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The Military Instrument

General Paul Gorman

We are here partially under the aegis of the Command and General Staff College of the United States Army and some of you may wonder why. The simple fact is that there is very high probability that the United States, under subsequent administrations, will have to confront again the sorts of questions that Frank McNeil raised for us at the outset of this morning's meeting. For those of us who have been in military uniform, and those of you who wear uniforms today, ours is not to reason why or wonder whether; ours is but to get on with the job.

I recently had an occasion to talk one-on-one with a certain military officer, a serving officer. He had been number two in a mission abroad, a mission characterized by some of the leaders of the Department of State as a country that is the single most important country in the Third World for the United States. This officer had sought me out because he had heard me in one of my talks castigate the performance of the U.S. military in assisting the U.S. Ambassador in the execution of a foreign policy in that country. After about a half-hour of give and take, he said "Well, you know, General, I'm prepared to believe that you're exactly right, that we should have been paying attention to the sorts of issues that you've listed; but," he said, "we had no instructions to do any of the things that you have commended. In fact, such guidance as we did receive from the Ambassador or from the Department of Defense, or from the Commander-in-Chief of the region would have led us to infer that we should have avoided those kinds of considerations." He asked, "Where is the doctrine? Where is the guidance that would lead us to concern ourselves with the sorts of matters that you are bringing to the fore?"

That, of course, is a very real question for military officers serving in positions of responsibility around the world where this phenomenon of low-intensity conflict exists today. And it is the reason why the Command and General Staff College has launched

an effort to explain the phenomenon to future generations. The term used within the military is doctrine; it is an unfortunate term—like low-intensity conflict. Perhaps a better way of putting it is simply that we are trying to get a consensus, not only within the ranks of the military, but within the government, on what and how one should proceed, how one should proceed to apply the military instrument to a low-intensity conflict.

I do not want to engage in further historical thumb-sucking. Rather, let me simply stipulate that I believe that this matter of LIC is a very real problem. It is a problem today, and it is going to become a more acute problem in the coming twenty years. I believe the problems of the Third World are going to become more vexatious for future generations of Foreign Service officers and military officers, and for future generations of American political leaders than they have been in the very vexatious past. I want to propose to you six notions, or premises, that I think should underlie the approach of the United States to the application of the military instrument in the sort of circumstances that have been under discussion here.

The first principle is one that is not well understood by the uniformed military. In fact, I think it almost generally ignored by most of my colleagues in the profession. That is, the United States armed forces will *not* be combat participants in the sorts of struggles that are at issue here. The role of U.S. forces in low-intensity conflict will almost invariably be indirect, and that certainly pertains to the role of the United States armed forces in any kind of support for insurgencies abroad.

The second proposition is that the armed services *should be prepared* to take on roles in support of insurgencies abroad. It is not true that such activities must be assigned to the Central Intelligence Agency. The laws of the United States make no such provisions. There is a provision in law for Special Activities, and it is the prerogative of the President to decide how roles and missions should be allocated. I would argue, in fact, that many of the difficulties that have obtruded in the past with so-called covert operations—the interference with the intelligence missions of the Central Intelligence Agency, the lack of professionalism in the execution of the directives, the privatization that has occurred in some instances, most recently in Central America—all of these manifestations come from our not using the best professional military talent available to the United States in a systematic way. The laws presently provide for such application of the military instrument, and we ought to take advantage of existing law. But that means that the military departments themselves have got to think

through, rethink through, their readiness to undertake this sort of a mission. We have not done that in recent generations; not since your era, Sam [LTG Sam Wilson], have we done any serious thinking about how to ready ourselves for this business. The whole terminology, "low-intensity conflict," has but one utility: it reminds the budgeteers in the Pentagon, and in the armed services, that there is this kind of a mission that can come their way.

The third general proposition that I would advance is that our security assistance legislation is inept for these purposes. I think we would all agree with two ideas at least that have been advanced here. One of them is that we will from time to time have to act against right-wing dictatorships which tend to be in the Third World, propped up by military establishments. If one can anticipate such difficulties, one is better able to deal with them. Thinking through where you might be years hence is a much better way of proceeding than trying to make it up as you go along, as we did in Central America some years ago. The long-term strategic view of Third World countries in which the United States might find itself supporting resistance movements of one kind or another would argue for a very different type of foreign aid instrument than that which is presently available. Without regard for the validity or invalidity of any of the eleven kinds of foreign aid that are presently defined by law, I would simply point out that the law itself has proved a very inflexible instrument for the President and the Secretary of State for the prosecution of foreign policy. Congress has repeatedly underfunded the administration's requests for security assistance, military assistance, and has earmarked 86 percent of recent requests for military assistance for just five recipient countries. Thus, Congress predetermines where more than eight out of ten security assistance dollars shall be spent, and in large measure how they will be spent. When it comes to trying to anticipate difficulties in countries where resistance movements of one kind or another are likely, there are very few funds left in the security assistance program.

There is a fourth strategic principle worth commending to you, again alluded to by previous speakers, that the United States should plan its military instruments in concert with other countries. Almost never will we be acting alone. We are not acting alone in Afghanistan; we are not acting alone in Central America; we are not acting alone anywhere in the world. Our ability to bring to bear the capabilities of allies in this kind of endeavor, I suggest to you, is strategically as essential as our thinking through the contribution of allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Yet, again, there is a fine fixation in our military professions'

writings and teachings of sort of an ethnocentrism—as though we were the only actors on the stage. That will be rarely the case, as it should be. We ought to find roles for others who may have a major stake in Third World affairs. Some U.S. strategist might even delight in the role of Japanese Toyotas in the defeat of Muammar Qaddafi's invasion of Chad, for example.

As a fifth proposition in this sort of endeavor, as in higher-intensity contingencies, the United States should seek to exploit its technological advantages. This may seem a given, but the fact is that the folks who tend to be in charge of these matters have a very profound anti-technological bias. This is true in the Directorate of Operations of CIA; it is true in the Special Operation Process of the military services. I would tell you, for example, that the single most important sort of assistance that the United States can give a potential insurgent force or a potential free political movement is tactical intelligence. The kind of tactical intelligence that we are most likely to be able to contribute most readily is technologically derived. Trying to organize ourselves to make that possible within the American intelligence community, let alone within the Defense Intelligence Agency, is a challenge that I submit demands the best minds that the military can bring to bear.

Similarly, I would suggest to you that one of the more destabilizing features of the Third World is the medical climate, note particularly the AIDS epidemic in Haiti or in Central Africa, which is bound to obtrude into Central America in the near future. There will be a need for us to bring to bear a much more extensive form of public health assistance. Is that going to figure in the support of insurgencies? You bet it is. I recently visited the Special Operations Command, the new command established in Tampa, Florida, by the Congress of the United States, in its wisdom. I was briefed that the Special Operations Forces of the United States has been in some 76 of the 170 plus countries of the world. I then asked to talk to the Command Surgeon. There is none. No one had thought to bring that kind of thinking to bear on the problem. We are going to need all of our technological prowess in this low-intensity conflict environment.

As a sixth and final proposition, as we think ahead, the United States will have to find alternatives to our present system of overseas bases. We have become overly dependent upon our ability to fly material and people hither and yon in the world. Also, we have become overly dependent upon enclaves on foreign soil from which we conduct our business. I suspect that in the future, particularly with respect to support of foreign insurgencies, we will place a much greater dependence upon maritime assets. That is

not an endorsement for 600 ships or 700 ships in the United States Navy, and that is not an endorsement for a larger Marine Corps. That is simply an assertion that any department or agency taking on this job is going to find itself dealing much more with foreign support for the purpose of moving goods, services, and conducting training. In terms of assets that we control, a lot more of our work is going to be done at sea or from the sea.

You put all of that together and you can begin to see the shape, it seems to me, of a doctrine for providing support, at the direction of the President, and hopefully with the support of the Congress, in the sort of contingencies that we are meeting here to discuss.

I believe that the United States armed forces have a great deal of potential that has not been brought to bear on even the very popular case that we are supporting in Afghanistan. For example, mention was made of the three million Afghan refugees. That is about the equivalent of the total number of people in all of Nicaragua. There are among those Afghan refugees tens of thousands of amputees from the mine warfare waged by the Soviets along the Pakistani border. I have argued unsuccessfully to date that one of the reactions of the United States to that set of circumstances should have been the insertion of an American military hospital optimized for the treatment of mine casualties. It would have been a gesture, I believe, very acceptable to the Pakistanis, certainly very acceptable to the Congress of the United States, and certainly very relevant to the set of circumstances with which we are contending out there. Yet it has not happened, and I do not know why. Maybe that is a matter the Low-Intensity Conflict Board is supposed to address: a way of making the military instrument relevant to this sort of an undertaking.

Let me conclude by emphasizing three ways to apply my propositions. First, the military services believe that they need the help of the other agencies of government in defining what their role in LIC should be. I would sharpen that to say that they deserve leadership from the Department of State. The Department of State ought to help define the roles and mission for the use of the military instrument, and there ought to be a much more imaginative and forward-looking view from the State Department.

Second, just to go back to the point that I made in my discourse on the centrality of intelligence, a major contribution that the military can make to any low-intensity conflict situation is the amplification of tactical intelligence for the Ambassador. Yet in situation after situation around the world, nothing is being done, or very little is being done, in that direction. That is a shortcoming

that again the Department of State ought to be leaning on the Director of Central Intelligence to remedy. I just cannot emphasize that enough.

Finally, we need to change the laws on Security Assistance so that there is a much broader range of possibilities than are now encompassed. Such changes are needed so that my lawyer friends will not be on the tail of the regional Commander-in-Chief who, as an instrument policy, uses U.S. engineers or doctors, for example, in a country which is providing assistance to a resistance movement.

RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS, MONEY, AND DRUGS

Virtually everywhere in the world where there is a phenomenon like a resistance movement, there is the problem of drug trade. One of the economic dimensions of the problem that we need to deal with is the propensity of part of these movements to fund their activities through entrepreneurial activities in that realm. That brings into the whole range of play here not only the ten agencies to which you refer, but all the law enforcement agencies that are concerned with that drug problem.

I would tell you that far more important than Marxist-Leninist dogma, money underwrites Communist insurgencies, and it underwrites the support of democratic resistance movements, and any other insurgency. I recently watched a column moving into Nicaragua, cattle laden with bag—a beautiful logistic idea. You drive the cattle down and then you eat your prime mover as part of your supplies. And I asked, "What is on the cattle? Give me, in priority, what is it that you're having them carry in-country," and the answer was, "cordobas" [Nicaraguan currency]. And the reason for that again has political significance. If they can pay for what they take from the "campesino," they're in a much better position subsequently to return, get information, get political support, and perhaps recruit.

Paul Gorman
General, United States Army, Retired