an essential component of LIC and as a regular feature of its conventional war-preparedness.

## Conclusion

The propagation and advocacy of the doctrine of Low-Intensity Conflict is the most terrible and terrifying development in the modern age. It embroils Third World nations perpetually struggling to break loose from the bonds of mass poverty, human misery, and foreign domination into protracted dirty little wars in the name of "freedom", but really freedom for continued United States' designs of world political and economic hegemony. The LIC strategy as practiced by the Reagan reactionary administration is a new kind of brinkmanship that unleashes global offensive of counter-insurgency and counter-revolution in the protective shadows of the nuclear age.

<sup>110</sup> (Underscoring mine) Sarkesian, p. 5-6.

<sup>111</sup> Simbulan, p. 179

<sup>112</sup> Resource Center Bulletin, p. 3

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Simbulan, p. 178.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>116</sup> "A Constant Patron Drumbeats the Counter-insurgency Effort of a Dying Client Regime," in *Philippine Human Rights Update*, October 15-November 14, 1985, p. 7

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Martin, p. 29

<sup>119</sup> Miles, p. 6

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Resource Center Bulletin, p. 3

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.



While it may be easy enough to denounce Vietnam-type United States military adventurism because of its bluntness and flagrance, US interventions under LIC may not be readily apparent, and may thus escape world condemnation, as it involves subtler forms of meddling, such as psychological operations, covert actions, humanitarian assistance, counter-insurgency training, and surrogate forces, among the other instruments or components of LIC we have attempted to elaborate in this paper. Nevertheless, the peoples of less-developed countries must recognize such activities of the United States as they are, and must militantly oppose them.

For example, we must free ourselves from the narrow-minded thinking that the anti-communist vigilante groups mushrooming in our countryside at an incredible pace are spontaneous people's reactions toward self-defense and self-help. They are a part and a parcel of over-all US strategic plans for maintaining the status quo in this country, a state of affairs with only one beneficiary in the final analysis: the United States.

In 1984, noble people of Nicaragua blazed an important legal trail toward international recognition of real sovereignty through popularly-determined political and economic developments and against United States imperialism. They brought their case before the International Court of Justice to seek judgment from the proceedings with its war of intervention on the small Central American nation. Their action bespeaks the civilized nature of their aspirations and national direction. Said the ICJ,

"The right to sovereignty and to political independence possessed by the Republic of Nicaragua like any other State of the region or of the world should be fully respected and should not in any way be jeopardized by any military and paramilitary activities which are prohibited by the principles of international law, in particular, the principle that *states should refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or the political independence of any State*, and the principle concerning the *duty not to intervene in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of a State*, principles embodied in the United Nations Charter and the charter of the Organization of American States.<sup>123</sup>

Predictably, the United States decided to conveniently ignore the World Court's injunction and has continued with its program of interventionism through low-intensity conflict.

For unless we can perceive what is behind the thin veil that masks United States crass materialism and interventionist militarism, we may never realize what it means to be truly free, to be truly democratic.

<sup>123</sup> (Underscoring mine) Ma. Victoria A. Grajeda, "Nicaragua vs. United States in the World Court: Provisional Measures," in *World Bulletin*, March-April 1985, pp. 47-49.

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# PHILIPPINE LABOR

# MOVEMENTS ARCHIVE

## Appendices



## SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT

### PEACE

**Cultural, Political and  
Economic Competition**

### LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

#### ***Political and Economic Conflict:***

Formation of cartels and alliances, soft propaganda, economic and political sanctions, military assistance

#### ***National and Subnational Conflict:***

Hostile propaganda, boycotts, seizures, border incidents and reprisals, terrorism and counter-terrorism, assassinations, sabotage, hostage-taking and rescues, training and advisory assistance, military assistance

#### ***Overt limited conflict:***

Rebellion, revolution, guerilla and counterguerilla operations, external advisers in combat, occupation of territory, seizure of resources, increased military support and limited assistance in combat operations, external forces involved in combat

### MID-INTENSITY CONFLICT

#### ***War:***

Regular forces engaged, attacks on political and economic infrastructure, declaration of war, invasion, expanded chemical war, attacks on civil targets, increasing national focus on military victory, strategic war, expansion of military force across spectrum of conventional military capability, mobilization

### HIGH-INTENSITY CONFLICT

#### ***Total War:***

Full mobilization, war in all dimensions, declaration of intent to conquer, tactical nuclear combat, strategic nuclear war

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## A COMPARISON: COUNTER-INSURGENCY DOCTRINE OF THE 1960s AND LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT OF THE 1980s

### COUNTER-INSURGENCY

1. Build-up of Special Operations Forces (SOF) by the Kennedy Administration.
2. Emphasis on coordinated internal defense and development programs.
3. Beginning of US support and training of civic action divisions in foreign armed forces.
4. Initiation of foreign police training by AID, DOD, and the CIA.
5. Focus on military assistance programs to combat insurgency.
6. Support for counter-terror by US trained military and paramilitary forces to strike back at guerillas and their supporters.
7. Common use of the terms "guerillas", "insurgents", and "revolutionaries" to describe leftist rebel armies.
8. Professed support for reforms that would alter the conditions that sparked popular rebellion.

### LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

1. Build-up of SOF by the Reagan Administration.
2. Re-emphasis on the need for coordinated defense and development programs.
3. Revival of civic action assistance and an expanded involvement of US troops in civic action programs.
4. Renewal of police training in Central America by the State Department, DOD, and Justice Department.
5. Intensified concern with combating Third World leftist movements and new focus on supporting right-wing insurgents trying to topple leftist governments.
6. New counter-terrorism policy calls for the United States to strike back at international terrorists and terrorist states with preemptive and retaliatory raids.
7. Facile description of all leftists involved in political violence as "terrorists" and "criminals".
8. Recognition that socioeconomic conditions increase popular support for leftist political violence but does not give even token attention to reforms present in such broad counter-insurgency efforts as the Alliance for Progress. Instead of using economic aids as leverage to push for substantial reforms,



- LIC advocates increased use of humanitarian assistance by AID and DOD as a way to soften, not solve, socio-economic problems. Also, humanitarian assistance is being used for military support and as part of psychological operations.
9. Willingness to commit US forces in combat roles to combat insurgency.
  10. Formation of a "Special Group" for counter-insurgency within the National Security Council and the establishment of similar groups at a country level to coordinate all US programs (from the Peace Corps to the CIA) within that country.
  11. Acceptance that US troops should play a direct role in counter-insurgency and pacification campaigns.
  9. Commitment of combat troops only as last resort but increased support for clandestine and covert operations, surgical strikes, and use of surrogate forces.
  10. Renewed prominence of the National Security Council in overseeing LIC operations and increased acceptance of interagency coordination both in Washington and at a country level.
  11. More emphasis on counter-insurgency and pacification as a task for foreign armed forces who can rely on US training and aid.

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*"Low Intensity Conflict:  
 The New Battlefield in Central America"*



# PHILIPPINE LABOR

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