

COMMAND, CONTROL, COMMUNICATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE:

USCINCSO's PERSPECTIVE, 1983-1985

The Southern Outpost of the United States

Each of the unified and specified commands is unique. Command arrangements, communications suites, and control measure appropriate for one may be inadequate or wholly cost-ineffective in another. The United States Southern Command, with its headquarters in Quarry Heights, Republic of Panama, is surely unlike the only other unified command with its headquarters on foreign territory, the U.S. European Command. USEUCOMs headquarters must Janus-like serve him who combines in his person the offices of Commander-in-Chief, Europe (a U.S. office), and Supreme Allied Commander Europe (a NATO office), and who exercises his responsibilities through two different command posts, one in Stuttgart, and one in Mons. USCINCSO has one comparatively small - and relatively insure - command post, a more inexperienced and less numerous staff, and far fewer assigned forces for his more limited role. Likewise, USSOUTHCOM bears little resemblance to USLANTCOM (whose CINC is also SACLANT), or to USPACOM: there are no naval forces assigned to SOUTHCOM; USCINCSO's writ ends at the waters edge, and the command's tiny naval component husbands a few small boats and bunker oil at the entrance to the Panama Canal. USCENCOM's headquarters is four times larger than USSOUTHCOMs, is located in Florida, and plans for forces many times more numerous and powerful

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than any contemplated for subordination to USCINCSO, under any circumstance.<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1970's, in the aftermath of Vietnam and amid the gathering support for negotiations with Panama over the Canal and the zone, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend the elimination of the U.S. Southern Command. The Secretary of Defense and President Nixon did not accept this advice, inter alia because it needlessly deprived the U.S. of a negotiating chip in the pending talks. Nonetheless, throughout the 1970s, there was a steady, eventually dramatic, reduction in the U.S. military presence in Latin America, so that by the 80's, there were stationed there less than one sixth as many service personnel as there had been a decade previous.<sup>2</sup> At the same time there had been an influx into the region of European and Asian military advisors, trainers and technicians; by 1983 it was literally true that the Soviets has more military personnel deployed in Peru alone than did USSOUTHCOM in all of Central or South America outside of Panama.

<sup>1</sup> In 1984 Headquarters, USSOUTHCOM had assigned 136 officers (1 general), compared with USEUCOM's 299 officer (10 generals), and USCENTCOM's 438 officers (9 generals). Over 60% of the USSOUTHCOM staff were 0-4 or junior; average for the same grades in the other commands was 36%.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. military personnel assigned in Latin America dropped from 532 in 1970 to 84 in 1981. Security Assistance funding for Latin nations was cut from \$137.5 million in Fiscal year 1976 to \$21.5 million in FY 80; in the same years, numbers of countries eligible for U.S. training were cut, and 50% fewer Latin military were being trained.

On the Mercator projection on which the Joint Chiefs of Staff allocate responsibilities among the CINC's, USSOUTHCOM is a monochrome overlay upon the Latin American land mass south of the border between Mexico and Guatemala. Normally USCINCSO is charged with planning and executing whatever military undertakings may serve the U.S. interests in the vast and diverse area, encompassing 19 sovereign states and a French Overseas Department. As a practical matter, within many countries within my putative domain I had little to do, and indeed, often could not even visit because of objections from prospective hosts or from our own diplomats. However, the problematic new island-nations of the Caribbean all lay outside my purview, as did Mexico, although in Mexico City I did maintain for the Department of Defense a small Security Assistance Office, devoted almost entirely to Mexico's F-5 purchase.

USSOUTHCOM and its headquarters are, of course, a vestige of the Canal Zone, and with the implementation of the Panama Canal Treaty in 1979, USCINCSO became an anachronism. His headquarters at Quarry Heights squats on premises jointly policed by Panama's Defense Forces and those of the U.S. While SOUTHCOM enjoys exclusive tenancy in its headquarters buildings and its key communications facilities, the fact is that the power, water, and interconnecting roads are all in Panamanian hands. No other CINC operates from similarly insecure facilities. But this is the instrument of U.S. policy to which the JCS have turned increasingly to meet the problems occasioned by the Cubanization of Nicaragua, and the threatened success of Leninist insurgents in El Salvador.

The Mission of USSOUTHCOM

My responsibilities as USCINCSO were defined for in a plethora of plans, directives, cables, telephone calls, and face-to-face guidance sessions. Much of what I was specifically told to do was classified, and remains so. In February of 1984 I explained my missions to the Senate Armed Services Committee in the following carefully chosen words:<sup>3</sup>

The Commander in Chief, United States Southern Command, by direction of the Secretary of Defense, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

- Exercises operation command over U.S. Forces on the land mass of South America and Central America less Mexico, and acts therein as the principal agent of the Department of Defense for implementing national security policy and military strategy.

- Prepares strategic assessments and contingency plans, and conducts training or operations as directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for:

<sup>3</sup> USCINCSO, Prepared Statement, U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, February 23, 1984.

- ....Coordinating the activities of service components, assigned and augmenting forces, and supporting maritime forces.
- ....Supporting other unified and specified commands.
- ....Disaster relief, search and rescue, or evacuation of U.S. citizens from endangered areas.
- ....Strategic and tactical reconnaissance.
- ....Countering international terrorism, subversion and illegal traffic of arms and drugs.
- ....Fulfilling provisions of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance and other mutual security pacts.

- Supports and assists U.S. Country Teams of the region, and facilitates coordination of U.S. military activities under their purview.
- Monitors security assistance programs in South and Central America, including Mexico, and command and supports therein the Military Assistance and Advisory Groups/U.S. Military Liaison Offices/ Offices of Defense Cooperation.
- Promotes among nations of the region mutual security and development through combined intelligence exchanges, planning, training, humanitarian assistance, nation building and other operations to:
  - ....Maintain peace, strengthen democracy, and advance economic and social well-being.
  - ....Counter Soviet and Cuban militarization and other destabilization undertakings.

- ....Insure interoperability with, and encourage standardization and rationalization among, prospective allies of the region.
  - ....Provide access to, or acquire as needed for the U.S. Forces, support facilities, communications systems, and operating, transit or overflight rights.
  - ....Safeguard U.S. access to raw materials and energy resources.
- Provides for the defense of the Panama Canal and for other Department of Defense obligations per the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977.

While this statement had been "cleared" by the Department of Defense, these missions were by no means understood or accepted by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, or the service staffs - let alone the Department of State, or the omnipresent and omniscient staffs of the committees of Congress. OSD persistently dealt direct with in Washington with representatives of governments within USSOUTHCOM's area, and even sent officials into the region for significant dealings, without either including a USSOUTHCOM representative, or informing me of what transpired - for example, a military co-production agreement with Brazil was negotiated without consultation. The Defense Security Assistance Agency sincerely believed that it had purview over USSOUTHCOM personnel who occupied positions authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act, especially those for which the U.S. was normally compensated by aid recipients. The Army Staff, the Air Staff and the Navy Staff all felt free, under the aegis of service-to-service cooperation, to deal directly with Latin counterparts, often

leaving USSOUTHCOM in the dark. But such problems within DoD were more manageable than interdepartmental difference of opinion on mission.

The Department of State's Bureau of American Republics Affairs (ARA) understandably had difficulty in contemplating the sharing of responsibility for foreign relations explicit in my statement: when, months subsequent to the senate hearing, we transmitted the foregoing description of my mission in a widely distributed cable. ARA's Panama Desk strongly objected on the grounds that, as it understood the terms of the Treaty of 1977, USCINCSO's authority extended no further than defense of the Canal, that much of DoD's responsibilities under the Treaty were vested in other DoD officials, and that the entire regional formulation of the CINC's mission was contrary to the Treaty's spirit, if not its letter. In the interests of interagency tranquility, I withdrew the cable, but my statement remains the only unclassified exposition of my missions.

Let me be clear: what I told the Senate was what I believed the President and the Secretary of Defense has told me to do. Disagreement and bureaucratic friction arose from those who never heard my order, or who read them differently.

I am now often asked whether I had a strategy. I did, but it may not measure up to the expectations of the neo-Clauswitzian school. My strategy rested on this estimate:

1. In the long run, U.S. relations with Brazil and with Mexico would be our only real measure of success, for these were the hemisphere's powers-to-be.
2. In the short run, Latins would judge us, and we would judge ourselves, against our actions in Central America, where the Cubans, after a generation of failures, finally had a lodgement on the mainland. If countering them "at the source" was out a sensible recourse was to foil their intention to subvert governments there and to install regimes committed to their brand of militarist, Marxist-Leninist dictatorship.
3. The Andean Ridge nations of South America - Colombia, Ecuador, Peru,, and Bolivia posed special problems for U.S. because of their role in cocaine and cannabis trafficking.
4. Throughout Latin America, trends were strongly in favor of democracy, trends which deserved strong U.S. support by all appropriate means.

In a more operational sense, I saw USSOUTHCOM as engaged in what has been characterized as "low intensity conflict." dealing with the threats to U.S. interests within its region posed by those who, for political purposes, use violence in the forms of coercive crime, sabotage, subversion, terrorism, and guerrilla warfare. Few in the Administration, and even a lesser fraction of the rest of the U.S. government and the American people, were prepared to accept my formulation that USSOUTHCOM was at war in Latin America on behalf of four U.S. objectives set forth by President Reagan himself:

- \* Support for democracy, reform, and human rights.
- \* Support for economic development.
- \* Support for dialogue and negotiations.
- \* Support for security as a shield for democratization, development, and diplomacy.

In 1985 I testified<sup>4</sup> before the Senate Armed Services Committee that USSOUTHCOM, in prosecuting low intensity conflict for these ends, limited its response to "direct action by its Special Operations Forces, to advising or supporting a threatened ally, or to positioning U.S. forces to deter escalation of the conflict by third nations." I predicted the following order among functions for which USSOUTHCOM forces might be called upon before they were likely to have to provide fire support or maneuver:

Security Assistance

Intelligence

Communications

Civic Action/Psychological Operations

Mobility

Construction

Medicine

Logistic Support

These are involvement which do not fit the traditional American

4 USCINCSO, Prepared Statement, Armed Services Committee, U.S. Senate, 27 February 1985.

notions of war or peace, and even lie outside the formulations of the War Powers Resolution. But they constitute uses of air power and land power analogous to the better understood naval missions of peacetime presence, surveillance, and show of force during what the Chief of Naval Operations has termed "violent peace."<sup>5</sup> They also illustrate that the use of national power should not be considered as coexistence with the use of force. There is assuredly no consensus, no national doctrine on that point, and much that I considered warranted by mission was opposed and defeated, or countermanded in Washington. In a recent lecture at the U.S. Air Force Academy.<sup>6</sup> I stated that "it is the hubris of Washington, and it afflicts civilian leaders as powerfully as military men, that our capital is the repository of available wisdom on all problems on the national agenda. It is fostered by the concentration in Washington of technical and analytical centers for the several intelligence agencies, and the nodes for the stovepipe communications from our Embassies abroad. It leads to attempts to plan and conduct joint operation from the Pentagon, and it leads to ignoring and bypassing the combatant commands and their CINCs. But I know from experience how mistaken it is, for while there may be in the Washington area

<sup>5</sup>Cf., Gorman, P.F., "Low Intensity Warfare: American Dilemma", Proceedings of the Low Intensity Warfare Conference, 14-15 January 1986, Department of Defense, 1986.

<sup>6</sup> Ira C. Eaker Distinguished Lecture on National Defense Policy, 21 April 1986

much information, that information is all too rarely transformed into intelligence, that is, sifted and situated between the ears of decision makers. The regional CINCs and the other combatant commanders within the "joint system" serve their nation by concentrating talented minds within their joint staffs full time on in-depth overwatch of a narrower span of problems than Washington can afford to consider, by developing estimates thereon informed by physical presence and a transregional perspective, and by raising these with proposals for decision in Washington. It is a grievous, if common error among civilians to suppose that the unified and specified commands are in place only to deter war and to provide against its outbreak, and that they are extraneous for the day-to-day formulating and conducting of foreign policy...an Assistant Secretary of State or U.S. Ambassador who exploits adroitly the resources of a CINC substantially amplifies his decisional information and his ability to influence events..."

#### Command Within USSOUTHCOM

USCINCSO exercises operational command over assigned forces. This term of art had been devised to distinguish between the command authority exercised by a CINC and that exercised by a commander within one of the services, or that exercised by any lesser commander under the rubric operational control. The current law (Title 10, U.S. Code, Par. 124) prescribes that:

The military departments shall assign forces to the combatant commands established under this section to perform the missions of

those commands. A force so assigned is under the full operational command of the commander of the command to which it is assigned. It may be transferred from the command to which it is assigned only by the authority of the Secretary of Defense and under the procedures prescribed by the Secretary with the approval of the President. a force not so assigned, remains, for all purposes, in the military department concerned...

Subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary, each military department is responsible for the administration of forces by that department to combatant commands established under this section. The Secretary shall assign the responsibility for the support of forces assigned to those commands to one or more of the military departments.

These provisions of the law are further emphasized by 10 USC Paras. 3034, 5081, 5201, and 8034, which provide that the authority of each Chief of service "shall be exercised in a manner consistent with full operational command vested in unified or specified combatant commanders..." However, the statute does not define further the boundary between what is "operational" or "combatant" on the one hand, or "administrative" "support" on the other. Such a definition is left by the law to the Secretary of Defense, with the advice of the JCS. For USSOUTHCOM, at least, that definition was fraught with difficulty.

The forces assigned to USSOUTHCOM are largely those stationed in Panama, probably originally put in the force structure to defend the

Canal. The Army component is a brigade of two infantry battalions and Special Forces battalion, with aviation, artillery, engineer, and combat service support units. The Air Force component is organized as a composite wing of forward air controllers and search and rescue aircraft. The Navy component is small shore station. Most of the forces of which USSOUTHCOM disposed during the period 1983 to 1985 did not come from these assigned units, but rather from augmentations, on loan from commands outside the theater, including many from the Reserve Components of the several services. Security Assistance undertakings were also manned mainly by personnel on temporary loan from CONUS commands (selected as individuals, not as units, in the usual case): reserve units in CONUS sent most of the transport aircraft used for intra-theater airlift; and almost all of the Army units who participated in exercises within the theater were from CONUS, many from the reserve components. Of course, the naval forces which operated in the vicinity of the theater in support of USSOUTHCOM came entirely from USLANTCOM or USPACOM. Overall, all these did a superb job, and we were able to what was expected of us.

By the mid-80's, some modernization of USSOUTHCOM force structure had taken place. In 1985 I told the SASC the following<sup>7</sup>:

<sup>7</sup> USCINCSO, Prepared Statement, Armed Services Committee, U.S. Senate, 27 February 1985

To meet developing threats to U.S. interests, U.S. armed forces in Panama are being restructured. When I came to Panama almost two years ago, I found an Army Component very well designed to defend the Panama Canal against brawlers and rioters, but ill-suited for supporting allies in the region. Consequently, I recommended that the Army deactivate the mechanized infantry battalion it had positioned there some 30 years ago, and give up in excess of 1200 infantry and artillery spaces so that USSOUTHCOM could obtain additional intelligence, communications, aviation, medical, and engineer capabilities. The entire restructuring, when completed, will total 334 fewer spaces than we started in 1983.

Additional, my Army Component (headquarters) was one of many subordinate to the Army's Forces Command, stationed in Atlanta. The Army proposed to the Congress that it form an Army headquarters (U.S. Army South) for the U.S. Southern Command. As a major Army Command directly subordinate to the Department of the Army, U.S. Army South will be better able to function as USSOUTHCOM's advocate and contender for Army resources, and to provide command, administrative and logistical support for deployed Army forces. U.S. Army South will be formed from assets of the present headquarters of the 193<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade (Panama), with no increase in personnel assigned to Panama.

I should also report that the U.S. Navy within the past year

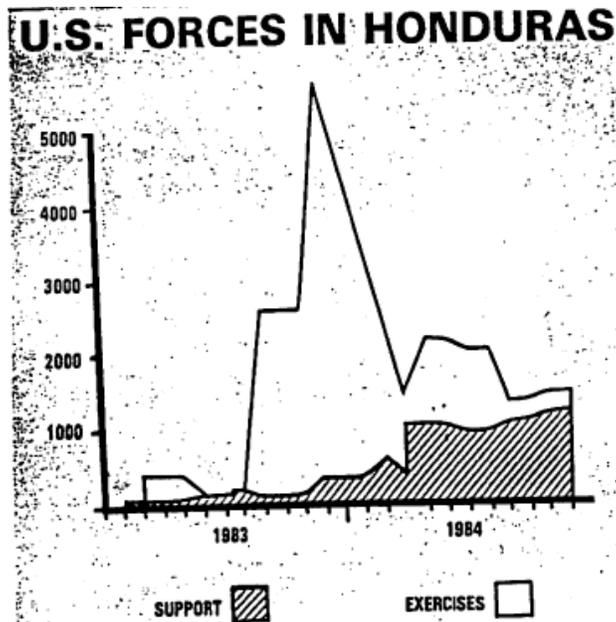
designated my Naval Component a second echelon command, whose commander reports directly to the Chief of Naval Operations, and that the Air Force has revised the prerogatives of my Air Component commander in the interest of giving USSOUTHCOM's budgetary and operation requests better visibility in the Pentagon.

That testimony makes clear two of the fundamental problems with which I had to contend: I lacked an effective advocate in the resource-allocation struggles within the Pentagon, and, although the threat was increasing, and Washington's operational urgencies pressed the command ever harder, there was a strong aversion in the JCS, within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and in the Congress to any perception of "build-up" in USSOUTHCOM. And if there was high-level support for temporary deployment of forces to Central America under the rubric of "exercises," there was also public controversy over the same, which ultimately led the Secretary of Defense to impose strict numerical limits on the numbers involved. To quote again from SASC testimony<sup>8</sup>:

Deployments of U.S. forces to Latin America have been designed to enhance readiness for low intensity conflict. I have previously described the recent and ongoing exercises in Panama. The other major deployments have involved naval forces in waters adjacent to Central America, and U.S. Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps units in Honduras. Honduras has hosted a number of

8 Ibid. N.B., some governors refused National Guard deployments.

joint, combined military exercises over the past two years. These exercises have been invaluable for training U.S. forces for low intensity conflict under real world conditions, increasing the interoperability between U.S. and Honduran forces, and supporting President Reagan's policy objectives. Our activities have been reassuring to the entire region, but especially to the Hondurans - if in years to come Hondurans criticize the United States for what it had been doing in Central America, it will not be for our having done too much, but rather for our having done too little. The following graph depicts the U.S. military activity in Honduras over the past several years; the projections for 1985 do not envision major increases.



...U.S. activities in Honduras over the past two years illustrate well the purpose and nature of our response to the low intensity conflict in Central America. In those past two years, Honduras has endured literally scores of border incidents and two invasions from Nicaragua by armed insurgents bands trained in Cuba, as well threats and acts of aggression from Salvadoran guerrillas.

I am confident that the training exercises of U.S. troops have deterred more flagrant acts of aggression. During that time, the Honduran Armed Forces, with our help, have restructured to create rapid response forces with enhanced fire power. Although unwilling, indeed unable, to match Nicaragua's massive build-up of armor and ground forces, the Hondurans have sought to upgrade their forces quality through intensive training, and better equipment. Major U.S. equipment acquisitions include UH-1H helicopters, A-37 aircraft, artillery, and increased field sustainment items. The Hondurans have also wisely invested in intelligence, civic action and PSYOPS capabilities, and involved their civilian agencies in the efforts of their security forces to support democracy, development and defense.

Here is a case in which security forces have indeed acted as a shield for democratization and development. With U.S. exercises as a backdrop, the Government of Honduras has solidified the position of its first elected civilian constitutional government in nearly twenty years, and proceeded with land reform. Moreover, the government of President Suazo has maintained a good record of respect for human rights, punishing the exceptional case of official abuse; there has been no evidence of systematic, officially condoned or instigated violations of human rights. And now U.S. economic assistance provides hope for economic revival as well.

But, of course, I think USSOUTHCOM command arrangements could have been improved. Even my assigned forces, I found, were constrained by policies established by their parent service headquarters in CONUS,

policies sometimes at odds with my own. Personnel policies varied widely, and disfunctionally, among the services. I had a Joint Task Force Headquarters in Honduras manned almost entirely by personnel on temporary duty whose length of tour differed significantly depending upon whether they had been sent by USSOUTHCOM, or by one of the services from CONUS. Turbulence was intolerable: in 1984-1985, JTFB's headquarters staff had a 400% turnover -e.g. 5 J-1's, 3 J-3's, 4 J-4's, 5 J-5's, 5 COMAFFORs. I found that my idea of organizing that JTF austere, without component headquarters, was openly opposed by CONUS-based commanders who insisted that their units be insulated from the JTF commander by service component headquarters mirroring the theater's C3. Some Service-set "administrative policies" inhibited actual operations. For example, the Army's FORSCOM headquarters in Atlanta attempted to limit flying hours for the helicopters they sent to USSOUTHCOM to those for CONUS training, even though my missions patently required more.

In general, units from CONUS rarely trained for low intensity conflict, and equipped and manned for higher intensity wars, were often awkward with my missions. I felt a need to exert more influence over how the services equipped and trained the forces they sent to me from time to time. And, since most, if not all, such forces were assigned to one or another of the unified command. I wanted the JCS to direct greater emphasis on readiness for the sort of conflict in which USSOUTHCOM was involved. Moreover:

- \* I was uncomfortable with the islands of the Caribbean being outside my theater, particularly since Cuba presented the lion's share of the threat I faced.
- \* Since I had no budget of my own, and was totally dependent on my service component's resources. I became convinced that I needed more clout in arguing for and defending budget lines in the service budgets.
- \* I became impatient with the propensity of headquarters outside my theater to dictate what I could or could not do, how I should organize, or how I should operate.

My experience strongly conditioned me to support wholly the relevant recommendations of the President's Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management<sup>9</sup>, the Packard Commission, to wit:

...The views of the CINCs must be more strongly and purposefully represented than they are at present within the councils of the Joint Chiefs and in weapons requirements decision-making...The measure of command now accorded the nation's combatant commanders is not always sufficient for our forces to perform with high confidence of success and coherence of effort. Unified Commanders require broader authority than "operational command," as now understood and practiced, in order to meet the heavy responsibilities that their missions place on them. The Unified Command Plan divides responsibilities among combatant commands too arbitrarily on the basis of geographical boundaries.

<sup>9</sup> An Interim Report to the President, February 28, 1986, pp.9-12.

Today, some threats overlap those boundaries, and must be dealt with functionally. Moreover, the current command structure reflects command arrangements that evolved during World War II to deal with high-intensity conflict across vast regions of the globe. However well the layers of the present command structure suit the contingency of general war, they are not always well-suited to the regional crises, tensions, and conflicts that are commonplace today...

Subject to the review and approval of the Secretary of Defense, Unified Commanders should be given broad authority to structure subordinate commands, joint task forces, and support activities in a way that best supports their mission and results in a significant reduction in size and numbers of military headquarters.

The Unified Command Plan should be revised to assure increased flexibility to deal with situations that overlap the geographic boundaries of the current combatant commands and with changing world conditions....

#### Control and Communications

I exercised command through the three principal mechanisms by which USSOUTHCOM performed its assigned tasks: (1) my joint headquarters at Quarry Heights, and its dependent service component headquarters nearby in Panama: (2) a Joint Task Force in Honduras, referred to above (first called JTF A, redesignated JTF B in the summer of 1984); and (3) the Military Groups, Missions, or Defense Assistance Offices to the U.S. Embassies in the region. Panama headquarters exercised control directly over most U.S. military aircraft flying in the region, and could communicate with U.S. Navy vessels supporting

the command; they also controlled U.S. units operating within Panamanian territory, territorial seas, or air space. The JTF in Honduras controlled land and air units operating in Honduras, and specified aircraft operating from there. The "Mil Groups", as they usually referred to, controlled Mobile Training Teams and other activities aimed at training or equipping host country forces, and coordinated the visits of myself or other members of headquarters in Panama.

As the U.S. government became more anxious over developments in Central America, military activity in that region stepped up markedly. In February, 1983, the Hondurans visited U.S. forces into their country for what was to be the first of a long series of combined exercises. In March of that year the Secretary of Defense directed regular surveillance flights in Central America, and by June, large naval forces initiated deployments near the coasts. During the summer JTF A was established. Throughout my tenure of command, Central America was the focus of military operations within USSOUTHCOM, and the object of most of our efforts to exert command control with JCS support, we were able to envelop the region in a nexus of satellite HF and VHF nets which reasonably assured communications under most circumstances.

What was particularly striking was how much better lateral, country-to-country communications U.S. military forces enjoyed compare with those available to U.S. Country Teams through the Department of State diplomatic networks. Extending USSOUTHCOM communications to Mil

Groups was usually problematic for diplomat-traditionalists could be depended upon to insist that all communications to or from an Embassy has to flow through the Ambassador or the Deputy Chief of Mission. In Honduras and El Salvador, the Ambassadors decided in favor of enhanced communications, and we were eventually able to provide the Mil groups there near real-time information, for designated purposes, using secure voice, teletype, and facsimile transmissions (with proviso for information copy to DCM).

I did a lot of traveling among those countries, at least one trip per week, meeting face-to-face with my subordinates, members of the U.S. Country Teams, and with local political and military leaders. Whenever I traveled I usually was accompanied by one officer aide de camp, and one communications sergeant, the latter carrying a suitcase containing a satellite radio and accessories which could within a matter of minutes assure secure voice or facsimile communications with either Panama or the JCS, I literally could transform an Ambassador's garden into the USSOUTHCOM Forward Post, from which I could deal with a day's correspondence, provide guidance to my staff, and talk, as needed with my superiors in Washington.

Once, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and I encountered a particularly sticky point in a negotiation with a senior Honduran commander, resolution of which required a decision from our Secretary of Defense. I passed General Vessey a note saying that I had secure voice facilities in operation outside in the courtyard of the Estado Mayor, and if he wanted to talk to SecDef then and there, he could. He

did so, got the decision he sought, and returning to the meeting, closed his point forcibly. On another occasion, while I was visiting border posts in a remote region of western Costa Rica, the local security commander confessed to me that because of a garbled message he expected my Army component commander, and asked both that I accept his apology, and that I carry back to General Woerner both a personal message and a weapon he wanted to present to the U.S. Army's museum in Panama. I said that I could do better than that, and within minutes had the Colonel making his speech of presentation direct to General Woerner.

Command control for most of Latin America, however, depended largely upon much more prosaic "cables" and reports, passed through routine State Department channels. I did visit countries in South America, but not all and none often. I did have Mil Group Officer visit USSOUTHCOM Headquarters from time to time, and Mil Group commanders could also send me a personal letter. Our country owes a great deal to the officers of those Military Groups, often living in austerity and danger, who faithfully pursued their instructions without much guidance or recognition. I left command grateful for their ability to foster great good will for the United States based on professional respect they endangered among their hosts, and wished that it had been possible for me to help them more.

I must say that, even taking all of DoD's communications magic into account, by late Twentieth Century standard, USSOUTHCOM's communications were primitive. I have long been convinced that when our government is dealing with a cross-agency problem such as that we

have been confronting in Central America, for which maps, charts, and other imagery are central for judgments and decisions, we ought to take all necessary steps to insure that key leaders operate from a common base of understanding of what we know, and of what we do not know as a government, and of how the several U.S. players propose to act. I am convinced that a secure video-conferencing network could and should be established to link together Ambassadors in the region, the CINC, and top Washington officials. Such a net would lend itself to periodic briefings on intelligence, reports of current operations, and discussions of impending decisions. It would be neither expensive nor onerous to maintain, given the state of the art in annotated imagery transmission over voice-grade secure circuits.

I tried to establish a minimal image-conferencing net among my Headquarters in Panama, the National Military Intelligence Center in the Pentagon, and Embassy, San Salvador so that we could all attend the same daily situation briefing, seeing and hearing the same evidence, interactively assessing it, and discussing what to do. Two years of unsuccessful trying left me frustrated, but unshaken in my conviction that the concept is sound, and that technology could support it, were there but a way to defeat the procurement bureaucracy which threw impediment after impediment in the way.

### Intelligence

The most urgent reason for improving communication is not control, but intelligence. As we have come to understand how to

exploit combinations of satellites and computers, and how to integrate these with intelligence collection of all types, we have developed capabilities which offer new, distinct advantages in coping with low intensity conflict anywhere in the third World, but especially in Latin America. The first is a revised concept of "theater of operation", for which the JCS deserve full credit. The Chiefs have been assailed in recent years by the congressional Reform Caucus and the media for unimaginative planning and stereotyping responses to contemporary problems. But as Central America grew in prominence on the national agenda, the JCS countenanced fundamental revision of the notion of "theater" that had been central to U.S. joint planning since George C. Marshall's organizational genius was exercised thereon early in World War II. In March, 1983, the JCS told my predecessor, Lieutenant General Wallace Nutting that he should put his theater of operations on a war footing, but that he should begin to plan toward "echeloning back" (to CONUS) major elements of his forces, so as to take full advantage of the proximity of our main concentration of forces and of their diverse capabilities.

As a first step, the JCS directed formation of a Central America Joint Intelligence Team (CAJIT), to be under DIA, and located in the basement of the Pentagon, but responsive to USCINCSO's requirements. Before I left command, I could state that there were more intelligence personnel working directly on my problem in CONUS than I had within the formal precincts of USSOUTHCOM. I had certainly had more intelligence folk responsive to me in the Pentagon than I had in Quarry Heights. The CAJIT was, from my perspective, an unqualified success. But there were other, similar, smaller operations, like CAJIT

linked to USSOUTHCOM from minute to minute, day by day, in several other locations. Many of those who manned these undertakings belonged to other CINC's and had contingency missions in other theaters. Had such contingencies materialized, I would have lost their services. But ad interim they were most gainfully employed in intelligence production which was both advantageous for USSOUTHCOM and superb training for them. I think General Jack Vessey and the other members of the JCS deserve credit for decision which brought about a very significant shift in intelligence effort and effectiveness without much expense and with virtually no fanfare.

One concomitant of that decision by the JCS was a significant reduction in the visibility, and associated risk, of intelligence collection overseas. The American news media have an almost prurient interest in intelligence collection, which sometimes leads them to publish absurdities urged on reporters by military bull-throwers in bars. I can recall two instances in which the same lady scribe was bilked over a beer, both of which led to ridiculous, but inflammatory stories about U.S. military activities which caused grief for Ambassadors concerned, and therefore for me. The stories also precipitated terrorist threats. I became convinced that the fewer people I had to deploy for the purposes of intelligence, and the less noticeable these few were, the safer for all concerned. Moreover, the less intelligence is publicized as connected with any U.S. presence, the more politically palatable for the host it is likely to be. Hence, the USSOUTHCOM echeloned-back model seems attractive for any Third World deployment, short of contingencies in which strategic communications might be interrupted.

At the time the JCS made their "echelon-back" decision, none of us understood, I think, now significant an upgrade in the quality of intelligence product would result. In short, the prime rationale for echeloning back is not that it is an efficient utilization of CONUS stationed personnel, or that it is more secure than deployments into theater, but that it produces better intelligence. After all, most of the national intelligence systems terminate in the National Capitol Region. What happened as a result of the JCS decision was, in effect, establishing there a center for fusion of national and theater intelligence. Of course, that fusion might have taken place in Panama, and some of it did -but not as easily, or as well. We discovered, upon involving theater intelligence officers in Washington-level analysis, that there was much more information at the national level than anyone had known of, waiting to be exploited by analysts attuned to theater lore and theater needs.

Intelligence is knowledge, and knowledge is power. Military intelligence can provide knowledge about low intensity conflict, and knowledge itself can constitute military power. I do not hesitate to say that intelligence was the single most important asset at my disposal in discharging my command responsibilities. Intelligence made me sure in planning operations, useful to Ambassadors, helpful to my superiors, and persuasive with the Congress. Intelligence gave me an advantage in dealing with friends and enemies alike, for knowing what I knew, the one might be embarrassed into acquiescence, and the other deterred.

There is one dimension of theater intelligence in USSOUTHCOM which is still being explored: international narcotics trafficking. In 1983 I became aware that there was overlap, if not congruence, between agricultural, manufacturing, transportation, and communications for that vast, well-financed criminality which constitutes the primary economic activity in the Caribbean Basin, and the focus, movements, and arming of subversives and insurgents. In particular, it is strategically significant that the only governments in Latin America which support narcotics trafficking as a matter of official policy are Cuba and Nicaragua. And tactically, in many ways the intelligence problem-set for guerilla warfare and that for counter-trafficking is the same. In 1984 and 1985, with increasing urgency, I advocated combining our theater intelligence with that of the several U.S. agencies which deal with drug enforcement. I understand that decisions have since been taken which have that effect.

But, as with communications, compared with what intelligence might have been, USSOUTHCOM's was wanting, and will need to be improved, especially if a serious effort is to be mounted against narcotics traffickers. For example, for over a year USSOUTHCOM operated an experimental long-endurance RPV in Central America without ever taking advantage of its imagery capabilities, again through failure to understand that imagery can be moved over routine communications as easily and as securely as voice. The RPV experience also retaught a lesson American forces learned again and again in Southeast Asia: no single intelligence collector is likely to work against guerrillas; what is needed is a medley of collectors, some

broad of view, seeking indicators to cue narrow-lookers like that RPV to pay-off. For example, USSOUTHCOM needs modern versions of the Phase III seismic and acoustic throw-away sensors which were sent to Viet Nam in 1970-1971. With These, U.S.-supported security forces might "bug" known or suspected guerilla camps or routes. When the sensors "ring", the validity of the target could be verified by the RPV, which could also produce imagery for planning the tactical exploitation. That the RPV had to be experimental, that imagery transmission systems were not included in the experiment, that such "bugs" are not available, are all indictments of DoD's research and development program which has concentrated, however understandably, on other kinds of wars, and other sorts of enemies. Hopefully, my successor will be able to fix this deficiency, and thereby to insure even better intelligence for the U.S. and these democracies it seeks to help in coping with low intensity conflict.

#### Summary

Beginning in 1983 the strategic withdrawal of the United States from Central America was reversed, and Headquarters, USSOUTHCOM was placed on a war footing. Through security assistance, increased U.S. military presence in the region, and better intelligence, friendly nations were strengthened and reassured concerning the U.S. commitment to their security, and Nicaraguan adventurism curbed. By 1985 the command was in a much better posture for the challenges which lay ahead: further implementation of the Panama Canal Treaty, the continuing war in El Salvador, the growing Nicaraguan threat to

Honduras and Coast Rica, the unfolding drama of the Nicaraguan rebels, counter-narcotics missions, and other, unforeseen undertakings to help shield nascent democracies from enemies foreign and domestic, and to safeguard our own vulnerable southern approaches.

Joint command is the acme of American military professionalism. To have been entrusted by my government with the United States Southern Command, at what may well prove to be a historic turning point in our relations with Latin America, is all the reward I could ask for forty years in uniform.