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WHY MORE SPECIAL FORCES ARE NEEDED FOR LOW-INTENSITY WAR

INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have witnessed the growth of low-intensity conflict as a challenge to United States security. Traditional or conventional warfare typically involves aggression across borders by large formations of troops armed with standard weaponry. Low-intensity conflict, by contrast, involves small-scale operations, often clandestine or covert, undertaken by irregular forces. Low-intensity challenges include terrorism, insurgency, and narcotics trafficking.

Low-intensity conflict poses a number of challenges to the U.S. For one thing, pro-Western governments in developing nations can be destabilized by guerrilla and terrorist organizations, often supported by the Soviet Union and its allies. For another thing, the West's interests in such regions as the Persian Gulf are challenged by radical Islamic forces.

The task for the U.S. and its allies is to develop creative and effective responses to unconventional warfare. The special forces operations against Iranian mine-laying boats in the Persian Gulf on September 21 and again on October 8 demonstrate the value of maintaining special operations capabilities in a high state of readiness. Furthermore, the use in these missions of U.S. Army Special Forces operating from U.S. Navy vessels illustrated the importance of maintaining well-trained, integrated forces for a variety of possible contingencies.

Falling Short. Despite these recent successes in the Gulf, however, the U.S. consistently has fallen short in the training, equipping, and proper utilization of the elite units required for such operations. The problems that caused such failures as the April 24, 1980, Iran hostage rescue mission remain essentially uncorrected.

To address this, Congress has sought to restructure the governmental and military apparatus responsible for special forces readiness. Despite Pentagon footdragging, what needs to be done is clear. The U.S. should:

- ◆◆ Create a center for low-intensity conflict to coordinate the efforts of the various departments of the federal government involved;

- ◆◆ Expand the U.S. capacity to collect the types of information needed to conduct special operations and respond effectively to low-intensity conflict;

- ◆◆ Develop and procure equipment suited to low-intensity warfare;

- ◆◆ Strengthen government-to-government agreements facilitating rapid execution of special operations;

- ◆◆ Relocate the newly established U.S. Special Operations Command from Florida to the Washington, D.C. area to facilitate planning and execution of operations; and

- ◆◆ Make special forces a more attractive career option.

On the whole, the number of U.S. special forces needs to be increased to meet myriad peacetime and wartime contingencies. So far, increases in the number of special forces units have been at the expense of manpower from existing special forces units. This makes little sense. Increases in overall strength must accompany organizational restructuring if the U.S. is to improve its special operations capabilities.

U.S. SPECIAL FORCES

Each branch of the Armed Forces includes elite units trained for special operations and low-intensity warfare. Their abilities are impressive, but until recently they were weak in numbers and handicapped by organizational problems. The post-Vietnam era witnessed a serious decline in overall special operations capability--for example, the number of active duty Army special forces groups dropped from a 1969 high of seven to a post-war low of three in 1974.

Army

The Army maintains the largest contingents of special forces. Currently, these include four Special Forces groups, a Ranger regiment, an aviation wing (the 160th Aviation Group), a psychological warfare group, and a civil affairs battalion.¹ Together these number approximately 22,000 active and reserve troops.

Known since their creation under the Kennedy Administration as Green Berets, Army Special Forces have as their primary mission the development, equipping, and training of foreign forces for counterinsurgency operations. Lower priority Green

1. John M. Collins, *United States and Soviet Special Operations*, Study by the Congressional Research Service for the House Armed Services Committee (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 23.

Beret missions include ambushes, raids, and sabotage. Army Special Forces usually operate in 12-man "A" teams, with 54 such teams to a Group.²

As part of the reorganization of U.S. special operations forces, Army Special Forces Groups are being increased to five groups. While all five groups will be stationed in the U.S., subordinate battalions and detachments are deployed permanently in foreign countries. Each of the five Groups will be responsible for a separate geographic region. The 1st Special Forces Group, headquartered at Ft. Lewis, Washington, is responsible for East Asia and the Pacific and maintains a battalion at Torii Station, Okinawa. The 10th Special Forces Group, whose region is Europe, is headquartered at Ft. Devens, Massachusetts, with a battalion forward deployed at Bad Tolz, Germany. The 7th Special Forces Group is directed toward Central America with a battalion forward deployed in Panama. Headquartered at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, the 5th Special Forces Group is responsible for the Middle East and North Africa. The fifth group is still in the planning stages but will be responsible for sub-Saharan Africa.

Ambushes, Sabotage, and Seizing Airfields. The main U.S. Army forces dedicated for operations deep behind enemy lines are its three Ranger battalions with 575 men each. Their main missions are interdicting enemy supply lines, conducting raids, ambushes and sabotage, and seizing such key objectives as airfields behind enemy lines. Rangers are employed at all levels of conflict from low-intensity to large-scale conventional wars.

In response to the growth of terrorism as a direct threat to U.S. interests abroad, the Army created the Delta Team. Headquartered at Ft. Bragg, and reportedly the size of a battalion, Delta is responsible for rescuing Americans held hostage in foreign countries.

The 160th Aviation Group, meanwhile, provides Army Special Forces with its own air support in the form of MH-6 helicopters. Armed with machine guns and rockets, these helicopters are much quieter than regular helicopters and carry night-vision devices. Such equipment is enabling pilots to spot the Iranian mine-laying activities in the Persian Gulf.

Navy

The U.S. Navy maintains some of the world's most capable special forces. Known by the acronym SEALs (for Sea, Air, Land), these units exist primarily to support fleet operations. They often are sent ashore ahead of the main landing parties to conduct reconnaissance and to sabotage enemy defense installations.

Navy special forces are divided into two Naval Special Warfare Groups--one for the Pacific, the other for the Atlantic--with a total of 5,265 SEALs (2,085 active and 3,180 reserve).³ Naval Special Warfare Group One (NSWG One), headquartered on Coronado Island, California, is subordinate to the U.S. Pacific Fleet Surface Force Commander. In addition to SEAL teams, NSWG One includes

2. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

special boat squadrons, an attack helicopter squadron, and specialized transportation teams for the covert infiltration and exfiltration of SEAL teams.

Naval Special Warfare Group Two, similar in composition to NSWG One, is based at Little Creek, Virginia. In addition to the two main groups, Naval Special Warfare Units are stationed in Puerto Rico, Scotland, and the Philippines. These units operate as forward headquarters for SEAL teams deployed abroad.

Air Force

The Air Force is responsible for transporting Army special forces into and out of areas of operation. Air Force special forces consist mainly of the 2nd Air Division, much of which is headquartered at Hurlburt Field in Florida. This division consists of a special air squadron of MC-130 *Combat Talons* for transport of Army special forces, a squadron of AC-130 gunships to support forces on the ground, and an HH-53 *Pave Low* helicopter squadron for covert infiltration and extraction of special forces teams.

LOW-INTENSITY CHALLENGES TO THE U.S.

Terrorism

Terrorism has become a principal instrument for attacking U.S. interests abroad. It is used by nations seeking a low-cost, low-risk means of undermining the U.S. position in various regions of the world and by groups lacking capabilities for sustained conventional military or political efforts. The U.S. has been slow to respond effectively to the terrorist challenge and has failed to develop an effective military structure for this purpose. Much of the inability of the U.S. to contend with terrorism stems directly from the absence of a centralized command structure and a neglect of elite troops.

Narcotics Trafficking

Drug interdiction is a special operations problem because of the increasing concern about the linkages between terrorist organizations and drug trafficking. Recognizing this linkage, Ronald Reagan signed an April 1986 national security decision directive defining drug trafficking as a national security threat warranting increased use of the military.⁴

The introduction of the Armed Forces into an area traditionally the responsibility of the Customs Service and the Coast Guard resulted in confusion as to where one's responsibilities ended and the other's began.⁵ Lack of understanding

4. Keith B. Richburg, "Reagan Order Defines Drug Trade as Security Threat, Widens Military Role," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 1986, p. A28.

5. Mary Thornton, "Coast Guard, Customs Battle Smugglers--and Each Other," *The Washington Post*, May 4, 1987, p. A1; and Thornton, "Meese Ends Turf Struggle in Drug War," *The Washington Post*, May 31, 1987, p. A1.

or appreciation for the unique talents or capabilities of diverse organizations continues to hinder efforts not just in drug interdiction, but in all areas of low-intensity warfare.

Insurgency

On occasion, a government friendly to the U.S. and important to its security is threatened by guerrilla forces. In such cases, as in El Salvador, the U.S. may provide counterinsurgency assistance to the beleaguered government. In contrast to brief, decisive actions such as hostage rescues or the Grenada operation, counterinsurgency operations can be waged for years or even decades.

Counterinsurgency requires much more than the supplying of weapons and supplies. It requires attacking from a number of angles while doing as much as possible to resolve the problems, often economic, that gave rise to popular dissatisfaction.

Generally out-numbered and out-gunned, a guerrilla army must bring about the collapse of the armed forces and of the government from within. In countries such as the Philippines and El Salvador, guerrilla strategy is to exacerbate societal ills while communicating to the target audience--the "masses"--the idea that guerrilla attacks are the fault of the government and that social and economic ills that gave birth to the insurgency will disappear when the revolution is complete.⁶ The objective is to attain control of the population, not of the territory. This strategy, understood well by communists, is not understood as well in the West.

A POOR U.S. RECORD IN LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

Israel, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and West Germany have responded successfully to unconventional conflict in a manner that the U.S. has been unable to emulate. U.S. failures range from the April 1980 hostage rescue mission in Iran, to the December 1983 air strike against Beirut, to a general inability to deal with Third World insurgencies. Such U.S. successes as Grenada have been few and usually poorly planned and executed.

The U.S. is unable to wage low-intensity warfare or conduct special operations effectively because its national security apparatus is not suitably structured. Successful special operations require forces and planning different from those needed for conventional warfare. For example, a centralized command structure is needed to ensure that traditional interservice rivalries and tendencies toward rigid standard operating procedures do not interfere with the planning and conduct of special operations.

Failure to centralize command can result in catastrophe. Example: in the attempt to rescue the hostages in Iran in April 1980, the Army, Navy, Air Force,

6. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Joint Low-Intensity Conflict Project, *Analytical Review of Low-Intensity Conflict* (Ft. Monroe, Virginia, 1986), vol. 1, chapter 4.

and Marines all vied for a role in the operation, thus violating the basic rule against the mixing of diverse forces for such missions.⁷

Each branch of the military historically has been opposed to the institutionalization of a centralized special forces command structure. Jealous of turf and reluctant to permit resources to be drawn away from conventional forces, the Services have proved formidable opponents of the centralization essential for the conduct of special operations.

U.S. RESPONSES TO LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

In the early 1980s, in response to the increasing demands for greater anti-terrorism capabilities, the Pentagon established the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. JSOC brought together the Army's Delta Team and 160th Aviation Group, the Navy's SEAL Team 6, and the Air Force's 2nd Air Division. The Command's mandate, though, was confined to anti-terrorist operations and it represented little more than a way of alleviating pressure from Congress to do something.

Similarly, in 1982 the Army established its Special Operations Command, and in 1983 the 23rd Air Force was formed to handle special operations contingencies. Finally, in 1984, in an effort to address the nagging problem of centralizing authority by a designated commander in the execution of a special operations mission, the Pentagon formed the Joint Special Operations Agency (JSOA) within the offices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

So far, JSOA has accomplished little; rather, it perpetuates a status quo built around parochial or bureaucratic interests much as does the Joint Chiefs of Staff system itself. Headed by a major general and assigned little more than an advisory role--hence, lying outside the operational chain of command--the JSOA has minimal input into the actual organization and employment of special forces.⁸

Intelligence: The Weakest Element

A serious weakness in the U.S. ability to conduct special operations and low-intensity warfare is a lack of adequate intelligence. Even in Grenada, success was marred by poor planning stemming in part from inadequate information. The intelligence community, especially the Central Intelligence Agency, is oriented toward collecting information on high priority targets like the Soviet Union. As a result, there are insufficient resources left for adequate coverage of Third World countries

7. Edward N. Luttwak, *The Pentagon and the Art of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p. 44.

8. Jim Wooten, "Special Operations Forces: Issues for Congress" (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1984), p. 13.

where low-intensity conflict exists or could emerge.⁹ This is a principal reason why the U.S. continues to be surprised by developments around the world.

Timely Intelligence. These failures can also be traced back to the decision in the 1960s to channel funds in the direction of electronic intelligence (ELINT) and satellite reconnaissance at the expense of human intelligence (HUMINT).¹⁰ Human intelligence is essential in planning special operations and low-intensity warfare. Satellites and electronic eavesdropping are ill-suited to collecting information on the intentions of insurgents. Dense jungles, moreover, limit the effectiveness of the satellites and electronic eavesdropping can be avoided through non-electronic communications.

Similarly, anti-terrorist actions, narcotics interdiction, and counterinsurgency depend heavily on the constant flow of timely intelligence. Lack of information on those responsible results in an inability on the part of the President to retaliate for terrorist incidents.

Timely intelligence is also essential in assisting foreign governments threatened by insurgency. Such intelligence can provide to that government information on important social, economic, and political developments and on the movements, weaknesses, and strengths of the guerrillas.

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABILITIES

Special Forces Reorganization

Special forces are elite units developed for specific missions requiring skills not possessed by general-purpose or conventional forces. These missions include hostage rescue, counterinsurgency, and behind-the-lines operations during war. The fast-breaking nature of such missions places a premium on readiness.

Each branch of the military maintains its own elite units and traditionally has been reluctant to relinquish control over those forces. This has prevented the President from having a unified command in a high state of readiness able to respond to crises. To remedy this, Congress last year ordered the Pentagon to establish a U.S. Special Operations Command and create a new Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict.

Such a command should prevent the problems which plagued the Iran hostage rescue mission and the Grenada operation when forces were brought together on a contingency basis, often with incompatible force structures and equipment. Allowing all four branches of the Armed Services to participate in the Iran rescue mission vastly complicated its planning and execution. In addition, planning was performed on an *ad hoc* basis and more often than not supporting intelligence was insufficient and obsolete.

9. U.S. Army, Joint Low-Intensity Conflict Project, *op. cit.*, p. 21-1.

10. Frank Greve, "CIA Lacking the Means to Spy on Terror," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 18, 1985, p. 1.

Making matters worse is the tendency of the military to rely on conventional means in the execution of operations. This has deprived the U.S. of the special operations option. The Navy's SEAL teams, for example, are among the finest in the world. Yet the SEALs are primarily used to support fleet operations and, consequently, are tightly controlled by theater commanders-in-chief. They are not adequately integrated into the unified command structure essential for rapid deployment in crises.

In the Grenada operation, the Navy's mission should have been limited to transporting troops and deploying SEAL teams for reconnaissance. Instead, carrier-based aircraft conducted air strikes against targets on the island that could have been attacked better by airborne or special forces. A SEAL team, meanwhile, spent much of the operation pinned down by Grenadian soldiers in the residence of the British Governor-General, whom they had been sent to rescue. Similarly, the use of the U.S. Marine Corps to conduct amphibious assaults against Grenada's beaches ignored the fact that crucial military and political objectives were located in central areas of the island.

Location of the Special Operations Command

The creation of the new U.S. Special Operations Command in October 1986 is a positive step toward correcting the deficiencies in U.S. special operations capabilities. It will bring together under a unified command, headed by a four-star general, the elite units of each branch of the Armed Forces for the purpose of force integration, training, and development of doctrine to guide their use.

Military opposition to the establishment of USSOC, however, was formidable. Indeed, it took pressure on the Pentagon from Congress to ensure that a very high ranking officer was placed in command. Defense Department opposition to USSOC is apparent also in the location of its headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida. The Pentagon has argued that MacDill, home of the now-dissolved Readiness Command, is the best choice for USSOC because the facilities already exist and because Congress did not allocate funds for new facilities.

Basing the command in Florida, however, removes it too far geographically--and politically--from the chain of command emanating from the White House, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Observes an Army colonel with a background in special forces: MacDill puts "the problem child out of the way."

Creating an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations

Even more controversial than the development of USSOC is the congressional requirement that the Pentagon establish a position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict. The new assistant secretary is to prepare special operations budgets, supervise special operations forces programs, and represent special operations forces' interests within the Defense Department.¹¹

11. Caspar W. Weinberger, *Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1988* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 296.

Congress's purpose in creating the new position is to ensure that special forces receive priority attention. In the past, special forces were often ignored or their importance downplayed by the general purpose forces and so have had to compete for resources from a position of low-priority.¹² Consequently, special forces have consistently come up short and equipment requirements have never been met.

Special Operations Forces Equipment

Special operations forces lack sufficient airlift and communications equipment. The Air Force bears responsibility for moving special forces into and out of crises and this requires special aircraft, specifically modified C-130 transports (known as MC-130 *Combat Talons*) and HH-53 *Pave Low* helicopters. These specially designed aircraft enable the Air Force to transport special forces clandestinely into and out of hostile environments and to conduct reconnaissance of target regions.

This fleet, though, has been permitted virtually to atrophy. Currently, it consists of only fourteen aging MC-130s and eight HH-53s.¹³ The Air Force at last at least is planning to address these aircraft shortages and is procuring 24 new MC-130s and modifying eleven HH-53 helicopters for special operations missions. These improvements in airlift capability are due to be complete by 1992.¹⁴

Poor Grades for Cooperation. Similarly, while the Navy consistently gets good grades for the quality of its Naval Special Warfare Groups, its willingness to shift resources from general purpose forces to its SEAL teams and to improve cooperation with its sister services is in doubt. For example, the Navy has spent over \$10 million on the design of a transport boat (designated SWCM1 for Special Warfare Craft, Medium) for use in infiltrating special forces teams into hostile territory. According to the Department of Defense's deputy inspector general, however, Navy surface warfare personnel "reduced the patrol boat's mission, seaworthiness, weapons, speed and range 'without input or concurrence by the special operations forces community'."¹⁵

12. Debra Meyer and Benjamin Schemmer, Interview with Noel C. Koch, Principal Deputy Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, *Armed Forces Journal International*, March 1985, p. 50; and Congressman Dan Daniel, "The Case for a Sixth Service," *Armed Forces Journal International*, August 1985.

13. Numbers taken from Collins, *op cit.*, pp. 28-29.

14. Interview with Noel C. Koch, former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, May 28, 1987. Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh testified before the Defense Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee on May 12, 1987, that there continued to be a lack of sufficient airlift for special forces missions.

15. George C. Wilson, "Navy Forged Signature for Boat Project," *The Washington Post*, June 12, 1987, p. 1.

IMPROVING U.S. LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT CAPABILITIES

Move the headquarters of the United States Special Operations Command from Florida to Ft. Belvoir or Andrews Air Force Base in the Washington, D.C. area.

The need for immediate communications and decision-making during contingencies in which special forces are used makes it imperative that the President have instantaneous access to the officer in charge of special operations forces. While there will be a liaison office in Washington, D.C., the placement of the command headquarters in Florida both removes it from the operational chain of command and complicates interaction with civilian agencies of the government often involved in low-intensity conflict.¹⁶

Procure the proper types and numbers of equipment.

Airlift for special operations continues to lag behind requirements. The Air Force should accelerate the procurement of MC-130 *Combat Talons* and HH-53 *Pave Low* helicopters. Similarly, the Navy should be prodded to correct the reluctance of its Special Warfare Groups to cooperate with special units from the other services. It could start with improving plans and equipment for the transport of special operations units not limited to SEAL teams.

Make Special Forces a more attractive career option within the military.

Special operations require abilities not possessed by general purpose forces. These special skills deteriorate once soldiers are away from elite units for any period of time. Special forces, more than any other units, need a sense of cohesion and continuity that can only emerge from the retention of personnel for multiple tours.

For the U.S. to maintain special operations capabilities at the needed high level, the Pentagon must provide incentive for personnel to make a career out of special forces. This requires greater upward mobility and possibility of achieving ranks commensurate with the rest of the military. This incentive has been lacking and accounts in part for the low level of readiness of U.S. special operations capabilities.

Improve intelligence capabilities for low-intensity conflict.

Fulfilling intelligence requirements to support special operations is neither easy nor cheap. It is, however, necessary. The U.S. must place greater emphasis on developing human intelligence capabilities. The need to have covert forces in the field providing information on adversaries' intentions requires a sustained effort at training recruits and infiltrating them into target regions. Absent improvements in intelligence, however, the U.S. will simply remain unable to act when the President

16. See "Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense," by the Secretary's Special Operations Advisory Group, reprinted in *Armed Forces Journal International*, April 1987, p. 13.

and Congress feel it should, and will often fail in those instances in which it does act.

Assist foreign governments in counterinsurgency.

Host governments do not need F-16 fighters to combat insurgencies. They do need such simple, reliable aircraft as the C-47 propeller transport or even the DC-10 widebody jet to transport troops into and out of regions where a guerrilla presence is detected. Though C-47s have been out of production for nearly four decades, a variant of this aircraft should be developed for export:

Combating insurgencies also requires communications capabilities lacking in most Third World armies. Providing host governments with simple, durable radios to facilitate communications between military units would assist counterinsurgency operations greatly. Similarly, providing friendly troops with night-vision devices would enable them to confront the guerrillas when they are most active and, hence, most "visible" and vulnerable. The equipment used by U.S. forces, however, generally is too sophisticated for use by less well trained Third World armies operating under primitive conditions. For this reason, emphasis must be on simplicity of design.

Psychological Operations. Successful counterinsurgency efforts require that the central government be represented and highly visible at the village or local level. Government troops must also be well trained and highly disciplined to minimize human rights violations and to give the appearance of professionalism and self-control. The U.S. should train special teams to assist in development programs at the village level. Such teams should be instructed in relevant languages, psychological operations, engineering, medical assistance, and logistics. Projects undertaken with the assistance of special teams could include road construction, educational programs, medical immunization, and irrigation.¹⁷

Additionally, the International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program, a useful adjunct to U.S. foreign assistance projects, offers grants to finance military training. In countries such as Honduras and Panama, for example, the U.S. has succeeded in strengthening ties with those governments while improving their counterinsurgency capabilities.¹⁸

A successful counterinsurgency effort also must include a sustained program of economic development. Central to such a program should be encouragement of private sector initiatives to spur economic growth. The U.S. and other Western nations for years have provided substantial economic assistance to many Third World countries. Despite this aid--often because of it--these countries consistently resist self-help measures intended to draw disaffected groups into the economy. Steps that can be taken include privatizing government-owned industries, establishing a climate

17. U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Field Circular, *Low-Intensity Conflict*, FC-100-20 (Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, 1986), pp. 4-7 to 4-8.

18. Capt. Gary L. Arnold, USAF, "IMET in Latin America," *Military Review*, February 1987, pp. 30-41.

hospitable to foreign investment, and ending governmental control of banking systems.

Improve cooperation with foreign governments.

National pride and concern about appearing subservient to the U.S. limit cooperation often needed for counterinsurgency, counterterrorism planning, and narcotics interdiction. Much progress, however, has been made in the forging of multilateral efforts in the areas of combating terrorism and drug trafficking. The State Department has won foreign government cooperation in attempts to interdict the flow of drugs to the U.S. These changes need to be formalized through bilateral and multilateral agreements to ensure a degree of automatic responsiveness.

Establish a Coordination Center for Low-Intensity Conflict to coordinate counterinsurgency efforts.

The contributions of the Departments of State and Defense, the U.S. Information Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Agency for International Development can only be coordinated through the creation of such a center. Preferably, it should be under National Security Council control with oversight by Congress. This would ensure that efforts are properly channeled toward the attainment of an objective.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. has proved unable to contend with the myriad of low-level contingencies with which it has been confronted because neither the U.S. government nor the military is structured to do so. The changes mandated by Congress--establishing the Special Operations Command and the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict--are a key step toward rectifying this deficiency. More needs to be done.

As a start, the new Assistant Secretary of Defense must be appointed. So far, the post remains vacant. Without it being filled, little else can be accomplished. Airlift is another problem, as is the concern that special forces equipment requirements will be met.

In the area of counterinsurgency, continued divisions between agencies can be resolved by a center to coordinate the efforts of the agencies. Additionally, the U.S. needs to assure that equipment supplied to friendly governments fighting insurgencies is suited to the task.

Unwilling to Prepare. Most important, the U.S. must plan better for likely contingencies in the Third World. Iranian mines in the Persian Gulf were an obvious threat, yet the U.S. was not prepared for them.

It is impossible, of course, to plan for every conceivable contingency. The U.S., however, has demonstrated a marked unwillingness or inability to prepare for any

contingency. There is no acceptable reason for the absence of proper intelligence during the planning of the rescue mission on Grenada.

If needed reforms are made, the President should have at his disposal the very capabilities that have led many other governments to success in responding to low-intensity conflicts: an integrated, well-equipped special operations force prepared for the types of situations in which the U.S. and its allies continue to find themselves.

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