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The American military and the lessons of Vietnam: A study of military influence and the use of force in the post-Vietnam era

Petraeus, David Howell, Ph.D.

Princeton University, 1987

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THE AMERICAN MILITARY AND THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM:
A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era

David Howell Petraeus

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<u>THE AMERICAN MILITARY AND THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM:</u>

A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era

David Howell Petraeus

ABSTRACT

The focus of this dissertation is the impact of Vietnam on America's senior military with respect to their most important task -- advising the nation's leadership on the use of American military forces in potential combat situations.

That Vietnam should have had such an impact was to be expected. Considerable anecdotal evidence -- some recounted in this dissertation -- indicates that lessons and analogies taken from past events frequently influence foreign policy-makers. Indeed, historical analogies are particularly compelling during crises, when the tendency to supplement incomplete information with past experiences is especially marked.

Not surprisingly, therefore, lessons drawn from American involvement in Vietnam have greatly influenced military thinking on the use of force. These lessons have had a chastening effect. Contrary to the stereotype of the military as hawks eager to employ military forces abroad, the post-Vietnam military generally have been quite circumspect in their approach to the use of force. Military caution has been evident in a number of the post-Vietnam cases -- each of which is examined in this dissertation -- where presidents considered the use of force. In

fact, in no case since Vietnam has the military leadership proffered more aggressive recommendations than those of the most hawkish civilian advisers.

Caution, it is explained here, is likely to characterize the military approach to the use of force for some time. The legacy of Vietnam is unlikely to soon recede as an important influence on America's senior military. The frustrations of Vietnam are too deeply etched in the minds of those who now the lead the services and the combatant commands.

Caution has its virtues, of course. As will be noted, however, the lessons from which that caution springs are not without flaws. In addition to the considerable wisdom that resides in them, the lessons the military took from Vietnam contain a number of ambiguities and problems as well. Indeed, those who seek guidance from any past event should beware the pitfalls that await them, for history can mislead and obfuscate as well as guide and illuminate. As this dissertation will conclude, so has it been with Vietnam.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to this dissertation. Most of all, I am profoundly grateful to Professor Richard Ullman, my principal faculty adviser throughout the Ph.D. process. My association with him was of central importance to this undertaking, not to mention to my intellectual development. I appreciate especially his characteristic generosity with his time and advice. I cannot thank him enough.

My wife Holly deserves considerable thanks as well. Not only did she shoulder more than her share of the child-rearing burdens so that I could write, she also read every chapter at least twice -- some many more times -- as she has done with everything I have written since I entered graduate school. Her contributions were not just those of a superb proof-reader, but also of one who has an unerring eye for weakness in logic, methodology, and structure.

Professor Stephen Walt also deserves my gratitude. As my second faculty adviser -- replacing Professor Barry Posen during the writing of my dissertation -- Professor Walt offered numerous sound suggestions and comments. Like Professor Ullman, he displayed tremendous competence not only as an academic, but as a teacher as well.

Many others at Princeton also helped along the way. Professors Klaus Knorr, Barry Posen, and R. John Vincent provided insightful critiques on my prospectus. Professor G. John Ikenberry served as the third reader once my dissertation was in

the final stages. John Duffield, a fellow graduate student and my carrel-mate, was a frequent source of valuable criticism during our two years together at the Woodrow Wilson School, and has been since then too. Daniel Deudney, another fellow graduate student, gave a very detailed and useful critique of one of my early papers and steered me in the direction of Ernest May's "Lessons" of the Past and other literature on the impact of history of policy-makers.

A number of others provided helpful comments at various stages of my writing. In the U.S. Military Academy's Department of Social Sciences I received considerable encouragement and support from the Department Head, Colonel Lee D. Olvey, and his deputy, Colonel James Golden. Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Kaufman -- an editor without peer -- provided detailed critiques of several chapters in their formative stages, as did another excellent editor, Major Craig Wildrick. Lieutenant Colonel Asa Clark IV prompted me to present a paper on the legacy of Vietnam, in collaboration with Dr. William Taylor, at the U.S. Military Academy Senior Conference XXIII. The preparation of that paper proved particularly valuable when Dr. Taylor circulated it among his colleagues at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, receiving useful comments from Admiral Thomas Moorer, Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, General E. C. Meyer, and Admiral James Holloway.

I owe an enormous intellectual debt as well to Dr. Richard Betts of the Brookings Institution -- the author of Soldiers,

Statesmen, and Cold War Crises. Dr. Betts' path-breaking work in the field of military influence and the use of force was of considerable assistance in my effort. As will be clear from my many references to his study, his efforts guided mine in a number of instances. I appreciate also his suggestions following a reading of my prospectus.

A number of other individuals gave interviews and shared the fruits of their own research. Most notable among them were Colonel Ralph Hallenbeck, who shared with me his dissertation on the decision-making during the Marine mission in Beirut, and Colonel Mark Gatanas (an assistant to presidential envoy Robert McFarlane in Beirut) who graciously sat through several lengthy interviews. Captain Daniel Bolger, a colleague at West Point, alerted me to some sources on recent cases of the use of force that I had overlooked. Captain Jay Parker, a graduate student at Columbia University, shared the fruits of his research on decision-making during the Indochina crises of 1954. Dr. Richard Sommers located several very important documents in the U.S. Army Military History Institute's Matthew Ridgway Papers. Others who answered questions along the way included Dr. Alexander Cochran, Lieutenant Colonel John Fairlamb, Lieutenant General James Gavin, General John Galvin, General Paul Gorman, Roy Gutman, Richard Halloran, Professor George Herring, General William Knowlton (my father-in-law, and an especially important source of insight into the thinking of his peers), Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf, Colonel Paul Miles, Lieutenant Colonel Augustus R. Norton, Lieutenant

Colonel John Oseth, General Matthew Ridgway, General William Rosson, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Schaden, Benjamin Schemmer, and General Richard Stilwell.

Many thanks to all of them. As Yankee manager Casey Stengel said about his ballplayers after winning the World Series: "I couldn't 'a done it without 'em."

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The only thing as important for a nation as its revolution is its last major war.

Robert Jervis[1]

The armed forces are commanded today by a generation of officers tempered in the fires of Vietnam. The legacy of Vietnam has profoundly etched the minds of those officers and has laden them with emotional baggage that shapes their judgments on military power and operations.

Richard Halloran[2]

The debate over when and how to commit American power abroad is really a debate over how to avoid, at all costs, another Vietnam.

William Broyles Jr.[3]

The focus of this dissertation is the impact of Vietnam on the American military. In particular, the goal is to examine the influence of Vietnam on the senior military with regard to their most important task -- advising the nation's leadership on the use of American military forces abroad.

An explanation of how this dissertation evolved will help the reader understand my approach. My research began in the spring of 1984 when I wrote a seminar paper titled "Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era." My initial goal was to examine how the senior military -- the

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[1] Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 266.

[2] Richard Halloran, To Arm A Nation (New York: Macmillan, 1986), p. 37.

[3] William Broyles, Jr., "The Road to Hill 10," Atlantic, Vol. 255, No. 4 (April 1985), p. 92.

leaders of my profession -- advised the president and secretary of defense during post-World War II deliberations on the use of American military forces. I sought to find out if the top military were Dr. Strangeloves in uniform -- wild-eyed leaders eager to employ military force -- or if, to the contrary, they were the cautious professionals Samuel Huntington described in The Soldier and the State.[4] I hoped, understandably I think, to find more of the Huntington description than the Strangelove caricature.

My first significant finding was that despite all the rhetoric about the military getting the United States involved in wars, there is only one study of post-World War II military advice in decisions on the use of American force abroad-- Richard Betts' Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises.[5] Betts, in fact, commented on the dearth of scholarship in this area. "Notions of military influence in crises," he wrote, "have been premises of political debate more than conclusions of analysis." To fill the academic void, Betts analyzed the 201 incidents from 1948 to 1973 in which presidents considered using force. On the basis of his extensive research and interviews, he concluded that:

> The stereotype of a belligerent chorus of generals and admirals intimidating a pacific civilian establishment is not supported by the evidence. In most cases where

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[4]Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

[5]Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

> some soldiers were vocally ahead of the civilians in urging the use of force, there were other soldiers giving advice similar to or more cautious than that of the principal civilians. This balanced the leverage that the aggressive officers could invoke on grounds of expertise....Military professionals rarely dominated decisions on the use of force. Soldiers have exerted the greatest leverage on intervention decisions in those instances where they vetoed it.[6]

Betts placed the character of military advice, therefore, somewhere in between the two images of military influence. The first image -- which accepts the Strangelove in uniform stereotype -- sees military leaders as hawks. Its thesis was expressed vividly by Arthur Schlesinger in The Crisis of Confidence when he contended that a "major cause" of America's "imperial drift" was the "incessant pressure of the professional military...constant demands...more military involvement, more military intervention."[7]

The other image accepts Samuel Huntington's characterization of the military leader as cautious professional, and views the senior military as holding a relatively pacifist attitude. Huntington, in fact, has been the leading proponent of this school, and his classic work The Soldier and the State illustrated his approach: "The military man rarely favors war."

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[6] Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 5.

[7] Arthur Schlesinger, Crisis of Confidence (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1969), p. 172. A more recent example of this school of thought was exemplified by a comment by Fred Hiatt, then the Washington Post's former Pentagon reporter: "The further [military] officials are from the bullets," he wrote, "the more readily they threaten force." See Harry M. Zubkoff, "Return Fire," Armed Forces Journal International, Vol. 124, No. 3 (October 1986), p. 118.

Huntington wrote.

> He will always argue that the danger of war requires increased armaments; he will seldom argue that increased armaments make war practical or desirable. He always favors preparedness, but he never feels prepared. Accordingly, the professional military man contributes a cautious, conservative, restraining voice to the formulation of state policy.[8]

Having found that Betts had already studied the period from the end of World War II to 1973, the logical task for my seminar paper seemed to be to extend Betts' study by looking at the post-Vietnam period. In my research for that paper (and, subsequently, for the dissertation as well), I sought to answer generally the same questions that Betts addressed:

First, when the use of force was an issue, what did military advisers recommend compared to civilian advisers?

Second, what effect did the advice or influence of the military have on presidential decisions?

Third, what appears to account for the advice proffered, or the influence exerted, by the military leadership?[9]

To answer these questions I analyzed each of the cases since 1973 in which the use of American military force was considered. One of the first methodological issues with which I had to grapple was the definition of the object of my research. After

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[8]Huntington, The Soldier and the State, p. 69.

[9]The questions that Betts addressed are listed on page 2 of Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises.
The reader should note the relatively narrow focus of these questions, and thus of the dissertation. I look only at military advice and influence on the use of force, not at broader issues such as the military view of, for example, the nature of relations between nation-states.

some thought, I defined "military" as the senior leaders and top staff officers of the joint staff, the military services, and the combatant commands.[10] I retain that definition in my dissertation. Officers in assignments outside the military services or joint service positions, therefore, are not "military" in my analysis; nor are retired military officers. Officers serving on the National Security Council staff or in other White House roles, for example, are not regarded as military -- even though they may be on active duty. To be sure, many of those individuals might dislike such a distinction. I employ it, nonetheless, because of my feeling that the perspective of officers in such positions understandably is less that of their military services or even the military as a whole, and more that of the White House or the executive branch agency to which they are assigned.[11]

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[10]Although Richard Betts does not explicitly define the term "military" or "senior leaders of the military", it is clear from his analysis that he also excluded from consideration those military officers serving in non-military positions in the executive branch.

[11]There is considerable support for my contention about the perspective of military officers serving outside the military. A comment by two highly respected soldier-scholars illustrates my point. "The military establishment has not always welcomed [assignment] of its sharper officers...at the senior level of the policy process. These officers were never allowed, nor did they seek, to use their...positions to represent, let alone advance, service or professional interests. Consequently, they did not inject a 'military perspective' into the formulation of the national security goals they may have helped formulate." See Brigadier General Amos A. Jordan (USA, Ret.) and Colonel William J. Taylor Jr. (USA, Ret.), <u>American National Security: Policy and Process</u> (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, rev. ed.), p. 175.

Navy Captain Jake Stewart, who recently completed a tour on

As my work on the seminar paper progressed, the answer that emerged to my first research question -- about military advice on the use of force compared to that of senior civilians -- proved somewhat surprising. I had expected findings similar to those of Betts -- that in any one case some military leaders would offer more activist advice, while others would offer less activist advice, in comparison to that of the principal civilians. I found, however, that in no case were the military as activist in their advice as the civilians most prone to take action -- such as Kissinger in the Nixon/Ford years, Brzezinski during the Carter administration, and several different officials in the Reagan administration. In short, the military since 1973 had conformed much more closely to the Huntington view (originally presented in 1957) than they had during the period of Betts' analysis.[12]

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the NSC staff, is a case in point. During his time on the NSC staff, he told the Army Times recently, he saw himself as "the president's man." Another former military officer who served on the NSC staff observed in the same article that "you have to trade off higher interests against the interests of your [military] service." See P.J. Budahn, "Officers Contribute Military Viewpoint to NSC," Army Times, 15 October 1986, p. 10.

Admittedly, such distinctions undoubtedly are most notable on budgetary issues. On issues involving the use of force, one would expect that all participants would think in terms of what is best for the country, rather than in terms of what is best for one's military service, political party, or office. Nonetheless, one might anticipate that how decision-makers define what is best for the country would be colored slightly by their institutional positions -- at least in cases where the commitment of force is not viewed as especially significant.

[12] Admittedly, the post-Vietnam period has been largely devoid of escalation decisions, decisions in which the military have in the past been most activist due to their desire to win the war and get home. I should note also, that in the period

My findings led me to question why the character of military influence since 1973 had been significantly different than before that time. The obvious factor, of course, seemed to be Vietnam and the lessons the military took from it. That hypothesis--which now seems almost self-evident, but was not so at the outset of my research -- led me to examine more closely the Vietnam experience of today's senior military, and to explore how that experience shaped their views on the use of force. I sought, in particular, to determine what seemed to be the conventional military wisdom on Vietnam -- that is, the generally accepted lessons the military derived from America's frustrating involvement in Southeast Asia. These lessons, I discovered, had led some senior military officers to establish certain conditions that they and many of their peers held as necessary before American troops should be committed to combat. Making their support of the use of force contingent on these factors was one way they sought to avoid another Vietnam.

My seminar paper completed, I decided in the summer of 1984 to continue my research in the hope that the impact of Vietnam on military thinking about the use of force might prove to be a legitimate dissertation topic. My timing was propitious. The tenth anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam prompted many during 1985 -- journalists, academics, military officers,

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1984-1987 -- the time during which my seminar paper was developed into a dissertation -- there have been cases in which senior military officials were as aggressive in their recommendations on the use of force as were key civilian advisers. See chapters V and VI.

and policy-makers -- to reflect further on what they believed to be the lessons of Vietnam. The result was considerable public debate about what "America's Longest War" had to teach us.[13] Vietnam was the intellectual "growth industry" of that year, and some of the most vocal voices in the ensuing debate were those of senior military leaders. My research was greatly facilitated.

The outpouring of reflection by senior officers provided considerable confirmation of my findings, not to mention many thought-provoking observations about what the United States should take from Vietnam. My summer stints in the Office of the Army Chief of Staff in 1984, and as Special Assistant to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command in 1986, provided further opportunities to supplement my research. Those jobs helped me develop a better feel for the senior military's thinking about the lessons of Vietnam and for the application of those lessons to contemporary events -- particularly to American involvement in Central America. My understanding of the paradoxes and ambiguities that reside in the military prescriptions concerning the use of force was deepened as well, and I was afforded the opportunity to conduct interviews with a number of the military and civilian officials involved in the post-Vietnam cases I was studying. Finally, the Pentagon and West Point, of course, both have libraries that cater to military users, which thus made it easy for me to survey the relevant

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[13]George Herring, America's Longest War (New York: Knopf, 1986, 2d Edition).

military and military-related periodicals.[14]

In those summer positions, as well as during my second year at graduate school and in my subsequent assignment teaching at West Point, I sought to supplement my research in a number of other ways too. An area of particular focus was the influence of history on policy-makers -- particularly during crisis decision-making situations. The considerable body of literature on how policy-makers use, misuse, and are influenced by lessons they take from history proved very helpful in providing the general theoretical underpinnings for my research. It was that literature which assured me that lessons of events such as Vietnam can have a significant impact on the thinking of

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[14]In the course of my research I went through issues of the following military or military-related journals back through the mid-1960s: _Army_, _Air Force Magazine_, _Air University Review_, _Armed Forces and Society_ (only through 1973, when its first issue was published), _Armed Forces Journal International_, _Armor_, _Infantry_, _Marine Corps Gazette_, _Military Affairs_, _Military Review_, _Naval War College Review_, _Parameters_ (though 1970 when it began publication), _U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings_. I also went through a number of non-military journals that might have articles relating to my research, among them: _Conflict_, _Foreign Affairs_, _Foreign Policy_, _International Security_, _Orbis_, _Political Science Quarterly_, _Washington Quarterly_, _World Politics_. And, of course, I made considerable use of newspapers and weekly news magazines.

Additionally, I made extensive use of the private paper collections at Princeton University's Seely Mudd Manuscript Library (the most useful of which were the Dulles papers) and of the Ridgway papers in the United State Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. I made limited use of the National Archives and resources of the JCS history office.

Finally, I supplemented my research by interviewing or corresponding with: a number of the participants in the post-Vietnam crises; senior officers from the Indochina decisions in the 1950s; historians and political scientists pursuing parallel research; and a number of active duty or recently retired military officers.

decision-makers, particularly under the conditions that typically prevail when the use of force is under consideration.

Examining the influence on the American military of another frustrating military experience -- the Korean War -- also proved useful. Not only did I discover parallels between the lessons of Korea and those taken from Vietnam, but the factors that undermined the legacy of the Korean War offered insights into the factors likely to determine the "half-life" of the Vietnam legacy as well. Those insights helped inform my speculation about how long the conventional wisdom on Vietnam will continue to influence military thinking on the use of force.

I also gave much thought to the general pitfalls that await those who would use historical analogies as an aid for policy-making, and I pondered the ambiguities and paradoxes that await those who would seek guidance in the lessons of Vietnam. Lessons of history in general and the lessons of Vietnam in particular, I came to realize, have much to offer those confronting contemporary problems -- but only if used with care and not pushed too far.

Finally, of course, I continued my research into military influence and the use of force in post-Vietnam era crises. I conducted further interviews, gleaned as much as possible from the unclassified sources available, and compared notes with other individuals pursuing research relevant to mine.

This dissertation represents my findings.

Chapter II

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PAST

Hardly anything is more important in international affairs than the historical images and perceptions that men carry in their heads.

Paul M. Kattenburg[1]

The propensity to rely upon the lessons of history as a strategy for coping with the complexities and uncertainties that are often an integral part of foreign affairs is rather widespread.

Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau[2]

Policymakers often cope with the difficulty of comprehending and dealing with new situations by resorting to historical analogies. Thus, an earlier historical case that...made a particularly strong impression on the policymaker becomes an aid to diagnosing the present situation and for deciding what is the best...way... to respond to it.

Alexander L. George[3]

Whether history is a storehouse of precedents and guidelines that can be applied to contemporary issues, or, on the contrary, offers nothing of relevance -- is "bunk" in Henry Ford's words-- has long been the subject of debate.[4] Despite the philosophical

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[1]Kattenburg, The Vietnam Trauma in American Foreign Policy, 1945-1975 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1980), p. 317.

[2]Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, American Leadership in World Affairs (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1984), p. 8.

[3]George, Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), p. 43.

[4]Examples of this debate can be found in: Arthur M. Schlesinger, The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941-1966 (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Crest, 1967), pp. 89-104; Henry A. Kissinger, A World Restored (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), pp. 330-332; Jay Luvaas, "Military History: Is It Still Practicable?" Parameters, Vol. XII, No. 1 (March 1982), pp. 2-14; Michael Howard, "The Use and Abuse of Military History," Parameters, Vol. XI, No. 1 (March 1981), pp.

disagreement over the relevance of the past to the present, however, there is considerable evidence that lessons and analogies drawn from history often play an important part in policy decisions.[5] The past, or, more correctly, what is perceived to have occurred in the past, is an important influence on statesmen. In seeking solutions to problems, occupants of high office frequently turn to the past for help. Consciously or subconsciously, with selectivity or not, policy-makers often draw on, and are influenced by, what they hold to be the lessons of history -- lessons which tend to be broad, non-specific notions about what took place in the past.

Turning to the past in the search for answers to present day problems is understandable; potentially history is an enormously rich resource. What was done before in seemingly similar

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9-14; and Klaus Knorr, "Introduction: On the Utility of History," in Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems ed. by Knorr (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1976), pp. 1-4.

[5]The best of the works that establish the influence of the past on decision makers is Ernest R. May's "Lessons" of the Past (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Other important sources include: Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, Thinking In Time (New York: The Free Press, 1986); Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), especially Chapter Six, "How Decision-Makers Learn From History;" George, Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy, pp. 42-53, 60-61; Stanley Karnow, "Vietnam As An Analogy," New York Times, 4 October 1983, p. A27; Holsti and Rosenau, American Leadership in World Affairs, pp. 3-10; Yaacov Y.I. Vertzberger, "Foreign Policy Decisionmakers as Practical-Intuitive Historians: Applied History and Its Shortcomings," International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June 1986), pp. 223-247; and Richard A. Melanson, Writing History and Making Policy (New York: University Press of America, 1983). One also should consult the fascinating book by E. H. Carr, What Is History? (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

situations and what the results were can be of great assistance to framers of foreign policy. Indeed, lessons of history form a bridge between the past and the present. No matter that in practice, the use of history is often flawed; no matter that the users of the past often fail to recognize that history can mislead and obfuscate as well as guide and illuminate. What is perceived to have happened before weighs heavily on the minds of those who confront what seem to be similar situations in the present.

The Importance of Perceptions

Perceptions of reality, more so than objective reality, are crucial to the decisions of statesmen. What policy-makers believe to have taken place in any particular case is what matters -- more than what actually occurred. As the following passage about foreign policy-making makes clear,

> The key...is...*perception*, the process by which decision-makers detect and assign meaning to inputs from their environment and formulate their own purposes and intents. For an individual to respond to a person, object, or event, there must first be the *detection* of signals, which is a function of our senses. In addition, however, we must have some code -- a set of concepts of images -- which permit us to interpret the meaning of the stimulus.[6]

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[6]Ole Holsti, R. C. North, and Richard Brody, "Perception and Action in the 1914 Case," in *Quantitative International Politics*, ed. by J. David Singer (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 128 (emphasis in original).

There are, of course, may other important variables in the determination of foreign policy decisions and behavior. I deliberately avoid discussion of the other variables and entire debate about the levels of analysis used to explain the actions of states in international politics.

Foreign policy behavior, therefore, is in some part shaped by the way key officials perceive, diagnose, and evaluate their environment. But this environment -- the reality that confronts statesmen -- often is complex and confusing. To impose some order, statesmen form simplified beliefs about the nature of their world. Reality is filtered through clusters of these beliefs, through what have been termed "cognitive maps" of the individual's physical and social environment. "The beliefs that compose these maps," Ole Holsti has written,

> provide the individual with a more or less coherent way of organizing and making sense out of what would otherwise be a confusing array of signals picked up from the environment by his senses...Foreign policy officials are no different in this respect, for the situations that confront them are often characterized by uncertainty.[7]

Beliefs about the past and what it teaches make up a particularly important part of the belief systems of political leaders, and thus influence their perceptions of reality and the decisions they make. "What one learns from key events in

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[7]Ole Holsti, "Foreign Policy Formation Viewed Cognitively," in Structure of Decision, ed. by Robert Axelrod (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 19, 20. Similar to the cognitive map concept is Nathan Leites' "operational code" -- "a set of general beliefs about fundamental issues of history and central questions of politics as these bear, in turn, on the problem of action." Leites originally developed the operational code concept in American Foreign Policy (London: G. Allen, 1960). It was developed subsequently by Alexander L. George in "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1969), pp. 190-222. As George explained, the beliefs that make up a policy-maker's operational code "provide norms, standards, and guidelines that influence the actor's choice of strategy and tactics, his structuring and weighing of alternative courses of action" (p. 191).

international history," Robert Jervis has written, "is an important factor in determining the images that shape the interpretation of incoming information...Previous international events provide the statesman with a range of imaginable situations and allow him to detect patterns and causal links that can help him understand his world."[8] Indeed, as Abraham Lowenthal observed in The Dominican Intervention,

> it should not be surprising that...analogies play...an important role in shaping the response of American government (and presumably others) to international affairs. Foreign political realities are so complex...that simplifying concepts are needed. Policy-makers seize on evils they have experienced and wish to avoid in order to organize their information about events they do not have time to analyze from scratch...Hence unfamiliar problems are discussed in terms of the familiar. The more...thought policy-makers give to avoiding a possible situation -- a "second Cuba," for example -- the more likely they are to misperceive ambiguous events as resembling that situation.[9]

Personal Experience

Lowenthal's observation highlights the special importance of historical events that individuals experienced firsthand. Personal experiences influence significantly the thinking of individuals -- especially if they come during the individual's formative years, if they have important consequences for the individual or his nation, and if they are thereafter unchallenged

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[8]Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, p. 217.

[9]Lowenthal, The Dominican Intervention, p. 161.

by alternative analogies drawn from other events.[10]

Firsthand experiences -- events seen and participated in-- thus leave "disproportionate impressions." Robert Jervis illustrates this point very vividly:

> A person who has been bitten by a snake will be predisposed to see ambiguous figures as snakes. He will be quicker to see snakes when they are present-- and will often mistake branches and shadows for them. His behavior also will be changed -- he will take detours around snake-infested areas and will...carry a snake-bite kit. His unbitten friends will be less affected even if it was only luck that determined that he, and not they, would be bitten and even though they are as likely as he is to get bitten in the future.[11]

A particularly dramatic or traumatic event early in life may, therefore, be the crucial formative episode for those who experience it directly.[12] Understandably, wars take on special significance. As Jervis observes:

> The only thing as important for a nation as its revolution is its last major war. Because of the dramatic and pervasive nature of a war and its consequences, the experiences associated with it -- the diplomacy that preceded it, the methods of fighting it,

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[10]Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, p. 239; Vertzberger, "Foreign Policy Decisionmakers as Practical-Intuitive Historians," pp. 241-242. Fred Ikle, now a policy-maker himself, noted when he was still an academic that the tendency to draw on personal experience increases with age. "Rather than digging into day-by-day details," he reasoned, "the gray-haired diplomat may make excessive use of analogies, of both the historical and the personal kind." See Ikle, How Nations Negotiate (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 157.

The importance of youthful experiences and environment in shaping one's future outlook has been recognized widely by behavioral psychologists. The most celebrated work in that field is Morris Massey's film "What You Are Is Where You Were When."

[11]Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, p. 240.

[12]Holsti and Rosenau, American Leadership, p. 10

> the alliances that were formed, and the way the war was terminated -- will deeply influence the perceptual predispositions of most citizens. Major wars so dominate the life of the country that in a real sense all those old enough to remember it will have experienced it first hand.[13]

In fact, major wars or a nation's revolution may influence perceptions even if individuals did not directly experience them. Individuals who never even approached the "front lines" may be as influenced by such events as are those who actually participated in the fighting.[14] Indeed, those who were not even alive during a war or revolution may be influenced by it through wisdom passed down by family, friends, teachers, books, or movies. But when a war is experienced first hand, it is likely to become of central importance in the thinking of the participants, particularly if the war took place during the individual's formative years and its lessons go unchallenged by future events of similar significance.

Wars, the diplomacy surrounding either their outbreak or their resolution, and other similarly traumatic events in the twentieth century have, in fact, provided a number of influential lessons. Among the analogies taken from such events are those that have given rise to such slogans as: "no more Versailles," "no more Munichs," "no more Chinas," "no more Koreas," "no more Cubas," and "no more Vietnams." Each of these epigrams has

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[13]Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, p. 266.

[14]Of course, not all those who experience a particular event will draw similar lessons from it.

exercised considerable sway over decision-makers.

Crisis Decision-Making

Although perceived lessons of the past are influential even in routine foreign policy decisions, they have been found to be especially important during crisis decision-making situations.[15] When leaders are surprised by international developments that threaten national security interests and appear to require a quick response, they are particularly prone to draw on historical analogies in deciding how to proceed.[16] A number of studies have provided support for Glenn Paige's hypothesis that "the greater the crisis, the greater the propensity for decision-makers to

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[15]For an excellent discussion of the characteristics of crisis decision-making, see James A. Robinson, "Crisis: An Appraisal of Concepts and Theories," in International Crises: Insights From Behavioral Research, ed. by Charles F. Hermann (New York: The Free Press, 1972), pp. 20-35.

[16]Michael Brecher and Benjamin Geist describe certain characteristics that influence a decision-maker's tendency to "conceptual rigidity" -- that is, to draw from past experience and to reason by analogy. See their Decisions in Crisis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 13. Brecher and Geist contend that the tendency to conceptual rigidity decreases when decision-makers have considerable high level experience in crisis decision-making, particularly when that experience has included a number of crises resolved successfully.

Ole Holsti has noted that the belief systems, or cognitive maps, alluded to earlier seem particularly important in: nonroutine situations that require more than merely the application of standard operating procedures; decisions made at the pinnacle of the government hierarchy; situations that are highly ambiguous and thus open to a variety of interpretations; and situations that are unanticipated and stressful. These characteristics are almost always present in crises during which national leaders consider the use of military force. See Holsti, "Foreign Policy Formation Viewed Cognitively," pp. 29-30.

supplement information about the objective state of affairs with information drawn from their own past experiences."[17] As Ole Holsti and James Rosenau have explained:

> When experiencing stress, decision-makers are likely to cope by relying on familiar or readily-available decision rules, probably employing increasingly crude and undifferentiated versions of them as stress increases. For example, they may find parallels between the present and previous situations and draw upon analogies that are based on superficial rather than fundamental similarities.[18]

It is not just stress that leads statesmen to seek guidance from historical analogies during crises, however. The influence of analogies is also due to the lack of complete information that is common in crisis decision-making situations.[19] In the absence of clear information about an adversary's intentions, for example, policy-makers are likely to fall back on what previous cases indicated about the enemy's motives. If unsure of the

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[17]Glenn D. Paige, "Comparative Case Analysis of Crisis Decisions: Korea and Cuba," in International Crises: Insights From Behavioral Research, p. 48. Paige's finding was confirmed in Brecher with Geist, Decisions in Crisis, p. 343; See also Ole R. Holsti and Alexander L. George, "The Effects of Stress on the Performance of Foreign Policy-Makers," Political Science Annual, Vol. 6 (1975), ed. by Cornelius P. Cotter (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), pp. 277-281; and Colonel Richard G. Head (USAF), et. al., Crisis Resolution: Presidential Decision Making in the Mayaguez and Korean Confrontations (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), p. 243.

[18]Holsti and George, "The Effects of Stress on the Performance of Foreign Policy-Makers," p. 281. See also F. P. Kilpatrick, "Problems of Perception in Extreme Situations," in Readings in Collective Behavior, ed. by Robert R. Evans (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969), pp. 171-173; and Thomas W. Milburn, "The Management of Crisis," in International Crises: Insights From Behavioral Research, ed. by C. F. Hermann (New York: Free Press, 1972), p. 274.

[19]Holsti and George, "The Effects of Stress," p. 294.

likely outcome of a particular action, a statesman is likely to anticipate that it will be the same as the outcome in an earlier, seemingly similar situation. "Faced with incomplete information about the immediate problem at hand," Charles Kegley and Eugene Wittkopf have observed, "it is not surprising that decisionmakers turn to the past for guidance."[20]

During crises, moreover, the role of individual policy-makers is more important than in routine matters. Crises frequently give rise to ad hoc decision-making by the national leader and a small group of key advisers. Established, bureaucratic procedures tend to be ignored or circumvented. The executive branch assumes the primary, if not exclusive, responsibility for dealing with the crisis. During a crisis, more than at any other time, therefore, a nation is its decision-makers; and they, due to the stress and incomplete information associated with crises, are very likely to seek guidance or

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[20]Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf, American Foreign Policy, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982, 2d ed.), pp. 540-546. Lawrence Falkowski has noted that even when there is information available, historical analogies "can help simplify the information and allow conclusions to be drawn quickly." See his Presidents, Secretaries of State and Crises in U.S. Foreign Relations: A Model and Predictive Analysis (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), p. 21.

Bernard Cohen and Scott A. Harris have written that "as part of the avoidance of uncertainty, the initial response of officials to any international event might be hypothesized as an immediate search, unarticulated and impressionistic, through the corridors of history and memory, for clues to the appropriate context within which to set the event for the purpose of deriving suitable principles of response. See their "Foreign Policy," in Policies and Policy Making, Vol. 6, Handbook of Political Science, ed. by Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1975), p. 400.

insights from the past.[21]

Organizational "Learning"

The focus to this point has been individuals, particularly foreign policy-makers, and the influence of history on them. It is not just individuals who "learn" from the past, however; organizations do as well.[22] John Lovell has explained that "to the extent that experience or 'lessons' from the past become assimilated into organizational structure, doctrine, practices, values and beliefs, one may speak of 'organizational learning'."[23]

As with individuals, organizations do not necessarily derive the correct lessons from the past: they do not always get wiser

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[21]See, for example, Robinson, "Crisis: An Appraisal of Concepts and Theories," pp. 29-33.

[22]Beyond individuals and organizations, generations can "learn" certain lessons from the past as well. I have not examined generational learning here, however, as it is only peripherally related to my topic, and because the "Vietnam generation" of the population at large does not agree on the lessons of Vietnam. The Vietnam generation of the military, on the other hand, does agree on what Vietnam taught (see chapter IV); but that is more easily dealt with under the heading of organizational learning than generational learning.

[23]John P. Lovell, "Vietnam and the American Army: Learning to Cope With Failure," in Democracy, Strategy, and Vietnam, ed. by Colonel George K. Osborn, et. al. (Lexington: Lexington Books, forthcoming in 1987). On collective learning, see also Earl C. Ravenal, Never Again: Learning from America's Foreign Policy Failures (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), pp. 27-28; Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, pp. 238-239; and John P. Lovell, "'Lessons' of U.S. Military Involvement: Preliminary Conceptualization," in Foreign Policy Decision Making: Perception, Cognition, and Artificial Intelligence, ed. by Donald A. Sylvan and Steve Chan (New York: Praeger, 1984), pp. 129-157.

or more effective. Organizational learning implies only that organizations have made adjustments in response to an experience.[24] The "conventional wisdom," in other words, tends to be institutionalized. In the military, for example, the commonly accepted lessons of the past are institutionalized through personnel and resource allocations, through incorporation into doctrinal manuals, and through instruction in the military school system -- where the accepted lessons may be elevated to the status of "school solution."

Organizational learning is, of course, dynamic. With changes in the political climate and in key organizational officials, the conventional wisdom on a particular event may change. But the more elementary the experience is, the greater will be its impact. As with individuals, the more traumatic and recent the event, the more enduring the lessons drawn from it.

In short, the collective memory of an organization, like the memory of an individual, reflects the impact of specific

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[24]Organizational learning is conditioned by organizational interests. Lessons of the past that suggest diminished emphasis should be given to what Morton Halperin has termed the "organization's essence" are less likely be accepted readily than are lessons that reinforce the importance of the organization's essence. One would imagine, for example, that the Air Force would be unlikely to embrace conclusions from past events that indicate the ineffectiveness of aerial bombing campaigns. See Halperin's Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1974), esp. pp. 26-62.

The importance of organizational interests in organizational learning will be discussed further in chapter IV, where it will be noted that one reason the military took certain lessons from Vietnam is that those lessons tended to be what the military wanted to hear. See, for example, John M. Gates, "Vietnam: The Debate Goes On," Parameters, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring 1984), p. 24.

historical events. The more significant the event, the more profound is its impact on the organization's interpretation of the present in light of the past. An organization may even undergo an experience so shattering that it becomes a prisoner of its past. In many respects, Vietnam was such an experience for the military.

Cases in Point

Diplomatic history contains many examples of policy-makers who have been influenced by what they believed the past to have taught. Reasoning by analogy to some familiar event, the literature reveals, has been a frequently employed aid to statesmen when faced with major decisions. As diplomatic historian Ernest May has explained: "Eagerness to profit from the lessons of history is the one common characteristic in the statecraft of such diverse types as Stanley Baldwin, Adolf Hitler, Charles de Gaulle, and John F. Kennedy." Each was "determined to hear the voices of history, to avoid repeating the presumed mistakes of the past."[25]

Not surprisingly, diplomatic history shows that the recent past is invariably more vivid and, therefore, more influential than the distant past. Traumatic events that occurred during the decision-makers' lifetimes have been especially influential--particularly when the decision-makers have been confronted by

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[25]Quoted in George, Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy, p. 45.

crises.

In the wake of World War II, for example, the events of the 1930s -- which most of the world's leaders experienced personally and remembered vividly -- proved very influential on statesmen during crises. President Truman relied repeatedly on lessons he derived from that period in contending with the crises that confronted him. Returning to Washington after being informed of the North Korean invasion of South Korea, for example, Truman spent most of the journey alone in his compartment, reflecting on instances in his lifetime when the "strong had attacked the weak."[26] As John Stoessinger reconstructed it, the North Korean attack, in Truman's view,

> was the latest link in a chain of aggressive acts unleashed by the German, Italian, and Japanese military adventurers that had led to World War II. There was no doubt in the President's mind that a Soviet probing action was behind the North Korean invasion. Unless Communist belligerency was deterred promptly and effectively, a third world war between Communist and non-Communist states would inevitably ensue.[27]

Events during other crises that confronted the Truman administration provide further examples of the influence of analogies from the inter-war period on President Truman's foreign policy advisers. As Kegley and Wittkopf have explained:

> When faced with the Soviet pressures on Iran, Turkey, and Greece that ultimately led to the Truman Doctrine,...the Truman administration came to view

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[26]Harry S. Truman, Memoirs (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1955), Vol. 2, p. 332-333.

[27]John G. Stoessinger, Why Nations Go To War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), p. 76. See also May, "Lessons" of the Past, p. 161.

> those events as analogous to developments prior to World War II (especially the Manchurian, Italo-Ethiopian, and Czechoslovakian crises). Cues were taken from those analogies as guides to policy actions.[28]

British Prime Minister Anthony Eden's policy against Egypt after Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal was similarly influenced by analogies from the 1930s. In a reply to what he termed a "disquieting message from [President] Eisenhower," Eden wrote:

> ...the divergence [between us] springs from a difference in our assessment of Nasser's plans and intentions...In the nineteen-thirties Hitler established his position by a series of carefully planned movements. These began with occupation of the Rhineland and were followed by successive acts of aggression against Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the West...Similarly the seizure of the Suez Canal is, we are convinced, the opening gambit in a planned campaign designed by Nasser to expel all Western influence and interests from Arab countries...You may feel that even if we are right it would be better to wait until Nasser has unmistakably unveiled his intentions. But this was the argument which prevailed in 1936 and which we both rejected in 1948 [at the time of the Berlin Blockade].[29]

Analogies from the 1930s appear to have been influential even in recent situations. President Reagan, for example, employed analogies from the 1930s when, in deciding to strike Libyan facilities in April 1986, he apparently saw a similarity between western failure to confront Muammar Qaddafi, who had been linked to several terrorist acts in Europe, and the failure in the 1930s to confront Hitler. "Europeans who remember history,"

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[28]Kegley and Wittkopf, American Foreign Policy, pp. 544-555. See also May, "Lessons" of the Past, 19-51.

[29]Anthony Eden, Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), pp. 517-21.

he observed following the raid, "understand better than most that there is no security, no safety, in the appeasement of evil."[30]

Lessons drawn from the 1930s, as well as from numerous post-World War II events, also played a part in the deliberations over U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Indeed, those deliberations were notable for their frequent references to historical precedents. During the internal debates waged within the Kennedy and Johnson administrations over the U.S. role in Vietnam, the participants drew on perceived lessons derived from a number of traumatic past events (all of which had occurred during the participants' lifetimes), among them: the 'loss' of China; the Munich analogy; the Korean War; the British experience in Malaya; Ramon Magsaysay's campaign against Philippine insurgents in the 1950s; the French defeat in Vietnam; and Communist behavior in the Quemoy-Matsu, Berlin, and Cuban crises.[31]

Interestingly, the fears of another ground war in Asia--

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[30]"Transcript of Address by Reagan on Libya," New York Times, 15 April 1986, p. A10. Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, then the chief U.S. delegate to the United Nations, also employed the Munich analogy in generating support for the Contras in 1985. In criticizing members of Congress who opposed President Reagan's request for aid to the Contras, Dr. Kirkpatrick asserted that in discussing U.S. policy and Nicaragua "it's not Vietnam that's the appropriate analogy; it's Munich." See Shirley Christian, "Nicaragua Week in the Capital," New York Times, 19 April 1985, p. A18.

[31]May, "Lessons" of the Past, pp. 87-121; Neustadt and May, Thinking in Time, pp. 75-90; Richard E. Neustadt, "Americanizing the Vietnam War," Kennedy School of Government Case C15-80-271, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1983); Kegley and Wittkopf, American Foreign Policy, pp. 544-545; and Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 164-170.

fears that had sprung from the Korean War experience -- were allayed during the Kennedy years. Analogies from experiences elsewhere in Asia -- analogies that argued in favor of U.S. military action in Vietnam -- seemed more applicable in the early 1960s.[32] The defeat of communist-led insurgents in the Philippines and Malaya, for example, was taken by American officials to show that a specialized effort of smaller size than that of the Korean War could yield success in Vietnam.[33]

The lessons of the "loss" of China also weighed on the White House in the early 1960s. As Ernest May has explained:

> If leaders of the Kennedy administration viewed Vietnam...as analogous to Malaya and the Philippines, they saw it as symbolically akin to China. They remembered Republican charges that the Democrats had "lost" China as having harmed their party for a decade.[34]

Finally, many in the administration saw communist subversion in South Vietnam as part of a communist master plan for global domination. For these officials, Vietnam was another battleground of the Cold War struggle between the Soviet Union

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[32] Recollections of Korea fuelled doubt in the early 1960s, but, paradoxically, also encouraged boldness. Many in the Kennedy administration admired Truman's 1950 decision to intervene in Korea in order to protect the integrity of other nations. "They wanted," Ernest May contends, "to act in Vietnam in keeping with Truman's example." See "Lessons" of the Past, pp. 106-110; and Neustadt and May, Thinking in Time, p. 87.

[33] May, "Lessons" of the Past, pp. 97-98. May cites illustrative memoranda by Secretary of Defense McNamara and Secretary of State Rusk in The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, pp. 305, 650. See also Arthur Schlesinger, A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), pp. 540-541.

[34] May, "Lessons" of the Past, p. 99.

and the United States. Their conclusion was that communist aggression in South Vietnam had to be resisted just as it had in Berlin, during the Quemoy-Matsu crisis, in the Belgian Congo, and even in Greece in 1947.

In considering the commitment to Vietnam of U.S. ground troops in 1965, President Johnson showed that he too was prone to reasoning by analogy. His speeches justifying the decisions of 1965 were filled with references to the period leading up to World War II and the Cold War. The defeat of South Vietnam, he said at a press conference in 1965, "would encourage and spur on those who seek to conquer all free nations within their reach...This is the clearest lesson of our time. From Munich until today we have learned that to yield to aggression brings only greater threats."[35]

But President Johnson also apparently was concerned with troubling parallels between U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the disastrous French involvement there a decade earlier. Ambassador Maxwell Taylor shared some of these concerns, warning in a February 1965 cable that:

> White-faced soldier armed, equipped and trained as he is [sic] not suitable guerrilla fighter for Asian forests and jungles. French tried to adapt their forces to this mission and failed; I doubt that U.S. forces could do much better.[36]

President Johnson's National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy

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[35]Quoted in May, "Lessons" of the Past, p. 114.

[36]Quoted in May, "Lessons" of the Past, p. 116, from the Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. III, p. 419.

sought to allay concerns that derived from the French experience. In a June 1965 memorandum for the President, Bundy enumerated numerous political and military differences between the French and American situations. His conclusion was that "despite superficial similarities, the situation faced by France in Vietnam in 1954 is not fundamentally analogous to that faced by the U.S. in Vietnam in 1965."[37] His views were widely shared by administration policy-makers, who also dismissed such comparisons. Many of these officials agreed with the reasoning of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had noted earlier that, after all, "The French also tried to build the Panama Canal."[38]

Experiences from the recent past also were very influential in the Johnson administration's decision-making during the Dominican Republic crisis of 1965. The administration's "preoccupation with avoiding a 'second Cuba'...structured the way American policy-makers looked at the Dominican Republic," Abraham Lowenthal has contended. The experience with Cuba and the "penchant" in the White House "for historical analogies," he observed, influenced what administration officials "noted and

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[37]McGeorge Bundy, "France in Vietnam, 1954, and the U.S. in Vietnam, 1965 -- A Useful Analogy," p. 8 (Memorandum for the President, dated 30 June 1965, document #11 in a collection by the Kennedy School of Government titled "Vietnam Documents," C-14-80-271D). See also the discussion of the events surrounding this memorandum in Neustadt and May, Thinking in Time, pp. 75-90.
One cannot argue with the analysis in Bundy's memorandum; he was correct -- the situations were different. He would have found the similarities much more troubling, however, had he done a similar comparison based on U.S. involvement in Vietnam in 1968.

[38]Quoted in Neustadt and May, Thinking in Time, p. 86, from The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. III, p. 625.

what they regarded as significant." An "insistent focus on the 'Castro-Communist' threat" was sharply evident.[39] Fear of another Castro in the Caribbean "strongly shaped the perceptions and judgments of American policymakers," and eventually led to intervention with American troops.[40]

The influence of lessons of the past has not, of course, been limited to western statesmen; the past has influenced leaders on the other side of the iron curtain as well. Moscow's handling of Nicaragua's ideological status in the early 1980s, Morris Rothenberg contends, reflected the impact of both the Cuban experience and what the Kremlin viewed as the "lessons of Chile." Soviet leaders sought to slow the pace of Nicaragua's identification with the "socialist community" in order to downplay Nicaragua's transformation into a socialist state. Soviet commentaries ignored statements by Sandinista leaders proclaiming their adherence to Marxist-Leninism. Nowhere did Soviet writers suggest that Nicaragua was aspiring to build a socialist society. Soviet journals and the May Day slogans reported in Pravda in 1982, in fact, referred to Nicaragua as a "people's democracy." Soviet leaders advised the Sandinista regime not to force the pace of its recognition as Marxist-Leninist, as Castro had been able to do.

The Soviet Union, moreover, wanted the Sandinistas to avoid

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[39]Abraham F. Lowenthal, The Dominican Intervention (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 153-154.

[40]George, Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice, p. 43.

what Soviet analysts identified as the major mistakes that led to the downfall of Allende in Chile: first, Allende's antagonism of the middle classes and large sectors of the business community; second, his failure to secure control of the armed forces; and third, his inability to establish control over the main levers of political power and to create instruments for mass mobilization. Based on Allende's experience, Soviet Latin American analysts argued that the key to realization of socialist economic reforms lay not in swift adoption of reforms, but rather in consolidation of political power in order to guarantee the "irreversibility of revolutionary gains." The Soviets believe that the Sandinistas have, in fact, largely avoided the mistakes of Allende.[41] The lessons gleaned from the past not only influenced Soviet policy, they may have helped it succeed.

Summing Up

Four points should emerge from this chapter. FIrst, perceptions of the past often influence the way decision-makers think and thus the policies they adopt.

Second, past events experienced first hand, especially during an individual's impressionable years, tend to be particularly influential -- the more so if they were very traumatic and no competing analogies emerge.

Third, the reliance on lessons of the past tends to be

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[41]Morris Rothenberg, "Latin America in Soviet Eyes," Problems of Communism, Vol. 32, No. 5 (September-October 1983), pp. 7-9.

particularly marked during crises. The stress and imperfect information associated with crisis decision-making frequently lead policy-makers to rely on the past to illuminate the present.

Finally, organizations, like individuals, also can take lessons from certain events. These lessons affect organizational thinking, procedures, and structure. In fact, the institutionalization of the "collective wisdom" frequently leads individuals within the organization to internalize those lessons -- even when the individuals did not experience the event first hand.

Based on these points, one would expect military leaders and military organizations to be particularly influenced by perceived lessons derived from recent wars. That has, in fact, been the case. As will be shown in the following chapters, Korea and Vietnam have influenced the thinking of the military leaders that experienced them. The lessons derived from those wars-- particularly those taken from Vietnam -- have had a discernable impact on military thinking about the use of force.

Chapter III

KOREA, THE "NEVER AGAIN" CLUB, AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

> Never, never again should we be mousetrapped into fighting another defensive ground war on [the Korean] peninsula. Never should we commit numerically inferior American troops...against numerically superior forces...unless we are prepared to win.
>
> General Mark W. Clark[1]

> If we cannot afford to fight limited wars then we cannot afford to survive, for that is the kind of war we will be confronted with. That is the only kind of war we can afford to fight.
>
> Lieutenant General James M. Gavin[2]

> Indochina is devoid of decisive military objectives and the allocation of more than token U.S. armed forces in Indochina would be a serious diversion of limited U.S. capabilities.
>
> The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1954[3]

> The immediate strategic importance of southeast Asia lies in the political value that can accrue to the Free World through a successful stand in that area...On the negative side, a United States political and/or military withdrawal...would have an adverse psychological impact of even greater proportion, and one from which recovery would be both difficult and costly.
>
> The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1962[4]

The cases to be examined presently will provide considerable evidence of the American military's cautious approach to the use of force in the post-Vietnam era. Contrary to stereotypes of the military as eager to employ American troops abroad, those case studies will show that the military of the 1970s and 1980s have

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[1]General Mark W. Clark (USA, Ret.), From the Danube to the Yalu (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), p. 328.

[2]Lieutenant General James M. Gavin (USA, Ret.), War and Peace in the Space Age (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 124.

[3]The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, p. 511.

[4]Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, p. 663.

been a conservative, at times even a constraining influence on American foreign policy. In fact, in the wake of Vietnam a number of senior officers have argued that U.S. troops should not be committed to combat unless certain conditions obtain. Clear military objectives must be established, public backing should be relatively assured, and commanders should be given the freedom and forces necessary to accomplish their mission before the public tires of American involvement. When it comes to the use of force, contemporary military thinking holds, the United States should either bite the bullet or duck, but not nibble.

This current "all or nothing," "never again" approach to the use of force is not, however, a new phenomenon. Such sentiments undoubtedly are more universally shared now than before America's frustrating experience in Southeast Asia. But what Samuel Huntington termed the military's "pacifist attitude" has been characteristic of earlier episodes in American history as well.[5] The 1954 deliberations over intervention in Indochina and the early 1960s debates over commitment of U.S. troops in Laos and Vietnam show that the impact of the Korean War was, to some degree at least, a precursor of the influence of Vietnam on military thinking about the use of force.

Examination of the influence of Korea thus can serve three purposes for one evaluating the impact of Vietnam on military

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[5]Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 69. For the most comprehensive study of military views on the use of force between 1945 and 1973, see Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

thinking about the use of force. First, study of the influence of Korea helps keep the impact of Vietnam in perspective. Second, it can provide additional evidence showing that lessons derived from history do influence American military leaders. And third, it can offer insights as to what factors undermine the influence of such lessons of history.

The Korean War Experience

The Korean War was very frustrating for America's military leaders. It was the first "limited war" fought by the United States in modern times, the first conflict limited in scope, objectives, and means employed.[6] That it came just five years after American and allied forces won total victory in the Second World War added to the military leadership's frustration; many senior officers found it unsettling not to gain a similar outcome in a war waged against what General Mark Clark later termed the "enemy's second team."[7] United States forces were "fought to a standstill by Asians," Roger Hilsman later wrote, "and by Asians whose arms and equipment were somewhat primitive by American standards."[8] Fighting for a draw, as many of the combat

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[6]General J. Lawton Collins (USA, Ret.), War in Peacetime (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1969), p. 382.

A shortened version of the section on the 1954 decisions will be published as "Korea, the 'Never Again Club,' and Indochina," in a forthcoming issue of Parameters.

[7]Clark, From the Danube to the Yalu, p. 328.

[8]Roger Hilsman, To Move A Nation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967), p. 128.

commanders saw their mission in Korea, was not what they were accustomed to.

Although both Democratic and Republican administrations viewed limitations on the use of force as necessary to confine the conflict and prevent it from engulfing the whole world, the restrictions on the conduct of the war were difficult for many of the senior military to accept -- particularly for those actually fighting in Korea. Commanders in Korea were frustrated by restrictions against bombing bases, airfields, and other installations in Manchuria and China. American aircraft, for example, were allowed to bomb only the southern half of the bridges over the Yalu, and were not permitted "hot pursuit" into Manchuria after enemy planes based there. Proposals by General Douglas MacArthur, the first supreme commander of allied forces, for a blockade of China and bombing of its industrial capacity to wage war were also disapproved.[9]

To the military, these limitations were occasionally as much sources of rationalization as they were bases for legitimate frustration. The restrictions were sometimes used as convenient explanations for lack of battlefield successes. Nonetheless, the field commanders were bitter at having imposed on them what General MacArthur termed "an enormous handicap, without precedent

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[9]Richard H. Rovere and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The General and the President (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1951), pp. 153-159.

in military history."[10] Those in the field came to feel that even the Joint Chiefs lacked the will to win. MacArthur, in particular, believed that Washington was denying him the tools to finish the job -- that he had been relegated to a "No-Man's Land of indecision."[11]

MacArthur was not alone; many military officers agreed with him. With the sole exception of General Ridgway, each of the other generals who directed the Korean War echoed MacArthur's calls for a military victory.[12]

Especially in retrospect, the Korean War came to be regarded by the military as precisely the type of costly and indecisive no-win conflict to be avoided in the future. The memoirs of the military leaders of that era reveal the frustration and

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[10] Rovere and Schlesinger, The General and the President, p. 153. See also Allen Guttman, ed., Korea and the Theory of Limited War (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1967); and The Military Situation in the Far East: Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 82d Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1951).

[11] William Manchester, American Caesar (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), p. 617; John W. Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1959), pp. 197-205; General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Reminiscences (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 365, 379.

[12] Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy, p. 275. In addition to the memoirs of General Clark and the sources cited in note 9, see also the descriptively titled article that summarized General Clark's testimony before a Senate Subcommittee, "You Can't Win if Diplomats Interfere," U.S. News & World Report, 20 August 1954, pp. 75-81; General James A. Van Fleet (USA, Ret.), "The Truth About Korea," Readers Digest, July 1953, pp. 1-16; the synopsis of General Van Fleet's Senate testimony, "Van Fleet Tells Story of Korea," U.S. News & World Report, 13 March 1953, pp. 100-107; and Robert Murphy, Diplomat Among Warriors, (New York: Pyramid Books, 1965), pp. 394-398.

bitterness created by the Korean War experience. General Mark Clark, for example, later wrote of his "personal disappointment that [the United States] did not find it expedient to whip the Communists thoroughly in our first shooting war with them"--although he was quick to acknowledge "the worldwide factors which led Eisenhower to...seek an armistice."[13] Air Force General Nathan Twining asserted that Korea showed that "America had become a 'paper tiger'."[14] Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, Chief of the United Nations Command Delegation to the Korean Armistice Commission, wrote that the limitations imposed on allied military operations encouraged the adversary to keep fighting, weakened support for the war effort at home, and ultimately prolonged the

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[13]Clark, From the Danube to the Yalu, p. 317.

[14]General Nathan F. Twining (USAF, Ret.), Neither Liberty Nor Safety (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), p. 56. For similar views, see General Thomas S. Power (USAF, Ret.), Design for Survival (New York: Coward-McCann, 1964), pp. 217-236. It should be noted, of course, that with some qualifications several leaders accepted the concept of limitations on the conduct of war. Among them were then Army Chief of Staff General J. Lawton Collins, General Maxwell Taylor (Army Chief of Staff from 1955-1959), and Lieutenant General James M. Gavin. See Collins, War in Peacetime, pp. 383-384; General Maxwell D. Taylor (USA, Ret.), The Uncertain Trumpet (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), pp. 23-24, and Swords and Plowshares (New York: Norton, 1972), pp. 134-135; and Gavin, War and Peace in the Space Age, pp. 121-129. General Gavin, however, advised against limited American involvement in Indochina in 1954, and in 1961 argued strongly against committing U.S. troops to Laos. See his Crisis Now (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 39-67. Furthermore, General Collins later criticized what he termed America's "aimless drift into deep involvement in Vietnam." See his War in Peacetime, p. 393.

conflict.[15]

Also unsettling for American military leaders -- who after the Second World War were accustomed to broad domestic support-- was the gradual erosion of public backing as the war dragged on and casualties mounted. Although few citizens had questioned the courageousness of President Truman's decision to support South Korea after it was flagrantly invaded by North Korea in June 1950, the inconclusiveness of American involvement took its toll on popular support. The fighting dragged on; eventually, over 54,000 Americans were killed, while another 100,000 were wounded or taken prisoner.[16]

Meanwhile, the public became divided over the tactics of the war. Many citizens clamored for bombing or blockading China in spite of the Truman administration's estimate that such actions could bring war with the Soviet Union. Others, as historian Ernest May explained, "evidenced impatience with continuing casualty reports and economic controls and appeared willing to see the war ended on almost any terms."[17] Public approval of

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[15] See Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy (USN, Ret.), How Communists Negotiate (New York: MacMillan, 1955); and Negotiating While Fighting: The Diary of Admiral C. Turner Joy at the Korean Armistice Conference, ed. by Allan E. Goodman (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978).

[16] Ernest May, "Lessons" of the Past (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 95. For comparison, over 58,000 Americans were killed in Vietnam.

[17] May, "Lessons" of the Past, pp. 95-96. For an excellent examination of public opinion on the war in Korea (as well as World War II and Vietnam), see John E. Mueller, War, Presidents and Public Opinion (New York: John Wiley, 1973).

President Truman, as measured by Gallup Polls, fell to as low as 23 percent in 1951.[18] General Eisenhower's victory in the presidential election of 1952 was in no small measure a result of the public perception that he would be better able to bring peace to Korea than would his Democratic opponent Adlai Stevenson. Thus the actual armistice in 1953, even though it included some concessions to the Communists, was greeted with relieved approval throughout the United States.[19] Thus it was altogether appropriate for Robert Osgood to write in 1957 that the United States had "never fought a war more unpopular than the Korean War."[20]

The Lessons of Korea and the "Never Again" Club

The Korean War experience held different lessons for different military figures. Some -- termed "absolutists" by Richard Betts -- felt that Korea showed the harmful effects of limitations on the conduct of war. Others -- whom Betts called "pragmatists" -- believed that Korea showed the necessity for such limitations.[21] For several reasons, however, absolutists

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[18]Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1960), p. 96. Truman's low standing with the public was, of course, also a result of his dismissing General MacArthur.

[19]May, "Lessons" of the Past, p. 96.

[20]Robert E. Osgood, Limited War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 189.

[21]Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 167. The terms "absolutist" and "pragmatist" were originally introduced by Morris Janowitz in The Professional Soldier (New

and pragmatists alike harbored considerable sentiment against involvement in another _limited_ land war in Asia.

The most important reason behind this common conclusion was the perception of the senior military, whether of the absolutist or pragmatist persuasion, that the American people had little stomach for another prolonged, limited war. This perception reinforced the absolutist belief in the necessity for quick, decisive military actions and was to lead to "All or Nothing" type advice during future deliberations over intervention in Asia. In any case, involvement in a limited land war was by definition alien to those of the absolutist persuasion.

The pragmatists, on the other hand, accepted the necessity for limitations on the use of force. They worried, however, that cuts in America's conventional forces (particularly in ground forces) resulting from the Eisenhower administration's policy of massive retaliation, with its emphasis on nuclear weapons, had left the military ill-suited for fighting limited wars in rugged, tropical terrain. Given the size and structure of U.S. forces, therefore, the pragmatists viewed commitment of American units to a limited land conflict in Asia as a diversion of relatively scarce conventional reserves from preparation for combat in more important theaters, most specifically Europe. Commitments in Asia were possible, they reasoned, only if there was a dramatic increase in the size of U.S. ground forces, and some restructuring to suit them to the type of conflict anticipated.

York: Free Press, 1960), pp. 264-321.

But even were such changes forthcoming, the pragmatists worried about public support for such an enterprise. As General Maxwell Taylor later wrote, Korea had "provided renewed evidence of our need for a crusading motivation or an inspiring slogan to offset the national urge to get an unpleasant job over quickly and to return to normalcy."[22]

Opposition to involvement in another limited land war in Asia thus made "bedfellows of both the pragmatists and absolutists."[23] Resistance to limited involvement was most marked, however, among the Army generals who served as commanders in Korea, and who subsequently rose to dominate the Army leadership. These senior officers were said to be members of what journalists called the "Never Again" club, an "organization" that apparently drew its name from General Clark's warning in 1954 that "never again should we be mousetrapped into fighting another defensive war on [the Korean] peninsula."[24] Subsequently this admonition was widened to apply to Southeast Asia as well; thus the "charter" of the Never Again Club held that the United

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[22]Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, pp. 156-157. General Taylor was probably the most influential member of the "pragmatist" school.

[23]Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 167.

[24]Clark, From the Danube to the Yalu, p. 328. It is interesting to note that few -- if any -- Army leaders acknowledged their "membership" in the Never Again Club. As Richard Betts found, each of the five former Army leaders from that period whom he interviewed "rejected the designation of the Never Again Club, which was thrust upon them by journalists in the 1950s and 1960s, but under questioning four revealed the same views popularly associated with that designation." Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 266, endnote 9.

States should not intervene in that region unless America was prepared to fight an all-out war, with the level of national commitment and mobilization necessary to accomplish the mission before public support eroded.[25]

Indochina I -- Dienbienphu

The first evidence of the extent to which the never again sentiment held sway surfaced when military leaders--particularly Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway -- vigorously opposed limited intervention to save the beleaguered French garrison at Dienbienphu in the spring of 1954. Ridgway's opposition was only one of several factors that resulted in American inaction; others included lack of Congressional support for unilateral American intervention, the unwillingness of the British to join the U.S. in intervention, and lack of consensus among other administration officials. Nonetheless, the Army position Ridgway submitted to the National Security Council impressed President Eisenhower and contributed to the procrastination and indecision that eventually proved decisive when Dienbienphu fell before the American response was determined.[26]

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[25]Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 167. See also the chapter on the Never Again Club in Joseph Kraft, Profiles in Power: A Washington Insight (New York: New American Library, 1966 ed.), pp. 139-146.

[26]Ernest R. May, ed., The Ultimate Decision: The President as Commander-in-Chief (New York: Braziller, 1960), pp. 220-221. The best analysis of the decision-making during the Dienbienphu crisis is George C. Herring and Richard H. Immerman, "Eisenhower,

The 1954 discussions over intervention in Indochina came after several years of growing U.S. support for the French in Indochina -- a region that was viewed as critical to American security interests in the Far East.[27] It was not until the Spring of 1954, however, that the United States faced the prospect of direct military intervention. As late as mid-March 1954, the fear was not that the French fortress at Dienbienphu would fall, but that French war weariness would result in surrender at an upcoming East-West conference in Geneva called to consider Far Eastern problems. If the French accepted a settlement viewed as unsatisfactory, Eisenhower Administration officials feared, the United States might have to arrange with

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Dulles, and Dienbienphu: 'The Day We Didn't Go to War' Revisited," The Journal of American History, Vol. 71, No. 2 (September 1984), pp. 343-363; See also: Chalmers M. Roberts, "The Day We Didn't Go to War," in Vietnam: History, Documents and Opinions on a Major World Crisis, ed. by Marvin E. Gettleman (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett, 1965), pp. 96-105; The Pentagon Papers, Senator Gravel Edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Vol. 1; The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam: History of the Indochina Incident, 1940-1954 (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 20 August 1971, declassified in 1981), pp. 345-396; Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954, Volume XIII, Indochina, Parts 1 and 2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982); Admiral Arthur W. Radford, From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: The Memoirs of Admiral Arthur W. Radford, ed. by Stephen Jurika, Jr. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), pp. 339-432; General Matthew B. Ridgway (USA, Ret.), Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), pp. 274-280; Anthony Eden, Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960).

[27]See Herring and Immerman, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu," pp. 343-363; and Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate For Change (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 332-333. A concise compilation of U.S. policy statements on Dienbienphu is contained in "Words That Brought A Crisis," U.S. News & World Report, 14 May 1954, pp. 74-78.

other nations to continue the war without France.[28]

While Eisenhower and his advisers pondered the long-range possibility of American intervention in Indochina, however, Vietminh General Giap, in historian George Herring's words, "tightened the noose around Dienbienphu." Attacking with far more artillery than French commanders thought the Communists had in Indochina, Vietminh forces had by March 17 captured two key French outposts and threatened the isolated fortress' airfield. The prospect of a French defeat loomed large and raised the issue of immediate American intervention.[29]

The visit to Washington of General Paul Ely, French Chief of Staff, brought matters to a head. Invited by Admiral Arthur Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Ely arrived on March 20, 1954 -- his visit given new impetus by the turn of events at Dienbienphu. Ely clearly was apprehensive about the outcome at Dienbienphu, and admitted that a defeat there would make it difficult for France to hold out at the upcoming Geneva Conference for terms acceptable to the United States. The dire situation at Dienbienphu enabled him to obtain emergency American supply of airplanes, small naval craft, arms, ammunition,

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[28] The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, pp. 88-92, pp. 448-454; and George C. Herring, America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1979), p. 28.

[29] "Did U.S. Almost Get Into War?" U.S. News & World Report, 18 June 1954, p. 35; Herring, America's Longest War, p. 29; Herring and Immerman, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu," p. 346.

parachutes, and other equipment.[30]

General Ely was worried not just about Dienbienphu, however, but about the prospect of Communist Chinese intervention in Indochina as well. He had been instructed to determine how the United States would respond if the Chinese sent jet fighters into Indochina. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles avoided a definitive response; the American reaction, he said, would depend on the circumstances, and would also require French accession to greater partnership than had existed to date.[31]

Admiral Radford, who asked General Ely to remain in Washington for an additional day, was more encouraging about the prospect of American intervention if requested by the French. He and General Ely discussed the possibility of a massive American air strike to relieve the siege of Dienbienphu. Code named VULTURE, the plan called for as many as 300 aircraft, launched from U.S. aircraft carriers and bases in the Philippines, to

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[30]An excellent description of the Ely visit, declassified in 1981, is contained in The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam: History of the Indochina Incident, 1940-1954 (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 20 August 1971, declassified in 1981), pp. 369-373a. See also Radford, From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: The Memoirs of Admiral W. Radford, pp. 391-397; and the memoranda by Admiral Radford on the Ely visit in The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, pp. 455-460.

[31]Chronology of Actions on the Subject of Indochina Prior to the Geneva Meeting on Korea and Indochina in the Spring of 1954, Box 82, John Foster Dulles Papers, Seely Mudd Library, Princeton University; History of the Indochina Incident, p. 371; Herring and Immerman, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu," p. 347; Radford, From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam, p. 393; and Louis L. Gerson, John Foster Dulles, Vol. XVII: American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy (New York: Cooper Square, 1967), p. 157.

strike Vietminh positions around Dienbienphu. Whether or not Admiral Radford intended him to, General Ely left Washington "feeling that a request from the French for American intervention would receive a prompt and affirmative reply."[32]

The talks with General Ely strengthened Admiral Radford's conviction that the United States was facing a potentially critical situation. He informed President Eisenhower of his fear that events in Indochina might so deteriorate as to "lead to the loss of all [Southeast] Asia to Communist domination." The United States must be prepared, he told the President, to react "promptly and in force, possibly to a frantic...request by the French for U.S. intervention."[33]

The service chiefs, particularly General Ridgway, were more cautious than Admiral Radford. "They remembered the bitter and protracted experience in Korea," notes the New York Times edition of the Pentagon Papers, "and were not eager to repeat it."[34] Radford's plan for American air strikes generated little support among the Joint Chiefs. Only Air Force Chief of Staff Nathan

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[32]Herring and Immerman provide a carefully documented account of the impressions that Admiral Radford and General Ely took from their meetings; see their "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu," footnote 14, pp. 347-348. See also History of the Indochina Incident, p. 373a. Radford discusses what he termed Ely's "serious misunderstandings" of his position in From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam, pp. 392-395, 400-401.

[33]History of the Indochina Incident, p. 373a; Radford, From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam, p. 397; The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, pp. 460-461.

[34]The Pentagon Papers, New York Times edition (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 11.

Twining supported Radford (and he opposed more than a single air strike and insisted on conditions the French were unlikely to accept), while the "other chiefs warned that air intervention at Dienbienphu would not decisively affect the outcome of the war and questioned whether the limited tactical gains would be worth the risks of direct involvement." Chief of Naval Operations Robert Carney equivocated, while Marine Corps Commandant Lemuel Shepherd "dismissed VULTURE as an 'unprofitable adventure' that might damage United States prestige in a way that could only be recouped by intervention with ground forces."[35]

Army Chief of Staff Ridgway was the most direct in his opposition, answering a request by Admiral Radford for his views on the desirability of recommending U.S. air support for the French defense of Dienbienphu with an "emphatic and immediate 'No.'"[36] Admiral Radford's plan, Ridgway later wrote, had an "ominous ring;" it was "that same old delusive idea... -- that we could do things the cheap and easy way, by going into Indo-China with air and naval forces alone." Ridgway felt sure "that if we committed air and naval power...we would have to

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[35]Herring and Immerman, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu," p. 348 and footnote 16; Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p.21; Eisenhower, Mandate For Change, p. 354; the service chiefs' views can be found in declassified memoranda (dated 2 April 1954) in the Ridgway Papers (Box 30) at the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

[36]Ridgway memorandum dated 021600 April 1954, Box 30, Ridgway Papers.

follow...immediately with ground forces in support."[37] This echoed the conviction advanced several months previously, in January 1954, by Vice Admiral A. C. David, Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, who wrote:

> Involvement of U.S. forces in the Indochina war should be avoided at all practical costs. If, then, National Policy determines no other alternative, the U.S. should not be self-duped into believing the possibility of partial involvement -- such as "Naval and Air units only." One cannot go over Niagara Falls in a barrel slightly.[38]

General Ridgway also believed that none of those advocating intervention had an accurate idea what such an operation would cost America in "blood and money and national effort." He felt it essential that the decision-makers be fully aware of the factors involved, and thus sent to Indochina a team of Army experts in every field of military operations. Their mission, Ridgway later wrote, was to "get the answers to a thousand questions that those who had so blithely recommended that we go to war there had never taken the trouble to ask."[39]

Contrary to what many discussions of Dienbienphu imply, however, the Army team's report was not submitted until two months _after_ Dienbienphu fell.[40] Nonetheless an Army position

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[37]Ridgway, _Soldier_, p. 276.

[38]_The Pentagon Papers_, Gravel edition, Vol. I, p. 89.

[39]Ridgway, _Soldier_, p. 276.

[40]Even General Ridgway's memoirs seem to imply, certainly unintentionally, that the Army team's report had an impact on the decision over intervention to save Dienbienphu (_Soldier_, pp. 276-

paper submitted to the National Security Council in the first week of April and reproduced in The Pentagon Papers conveyed the essence of Ridgway's concerns and must have influenced the deliberations over intervention. It argued:

> 1. U.S. intervention with combat forces in Indochina is not militarily desirable...

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278). Except for Ronald H. Spector's Advice and Support: The Early Years (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1983), p. 213, every other source that mentions the dispatch of the team also implies that its report influenced Ridgway's position on U.S. intervention to save Dienbienphu, or at least on the later issue of intervention to shore up the French position in Indochina. David Halberstam, in The Best and the Brightest (New York: Random House, 1969), states, for example, that "On May 11 Ridgway briefed the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of Defense on his survey team's report." Even books published after the declassification of vast numbers of documents in the early 1980s imply that the team's report influence Ridgway's advice in May and June. See, for example, John Prados, The Sky Would Fall (New York: The Dial Press, 1983), p. 188.

According to the Pentagon Papers (Gravel edition, Vol. I, p. 127), however, the Army team spent the period 31 May to 22 June "in the field" -- thus not even beginning its mission until three weeks after the fall of Dienbienphu. The team's report was submitted to General Ridgway on 12 July 1954 and therefore could not have influenced the debate over intervention during the siege of Dienbienphu. (A copy of the report, still classified, is in the National Archives, File CCS092 Asia (6-25-48), bulky package 13.) In a telephone conversation on 1 August 1986, General Ridgway told me that he did not receive any interim report from the team chief, Colonel David W. Heiman, prior to the submission of the report on 12 July.

Even without that report, however, it is clear that Ridgway and Secretary of the Army Robert T. Stevens were well aware of the logistical obstacles to fighting in Indochina and did convey those concerns to the Secretary of Defense and President. Two 1953 studies by the Plans Division, G-3, Army Staff, and a March 1954 memorandum by Major General James Gavin (the Assistant Chief of Staff G-3) may have been the basis for Ridgway's judgments and for the position paper he submitted in early April 1954. In addition to the Army position paper discussed in coming pages, see Stevens' 19 May 1954 memorandum for the Secretary of Defense in The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, pp. 508-509; Spector, Advice and Support, pp. 195, 201-202; and the 3-page Gavin Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, Army (G-3 091 Indochina TS) in the Ridgway Papers.

2. A military victory in Indochina cannot be assured by U.S. intervention with air and naval forces alone.

3. The use of atomic weapons in Indochina would not reduce the number of ground forces required to achieve a military victory in Indochina.

4. Seven U.S. divisions or their equivalent, with appropriate naval and air support, would be required to win a victory in Indochina if the French withdraw and the Chinese Communists do not intervene...

5. The equivalent of 12 U.S. divisions would be required to win a victory in Indochina, if the French withdraw and the Chinese Communists intervene.

6. The equivalent of 7 U.S. divisions would be required to win a victory in Indochina if the French remain and the Chinese Communists intervene.

7. Requirements for air and naval support for ground force operations are:
a. Five hundred fighter-bomber sorties per day exclusive of interdiction and counter-air operations.
b. An airlift capability of one division drop.
c. A division amphibious lift.

8. Two U.S. divisions can be placed in Indochina in 30 days, and an additional 5 divisions in the following 120 days. This could be accomplished without reducing U.S. ground strength in the Far East to an unacceptable degree, but the U.S. ability to meet its NATO commitment would be seriously affected for a considerable period. The amount of time required to place 12 divisions in Indochina would depend upon the industrial and personnel mobilization measures taken by the government...[41]

The Army position clearly challenged -- and probably demolished -- the notion that U.S. air and naval action alone could turn the tide. Ground forces inevitably would be required

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[41]The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, pp. 92-93, 471-472. See also "What Ridgway Told Ike," U.S. News & World Report, 25 June 1954, pp. 30-32; and the undated memorandum by Major General James M. Gavin for General Ridgway, in the Ridgway Papers, Box 30.

if air and sea forces were used. Atomic bombs alone would not solve the problem. The number of ground forces needed would be very large, probably necessitating a draft and industrial mobilization, and undoubtedly degrading America's ability to meet its NATO commitment. Logistical problems would be immense; the logistical infrastructure in Indochina was virtually nonexistent, and was certainly inadequate to support the large-scale conventional military operations envisioned. The nearest bases would be 1,000 miles away in the Philippines and 2,500 miles away in Japan. Popular support within Indochina for U.S. intervention appeared very questionable, and allied support was also much in doubt. In short, as a U.S. News & World Report article noted two months later, "top Army planners" were convinced that if the "U.S. [became] involved in war in Indo-China, it [would] find itself in a far bigger, tougher fight than it ever faced in Korea."[42].

Such concerns were shared -- to varying degrees -- by leaders of the other services as well; with the exception of Admiral Radford, the senior military held grave reservations about intervention in Indochina. They were not opposed to intervention per se; rather they sought to avoid *limited*

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[42]"What Ridgway Told Ike," pp. 30-32, contains a remarkably detailed press description of the Army position on intervention in Indochina. General Ridgway later told Colonel Frank Hannon, then a History Professor at the U.S. Military Academy, that intervention in Indochina would require 500,000 troops for eight years, and even then success would not be guaranteed--a remarkably prescient observation given America's eventual experience in Vietnam.

intervention -- to avoid another Korea. Unless America was willing to intervene in sufficient scale to achieve success, and to attack Communist China, which General Ridgway termed the "immediate and major source of Viet Minh military power," most military leaders were opposed.[43]

It is difficult, of course, to judge the importance of military reservations, particularly those of General Ridgway and the Army, in President Eisenhower's eventual rejection of intervention.[44] Many other factors mitigated against American

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[43]Ridgway, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, 22 April 1954, Box 30, Ridgway Papers.

[44]In his memoirs, General Ridgway judged that the Army position "played a considerable, perhaps a decisive, part in persuading our government not to embark on that tragic adventure." Soldier, p. 277. He recently restated this view saying that "given General Eisenhower's appreciation of military factors, [the Army position] could have been a determining factor" (interview, 1 August 1986). Richard Betts shares this opinion (Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 21), and the extensive interviews he conducted in writing his study of decisions on the use of force from 1945-1973 give his judgment added weight (although his book was written prior to the declassification in the early 1980s of large numbers of relevant documents). William P. Bundy, in his own words "a back-bench participant at the time," wrote recently that Eisenhower -- while insisting on allied and Congressional support for any military action -- "perhaps more decisively, accepted the military judgment of General Ridgway that only ground action on a massive scale could secure the situation in a lasting way." Bundy's "hunch" is that "the President never really intended to act militarily, but did see the point of keeping the threat alive to give at least some bargaining leverage in the Geneva negotiations." See his "The Relative Importance of Force," in Colonel George K. Osborn III (USA) ed., Vietnam: Did It Make A Difference? (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming).

Joseph Kraft, on the other hand, wrote (without the benefit of the many recently declassified documents) that "General Ridgway's resistance was not decisive. The Navy and elements of the Air Force were ready to launch air strikes in Indochina, but when the British refused to underwrite that policy, this

action as well. One was the lack of Congressional enthusiasm for the Radford plan to use air and naval power. That plan received a lukewarm reception when Secretary Dulles and Admiral Radford presented it to eight key members of Congress on April 3. The Congressmen were opposed to the United States going it alone. They insisted that firm commitments of support from other nations be obtained. A resolution authorizing the President to commit American forces to the defense of Indochina would be forthcoming, they said, only if "satisfactory commitments" could be secured from Great Britain and other allies to support military intervention, and from France to "internationalize" the war and accelerate the move toward independence for Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Nor were the Congressional leaders optimistic about the outcome of air and naval action. "Once the flag is committed," they warned, "the use of land forces will surely

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country's civilian leadership backed away entirely from military intervention." See his Profiles in Power, p. 140. President Eisenhower barely mentioned the service chiefs' views on intervention in Mandate For Change (which devotes pages 332-356 to a discussion of the deliberations over Dienbienphu) but in his discussion of "might have beens" (p. 373), generally espoused the Ridgway views on the ineffectiveness of air strikes and on the potential necessity of attacking Chinese airfields in the event of Chinese air intervention.

Finally, Professor George Herring -- perhaps the leading scholar on American decision-making in the early Vietnam years-- contended in a 5 December 1985 speech at West Point that Ridgway's advice was not of crucial significance. He argued that the other factors noted here -- the lack of Congressional support and the failure to obtain allied support -- were more important in the eventual decision not to intervene.

follow."[45]

The eventual failure to secure allied support--particularly that of Great Britain -- was another crucial factor that stalled plans to use American military power to relieve Dienbienphu. Allied support was not only necessary in the eyes of Congress, but also came to be viewed as essential by President Eisenhower.[46] On April 4, the day after Dulles and Radford briefed Congressional leaders, Eisenhower ruled out unilateral U.S. intervention. American military involvement in Indochina could come, he decided, only upon the satisfaction of three

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[45]Herring, America's Longest War, p. 32; and Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Vol. XIII, Indochina (Washington: Government Printing Office, ?????), Part 2, pp. 1224-1225. See also Roberts, "The Day We Didn't Go to War," pp. 96-99; and "Chronology of Actions on the Subject of Indochina Prior to the Geneva Meeting," January 27, 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers, Box 82, Seely G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University. Members of Congress later "shot down" what some interpreted as a trial balloon floated on April 16 by Vice-President Nixon, who told a convention of newspaper editors he was in favor of "putting American boys" into Indochina to "avoid further Communist expansion in Asia." See Richard Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (New York: Warner Books, 1979), Vol. I, pp. 187-188; Eisenhower, Mandate For Change, p. 347; Robert J. Donovan, Eisenhower: The Inside Story (New York, Harper, 1956), p. 266; History of the Indochina Incident, p. 378; and Radford, From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam, p. 398.

[46]See the discussion of the United Action plan in Herring and Immerman, "Eisenhower, Dulles and Dienbienphu," pp. 350-362. See also Richard Nixon, RN, Vol. I, p. 189.

Some observers believe that Eisenhower used the requirement of allied support to "isolate Radford, Vice-President Nixon, and other advocates of unilateral intervention" and thus force them to reject the go-it-alone approach and search for allied and congressional support. See Leslie H. Gelb, with Richard K. Betts, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1979), p. 57; and David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (New York: Random House, 1971), pp. 140-144.

conditions: (1) formation of a coalition force with U.S. allies -- particularly the British Commonwealth -- to pursue "united action;" (2) declaration of French intent to accelerate independence of the Associated States (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia); and (3) Congressional approval of U.S. involvement.[47]

In the end it appears that the British played a central role. Despite three weeks of active promotion by President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles -- which included Eisenhower's famous domino speech and several trips by Dulles to London and Paris -- British Prime Minister Churchill rejected "united action" to save Dienbienphu. On April 27 he told the House of Commons that the British government was "not prepared to give any undertakings about United Kingdom military action in Indochina in advance of the results of Geneva."[48] Two days later, the National Security Council decided to "hold up for the time being any military action in Indo China" pending developments at

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[47]The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, pp. 94 and 101; Chronology of Actions on the Subject of Indochina Prior to the Geneva Meeting on Korea and Indochina in the Spring of 1954, Dulles Papers.

[48]The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, p. 105. For a British perspective on the American plan for united action in Indochina and an account of the Dulles consultations with the British Foreign Secretary, see Eden, Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, pp. 100-119. It appears that Secretary of State Dulles had anticipated the lack of UK support; the lack of UK support was an important factor that he cited in a 25 April telegram in which he concluded that "armed intervention" was "not warranted." Telegram from Dulles to the Acting Secretary of State, received in Washington 25 April 1954, 3:56 p.m., from Geneva, Dulles File, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

Geneva.[49] Although Dulles continued the effort to organize united action, the fall of Dienbienphu on May 7 closed the issue of saving the French fortress.

Indochina II

The fall of Dienbienphu on May 7 did not, however, mark the end of deliberations over American intervention in 1954. The April 26 opening of the Geneva conference on Indochina had reawakened U.S. fears that the French would use the conference as "a fig leaf of respectability" for their surrender of Indochina.[50] On May 7, following news that Dienbienphu had just fallen, President Eisenhower met with Secretary Dulles to again consider U.S. intervention. According to a memorandum by Robert Cutler, the President's executive assistant, Dulles and Eisenhower discussed how "the U.S. should (as a last act to save Indo-China) propose to France" that if certain conditions were met, the U.S. would "go to Congress for authority to intervene with combat forces." Dulles agreed to mention the subject to the French Ambassador, "perhaps making a more broad hint than heretofore."[51] The French received Dulles' communication and on

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[49]Quotation from the James Hagerty diary, April 29, 1954, in Herring, America's Longest War, p. 36. Robert J. Donovan reported also that by late April Admiral Radford had swung to the view that the battle lines around Dienbienphu had become so indistinguishable as to make an air strike ineffective. See Eisenhower: The Inside Story, p. 264.

[50]Herring, America's Longest War, p. 37.

[51]The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, pp. 502-503; and The Pentagon Papers, New York Times edition, p. 12.

May 10 the French Premier told the U.S. Ambassador in Paris that France needed American intervention to save Indochina. That evening Eisenhower discussed the French appeal with Secretary Dulles, Secretary of Defense Wilson, and Admiral Radford. During their meeting, the President directed Dulles to prepare an address that he could give to a joint session of Congress, requesting authority to commit American troops in Indochina. Additionally, he ordered further contingency planning.[52]

By mid-May, however, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had swung further toward the view that involvement in Indochina would divert forces earmarked for other, more important contingencies--although it is clear that their formal position represented the uneasy reconciliation of divergent beliefs. On May 26 they submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense that stated: "<u>Indochina is devoid of decisive military objectives and the allocation of more than token</u> U.S. armed forces <u>in Indochina would be a serious diversion</u> of limited U.S. capabilities."[53] While generally supportive of the idea of "air-naval support directed from outside Indochina," they cautioned against making a "substantial" air force commitment. The Chiefs also placed considerable emphasis on "an offensive to attack the source of

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[52]<u>The Pentagon Papers</u>, <u>New York Times</u> edition, p. 12. A draft Presidential address requesting Congressional authority for American intervention in Indochina, as well as a draft Congressional resolution granting this authority can be found in the John Foster Dulles Papers (Box 82).

[53]<u>The Pentagon Papers</u>, Gravel edition, Vol. I, p. 511, emphasis in original.

Communist power" (the People's Republic of China), as well as on "employment of atomic weapons...in the event that such a course appears militarily advantageous." Additionally, they warned that in the event of U.S. involvement, "it would be necessary to insure the degree of mobilization required to take care of the increased possibility of a general war."[54]

Finally, the Army, this time in the form of a May 19 memorandum from the Secretary of the Army to the Secretary of Defense, continued to argue that air and sea forces alone could not "solve our problems in Indo-China," and that there was a "very evident lack of appreciation of the logistics factors affecting operations in that area."[55]

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[54]The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, pp. 126-127, 509-515.

[55]The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, pp. 126-127, 508-509. A 17 May 1954 Ridgway Memorandum for Record (in the Ridgway Papers at Carlisle Barracks) indicates that the source of Secretary Stevens' memo was his desire to have concerns General Ridgway stated to Acting Secretary of Defense Anderson submitted as the Army's views over Secretary Stevens' signature. In addition, many authoritative accounts report that General Ridgway, at his own request, briefed President Eisenhower on the unfeasibility and high cost of intervention on the ground. See, for example, Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 22; Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest, p. 143; Prados, The Sky Would Fall, pp. 189-190; author's conversations with Lieutenant General James M. Gavin, West Point, New York, 31 May 1985, and with General Ridgway, 1 August 1986. Ridgway's memoirs, however, do not mention such a briefing, noting merely that the Army team's report "reached President Eisenhower." See Soldier, pp. 276-278. (General Gavin, in our 31 May 1985 conversation, attributed this to General Ridgway's "characteristic modesty.") What neither Generals Ridgway nor Gavin could recall, however is whether General Ridgway briefed President Eisenhower prior to or after the fall of Dienbienphu. Prados states that the briefing was on June 10 (p. 189), as does Ronald H. Spector (Advice and Support, p. 210.)

A discussion of U.S. military contingency plans for

It is once again difficult to judge the impact of the military's views and their "all or nothing" advice on the eventual decision against intervention. As before the fall of Dienbienphu, there were many other factors that mitigated against American military involvement. The United States and France were unable to agree on terms for U.S. involvement. Although British backing was dropped as an American precondition for intervention, stiffer concessions were demanded of France, including an unequivocal commitment to internationalize the war and a guarantee that the Associated States could withdraw from the French Union at any time.[56] The French never agreed to those demands, however, and added several demands of their own that were unacceptable to Washington. "As the discussions dragged on inconclusively," described George Herring, "each side grew wary." The French cabinet, under pressure from a war-weary National Assembly, "eventually concluded that it must exhaust every possibility of a negotiated settlement before considering prolongment of the war."[57] Simultaneously, the military situation in the Red River Delta near Hanoi deteriorated so badly that Washington decided intervention had become useless. On June 15, Secretary Dulles informed the French Ambassador that the time

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intervention is contained in History of the Indochina Incident, pp. 427-433.

[56]A complete list of the conditions for intervention may be found in History of the Indochina Incident, p. 412. See also Radford, From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam, p. 417-418.

[57]Herring, America's Longest War, p. 38.

for U.S. intervention had run out.[58] The fall of the French government and its replacement by one committed to a negotiated settlement sealed the issue. "From that point on," observed Herring and Immerman, "the Eisenhower administration devoted its efforts to attaining the best possible settlement at Geneva and to salvaging what it could in Southeast Asia."[59] Although coming years would see increasing American military training and assistance in Vietnam, the prospect of direct intervention would not resurface until the early 1960s.

Laos -- 1961

The Never Again Club resurfaced in 1961 when the Kennedy administration considered American military intervention to prevent the takeover of Laos by the Pathet Lao, a group openly supported by North Vietnam and the Soviet Union. Once again, America's senior military leaders -- seeking to avoid U.S. involvement in another limited conflict in Asia -- opposed U.S. military participation short of an all-out commitment, possibly including nuclear weapons. Although there were other factors that worked against intervention, such as conventional military force shortcomings and the geographically inaccessible location of Laos, the all or nothing advice of the Joint Chiefs and their inability to agree on what forces would be required for victory

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[58] The Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, p. 131.

[59] Herring and Immerman, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu," p. 362.

clearly influenced President Kennedy's decision to seek a diplomatic solution rather than to exercise a military option.

As newly inaugurated President John F. Kennedy settled into office in 1961, it was not Vietnam, but its Southeast Asian neighbor Laos, that caused him greatest concern. As a result of the Geneva conference of 1954, Vietnam had been partitioned; Ho Chi Minh set up a communist-controlled state north of the 17th parallel and non-communists established a government for the part of the country south of that line. To the surprise of many, South Vietnam, with the help of large amounts of American aid, had become relatively stable.[60]

Laos, on the other hand, seemed on the verge of falling under the control of the Pathet Lao, a communist group long supported by the North Vietnamese. Just before Kennedy's inauguration, the Soviet government had openly joined the North Vietnamese in supplying the Pathet Lao. "Fleets of Soviet planes delivered weapons and equipment to landing fields in the sparsely settled Laotian highlands," wrote Ernest May. "Like Berlin, Laos became a place where the two super-powers stood fist to fist."[61]

President Kennedy approached the issue with an inclination to action and a determination to keep Laos, as well as other parts of the world, from moving into the communist orbit. During his campaign for the presidency he had frequently cited the deteriorating situation in Laos as a product of shortcomings in

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[60] May, "Lessons" of the Past, pp. 88-89.

[61] May, "Lessons" of the Past, p. 89.

the Eisenhower administration's approach to foreign policy. A stronger America and better leadership, he believed, could turn back the communist tide.[62]

A few days before Kennedy's inauguration, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had seemingly challenged Kennedy, pledging support for what he termed "wars of national liberation." Kennedy's stirring inaugural address constituted a direct response to Khrushchev's challenge.[63] "We shall," Kennedy proclaimed,

> pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty...To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny.[64]

The lines were drawn and Laos emerged as the first test.[65]

Kennedy initially encouraged diplomatic efforts aimed at establishment of a neutral Laos -- an "independent, peaceful,

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[62]Charles A. Stevenson, The End of Nowhere (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 129.

[63]Colonel Dave R. Palmer (USA), Summons of the Trumpet (San Francisco: Presidio Press, 1978), pp. 1-2.

[64]President Kennedy's inaugural address is reprinted in a number of places, among them Theodore C. Sorenson, Kennedy, (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 245-248.

[65]That Laos was Kennedy's test case was confirmed by McGeorge Bundy in an interview with Herbert S. Parmet. See Parmet's JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy (New York: Dial Press, 1983), p. 132 and note 8, p. 370. Kennedy himself voiced that sentiment when he toasted Souvanna Phouma at a White House luncheon, stating that "the future not only of Laos but of a good deal of the rest of the world" depended on the resolution of the Laotian conflict. Quoted in Parmet, p. 133, from the Public Papers of President John F. Kennedy, 1962, p. 582.

uncommitted country." Simultaneously, he developed policies along a second track -- the military one.[66] He quickly discovered, however, that there were serious shortcomings in America's conventional force structure. There was no sizeable strategic conventional reserve and recent exercises had demonstrated severe limitations in America's airlift capability.[67] The President was stunned, his military aide later wrote, to learn that if 10,000 men were sent to Southeast Asia, there would be practically no strategic reserve left for other contingencies.[68] Thus less than two weeks after taking office, Kennedy asked Congress to take immediate action to increase the country's airlift capacity, while simultaneously he directed efforts to improve America's conventional capabilities.[69]

Kennedy discovered also that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not eager for action in Laos, with its rough terrain and lack of logistical infrastructure. When General Lyman Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was asked in early 1961 about parachuting and airlifting a division of Marines into the Laotian Plain of Jars, he replied: "We can get them in all

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[66]Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, p. 133.

[67]Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, p. 135. For an excellent discussion of the development of America's rapid deployment capability, see Colonel Robert P. Haffa, Jr. (USAF), The Half War: Planning U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces to Meet a Limited Contingency, 1960-1983 (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), esp. pp. 145-170.

[68]Major General Chester V. Clifton (USA), "Hail to the Chief," Army, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January 1964), p. 32.

[69]Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, p. 135.

right. Its getting them out that worries me."[70] The idea of limited intervention, of course, reawakened the worst fears of the Never Again Club. As Kennedy adviser Ted Sorenson observed:

> Even if no other communist forces intervened, [intervention in Laos with American troops] appeared to require the prolonged deployment of a large American expeditionary force to the mountains and rain forests of the Asian mainland in defense of an unpopular government whose own troops had little will for battle. It had all the worst aspects of another Korean War-- the kind of war many American commanders had vowed they would never fight again without nuclear arms -- in a country with no seaports, no railroads, only two mountain "highways" (on dry days) and almost no communications.[71]

In meetings with the President on 20 and 21 March the Joint Chiefs proffered their "all or nothing" views. They argued against a proposal by State Department official Walt Rostow for the movement of some American troops to Thailand as a show of force, predicting that such an action would prompt massive North Vietnamese intervention. The only way to prevail, they argued, was to send in a least 60,000 troops and to promise that they would be supported even to the point of nuclear war with China. Of course, arguing for such a large commitment, especially given the limitations of U.S. conventional forces, made it likely that the President would reject intervention.[72] The similarity to military advice during the 1954 Indochina crises was striking; it was, Yogi Berra would have observed, deja vu all over again.

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[70]Quoted in Roger Hilsman, To Move A Nation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967), p. 128.

[71]Sorenson, Kennedy, p. 641.

[72]Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, p. 143.

In April 1961, however, presidential consideration of the military option took on new urgency. Despite Soviet agreement to join in a cease-fire appeal, the fighting in Laos did not stop. On April 26, the Pathet Lao were attacking in force, as if, presidential adviser Arthur Schlesinger later wrote, "to overrun the country before the ceasefire could take effect."[73] The following day, a long and confused National Security Council meeting took place. Richard Betts' description, which draws on extensive interviews with participants, is particularly illuminating:

> Most civilian participants tentatively favored a limited show of force in Southeast Asia, which they hoped would produce diplomatic results. Averell Harriman supported the proposal of Walt Rostow, who wanted to send 25,000 troops to Thailand ready for deployment to Laos so that he would have some bargaining chips in the coming Geneva negotiations on Laos. The Joint Chiefs on the other hand, seemed to waver between timid opposition to any military intervention and a frightening proviso that they be given the option to use tactical nuclear weapons if United States force was committed. Actually the military -- especially Army Chief of Staff George Decker -- wanted to avoid a show of force or a limited action which could end in disaster. They wanted either massive commitment sufficient to win or a complete avoidance of a military entanglement. Their concern with operational success took precedence over a concern with political signalling. The ultimate impact that their equivocal stance had on the decision was dovish, though some civilians saw it as recklessly hawkish because of the mention of nuclear weapons.[74]

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[73]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 283.

[74]Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, pp. 37-38. For other accounts of this important meeting, see Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 283; Walt W. Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, (New York: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 664-665, 669; Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest, p. 89; Hilsman, To

Arthur Schlesinger later emphasized that the divided views of the military made it hard for the participants to make out what the Chiefs were trying to say. Vice-President Johnson was so frustrated, in fact, that he proposed having the Chiefs put their views in writing in order to clarify their differences.[75]

Also complicating President Kennedy's task was the continually changing military position on what would be required for success in Laos. In the wake of the disastrous mid-April Bay of Pigs invasion -- a CIA operation that most of the administration thought the Joint Chiefs should have advised against -- the senior military were reluctant to guarantee success in Laos unless they had "almost unlimited commitment of troops and weapons." As Charles Stevenson recounts, "Initial plans for intervention called for a limit of 40,000 troops. That figure had been raised to 60,000 by the end of March and was up to 140,000 by the end of April." Even then, the Chiefs were unwilling to "accept intervention without an advance promise to allow use of tactical nuclear weapons."[76]

Move A Nation, pp. 128-129; Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, pp. 143, 151; Parmet, The Presidency of John F. Kennedy, p. 148-150; and Stewart Alsop, The Center (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 146-147.

[75]Kennedy approved Vice-President Johnson's proposal and according to Schlesinger, "later received seven different memoranda, for the four members of the JCS and the three service secretaries." See A Thousand Days, p. 283. Charles Stevenson contends that Kennedy received eight different memoranda, the eighth being from Secretary of Defense McNamara. See The End of Nowhere, p. 152.

[76]Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, p. 151.

The Joint Chiefs were in a difficult position. On the one hand they wanted to avoid American involvement in another limited land war in Asia which they believed would be protracted and would eventually lose public support. On the other hand they felt an obligation to provide alternatives to a President and administration that seemed inclined to intervene with American troops.[77] The only way out was to propose large-scale intervention and unlimited force. That minimized the chances that Kennedy would exercise a military option and, in the event he did, minimized the chances of American units getting bogged down in a long, inconclusive conflict. The resulting military advice was very unsettling for President Kennedy and many of his advisers. As Walt Rostow later observed, Kennedy "never saw the American military less clear in mind, less helpful to a President, than in the first four months of [his] administration...it had a distinctly unsettling effect on Kennedy..."[78]

The military position that evolved was what Arthur

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[77]It should be noted that at least one of the Chiefs, Admiral Arleigh Burke, wanted to make a stand in Laos. General Lemnitzer also came to this view at the end of April, but by then several months of divergent military opinions had strengthened Kennedy's skepticism about a military action in Laos.

[78]Rostow, <u>The Diffusion of Power</u>, pp. 664-665, endnote 4. Relevant to Rostow's point is Richard Betts' description of Army Chief of Staff George Decker's position during the discussions on Laos. "Decker was reluctant," wrote Betts, "to risk the army in Laos in 1961 but he hesitated to advise unequivocally against it. He told President Kennedy that the army was ready to go wherever the President directed, but he hedged with so many warnings and conditions that his advice had the effect of a veto." See <u>Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises</u>, p. 178.

Schlesinger later termed the Pentagon's "standard line" on Southeast Asia, which he characterized as:

> unrelenting opposition to limited intervention except on the impossible condition that the President agree in advance to every further step they deemed sequential, including, on occasion, nuclear bombing of Hanoi and even Peking. At one National Security Council meeting, General Lemnitzer outlined the processes by which each American action would provoke a Chinese counteraction, provoking in turn an even more drastic American response. He concluded: "If we are given the right to use nuclear weapons, we can guarantee victory." The President sat glumly rubbing his upper molar, saying nothing. After a moment someone said, "Mr. President, perhaps you would have the General explain to us what he means by victory." Kennedy grunted and dismissed the meeting.[79]

It was not just the active duty military, however, who counseled the President against military intervention in Laos. Several legendary figures from World War II, undoubtedly influenced by the Korean War, also cautioned against using U.S. troops for such a mission. In April 1961, for example, General Douglas MacArthur told Kennedy that "anyone wanting to commit American ground troops to the mainland of Asia should have his head examined." He advised also that if American troops were committed in Southeast Asia the President must be prepared to use nuclear weapons should the Chinese enter in force. Finally, he reminded Kennedy of the difficulty of justifying intervention against communism in Laos while rejecting it against communism in Cuba.[80]

World War II airborne hero General James Gavin also

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[79]Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 284.

[80]Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 284.

cautioned Kennedy against intervention in Laos. Appointed in 1961 by Kennedy to the post of U.S. Ambassador to France, Gavin returned to Washington in May to discuss a forthcoming presidential trip to France. When talk shifted to Southeast Asia, Gavin "argued strongly against committing troops to Laos." He pointed out the logistical difficulties of intervening in a landlocked area where it would be very difficult to bring U.S. power to bear, "even if it should be in the U.S. interest to do so." Laos, Gavin believed, "would turn into a bottomless pit into which we would pour soldier after soldier." In short, Gavin told Kennedy, "There was little to be gained and a great deal to be risked by U.S. military action."[81]

Added to these cautions, to the lack of suitable military forces, and to military ambivalence over intervention, was a lack of Congressional support. When shortly after the Bay of Pigs fiasco Kennedy had Admiral Arleigh Burke -- the member of the Joint Chiefs most eager to make a firm stand in Laos -- address a group of Congressional leaders, the President quickly discovered that "Congress had no stomach for further military adventures."[82] A final complicating factor was Kennedy's finding that America's allies were reluctant to support American intervention.[83] Thus

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[81]Gavin, Crisis Now, p. 51.

[82]Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, pp. 151-152; Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, p. 268; and Parmet, The Presidency of John F. Kennedy, p. 141-142, 150-151.

[83]Stewart Alsop reported that Pakistan, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain promised to send token forces (The Center, p. 147). But Roger Hilsman pointed out that British

when General Lemnitzer went to Laos at the end of April and, once on the spot, reportedly departed from his previously held all or nothing view by cabling back his endorsement of a limited commitment, Kennedy had already shifted toward a diplomatic resolution of the crisis.[84]

When the Geneva negotiations on Laos opened on May 16-- following a cease-fire in Laos -- the administration's attention quickly shifted to the diplomatic process. The Pentagon felt sufficiently relieved to order dissolution of the military staff that had been formed to support the special interagency task force organized for the Laos crisis. Following a June meeting between Khrushchev and Kennedy in Vienna where the Soviet leader agreed that Laos was not worth a war between the superpowers, the path seemed open to a settlement. Laos became a problem that demanded Kennedy's attention only occasionally. His instructions to U.S. negotiator Averell Harriman were clear: "I want a

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Prime Minister Macmillan's support was given only "reluctantly." See To Move A Nation, p. 131; and Harold Macmillan, At the End of the Day, 1961-1963 (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 238. Strong opposition to the idea came from the French. Parmet, The Presidency of John F. Kennedy, p. 142; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 333-334; and Stevenson, End Of Nowhere, pp. 146-147.

[84]Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 284; and Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, p. 267. While backing away from military operations, however, Kennedy did order the start of covert operations against the North Vietnamese, both in Laos and in their homeland. He also alerted a special task force on Okinawa, readied a Marine force in Japan, ordered the Seventh Fleet to the Gulf of Siam, dispatched a 500-man unit to set up a helicopter repair base in Thailand, and sent stockpiles of supplies and equipment to bases near the Laotian border. See Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, p. 153; Hilsman, To Move A Nation, p. 153; and Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, p. 268.

negotiated settlement in Laos. I don't want to put troops in...It's your problem. Work it out."[85]

Laos -- 1962

After close to a year of inconclusive negotiations and sporadic fighting, events in Laos again demanded President Kennedy's personal attention. In late April and early May 1962, Pathet Lao troops attacked Royal Laotian forces at several strategic locations in what was viewed in Washington as a flagrant challenge to the cease-fire and to American hopes for a negotiated withdrawal of communist forces from Laos. Averell Harriman, appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs in the Spring of 1962, and Roger Hilsman prepared the State Department proposal for responding to the Pathet Lao attacks, and presented it at a National Security Council meeting on May 10, 1962. It called for a series of diplomatic moves to inform Britain, India, and the Soviet Union that the United States "would not tolerate a Communist take-over." The diplomatic moves would be backed up by "credible evidence that the United States meant what it said," including: sending the Seventh Fleet to the Gulf of Siam; deploying a battle group of about a thousand men to Thailand; moving a battle group already in Thailand on SEATO maneuvers up to the Laotian border; and taking steps to improve the communications routes in northeast

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[85]Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, pp. 154-155.

Thailand in case an occupation of Laos became necessary.[86]

Hilsman wrote that he and Harriman were "braced for a battle between the 'Never Again' view that either all-out force should be used in Asia or none at all versus the politically tailored recommendations that had been laid out before the President." Their expectations were met; moving the fleet was all right with the military but not the troops. The Joint Chiefs repeated their arguments against intervention unless they could use sufficient force to meet any reaction by the communists. In addition to moving the fleet, the Chiefs proposed a series of diplomatic protests and renewed advisory and equipment support for the Royal Lao forces.[87]

With both Secretary of Defense McNamara and General Lemnitzer enroute back to Washington from a trip to Southeast Asia, Kennedy initially "made the minimal decision on which both groups could agree -- starting a naval task force toward the South China Sea."[88] On May 12, with McNamara and Lemnitzer present, Kennedy called another National Security Council meeting. McNamara ran down the information he had gathered during his trip and concluded that he and General Lemnitzer both supported the initial troop movements and the improvement of the communications and supply lines in northeast Thailand. This

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86Hilsman, To Move A Nation, p. 143.

87Hilsman, To Move A Nation, p. 143; and Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, p. 175.

88Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, p. 175.

tipped the balance in favor of the State Department proposal and the meeting adjourned quickly so that detailed plans could be worked out. That afternoon the President approved those plans.[89] As his adviser Theodore Sorenson later put it, Kennedy believed he had to show that he had not been bluffing earlier when he said that he would not permit Laos to be taken into the communist orbit through military action.[90]

Lemnitzer's assent to the diplomatic initiatives and troop movements, however, did not mean that the military had given up their all or nothing views; they had not. Together with McNamara they continued to oppose the limited use of force for political purposes -- which they feared would lead to a limited war or a defensive position. The military held that if forces actually had to intervene in Laos, the first step should be to occupy the whole panhandle of Laos, all the way over to North Vietnam, which borders the upper half of the panhandle. And, as Roger Hilsman recounted,

> unless the communists, including the guerrillas in southern Laos, surrendered immediately, the next step should be an all-out attack on North Vietnam itself-- land, sea, and air. What the United States would do if the Chinese Communists intervened was not spelled out, but the general impression was that the recommendation would be to retaliate on the mainland with nuclear weapons.[91]

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[89]Hilsman, To Move A Nation, pp. 144-146; Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, pp. 175-176. Calling this the "State Department proposal" should be qualified because Secretary of State Rusk, according to Hilsman, shifted his views during the crisis.

[90]Sorenson, Kennedy, p. 647.

[91]Hilsman, To Move A Nation, p. 147.

The President, however, ruled out such proposals; he wanted, in Charles Stevenson's words, "a political use of military forces, not the start of a regular military operation." Only about 3,000 American troops were involved in the plan he implemented, and their deployment to Thailand was intended to signal that a Pathet Lao attack to the Mekong River would result in a clash with American forces -- not that the United States was about to take over Laos. This deployment and American diplomatic pressure on the other key participants succeeded both in stopping the Pathet Lao and in convincing Royal Lao leader General Phoumi that it was in his interest to reach a negotiated settlement. On June 11 a formal agreement was signed, creating a shaky coalition "government of national unity" that was an amalgam of regional and political factions. Finally, on July 23, 1962, the fourteen nations represented at Geneva signed a new accord on Laos, ending the conference and, to a large extent, the crisis of the preceding two years. Laos passed into the background and attention shifted to Vietnam.[92]

Vietnam -- the Early 1960s

Military advice on Vietnam in the early 1960s reflected the demise of the Never Again Club along with its determination to avoid American involvement in another limited war on the Asian mainland. Although vestiges of the "never again" and "all or

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[92]Stevenson, The End of Nowhere, pp. 177-179; Sorenson, Kennedy, pp. 647-648; Hilsman, To Move A Nation, pp. 150-151.

nothing" approach of the 1950s and the deliberations over Laos resurfaced periodically, military advice on Vietnam by 1961 represented a distinct reversal of the previously noted JCS position of May 1954 which declared that "**Indochina is devoid of decisive military objectives and the allocation of more than** token U.S. armed forces **in Indochina would be a serious diversion** of limited U.S. capabilities."[93] By 1961, observed Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts, the JCS were, for a number of complex reasons, willing to fight what many of their predecessors had viewed as the "wrong war":

> General Lyman Lemnitzer, chairman of the JCS, and Army Chief of Staff General George H. Decker were not reincarnations of Ridgway. Reverses in Cuba, tension in Berlin, and retreat in Laos made Vietnam seem more important as a cold war testing ground to civilian leaders, and the JCS agreed. Insurgencies also looked more manageable...and Kennedy and [General Maxwell] Taylor's enthusiasm for fighting counterinsurgency wars had been successfully communicated, if not force-fed, to the ranks. Furthermore, by this time it was the U.S. military, not...French forces, that were in Vietnam. It was... an American show, and the U.S. military had an established stake in it. Finally, the U.S. military were typically military in being cautious about initial involvement; but once in, their axiomatic goal was to do everything they could to win.[94]

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[93] Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. I, p. 511 (emphasis in original).

[94] Leslie H. Gelb, with Richard K. Betts, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1979), p. 233.

Morris Janowitz views the military's failure to follow "its own professional judgment" as the "central issue" of American involvement in Vietnam and attributes it to the "workings of a military bureaucracy" which had "become 'overprofessionalized'--more prepared to follow orders than to exercise independent professional skill and judgment." See his "Toward a Redefinition of Military Strategy in International Relations," World Politics, Vol. 26, No. 4 (July 1974), pp. 494-495.

Following the partition of Vietnam in 1954, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had sought to avoid any American military commitment there. They were particularly afraid of creating a situation in which the United States would have only limited influence but would nevertheless assume the responsibility for failure. And given what the Chiefs termed the "chaotic internal political situation within Vietnam," failure was a distinct possibility. In both September and October 1954, therefore, the JCS resisted the State Department's desire to send a military assistance group to Vietnam. Without a reasonably strong, stable civilian government in control, they argued, it was hopeless to expect an American military mission to be able to develop "loyal and effective security forces." The Joint Chiefs would agree to send a training mission to Saigon only if "political considerations [were] overriding."[95] Political considerations were indeed overriding and, as the Pentagon Papers analyst wrote, "the United States decided to gamble with very limited resources." In fact, he continued, "low value chips for high stakes made the gamble

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Lawrence J. Korb argues additionally that "the JCS was anxious to establish a logistic base and a legal precedent for the entry of American troops into the area before the situation deteriorated too much," and -- more cynically -- that the JCS "felt that a deployment to Vietnam would strengthen their case for an increase in defense spending over the restrictive ceilings of the Eisenhower period." See his The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-Five Years (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 51-52.

[95] Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, pp. 430-431; and Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 22.

all the more appealing."[96] As the inclination to gamble persisted, however, the more that went into the pot the less abstemious became the military. And gradually, as Richard Betts notes, the issue for the military became "not so much whether to make a commitment but whether to reinforce one that was already made."[97] Thus the military -- which had for nearly a decade advised against U.S. involvement in a ground war on the Asian mainland -- gradually came to see America and their institutions as having a stake in the survival of Vietnam.

By the time President Kennedy took office in 1961, the American military training mission in South Vietnam numbered 685 men -- the limit imposed by the Geneva Accords of July 1954 and beyond which President Eisenhower had refused to budge. Within five months of Kennedy taking office, the Joint Chiefs, while deferring details on the composition of U.S. forces and "assuming that the political decision is to hold Southeast Asia outside the Communist sphere," recommended immediate deployment of "suitable U.S. forces to South Vietnam."[98] Apparently acknowledging and acquiescing in the Administration's determination to make a stand in Vietnam,[99] the JCS seemed eager to do two things: first, to

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[96] Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, p. 432.

[97] Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 22.

[98] Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, pp. 48-49.

[99] On Kennedy's decision to use Vietnam as the place to make American power look credible, see Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 76; Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, pp. 268-272; and Gelb with Betts, The Irony of Vietnam, pp. 70-71.

attempt through deployment of American forces to indicate firmness of U.S. intent and thereby provide a visible deterrent to Chinese and North Vietnamese action; and second, to begin establishment of the logistical infrastructure required should major U.S. involvement later become necessary in Vietnam or elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Significantly, however, the JCS were not yet proposing use of American units in combat with the Vietcong.

President Kennedy accepted the military recommendations and approved the dispatch of a 400-man Special Forces Group to accelerate the training of Vietnamese units, as well as deployment of a small number of other American soldiers to advise the Vietnamese on matters from health, welfare, and public work projects to improving the security of South Vietnam borders.[100]

By the fall of 1961, the situation in South Vietnam had deteriorated further and led Kennedy to dispatch General Maxwell Taylor, who then held the somewhat ambiguous position "military representative of the President," to Vietnam. Taylor was directed to survey the situation and recommend measures to shore up the South and eventually contain and eliminate the threats to its independence.[101] Taylor took along White House official Walt

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[100]Pentagon Papers, Vol. II, p. 50.

[101]General Taylor, a renowned airborne commander during World War II, had retired in 1959 after a frustrating tour as Army Chief of Staff. The 1960 publication of his book The Uncertain Trumpet (New York: Harper, 1960) - which criticized the Eisenhower policy of "massive retaliation" and argued instead for "flexible response" -- caught the attention of then Senator Kennedy, whose own views were quite similar. Following the Bay

Rostow and a team of military and foreign service officers. Enroute to Saigon, the group stopped in Hawaii and discussed the situation with Admiral Harry Felt, Commander in Chief of the Pacific. Felt recommended prompt logistical help for Vietnam, but advised against committing combat troops at that time.[102]

The Taylor mission arrived in Saigon on October 18 and stayed in Vietnam for a week -- into which were crammed a rapid series of official calls, briefings, discussions, and visits to the field. Their visit complete, the group departed on October 25 for Thailand and, the following day to the Philippines where the group finalized its report so that they could arrive in Washington with a finished report in hand. By November 3 the group was back in Washington, and Taylor's twenty-five page report and separate annexes had been published and distributed. In it, Taylor proposed the dispatch to Vietnam of a military task force of 6,000-8,000 men in order to raise South Vietnamese morale and demonstrate the seriousness of U.S. intent to resist a communist take-over. The introduction of his force was to be

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of Pigs fiasco in April 1961, Kennedy asked Taylor to chair an investigation to determine why that venture failed. When the investigation concluded, Kennedy asked Taylor to stay on in the White House as Military Representative of the President, to "advise and assist him with...military matters" (a rather ambiguous position considering that the post of chairman of the Joint Chiefs was established to fulfill similar duties). In October 1962, when the incumbent CJCS, General Lyman Lemnitzer, completed his first two year tour, Kennedy replaced him with Taylor, sending Lemnitzer to a NATO command. See General Maxwell D. Taylor (USA Ret.), Swords and Plowshares (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), pp. 178-203. Kennedy's instructions to Taylor before his October trip to Saigon are on pages 225-226.

[102] Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, p. 50.

related to flood relief in the Mekong Delta, and it was thus to consist of engineer and logistical units, that would conduct combat operations only as "necessary for self defense," but would also "provide an emergency reserve to back up the Armed Forces" of Vietnam, and "act as an advance party for such additional forces as may be introduced."[103] Taylor also recommended a "radical increase" in the number of Special Forces teams in Vietnam and in "U.S. trainers at every level from the staff colleges...to the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps." And to execute this "program of limited partnership," Taylor proposed that the Military Assistance and Advisory Group in South Vietnam be shifted to "something nearer -- but not quite -- an operational headquarters in a theater of war." Taylor also noted the need to develop America's conventional military reserves to be prepared for contingencies that could arise in the event of "overt major hostilities by North Vietnam." Finally, he warned that "the time may come...when we must declare our intention to attack the source of guerilla aggression in North Vietnam and impose on the Hanoi government a price...which is commensurate with the damage being inflicted on its neighbors to the

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[103]"Evolution of the War: The Kennedy Programs and Commitments, 1961," United States - Vietnamese Relations, 1945-1967, IV.V.1 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971). Many analysts believe that the humanitarian relief aspect of the commitment was merely a way of camouflaging the commitment of combat-equipped forces at a time when Vietnamese leader Diem was not inclined to accept U.S. ground combat forces. See, for example, George McT. Kahin, Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam (New York: Knopf, 1986 ed.), p. 135.

south."[104]

On November 8, the Secretary of Defense, his deputy, and the JCS jointly responded to the Taylor report, supporting Taylor's recommendations but adding four conditions. First, they made their support conditional on the United States committing itself to the "clear objective of preventing the fall of South Vietnam" (a commitment they were "inclined to recommend"). Second, they warned that the troops recommended by Taylor would "not in themselves do the job of restoring confidence and setting Diem on the way to winning the fight," and would "not tip the scales decisively." Third, they argued that the only way to convince the other side that "we mean business" was to accompany the introduction of forces with a warning to Hanoi "that continued support of the Viet Cong will lead to punitive retaliation against North Vietnam." Fourth, they argued that the possible extent of America's military commitment be recognized up front. "The struggle may be prolonged," they warned, "and Hanoi and Peiping may intervene overtly." As a result, U.S. forces on the ground in Southeast Asia could reach 205,000, which would require the addition of more National Guard or regular Army divisions.[105] In short, McNamara and the JCS wanted to get involved only if the United States was committed to keeping South Vietnam out of Communist control -- something which they supported. And if that

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[104]Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, pp. 653-654; Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, pp. 242-244.

[105]Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, pp. 108-109; and Korb, The Joint Chiefs of Staff, pp. 152-153.

commitment was forthcoming, they wanted to be assured of having sufficient forces to accomplish what they envisioned their mission might be -- a mission that could result in protracted involvement. In many respects, of course, these admonitions represented the continuing sentiment for an all or nothing commitment. More significant, perhaps, was that the JCS warnings were devoid of never again sentiment (although such sentiment was to resurface periodically through 1965), or of such strikingly high estimates of potential force requirements as to scare off the administration from major involvement (as the Ridgway warnings in 1954 appeared to have done).

In spite of the McNamara-JCS memorandum, President Kennedy decided to send support troops (including helicopter units) and more advisers, but not to send any combat troops or the task force proposed by Taylor.[106] Even though Kennedy decided against combat troops and the military task force recommended by Taylor, however, his decision was a crucial one; by the end of 1961 the MAAG's authorized strength had been more than doubled, to 2067. In January 1962 the number increased to more than 3000 -- a

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[106]Kennedy's decision was made easier when McNamara modified significantly the position he had taken earlier together with the JCS. In departure from his earlier recommendation, McNamara joined with the Secretary of State to recommend increases in economic aid, equipment, advice (administrative and military) and training, but no more military forces than those required to carry out those tasks - not even the task force proposed in the Taylor report. On why McNamara may have changed his recommendations so significantly, see Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, pp. 116-117 (for the text of the Mcnamara-Rusk Memorandum see pp. 110-116); and Robert L. Gallucci, Neither Peace Nor Honor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), pp. 23-24.

significant increase over the 685-man force in Vietnam when he took office, and nearly five times the level authorized by the Geneva Agreements.[107]

Kennedy's decision was not satisfactory to the military, however. In January 1962 the JCS submitted a memorandum through the Secretary of Defense to the President that explained their view of Kennedy's course of action, and that also represented their complete repudiation of the JCS position in 1954. The new memorandum stated in part:

> The immediate strategic importance of southeast Asia lies in the political value that can accrue to the Free World through a successful stand in that area. Of equal importance is the psychological impact that a firm position by the United States will have on the countries of the world -- both free and communist. On the negative side, a United States political and/or military withdrawal...would have an adverse psychological impact of even greater proportion, and one from which recovery would be both difficult and costly.[108]

In short, the JCS concurred with Kennedy that the time had come for the United States to make a stand and agreed with his choice of Vietnam as the place to do it.[109] As the JCS memo

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[107]Pentagon Papers, Gravel ed., Vol. II, p. 454; and Guenter Lewy, America in Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 24. By the end of 1962, there would be over 11,000 military personnel in Vietnam, including helicopter companies and a headquarters to oversee the U.S. buildup -- Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. Kahin, Intervention: How American Became Involved in Vietnam, p. 139.

[108]Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, p. 663.

[109]Vietnam took on increasing importance, of course, after the decision was reached to not intervene in Laos. Vietnam was, in contrast to Laos, at least relatively accessible, given its long coastline on the South China Sea which was dominated by U.S. naval power.

read, the need for "success in that area cannot be overemphasized." In fact, if the Viet Cong could not be brought under control by South Vietnamese forces, the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw "no alternative to the introduction of US military combat forces..."[110] It was one of the memorandum's closing paragraphs, however, that indicated most vividly the shift in the JCS' thinking over the past decade and the virtual demise of the never-again sentiment:

> Three salient factors are of the greatest importance if the eventual introduction of US forces is required.
>
> a. Any war in the Southeast Asian Mainland will be a peninsula and island-type of campaign -- a mode of warfare in which all elements of the Armed Forces...have gained a wealth of experience and in which we have excelled both in World War II and Korea.
>
> b. Study of the problem clearly indicates that the communists are limited in the forces they can sustain in war in that area because of natural logistic and transportation problems.
>
> c. Our present world military posture is such that we now have effective forces capable of implementing existing contingency plans for Southeast Asia without affecting to an unacceptable degree our capability to conduct planned operations in Europe.[111]

The military seems to have been convinced that the United States was so committed to Vietnam that there was no alternative to getting on with the war. Procrastination, they argued, "will merely extend the date when such action must be taken and will make our ultimate task proportionately more difficult."[112] And

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[110]Ibid, pp. 664-665.

[111]Ibid, pp. 665-666.

[112]Ibid, p. 666.

because of force structure increases under the Kennedy administration, the capability to fight a small war without degrading forces earmarked for Europe was now available.

The Demise of the Korean War Legacy

The lessons of Korea had, therefore, by 1962 been rejected--overcome by the exigencies of the moment, rendered irrelevant by new developments (such as the creation of new forces and the perception of an American "stake" in Vietnam), and, to some degree, ignored, misinterpreted, or merely wished away. There would in the years and decisions to come be military leaders who would recall the lessons of Korea and their warnings about the finite nature of domestic support for overseas adventures and the difficulties of ground warfare on the Asian mainland.[113] In

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[113]General Harold K. Johnson, who became Army Chief of Staff in 1964, was one who would recall the lessons of Korea. He reportedly "had doubts about another land war in Asia." But after receiving a "dressing-down" by President Johnson (who, in front of some members of the General's staff, complained: "you're not giving me any...solutions for this damn little piss-ant country...I don't need ten generals to come in here...and tell me to bomb. I want some solutions... some answers.") and being sent to visit Vietnam, General Johnson was persuaded by General Westmoreland to recommend the commitment of an Army division to Vietnam. See David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Crest, 1972), pp. 683-684. (The source of Halberstam's account was Colonel Paul Miles, then Aide-de-Camp to Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland, and now Deputy Head of the Department of History, U.S. Military Academy. Interview with Miles, 14 March 1986, West Point, New York.) An interesting analysis (which drew on interviews with several figures now dead) of the Johnson mission to Vietnam in March 1965 may be found in Steven G. Lamb, "Johnson Mission: The Catalyst for American Ground War" (West Point: U.S. Military Academy, senior thesis, 1980).

On Army reticence about involvement in Vietnam, see also Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 25; and

fact, Joseph Kraft, writing in the mid-1960s without the benefit of the Pentagon Papers, argued that the Never Again Club was influential in keeping U.S. combat troops out of Vietnam until 1965 by pushing instead for bombing the North. Thus, wrote Kraft, when in the summer of 1965 "it was plain that there would be no victory by airpower...[the] Never Again Club was hoist by its own petard, for when the President went along with its proposals to bomb the North, the Army generals lost the means of saying no to civilian proposals for additional ground troops."[114]

In the military view, however, by 1962 the war was on, American was committed, and the military axiomatically -- and understandably -- wanted to do everything they could to win. The pace of escalation would slow briefly during late 1962 when events took a brief turn for the better, and in early 1963 the Pentagon actually began planning for withdrawal of American troops.[115] But with the reversals of 1963 and overthrow of

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General Curtis LeMay (USAF, Ret.) with Mackinley Kantor, Mission with LeMay (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), p. 564.

General Maxwell Taylor, in fact, had noted how the Korean War had "illustrated the difficulty of convincing the American people and keeping them convinced for the long pull of the necessity and justification of exposing the lives of a small segment of our manhood for a stake far from home with little visible relation to the national security." See his Swords and Plowshares, p. 156.

[114]See Kraft's Profiles in Power: A Washington Insight (New York: New American Library, 1966 ed.), pp. 145-146.

[115]Events would later show that some of the perceived progress, however, was actually the report of biased reporting by the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam, which had been instructed by General Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, to be optimistic in its reporting. See, for example, Lawrence Korb, The Joint Chiefs of Staff (Bloomington: Indiana University

Vietnamese President Diem late that year, it became clear that greater U.S. involvement was the only alternative to a Communist victory. Mindful of America's commitment in Vietnam, the JCS would continually argue, as they did formally on several occasions in 1964, that the United States should "conduct increasingly bolder actions...," and "should not be slow to get deeply involved...[because] the United States is already deeply involved."[116] It would not be until 1965 that the first American combat units would enter Vietnam, but by 1962, military thinking on Vietnam already had shifted dramatically in its assessment of the importance of Vietnam and the feasibility of making a stand against communism there. Many of the war's major decisions were yet to be made, of course, but they would be taken without the counterweight of a reluctant military in any way similar to that which was present during the Indochina crises of 1954, or even the Laotian crises of 1961 and the spring of 1962. Why that change in thinking occurred is important not only for historical purposes, but for the light that analysis of the demise of the Never Again club may shed on the factors that will influence the

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Press, 1976), p. 154; and Kahin, Intervention, pp. 142-143. Claims of success and plans for withdrawal are in Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. II, pp. 179-181, 183.

[116]Pentagon Papers, Gravel edition, Vol. III, pp. 498, 550. The Korean analogy was occasionally resurrected thereafter, especially during the 1964 policy debates, but was generally dismissed by the military, who saw no likelihood that Vietnam would be prosecuted similarly to Korea. See, for example, Ibid, p. 623; and the discussion in "Americanizing the Vietnam War" (Cambridge: Kennedy School of Government Case Study C15-80-271, 1983), pp. 12-14.

longevity of the No More Vietnams legacy.

The Joint Chiefs' change of heart in the early 1960s from their predecessors' position in 1954 did not, of course, result from purely objective strategic analysis carried out in a vacuum. Their collective position was affected powerfully by a number of factors, including: the perception of a global, monolithic communist movement challenging the West; the activist outlook of the Kennedy Administration; major changes in U.S. military forces and capabilities; and changes in key military personnel.[117] Developments in each of these areas in some way undermined the impact of the Korean legacy, and are worth examining further as they offer some insights about the longevity of the Vietnam legacy for the American military.

International events exercised considerable influence over military and civilians alike in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Cold War made international politics appear to be a zero-sum affair. The lines were drawn between East and West, and it was widely perceived that any gain for one side was a loss for the

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[117]Lawrence Korb has argued that two additional reasons also help explain the "apparent turnabout of the JCS position." First, he believes that the JCS were "anxious to establish a logistic base and a legal precedent for the entry of American troops into the area before the situation in South Vietnam deteriorated too much." This JCS desire, in my mind, however, was more a function of the other, more important factors to be explained in coming pages - especially the feeling that Communism was on the march and had to be stopped in Vietnam.

Second, Korb argues that the Joint Chiefs felt that "a deployment to Vietnam would strengthen their case for an increase in defense spending over the restrictive ceilings of the Eisenhower period." See Korb's The Joint Chiefs of Staff, pp. 149-150.

other. Not only that, any loss would, according to the domino theory, likely lead to further losses. Until 1962, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China appeared to be inseparable partners in the Communist cause, and each employed militant rhetoric in addition to actively seeking to subvert governments of the West.[118] They pledged support to "wars of national liberation" (as long as they took place outside the Soviet bloc), and lived up to their pledge by giving assistance to revolutionary efforts in Cuba, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Tibet. The United States, meanwhile, provided assistance to governments seeking to stave off or defeat insurgencies in Central and South America, Southeast Asia, and Africa.

In the early 1960s the Cold War heated up. The United States and the Soviet Union had a tense standoff over Berlin and came very close to armed conflict during the Cuban missile crisis. The rhetoric escalated on both sides and the tension increased. President Kennedy came to believe that he was being tested by Khrushchev. Even the nuclear stalemate between the two countries was defined ominously (and somewhat inaccurately) as a "delicate balance of terror."[119] "The tide is unfavorable." President Kennedy warned the nation in his state of the union address in January 1961. "The news will be worse before it is

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[118]James C. Thomson, Jr., "How Could Vietnam Happen?" The Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 221, No. 4 (April 1968), p. 48.

[119]See Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," Foreign Affairs, January 1959, p. 159.

better."[120] His prediction was accurate. The following eight months would see crises in the Congo, Laos, Angola, Cuba, Vietnam, South Korea, the Dominican Republic, Tunisia, Berlin, Brazil, and in U.S.-Soviet relations.[121]

It is not surprising, therefore, that American leaders--the military included -- came to see the historical analogies drawn from Munich, Berlin, or the Cuban missile crisis (as well as the defeat of insurgent insurrections in Greece, the Philippines, and Malaysia) as more appropriate to the situation in Southeast Asia than any analogies drawn from the Korean War.[122] Perhaps most importantly, the civilian leadership in particular never lost sight of the lesson of China: not to lose another country to Communism on their watch, especially with an election on the horizon.[123]

The activist orientation of the Kennedy administration led the military to reassess its never again and all or nothing views

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[120]Quoted in Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 292.

[121]See the description of these events in Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 292-294. Less than half these events, of course, were truly "Cold War" crises. That fact did not diminish the sense in the administration, as Sorensen noted, that the first eight months of the Kennedy administration were "the darkest period for the President personally and for freedom."

[122]For an excellent discussion of which analogies were viewed as relevant by American policy-makers, see May, "Lessons" of the Past, pp. 87-121.

[123]In fact, Kennedy had joined in the attacks on President Truman for "losing" China, and he was, in the words of George Herring, "extremely sensitive to the political damage that could be done by the loss of additional Asian real estate." See Herring, America's Longest War (2d ed.), p. 75.

-- especially given the number of crises and so-called "brush fire" wars around the globe. Kennedy and the so-called "best and the brightest" did not come into office to stand idly by while America's interests were challenged.[124] Kennedy had, during his campaign for the presidency, criticized the Eisenhower administration's reliance on the policy of "massive retaliation" -- which threatened the use of American nuclear forces in response to any act of Communist aggression. Kennedy contended that the growth of the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal and the rise of guerilla warfare had rendered massive retaliation no longer credible. He argued instead for a policy of "flexible response," which prescribed meeting aggression at the level at violence at which it was initiated, and was the method by which he would fulfill his promise to regain the initiative in the Cold War.[125] His views on the use of military force were akin to those of General Gavin, who in 1958 criticized those who said

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[124]There was, as John L Gaddis later observed, a "premium on 'toughness'" during the Kennedy-Johnson years. See his Strategies of Containment (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 260.

[125]See Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, pp. 179-180. Although Kennedy borrowed Taylor's term "flexible response," he actually applied it to much lower levels of conflict than Taylor had proposed. Taylor's concept was aimed more at mid-intensity combat. See Major Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr. (USA), The Army Concept and Vietnam: A Case Study in Organizational Failure (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1984), p. 28. Taylor was not alone, of course, in arguing for military capabilities that would provide a broader spectrum of possible responses than feasible under the policy of massive retaliation. Academics such as William Kaufman, Henry Kissinger, and Robert Osgood all offered convincing arguments for developing limited warfare capabilities.

that America could not afford to fight limited wars, only big wars. "If we cannot afford to fight limited wars," Gavin wrote, "then we cannot afford to survive, for that is the only kind of war we will be confronted with. That is the only kind of war we can afford to fight."[126] And the members of his administration were inclined to fight. As early as two months into the Kennedy presidency, Walt Rostow urged the president to act.

> We must somehow bring to bear our unexploited counter-guerrilla assets on the Viet-Nam problem...It is somehow wrong to be developing these capabilities but not applying them in a crucially active theater. In Knute Rockne's old phrase, we are not saving them for the Junior Prom.[127]

In short, Kennedy and his advisers were far more willing to get

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[126]Gavin, War and Peace in the Space Age, p. 124. Despite Gavin's apparent argument for fighting limited wars, he opposed American military involvement in Vietnam (both in 1954 and in the early 1960s -- the latter while in retirement) and Laos -- thus leaving some question as to just what kind of limited war he felt the United States should fight. For an excellent discussion of Gavin's opposition to Vietnam, and the opposition of other notable retired military officers as well (including Ridgway, former Marine Corps Commandant and Medal of Honor winner David Shoup, Marine Major General Samuel Griffith, and former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, Air Force General Lauris Norstad), see Bob Buzzanco, "The American Military's Rationale Against the Vietnam War," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 101, No. 4 (1986), pp. 559-576.

Interestingly, General Ridgway and others senior leaders of his generation were never convinced of the wisdom of the war or of the rationale for changing the JCS assessment of Vietnam in 1954. In 1970 Ridgway concluded, for example, that a successful war effort "is not now and never has been possible **under conditions consistent with our interests.**" Quoted in Buzzanco, Ibid, p. 563, from the 14 March 1970 New York Times (emphasis in original). And in a 1985 conversation, General Gavin told me, in a departure from what his writings of the late 1950s implied, that there is no such thing as a "low-cost limited war." Interview with Gavin, 31 May 1985, West Point, New York.

[127]Quoted in Kahin, Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam, p. 131.

involved in limited wars than were President Eisenhower and his officials, and this inclination was communicated in no uncertain terms to the military as early as February 1961.[128]

The Kennedy administration's enthusiasm for development of forces suitable for the conduct of counterinsurgency operations struck the military -- particularly the Army -- with a force that is difficult to appreciate twenty years later. Its impact was especially powerful because it was pushed by the President himself, who "took the lead in formulating the programs, pushing both his own staff and the government establishment to give the matter priority attention." One of the first questions he asked his advisers after the inauguration was: "What are we doing about guerilla warfare?"[129] He pushed his concerns in every imaginable form -- in his second National Security Action Memorandum (and in others to follow, especially numbers 52, 56, 124, 162, and 182), in a May 1961 "Special Message to Congress on Urgent National Needs," in sessions with the JCS, in letters to Secretary of Defense McNamara, through key officials in the White House and the departments, in a graduation address at West Point, in "hiring and firing" of military officers, through an introduction to a collection of articles on counter-guerilla

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[128]Admittedly, Kennedy's cautious early policies on Vietnam contrasted sharply with the administration's rhetoric, and it was not for a year that he made a firm commitment. Herring, America's Longest War (2d ed.), p. 75. A detailed analysis of Kennedy's policies in his first year is in Stephen Pelz, "John F. Kennedy's 1961 Vietnam War Decisions," Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol. 4 (December 1981), pp. 356-385.

[129]Hilsman, To Move A Nation, p. 413.

warfare, and even through personal involvement in the selection of equipment to be used by Special Forces units.[130]

Some appreciation for the impact of the Kennedy administration's emphasis on counterinsurgency warfare capabilities may be gained by reviewing such journals as Army magazine, which devoted the March 1962 issue to, in the words of its editor, "spreading the gospel" of counterinsurgency.[131] As Colonel Harry Summers recently observed, "Reading it today sounds more like the description of a new liturgy than a discussion of strategic doctrine."[132]

Some of the most significant signals, however, were sent through personnel assignments which the President used to show that those at the top who resisted his counterinsurgency initiatives were not long to stay. Army Chief of Staff General George Decker was gone six months after he stoutly stood up to the President with the assurance that "any good soldier can handle guerrillas."[133] General Lyman Lemnitzer, Chairman of the

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[130]Hilsman, To Move A Nation, pp. 415-416; Krepinevich, The Army Concept and Vietnam, pp. 128-188; Summers, On Strategy, pp. 45-47; Hilsman, The Best and the Brightest, p. 122; Douglas S. Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance (New York: The Free Press, 1977), pp. 52-88; and Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, pp. 201-203.

[131]Army, Vol. 12, No. 8 (March 1962).

[132]Summers, On Strategy, p. 46.

[133]Quoted in Summers, On Strategy, p. 46. General Decker served only two years as Army Chief of Staff instead of the customary four year term which has since been legislated for all service chiefs. Decker's position had also not been helped by his equivocation during the Laotian crises of 1961 and 1962.

Joint Chiefs, was replaced within a year (having served only two years as Chairman) after newspapers carried a story that said he felt the new administration was "oversold" on the importance of guerilla warfare. Lemnitzer's successor was General Taylor, a close adviser to Kennedy and head of the inter-departmental committee formed to coordinate and encourage development of counterinsurgency capabilities throughout the executive branch departments. The message was especially clear at one White House meeting in early 1962 attended by a number of the senior military when "President Kennedy dropped a broad hint that future promotions of high ranking officers would depend upon their demonstration of experience in the counter-guerilla or sublimited war field."[134]

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[134]Hilsman, To Move A Nation, p. 415; Lloyd Norman and John B. Spore, "Big Push in Guerilla Warfare," Army, March 1962, pp. 28, 34.

Ironically, even General Taylor was not initially a true believer in counterinsurgency tactics. His Uncertain Trumpet focused more on improving mid-intensity rather than low-intensity conflict capabilities, and it is not clear that he ever fully accepted the importance of counter-guerilla capabilities. For a superb analysis of Taylor's views, see Krepinevich, The Army Concept and Vietnam, pp. 142-143; see also Douglas Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era, p. 207.

Decker and Lemnitzer were not the only members of the JCS replaced before they completed the traditional four-year term of office. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral George Anderson, who had confronted Secretary of Defense McNamara in the Navy flag plot during the Cuban missile crisis, also was replaced after two years as a service chief. He was succeeded by Admiral David McDonald in August 1963. (For the military view of the Navy flag plot incident, see Lieutenant General Victor Krulak (USMA, Ret.), Organization for National Security (Washington, D.C.: United States Strategic Institute, 1983), pp. 86-87. For the civilian view, see Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), pp. 131-132.

While the replacement of Anderson was unrelated to the effort to get the military behind the development of

Meanwhile, administration officials were busy following up the President's directives. Roger Hilsman, Walt Rostow, Robert Kennedy, and Richard Bissell "carried the gospel" throughout the government.[135] As Robert Gallucci explained, it quickly developed within the administration that "Communist insurgency was to be the challenge, counterinsurgency the response, and Vietnam the test case."[136] It did not take long for the senior military to realize this, or to realize that neither never again nor all or nothing advice would be palatable to the Kennedy administration -- although they persisted in offering much of the

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counterinsurgency capabilities, his departure meant that only ultra-hawkish Air Force Chief of Staff ("Bombs Away") Curtis LeMay served out a full four year term during the early 1960s--perhaps because the civilians always knew where he would stand on any issue. Strategically conservative Marine Corps Commandant David Shoup (who emerged as one of the most important opponents of the Vietnam involvement after his retirement) did serve a four-year term and was succeeded on 31 December 1963 by General Wallace Green, whom Richard Betts termed a "bellicose proponent of sending troops to Vietnam." (Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 170.) However, the Commandant of the Marine Corps did not gain full membership in the JCS until October 1978.

The ultimate result of the changes in JCS positions was appointment of a JCS whose members were ideologically in tune with the prevailing mood of the Kennedy administration.

Appendix A contains a chronological list of the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[135] Arthur Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, pp. 286-287; Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, pp. 283-286; Hilsman, To Move A Nation, pp. 424-436; Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 629-633; Parmet, The Presidency of John F. Kennedy, pp. 136-138; and Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, pp. 197-203, 238-244, 370-371.

[136] Gallucci, Neither Peace Nor Honor, p. 16. See also Thomson, "How Could Vietnam Happen?" p. 49.

latter.[137] It was time to get on board or jump ship (or more correctly, to walk the plank) -- a realization that must have been reinforced by civilian rejection of military advice during the Laos crisis, and by military perceptions of the low esteem in which they were held after the Bay of Pigs debacle (which, of course, was the event that led to Kennedy's extraordinary action of bringing Maxwell Taylor back to active duty with a position in the White House).

Meanwhile, changes in the military force structure -- many of them desired by the military -- were making it more feasible to get forces from the United States to Southeast Asia, resupply them while there, conduct limited conflict missions, and do all that without (at least initially) excessively degrading readiness for the NATO contingency.[138] The number of active duty Army divisions was increased from 11 to 16 and, of even greater note, a major buildup of the Army's counterinsurgency elements, the Special Forces, was spurred on by White House support and interest. In the first 21 months of the Kennedy administration, the size of the "Green Beret" force was increased by 150%, the beginning of an almost geometric expansion in the years that followed.[139] Additionally, the use of helicopters was explored

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[137]Of course, the military welcomed many of the Kennedy administration's changes, especially those, such as increasing the number of Army divisions, which were in line with the Services' traditional roles.

[138]See Haffa, The Half War, pp. 29-33.

[139]Russell F. Weigley, History of the United States Army (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 543.

as a means of providing new battlefield mobility, and other new equipment was designed for possible use in the jungles and rice paddies of Southeast Asia.[140] Taken together, these force structure developments and the accompanying doctrinal developments undermined the argument for avoiding U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia on the grounds that such a commitment would degrade forces earmarked for NATO and other contingencies.

In retrospect, then, a number of interrelated factors combined to undermine the lessons of Korea -- international events, changes in the political and military leadership, new approaches to the use of force, and changes in the military force structure and doctrinal emphasis. Even contending historical analogies played a part; in particular, there was the problem of choosing whether the Korean War or the Chinese Civil War was the experience most salient to the late 1950s and early 1960s. "The lessons of both were in conflict," concluded Richard Betts, "and both the administration and the army were torn by the uncertainty. If the United States was to avoid another frustrating stalemate but also avoid decisive escalation...foregoing intervention altogether would have been desirable. But avoiding war threatened to erode containment."[141]

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[140]On the development of air mobility concepts and forces, see Lieutenant Colonel John R. Galvin (USA), Air Assault: The Development of Airmobile Warfare (New York: Hawthorn, 1969), pp. 274-288.

[141]Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 168.

Thus the policy-makers and the military were faced with two contradictory rules: do not lose another country to Communism versus do not fight another land war in Asia. They tried to accommodate both rules by initially providing only assistance, equipment, and logistical support to the regime in Saigon. But when those efforts proved insufficient, the first rule took precedence over the second and brought about the final demise of the lessons of Korea and the Never Again Club.

Chapter IV

THE IMPACT OF AMERICA'S LONGEST WAR

Don't go if you don't have to...But if you have to go, go in the fashion that's going to get public support for what you're going to do. Do it quickly.

General John W. Vessey, Jr.[1]

The government, the press, and the people as a whole had no enthusiasm for the war, indeed failed to understand what the nation was fighting about. This showed in lack of spirit in the troops sent to the east and in failure of the people at home to support the war. Such support is necessary in any war...Unless the people are enthusiastic about war, unless they have a strong will to win it, they will become discouraged...Wars may be won or lost in the home country as well as on the battlefield...no government can go to war with hope of success unless it is assured that the people as a whole know what the war is about, that they believe in the cause, are enthusiastic for it, and possess a determination to win. If these conditions are not present the government should take steps to create them or keep the peace.

A student in the U.S. Army War College class of 1928, on Russia's ineptitude in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05.[2]

Vietnam cost the military dearly. It left America's military leaders confounded, dismayed, and discouraged. Even worse, it devastated the armed forces, robbing them of dignity, money, and qualified people for a decade.

The Army and the Marine Corps paid particularly high prices. They bore the brunt of what was essentially a ground war, and together suffered over 75 percent of the 350,000 American

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[1]Quoted in Richard Halloran, "Reflections on 46 Years of Service," New York Times, 3 September 1985, p. A18.

[2]Quoted in Colonel Dave R. Palmer, Summons of the Trumpet (San Rafael, California: Presidio Press, 1978), p. 268.

casualties.[3] The Army and the Marines also endured the most severe organizational strains. The Army underwent considerable restructuring and a rapid expansion to carry out the escalation of American involvement in the war. At the height of the U.S. effort, nine of the Army's 17 active divisions were involved in the fighting.[4] The Marine Corps was even more heavily engaged, with elements of three of its four active divisions committed to Vietnam in 1969.[5] Not surprisingly, the post-Vietnam drawdown and the public disapproval of the war effort affected these two services most heavily as well. The Army suffered through a true crisis of identity.[6] It was cut in size from about 1.6 million

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[3]Over 58,000 of the 350,000 lost their lives. Department of the Army Historical Summary (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1977), p. 4.

[4]The nine Army divisions that had elements committed to Vietnam were the: 1st Cavalry (Airmobile), Ist Infantry, 4th Infantry, 5th Infantry (Mechanized), 9th Infantry, 23d Infantry (Americal), 25th Infantry, 82d Airborne, and 101st Airborne. There were also numerous non-divisional units such as the 1st Aviation Brigade, 5th Special Forces Group, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, and the 173d Airborne Brigade. For a comprehensive listing of the U.S. and allied units that fought in Vietnam, see Shelby Stanton, Vietnam Order of Battle (Washington, D.C.: U.S. News Books, 1981).

[5]Allan R. Millet, "The U.S. Marine Corps: Adaptation in the Post-Vietnam Era," Armed Forces and Society, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Spring 1983), p. 364.

[6]A particular insightful discussion of the Army's crises of "confidence" and "adaptation" is contained in "Lieutenant Colonel William L. Hauser (USA), America's Army in Crisis: A Study in Civil-Military Relations (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). See also the sources cited in note 12 below. As Colonel Hauser described elsewhere, for the Army, the early 1970s were "a crisis of confidence, born of an 'unwon' war, of charges of mismanagement and incompetence attendant to that war, of increasing manifestations of public antimilitarism, and of doubts about the role of ground forces in the era of the Nixon

to 800,000, had to deactivate four divisions and a vast array of non-divisional units, and was forced to reconfigure most of what remained for a European battlefield.[7] The Marines were able to avoid such profound structural changes, only to find, even more disturbingly, that unlike the two world wars and Korea, Vietnam had "endangered [the Marines'] elitist combat reputation and functional role in the U.S. armed forces."[8]

While the psychic scars of the war may be deepest among the Army and Marine Corps leadership, however, the senior leaders of all the services share a similar reaction to Vietnam. There is no desire among any of them to repeat the experience that provided the material for such descriptively titled books as: Defeated: Inside America's Military Machine; Self Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army During the Vietnam Era; and Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the United States Army.[9] The simple essence of this feeling is that, in the

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doctrine." See Hauser's "Armies and Societies: Three Case Studies," Military Review, Vol. 52, No. 7 (July 1972), p. 4.

[7]Transcript of "The American Way of War," a Public Broadcasting Service program in the Frontline series, 30 April 1985, pp. 8-9.

[8]Millet, "The U.S. Marine Corps," p. 364.

[9]Stuart Loory, Defeated: Inside America's Military Machine (New York: Random House, 1973); Cincinnatus, Self Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army During the Vietnam Era (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981). Although purportedly a "senior field grade officer" assigned to the Pentagon, Cincinnatus turned out to be Cecil B. Currey, a history professor at the University of Florida and a National Guard chaplain; and Richard A. Gabriel and Paul Savage, Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the United States Army (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

words of then Colonel Dave Palmer, "there must be no more Vietnams."[10]

The Legacy of Vietnam

In 1968, Professor Samuel Huntington cautioned the participants of a conference on Vietnam: "It is conceivable that our policymakers may best meet future crises and dilemmas if they simply blot out of their minds any recollection of Vietnam."[11] But for a generation or more of America's military leaders, especially those in the Army and Marine Corps, erasing such memories is impossible. The painful experience of Vietnam is indelibly etched in their minds, and from it they have taken three general impressions that influence their advice on the use of force. First, they have become very sensitive to the finite limits of public support for protracted military operations. Second, they have developed a nagging doubt about the efficacy of American military force in solving certain international problems. And third, they have carried from Vietnam a greater disillusionment with, and heightened wariness of, civilian officials.

Public Support -- The "Essential Domino"

Vietnam showed the military that there are finite limits to how long the American public will support a protracted conflict-

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[10]Palmer, Summons of the Trumpet, p. 268. Now a Lieutenant General, Palmer is the Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy.

[11]Quoted in No More Vietnams? ed. by Richard M. Pfeffer (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 2.

- at least a conflict that is not viewed as a crusade. This awareness was not, of course, a complete revelation to all in the military. Among 20th Century wars that the United States entered, only World War II enjoyed overwhelming support.[12] As early as the 19th Century, Alexis de Tocqueville had observed that democracies -- America's in particular -- were better suited for "a sudden effort of remarkable vigor, than for the prolonged endurance of the great storms that beset the political existence of nations." A democracy, he wrote,

> can only with great difficulty regulate the details of an important undertaking, persevere in a fixed design, and work out its execution in spite of serious obstacles. It cannot combine its measures with secrecy or await their consequences with patience.[13]

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[12]See John E. Mueller, War, Presidents and Public Opinion (New York: John Wiley, 1973), pp. 42-65, 168-175.

[13]Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (New York: Vintage Books, 1945), Vol. I, p. 237. In a more contemporary analysis, Larry Elowitz and John Spanier address the question of whether the American democracy can conduct a limited war successfully. See their "Korea and Vietnam: Limited War and the American Political System," Orbis, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer 1974), pp. 510-534. See also Robert E. Osgood, Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 1953), esp. pp. 429-452; George F. Kennan, American Diplomacy 1900-1950 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), esp. pp. 91-103; Vincent Davis, "Levee en Masse, C'est Fini: The Deterioration of Popular Willingness to Serve," in New Civil-Military Relations, ed. by John Lovell and P. Kronenberg (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, 1974), pp. 89-108; and Bruce Russett and Donald R. Deluca, "'Don't Tread on Me': Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in the Eighties," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 96, No. 3 (Fall 1981), pp. 381-199.

As Stephen Walt reminded me, there have, of course, been democracies that have successfully fought limited wars. Israel is one example, Great Britain is another. Walt suggests that the real key seems to be whether or not the democratic state's survival or homeland is threatened; the implication is that Vietnam was too peripheral an interest to maintain public support for the huge level of American involvement there.

After World War II, General George C. Marshall echoed de Tocqueville's admonition, warning that "a democracy cannot fight a Seven Years War."[14] Yet such prescient observations as de Tocqueville's and Marshall's were overlooked by many in uniform (and in civilian clothes as well) during the early 1960s.

Vietnam validated the observations of de Tocqueville and Marshall in a dramatic fashion. In fact, the ability of television to convey the graphic detail of combat into America's living rooms gave their cautions even more significance. In television, not just the military, but all government leaders found a new challenge -- how to deal with "a medium that transmits simple surface impressions, while national policy issues are infinitely complex and many-sided."[15]

For the military, therefore, Vietnam was an extremely painful reminder that when it comes to intervention, time and patience are not American virtues in abundant supply. "If Americans do not win their wars in a weekend," Colonel Peter

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[14]Maurice Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1945 (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 19), p. 5.

[15]Lloyd N. Cutler, "Foreign Policy On Deadline," Foreign Policy, No. 56 (Fall 1984), pp. 113-128. In 1984, General Maxwell Taylor asserted that one lesson of Vietnam was that "you should never let television on the battlefield." See Albin Krebs, "Maxwell D. Taylor, Soldier and Envoy, Dies," New York Times, 21 April 1987, p. A28. Taylor's view is echoed in Major Cass D. Howell (USMC), "War, Television and Public Opinion," Military Review, Vol. 67, No. 2 (February 1987), pp. 71-79.

Dunn wrote after Vietnam, "they tire of them."[16] In the end, the "essential domino," as Leslie Gelb termed it, was public opinion.[17]

Post-Vietnam developments have reinforced the military's rediscovery of the importance of public support and its limits. The military are keenly aware of, and troubled by, the ambiguity in the American desire for what might be termed "cost-free omnipotence." Vietnam, Stanley Karnow wrote in 1985, "appears to have instilled in Americans an ambivalent attitude of pride and prudence."[18] In the late 1970s and through most of the 1980s, Americans have favored increased defense spending and more vigorous assertion of American economic and political positions abroad. During the same period, however, a majority of Americans have remained "wary of the kind of involvement in the affairs of other countries that characterized U.S. foreign policy" in the 1960s.[19] In short, concluded three policy analysts, "we should

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[16]Colonel Peter M. Dunn (USAF, Ret.), "Clausewitz, Revolutionary War, and Reunification" (Unpublished manuscript, 1985), pp. 1-2.

[17]Leslie H. Gelb, "The Essential Domino: American Politics and Vietnam," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 50, No. 3 (April 1976), p. 466.

[18]Stanley Karnow, "Why Interest in the Vietnam War is Rekindled," New York Times, 15 April 1985, p. A19.

[19]See, for example, John E. Reilly, "The American Mood: A Foreign Policy of Self-Interest," Foreign Policy, No. 34 (Spring 1979), p. 74; "A Reluctance to Get Involved," Public Opinion, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 1986), pp. 30-31; "Hard Line, Soft Line: The Public's Views," Public Opinion, Vol. 7, No. 2 (April/May 1984), p. 37; and John E. Reilly, "America's State of Mind," Foreign Policy, No. 66, (Spring 1987), p. 48.

defeat our enemies and impose our will," but "we should not pay any substantial price for it."[20] The eventual American impatience with the Marine peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, and opinion polls on such hypothetical cases as the commitment of American troops to Central American contingencies, remind U.S. military leaders that as much as the American people miss the prestige and benefits of world preeminence, they remain, in the words of historian George Herring, "reluctant to shoulder the burdens or accept the risks" of U.S. intervention.[21]

The Limits of American Military Power

The military also took from Vietnam a new recognition of the limits of American military power in solving certain types of problems in world affairs. In particular, Vietnam planted in the minds of many in the military doubts about the ability of U.S. forces to conduct successful large-scale counterinsurgencies. These misgivings do not in all cases spring from doubts about the

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[20]I.M. Destler, Leslie H. Gelb, and Anthony Lake, Our Own Worst Enemy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 79.

[21]George C. Herring, America's Longest War (New York: John Wiley, 1979), p. 267. Illustrative polls reflecting U.S. views on hypothetical interventions with military forces abroad include: "Evaluating the Situation in Central America," and "A Reluctance to Get Involved," Public Opinion, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 1986), pp. 28-31; "Hard Line, Soft Line: The Public's Views," and "Central America: The Public's Ambivalence," Public Opinion, Vol. 7, No. 2 (April/May 1984), pp. 35, 37; and Everett C. Ladd, "Public Opinion on Central America," Public Opinion, Vol. 6, No. 4 (August/September 1983), pp. 20-41.

The military leadership also may see the current reluctance of the public and Congress to support the Contras as another sign of America's inability to carry through with a foreign policy commitment. Indeed the Contra issue may be seen by senior officers as particularly troubling since it does not even involve American troops.

capabilities of American troops and units per se; even in Vietnam, military leaders recall, U.S. units never lost a battle.[22] Nor do these concerns find their origins in any military squeamishness about the use of force; no such sentiment is present. Rather, the doubts that are part of the Vietnam legacy spring from a number of interrelated factors: the previously noted worries about a lack of popular support for what the public might perceive as ambiguous conflicts; suspicions about the willingness of civilian policy-makers -- not just those in the executive branch -- to stay the course; and lurking fears that the respective services have yet to come to grips with the difficult tasks of developing the doctrine, equipment, and forces suitable for nasty "little" wars.[23]

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[22]Although this phrase is heard frequently, I have never heard anyone define the terms "battle" and "lost." Beyond that, it is arguable, whether either side ever won the battle for the "hearts and minds" of the South Vietnamese citizenry, although some progress had certainly been made by the South Vietnamese government and the United States by the early 1970s. In any case, that battle was never decisive; the North Vietnamese seized control of the South in 1975 with conventional forces, not insurgents.

[23]In fact, there appears to be a debate under way--particularly within the Army -- over whether American forces should be used in counterinsurgency operations at all, and if so, how they should be structured. Some officers feel that the U.S. military should not be called on to perform such operations. As one senior officer who commanded a battalion in Vietnam advised: "Remember, we're watchdogs you unchain to eat up the burglar. Don't ask us to be mayors or sociologists worrying about hearts and minds. Let us eat up the burglar our own way and then put us back on the leash." Quoted in George C. Wilson, "War's Lessons Struck Home," Washington Post, 16 April 1985, p. A9. Similar sentiments were expressed by a Navy admiral who advised the U.S. Military Academy's 1985 Senior Conference that the primary task of the military is to put "ordnance on target." See John D. Morrocco, "Vietnam's Legacy: U.S. More Cautious In Using Force,"

Professor Quincy Wright once charged the "military mind" with "overconfidence in the military methods as applicable to the solution of all problems."[24] If that overconfidence was ever universal -- and that is arguable -- it was certainly shaken by

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Army Times, 1 July 1985, p. 42. See also Colonels Zeb B. Bradford, Jr. and Frederic J. Brown, The United States Army in Transition (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1973), pp. 64-67.

Others, who believe that the U.S. could develop suitable American forces for counterinsurgency operations, have doubts about the existing capabilities of U.S. units in this area. As one U.S. officer put it, "I submit that the U.S. Army does not have the mind-set for combat operations where the key terrain is the mind, not the high ground. We do not take the time to understand the nature of the society in which we are fighting, the government we are supporting, or the enemy we are fighting." Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence W. Bayer, "To Understand Low-Intensity Conflict," Military Review, Vol. 65, No. 4 (April 1985), p. 81. See also the letter to the editor of Military Review by Captain Francisco J. Pedrozo (USA), Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 1986), pp. 81-82.

Still others, regardless of their confidence in U.S. military capabilities for counterinsurgency conflict, worry that the American people will not support extended U.S. involvement in a "small war." Those of this school wonder whether the United States as a nation, even if the military develops sound doctrine and suitable forces, can really fight a low-intensity conflict. See, for example, Lieutenant Colonel Richard E. Brown (USA), "FM 100-5 and Low-Intensity Conflict," Military Review, Vol. 65, No. 3 (March 1985), esp. p. 72.

Lastly, though their number is dwindling, there remain military officers who have few qualms about American participation in counterinsurgency operations, but cling to the notion that no special capability is needed because big units can invariably handle small wars -- that, in the words of General Curtis Lemay (Air Force Chief of Staff in the early 1960s), "if you can lick the cat, you can lick the kitten" (attributed to Lemay in William W. Kaufmann, "Force Planning and Vietnam," in Vietnam: Did It Make a Difference? (Lexington: Lexington Books, forthcoming in 1987), ed. by Colonel George K. Osborn, III (USA), et al.). An overview of this debate is in Major Michael L. Brown (USA), "Vietnam: Learning From the Debate," Military Review, Vol. 67, No. 2 (February 1987), pp. 48-55.

[24]Quincy Wright, "The Military and Foreign Policy," in Civil-Military Relationships in American Life, ed. by Jerome G. Kerwin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 116.

Vietnam. The experience of having won all the battles but having lost the war, whatever the mitigating circumstances, created among the military a new skepticism about the efficacy of American forces in the Third World countries where social, political, and economic factors are the causes of unrest. As will be examined in more detail presently, this feeling has been particularly visible in the public statements of U.S. military leaders about possible introduction of American troops into Central America. Shortly before his retirement in 1983, then Army Chief of Staff E.C. Meyer noted, for example, that "the problems in Central America are so tied to economic and political conditions, and their solutions are so dependent on local leaders that I wouldn't even know how to design a military solution.[25] General Meyer's sentiments were echoed by General John Vessey, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, when he stated in a May 13, 1983 speech:

> Neither I, nor any member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, nor the civilian members of the Department of Defense advocate introducing U.S. combat forces to try to implement an American military solution to the problems in Central America.[26]

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[25]Quoted in Walter Mossberg, "The Army Resists a Salvadoran Vietnam," Wall Street Journal, 24 June 1983, p. 22. See also Richard Halloran, "General Opposes Nicaragua Attack," New York Times, 30 June 1985, p. A3.

[26]"Pentagon is Opposed to Use of Troops in Central America," New York Times, 5 June 1983, p. A5. This same point has been made by a number of other military leaders. See, for example, Drew Middleton, "U.S. Generals Are Leery of Latin Intervention," New York Times, 21 June 1983, p. A9; and George C. Wilson, "Top U.S. Brass Wary on Central America," Washington Post, 24 June 1983, p. A20.

The same point has been made publicly by a number of other military leaders, among them: General John Wickham, the Army Chief of Staff; General Wallace Nutting, former Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command; General Bernard Rogers, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe; and retired General William Westmoreland, the American commander in Vietnam.[27] In each case, while their feelings may reflect sound strategic thinking, their thinking appears to have been powerfully affected by Vietnam.

The post-Vietnam recognition of the limits of America military power should not, of course, be overstated. Several qualifications should be made. First, while recognizing that military force cannot solve all problems, particularly some of those traditionally associated with the low intensity end of the spectrum of conflict, there is continued faith among military leaders in the importance of military capabilities in support of America's commitments in Europe, Northeast Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere. Second, most military leaders still recognize the value of certain types of military assistance in the low intensity end of the spectrum short of providing combat troops (e.g. assistance in organizing, equipping, and training Third World forces). Third, many senior officers appear to concur with the reasoning of Professor Tony Smith, who recently wrote that "if the experience of Vietnam does counsel against large-scale, long-term involvement to 'win the hearts and minds' of a foreign people for a particular regime, it would not appear to rule out

[27]See the sources cited in the previous two footnotes.

smaller scale interventions, designed to achieve more limited goals.[28] Fourth, the Army, in particular, is building up its forces earmarked for small war contingencies, and thus may regain some degree of confidence in U.S. low-intensity conflict capabilities.[29] Fifth, and very importantly, many in the military believe that the United States armed forces _can_ win small wars if allowed to do so. Those who hold this view tend to believe that Vietnam was less an illustration of the limitations of American military power than an example of what happens if that power is limited and not used to best advantage. This feeling springs from a conviction that the U.S. military in Vietnam were so hemmed in by restrictions that they could not accomplish their mission. The lesson for those of this persuasion, therefore, is that the military must be given a freer hand in future military operations. Even among the most fervent believers in this logic, however, there is a new recognition that the world is more intractable, and intervention with U.S. troops more problematic. Even those who remain confident that the U.S.

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[28]Tony Smith, _The Pattern of Imperialism_ (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 205. Grenada may have reinforced this logic.

[29]See Richard Halloran, "U.S. Moving to Expand Unconventional Forces," _New York Times_, 26 November 1986, p. A20; Colonel James B. Motley (USA, Ret.), "Washington's Big Tug-of-War Over Special Operations Forces," _Army_, Vol. 36, No. 11 (November 1986), pp. 17-25; P. J. Budahn, "Legislation Sets Up Unified Command for Special Forces," _Army Times_, 27 October 1986, p. 41; "US and Soviet Special Operations," _Armed Forces Journal International_, Vol. 124, No. 7 (February 1987), pp. 48-52; and John H. Cushman, "Special Attention for Special Forces," _New York Times_, 23 December 1986, pp. A1, A4.

could win a protracted "small war" if allowed to do so, are acutely sensitive to what General Maxwell Taylor has described as the

> great difficulty in rallying this country behind a foreign issue involving the use of armed force, which does not provide an identified enemy posing a clear threat to our homeland or the vital interests of long time friends."[30]

In short, even those who comprise the post-Vietnam reincarnation of the 1950s-era "absolutists" doubt that the military will be given the operational freedom, resources, and time to win a protracted small war.

The many seemingly endless struggles around the world reinforce the heightened awareness of the ambiguities and difficulties associated with so-called "low-intensity conflict," and serve as reminders of the problems large nations have in fighting small wars.[31] Some of these conflicts, including the Marine peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, also illustrate the high

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[30]General Maxwell D. Taylor (USA, Ret.), "Post-Vietnam Role of the Military in Foreign Policy," in Contemporary American Foreign and Military Policy, ed. by Burton M. Sapin (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman, 1970), pp. 36-43.

[31]For a discussion of the concept of low-intensity conflict as used here, see Amos A. Jordan and William J. Taylor, Jr., American National Security (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, revised edition), pp. 270-293. For an excellent discussion of the problems of large nations in fighting small wars, see Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," in Power, Strategy, and Security, ed. by Klaus Knorr (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 126-151. For a particularly perceptive discussion of the shortcomings of U.S. preparation for involvement in low-intensity conflict, see Eliot Cohen, "Constraints on America's Conduct of Small Wars," International Security, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Fall 1984), pp. 151-181.

costs of operations against guerrillas and terrorists armed with sophisticated weapons. And while observing the Soviet difficulties in Afghanistan with a certain sense of vindication, the U.S. military are at the same time reminded of the difficulties of defeating a determined guerrilla opponent who enjoys sanctuaries and is fighting in rugged terrain. After all, if a country with relatively few public opinion concerns or moral compunctions about its tactics cannot beat a bunch of ill-equipped Afghan tribesmen, what does that say about the ability of the United States -- with its domestic constraints, statutory limitations, moral inhibitions, and zealous investigative reporters -- to carry out a successful action against a guerrilla force?

Civil-Military Relations

The military also took from Vietnam (and the concomitant activities in the Pentagon) a heightened awareness that civilian officials are responsive to influences other than the objective conditions on the battlefield.[32] A consequence has been an increase in the traditional military distrust of civilian political leaders.[33] This generalization, admittedly, does not

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[32]See, for example, Major Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr. (USA), "Past As Prologue: Counterinsurgency and the U.S. Army's Vietnam Experience in Force Structuring and Doctrine," in Vietnam: Did It Make A Difference? ed. by Colonel George K. Osborn, III (USA), et al. (Lexington: Lexington Books, forthcoming in 1987).

[33]John P. Lovell, "Vietnam and the American Military: Learning to Cope With Failure," in Vietnam: Did It Make A Difference? ed. by Colonel George K. Osborn (USA) (Lexington: Lexington Books, forthcoming in 1987).
Of course, military views of politicians and political

hold true across the board and has diminished somewhat in the past few years. There appears to be, for example, excellent rapport between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the current Secretary of Defense. A 1984 poll by Newsweek, moreover, found that 97% of America's generals and admirals have a "favorable opinion" of President Reagan.[34] Nonetheless, while the military still accept emphatically the constitutional provision for civilian control of the armed forces, there remain from the Vietnam era nagging doubts about the abilities and motivations of politicians and those they appoint to key positions.[35]

Vietnam was a painful reminder for the military that they, not the transient occupants of high office, generally bear the

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appointees often have been less than favorable (and vice-versa). Lieutenant General James M. Gavin (USA, Ret.), for example, quotes an unnamed Army Chief of Staff of the 1950s as saying about Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson: "He was the most uninformed man, and most determined to remain so, that has ever been secretary." See Gavin's War and Peace in the Space Age (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 155.

[34]The sample for the Newsweek poll included more than one out of every four active flag-rank officers stationed in the United States. See "A Newsweek Poll: The Military Mind," Newsweek, Vol. 104, No. 2 (9 July 1984), p. 37. One would expect such results, of course, given the defense buildup over which President Reagan has presided.

[35]The overwhelming acceptance of civilian control is illustrated in "A Newsweek Poll: The Military Mind," Newsweek, Vol. 104, No. 2 (9 July 1984), p. 37. Again, such results are to be anticipated; after all, few military officers would say that they should be meddling in politics.

Even in the immediate post-Vietnam period there was always overwhelming support among officers for the principle of civilian control. See, for example, John Moellering, "The Army Turns Inward," Military Review, Vol. 53, No. 7 (July 1973), p. 80; and Franklin D. Margiotta, "A Military Elite in Transition: Air Force Leaders in the 1980s," Armed Forces and Society, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Winter 1976), p. 173.

heaviest burden during armed conflict. Vietnam gave new impetus to what Samuel Huntington described in the 1950s as the military's pacifist attitude. The military man, he wrote,

> tends to see himself as the perennial victim of civilian warmongering. It is the people and the politicians, public opinion and governments who start wars. It is the military who have to fight them.[36]

As retired General William A. Knowlton told members of the Army War College class of 1985: "Remember one lesson from the Vietnam era: Those who ordered the meal were not there when the waiter brought the check."[37]

Numerous factors during the Vietnam era contributed to the souring of civil-military relations in America and fostered distrust and animosity on both sides.[38] Of particular importance, too many of the military's civilian masters never made a sincere effort to cultivate an effective relationship with

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[36]Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 69-70.

[37]General William A. Knowlton (USA, Ret.), "Ethics and Decision-Making," address delivered at the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 22 October 1984, p. 28 of transcript (cited with permission of General Knowlton). Similarly, a "senior officer" told the New York Times' Richard Halloran: "We were the scapegoats of that conflict. We're the ones pulling back on the reins on [Central America]." Halloran, "Vietnam Consequences: Quiet From the Military," New York Times, 2 May 1983, p. A16.

[38]See, for example, Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak (USMC, Ret.), Organization for National Security (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Strategic Institute, 1983), pp. 81-102; Stephen P. Rosen, "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War," International Security, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall 1982), pp. 100-103; and Frank A. Burdick, "Vietnam Revisioned: The Military Campaign Against Civilian Control," Democracy, Vol. 2, No. 1 (January 1982), pp. 36-52.

the military. Relations between military and civilian leaders became strained, with grave repercussions. David Halberstam's report of President Johnson's instructions to Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson before the latter's important trip to Vietnam is revealing:

> General Johnson was sent to Vietnam specifically by Lyndon Johnson, who had given him a real dressing-down. The President had let loose, right in front of members of the general's staff. All he heard from his generals, the President said, was "Bomb, bomb, bomb. That's all you know. Well I want to know why there's nothing else. You generals have all been educated at the taxpayers' expense, and you're not giving me any ideas and any solutions for this damn little piss-ant country. Now, I don't need ten generals to come in here ten times and tell me to bomb. I want some solutions. I want some answers."[39]

Not surprisingly, President Johnson got some "answers." During his visit to Vietnam, General Johnson -- according to Halberstam "a man who had many doubts about another land war in Asia" -- was persuaded by General Westmoreland to recommend the commitment of the first Army division to Vietnam.[40]

In another instance, President Johnson, never one known for his reticence, sent General Westmoreland back to Vietnam in 1966 following a Westmoreland visit to Washington, with a warning unlikely to foster mutual trust and confidence between a president and his senior commander in the field: "General, I

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[39]David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Crest, 1972), pp. 683-684.

[40]Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest, p. 685. This anecdote is not intended to imply that President Johnson was solely responsible for the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam.

have a lot riding on you...I hope you don't pull a MacArthur on me."[41] And in February 1968, at the height of the Tet offensive, President Johnson extracted from each of the service chiefs a signed statement that the American base at Khe Sanh would not fall to the enemy.[42] Such actions served little more than to poison the relationship between the President and his senior military advisers, and the effects linger to today.[43]

Civil-military relations within the Pentagon during Vietnam were not much better. The military had traditionally viewed military policy and operations as their institutional property. The invasion of their domain in the early 1960s by what many perceived to be misguided amateurs and transient meddlers was resisted. As the decade went on, the military became increasingly frustrated by Secretary of Defense McNamara's "obsession with getting control of the defense budget," and by the micro-management of the war effort in general.[44]

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[41]General William C. Westmoreland (USA, Ret.), A Soldier Reports (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 193.

[42]Palmer, Summons of the Trumpet, p. 171.

[43]See, for example, Richard Halloran, To Arm A Nation (draft manuscript), pp. 28-29. As Eliot Cohen observed, "American civil-military relations are in a state of profound but hidden crisis." In his view, "the military has developed an acute mistrust of its civilian masters." See "Constraints on America's Conduct of Small Wars."

[44]See, for example, Rosen, "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War," p. 101; Rear Admiral Henry E. Eccles (USN, Ret.), Military Power in a Free Society (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College Press, 1979), pp. 140-141; Palmer, The 25-Year War, pp. 198-203; and Michael W. Davidson, "Senior Officers and Vietnam Policymaking," Parameters, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring 1986), pp. 55-62. One must acknowledge, of course, that there were two

The military leadership emerged from the Vietnam era, in fact, feeling that their civilian leadership had not understood the conduct of military operations, had lacked the fortitude to see things through, and frequently had held different (i.e. incorrect) perceptions of what was really important. There was from the beginning of the McNamara era a belief that the civilians who "took over" the Pentagon did not understand the complexities and difficulties of military operations. More and more senior officers came to agree with General Thomas White, a former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, who wrote in 1963:

> In common with many other military men, active and retired, I am profoundly apprehensive of the pipe-smoking, tree-full-of-owls type of so-called professional "defense intellectuals" who have been brought into this nation's capitol.[45]

Many of the military's senior leaders felt, as noted earlier, that they had to fight the war in Vietnam under too many restrictions, in effect with one hand tied behind their backs. Retired Marine Lieutenant General Victor Krulak recently wrote,

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sides to the relationship. Even before the escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the civilians of that era felt they had been let down by the Joint Chiefs during the deliberations over the Bay of Pigs invasion, as well as during the Cuban missile crisis. The civilian leadership increasingly came to believe that the military were insensitive to the domestic and international political realities in which limited wars like Vietnam had to be fought, and in which crises like the Cuban missile crisis were played out. (See, for example, Robert F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 119.) And, of course, the military made their share of mistakes and misjudgments. Although such aspects of 1960s civil-military relations would be relevant to a discussion of the civilian lessons of Vietnam, however, they are not pertinent here.

[45]General Thomas D. White, "Strategy and the Defense Intellectuals," The Saturday Evening Post (4 May 1963), p. 10.

for example:

> 57,900 Americans died in the Vietnam War. A fair case can be made that the number of dead would have been fewer and the result more favorable had we fought the war the way our military leadership wanted.[46]

Two key commanders during the war, General William Westmoreland and Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, have repeatedly criticized President Johnson for pursuing a piecemeal, gradualist approach to the war.[47] Westmoreland also has charged that America's political leaders failed to understand the nature of the challenge in Vietnam.[48] In one of his monthly columns in Air Force magazine, General T.R. Milton agreed, capturing the reaction of many military officers when he wrote shortly before the fall of Saigon in 1975: "The U.S. military did not lose the war...it might have been won, and won long ago if only there had not been such political inhibition."[49] While that sentiment is by no means universally held by today's military leaders or even by those who led the services during Vietnam, it remains--

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[46]Krulak, Organization for National Security, p. 87. See also Captain Wayne P. Hughes (USN), "Vietnam -- Winnable War?" U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 103, No. 7 (July 1977), pp. 60-65.

[47]General William C. Westmoreland (USA, Ret.), "Vietnam in Perspective," Military Review, Vol. 59, No. 1 (January 1979); Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, Strategy for Defeat (San Rafael, California: Presidio Press, 1978). See also the results of Brigadier General Douglas Kinnard's (USA, Ret.) survey in The War Managers (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1977), pp. 160-163.

[48]Westmoreland, "Vietnam in Perspective," p. 35-39.

[49]General T.R. Milton (USAF, Ret.), "USAF and the Vietnam Experience," Air Force, Vol. 58, No. 6 (June 1975), p. 56.

however arguable -- a powerful influence on the military's perceptions of politicians.

The military have also recoiled from the bureaucratic detachment with which the war was waged. Many of the top civilians sought to conduct the war with game theory precision-- to engage in what Irving Horowitz dubbed "the Howard Johnson sanitized version of conflict."[50] In late 1964, for example, an assistant secretary of state sought to resolve a discussion over how heavy American bombing and strafing should be with the following words: "It seems to me that our orchestration should be mainly violins, but with periodic touches of brass."[51] However elegant, such guidance did not translate well to the commanders in the field. This reaction remains today. Many military leaders see military force as indiscriminate "steel on target."[52] As one senior officer who commanded a battalion in Vietnam advised recently:

> Remember, we're watchdogs you unchain to eat up the burglar. Don't ask us to be mayors or sociologists worrying about hearts and minds. Let us eat up the burglar our own way and then put us back on the

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[50] Irving Horowitz, Ideology and Utopia in the United States 1956-1976 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 279.

[51] James C. Thomson, Jr. , "How Could Vietnam Happen?" Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 221, No. 4 (April 1968), p. 51.

[52] As one military officer told an ambassador who asked what the military could do: "Well, we can kill people and destroy things in the name of the United States." Quoted in "The American Way of War," p. 19.

leash.[53]

The military also greatly resented what was perceived as civilian meddling in the details of the war. The military felt that the conduct of the war was their province, but that they were over-supervised by senior civilians. Rear Admiral Henry Eccles, an influential figure at the Navy War College, has argued that the civilian micro-management of the war during the Johnson years minimized the effectiveness of operations and maximized their cost to American troops.[54] Railing at what was perceived as civilian over-control, one disgruntled general expressed the feeling of many in the military in the following verse:

I am not allowed to run the train
The whistle I can't blow.
I am not allowed to say how fast
The railroad trains can go.
I am not allowed to shoot off steam
Nor even clang the bell.
But let it jump the goddam tracks
And see who catches hell![55]

The military took from the war as well a certain doubt about the "guts" of politicians and appointees to "stick it out" over the long haul in future conflicts. While serving as Secretary of

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[53]Quoted in George C. Wilson, "War's Lessons Struck Home," Washington Post, 16 April 1985, p. A9. As noted in footnote 26, there is a debate underway over whether the military is, indeed, just steel on target or can perform with success many tasks associated with the low end of the conflict spectrum.

[54]Eccles, Military Power in a Free Society, pp. 140-141. See also The War Managers, pp. 160-163; and Edward Marks' superb article "The Vietnam Generation of American Officers," Conflict, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1983), p. 46.

[55]Quoted in Richard J. Stillman, "The Pentagon's Whiz Kids," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 92 (April 1966), p. 57.

State, retired General Alexander Haig "sensed, and understood, a doubt on the part of the military in the political will of the civilians at the top to follow through to the end" of a major military commitment.[56] The failure of the Johnson administration to make the tough decisions and ask Congress for a declaration of war and mobilization of the reserves and national guard often has been criticized by the military.[57] As one naval officer put it, "the buck failed to stop at the oval office,...no one was willing to take the necessary responsibility." As a result, "America never really made a commitment on behalf of the Vietnam effort."[58]

In the minds of many leaders, the strategy of a graduated application of air power during Vietnam reflected both the politicians' lack of appreciation for military strategy and a desire to put off tough decisions. "Gradualism," wrote then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Thomas Moorer, "forced airpower into an expanded and inconclusive war of attrition."[59]

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[56]General Alexander M. Haig (USA, Ret.), Caveat (New York: MacMillan, 1984), p. 128.

[57]Palmer, The 25-Year War, p. 190; and Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr. (USA), "Lessons: A Soldier's View," The Wilson Quarterly (Summer 1983), pp. 125-135. The failure to mobilize is also a recurrent theme in Summers' influential On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: The U.S. Army War College, 1981).

[58]Commander Roy L. Beavers (USN, Ret.), "An Absence of Accountability," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 102, No. 1 (January 1976), pp. 19-23.

[59]Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, quoted in Guenter Lewy, "Some Political-Military Lessons of the Vietnam War," Parameters, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring 1984), p. 9. See also Moorer's "The Christmas

The military judgment of the graduated response policy was summed up by one senior Air Force officer who said "We taught the bastards to cope."[60] As General Haig later observed:

> If it is easier to escalate step by small step, it is easier for an adversary to respond to each step with a response that is strong enough to compel yet another escalation on our part...If an objective is worth pursuing, then it must be pursued with enough resources to force the issue early.[61]

Finally, Vietnam increased the ever present tensions between the military and political appointees by leaving each feeling the other was marching to the beat of a different drummer. During the war and its aftermath, the military developed a perception that many political appointees were more concerned about their own careers, their own administrations, or their own political parties than about the good of the country. The military were increasingly frustrated by the short-term horizon that political appointees of limited tenure seemed to place on many issues. While such frustrations are inevitable and present even in the best of times, Vietnam exacerbated these tensions.[62] "If you happen to work for civilian political appointees," one retired four-star general recently cautioned a war college audience, "you will probably find that such individuals have different

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Bombing of Hanoi -- or How the POWs Got Home," Wings of Gold (Fall 1985), pp. 65-69.

[60]Margiotta, "A Military Elite in Transition," p. 162.

[61]Haig, Caveat, p. 125.

[62]Graham Allison explains the traditional tensions between career officials and political appointees in his Essence of Decision (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), pp. 179-180.

imperatives and a different frame of reference that you."[63] Such feelings also seem to have inspired General E.C. Meyer, then Army Chief of Staff, to remark that the military's "focus must be on a sensible posture over time, as opposed to the 'today' orientation of the politician."[64]

Since Vietnam, therefore, the military have worried not just about the potential absence of public support for military operations, but over the degree of freedom that will be permitted by civilian officials as well. Top military leaders have been particularly suspicious of civilian leaders who see military action as a means of finessing a debilitating political situation at home -- leaders who exhibit what Miles Kahler has termed the "Mayaguez syndrome" -- a compulsion to "do something" to rally the nation's self image.[65] Beyond that, Paul Kattenburg has observed, the military seem especially concerned over being saddled with another situation where the real objective may be to keep successive American presidents from being "tarred domestically with the brush of having lost another round to

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[63]Knowlton, "Ethics and Decision Making," p. 28. See also Lieutenant Colonel Andrew P. O'Meara (USA), "Civil-Military Conflict Within the Defense Structure," Parameters, Vol. 8, No. 1 (March 1978), p. 86.

[64]General E.C. Meyer (USA), "Toward a More Perfect Union in Civil-Military Relations," Parameters, Vol. 9, No. 2 (June 1979), p. 83.

[65]Miles Kahler, "The Rumors of War: The 1914 Analogy," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Winter 1979/1980), p. 389.

Communism.[66]

In sum, Vietnam left America's military leaders with a new realization of the limits of public support for protracted military operations; doubts about the efficacy of U.S. military power in certain international situations; and more than the usual misgivings about civilian policy-makers. The result is a military leadership that is apprehensive about having American troops committed to another unpopular and difficult conflict, being limited in their ability to fight that conflict, and then being left holding the bag long after the politicians have left office.

The Lessons of Vietnam

Not surprisingly, Vietnam had a chastening effect on military thinking about the use of force. A more hardheaded attitude is brought to the analysis of possible missions. "We've thrown over the old 'can-do' idea," an Army Colonel at Fort Hood told the New York Times' Drew Middleton. "Now we want to know exactly what they want us to do and how they think we can accomplish it." Henceforth, the senior military seem to feel, the United States should not engage in war unless it has a clear idea why it is fighting and is prepared to see the war through to

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[66] Paul M. Kattenburg, "Reflections on Vietnam: Of Revisionism and Lessons Yet to be Learned," Parameters, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Autumn 1984), p. 44.

a successful conclusion.[67]

Vietnam increased the military inclination to the "all or nothing" type of advice that characterized military views during the Eisenhower Administration's deliberations in 1954 over intervention in Dienbienphu and the Kennedy Administration's discussions over intervention in Laos in 1961. There is a conviction that when it comes to the use of force, America should either bite the bullet or duck, but not nibble.[68] "Once we commit force," cautions Army Chief of Staff General John Wickham, "we must be prepared to back it up as opposed to just sending soldiers into operations for limited goals."[69] Furthermore, noted Wickham's predecessor before his retirement in 1983, commanders must be "given a freer hand in waging war than they

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[67]Drew Middleton, "Vietnam and the Military Mind," New York Times Magazine, 10 January 1982, p. 90. See also George Herring's discussion of General William C. Westmoreland's views in "American Strategy in Vietnam: The Postwar Debate," Military Affairs, Vol. 41, No. 2 (April 1982), p. 58; Marks, "The Vietnam Generation of American Military Officers, pp. 48-48-52; and Richard Halloran, "For Military Leaders, the Shadow of Vietnam," New York Times, 20 March 1984, p. B10.

These sentiments have been evident not only during post-Vietnam crises, but even during war games conducted for new flag rank officers attending the Capstone Course at the National Defense University. One retired four-star general monitoring the games, observed that an Army brigadier general in the course was exercising considerable caution in his approach to commitment of U.S. troops to a possible combat situation. The brigadier general insisted that all the "Weinberger guidelines" for committing military force be met. "You've got to understand, sir," he told the retired four-star, "we're the Vietnam generation."

[68]This is paraphrased from Richard K. Betts, "Misadventure Revisited," The Wilson Quarterly, Summer 1983, p. 99.

[69]George C. Wilson, "War's Lessons Struck Home," Washington Post, 16 April 1985, p. A9.

had in Vietnam."[70] The military leadership does not want to be proscribed from winning.[71] In this view, if the United States is to intervene, it should do so in strength, accomplish its objectives rapidly, and withdraw as soon as conditions allow. Not surprisingly, the American interventions in the Dominican Republic in 1965 and Grenada in 1983 have come to be viewed as model cases of the use of force.[72]

Additionally, the public must be made aware of the costs up front. The "price of involvement," General Frederick Weyand urged in 1976, must be made "clear before we get involved."[73] Force must be committed only when there is a consensus of understanding among the American people that the effort is in the best interests of the United States.[74] There is a widely held belief that "Congress should declare war whenever large numbers of U.S. troops engage in sustained combat" -- that the American

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[70]General E. C. Meyer (USA), quoted in George C. Wilson, "Top U.S. Brass Wary on Central America," Washington Post, 24 June 1983, p. A20.

[71]Richard Halloran, "For Military Leaders, the Shadow of Vietnam," New York Times, 20 March 1984, p. B10.

[72]Citations of the Dominican Republic intervention as an example of a good operation include Palmer, The 25-Year War, pp. 190-191; and Lloyd Norman, "The Chiefs: Partisanship Goes Out When 'Purple Suits' Go On," Army, Vol. 20, No. 5 (May 1970), p. 40.

[73]Quoted in Colonel Harry Summers (USA), On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, 1981), p. 25.

[74]General Bruce Palmer (USA, Ret.), The 25-Year War (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), p. 204.

people must be mobilized because "a nation cannot fight in cold blood."[75] The military want to avoid what former Army Chief of Staff E. C. Meyer termed the Vietnam mistake of "putting soldiers out at the end of a string" without the full support of the American people.[76] Since time is crucial, furthermore, sufficient force must be used at the outset to ensure that the conflict can be resolved before the American people withdraw their support for it. Nothing succeeds with the American public like success, the military realize; the sooner the mission is accomplished, the better. "Do it quickly," counseled then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General John Vessey in 1985.[77]

Finally, Vietnam has led the senior military to believe that in the future, political leaders must better define objectives before putting soldiers at risk. "If I have to go again, I want an ironclad understanding of what it is [they] want me to do," an

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[75]Palmer, The 25-Year War, p. 194. The necessity for mobilization is the central theme of Colonel Harry G. Summers Jr. (USA), "Lessons: A Soldier's View," The Wilson Quarterly (Summer 1983), pp 125-135. See also Wilson, "Top U.S. Brass Wary on Central America." This issue is discussed in more detail in chapter VII.

[76]George C. Wilson, "Top U.S. Brass Wary on Central America," Washington Post, 24 June 1983, p. A20; General Donn A. Starry (USA), "The Principles of War," Military Review, Vol. 61, No. 9 (September 1981), p. 20; George C. Wilson, "War's Lessons Struck Home," Washington Post, 16 April 1985, p. A9; and Richard Halloran, "Reflections on 46 Years of Army Service," New York Times, 3 September 1985, p. A18.

[77]Richard Halloran, "Reflections on 46 Years of Army Service," New York Times, 3 September 1985, p. A18.

Army officer told Richard Halloran.[78] Added General Vessey: "Don't send military forces off to do anything unless you know what it is clearly that you want done. I am absolutely, unalterably opposed to risking American lives for some sort of military and political objectives that we don't understand."[79]

In short, rather than preparing to fight the last war -- as generals and admirals are often accused of doing -- contemporary military leaders seem far more inclined to avoid any involvement overseas that could become another Vietnam. The lessons taken from Vietnam work to that end; military support for the use of force abroad is contingent on the presence of specific pre-conditions chosen with an eye to avoiding a repetition of the U.S. experience in Southeast Asia.

These pre-conditions -- which are the "lessons of Vietnam," the "conventional wisdom" -- can be distilled into criteria that should be met before American forces are committed to potential

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[78]Richard Halloran, "For Military Leaders, the Shadow of Vietnam," New York Times, 20 March 1984, p. B10; and "The American Way of War," p. 18. The view that the objectives in Vietnam should have been more clearly defined is reflected in The War Managers, pp. 15-33, 169, 176.

[79]Richard Halloran, "A Commanding Voice for the Military," New York Times Magazine, 15 July 1984, p. 52. Lieutenant Colonel Richard Schaden, at the time Special Assistant to the commander in chief, U.S. Southern Command, said that "senior officers now demand specificity in missions and objectives." Interview at West Point, Fall 1985.

There is also among the military, dislike of "feints, demonstrations, and shows-of-force" at the strategic level--since they too frequently run the counterproductive risk of being perceived as bluffs. See Colonel Harry G. Summers Jr. (USA), "Critics Say Pentagon Is Dovish," Los Angeles Times, 6 May 1984, p. IV-2.

combat situations abroad. These criteria may be phrased as cautions to a president: "Don't commit American troops, Mr. President," they hold, "unless:

1) You really have to (in which case, presumably, vital U.S. interests are at stake);

2) You have established clear-cut, attainable military objectives for American military forces (that is, more than just some fuzzy political goals).

3) You provide the military commander sufficient forces and the freedom necessary to accomplish his mission swiftly. (Remember, Mr. President, this may necessitate mobilization of the reserve components -- perhaps even a declaration of war.)

4) You can ensure sufficient public support to permit carrying the commitment through to its conclusion."[80]

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[80]This approach draws on that used by Richard Halloran, in To Arm A Nation (New York: Macmillan, 1986), p. 37. These criteria also are very similar to those proposed by Secretary Weinberger in his National Press Club speech on 28 November 1984 -- which is hardly surprising because reportedly senior military officers were consulted by Weinberger prior to making the speech. See Richard Halloran, "U.S. Will Not Drift into a Latin War, Weinberger Says," New York Times, 29 November 1984, pp. A1, A4.

The military leadership should not be viewed as monolithic, of course, but the lessons laid out here represent what is clearly the dominant view on what should be taken from Vietnam. It is fair to say, in fact, that these lessons have become, to use Alexander George's term, the "operational code" of the current generation of military leaders -- the set of assumptions about the conditions necessary for the use of force, assumptions formed in response to a traumatic event early in their careers that govern without much variation their approach to the use of force in subsequent crises. See "The Operational Code: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1969), pp. 190-222.

One should also note a slightly self-serving aspect to the lessons adopted. These lessons are, in many respects, what many

For the military, in short, the debate over how and when to commit American troops abroad has become a debate over how to avoid, at all costs, another Vietnam.

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people in the military want to hear. The conventional wisdom implies that the blame for Vietnam should be placed squarely on the shoulders of others -- timid politicians, civilian counterinsurgency experts, the public -- and thus absolves the military from much responsibility for failure. See John Gates, "Vietnam: The Debate Goes On," Parameters, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring 1984), p. 24.

Chapter V

MILITARY INFLUENCE AND THE USE OF FORCE IN THE POST-VIETNAM ERA

The JCS are a hell of a lot more dovish than many people think.
Senior Officer in the Pentagon[1]

The mission, the role of the marines who went into Vietnam...I mean into Lebanon...a Freudian slip.
General P.X. Kelley, Marine Corps Commandant[2]

The 1960's and 1970's left many in the United States Army with their own Vietnam syndrome -- an unwillingness to be caught once again in a strange foreign land, fighting an elusive enemy without clear support from the American people or clear directives from the civilian leadership, and with the specter of public disapproval, demoralization and defeat at the end of the road. Few of the advisers [in El Salvador] would want to see the Army go through such an experience again. Rather than try to save El Salvador from the guerillas that way...one adviser commented, "it would probably be better to let them have it."
Lydia Chavez[3]

Since [1985] a consensus has developed in the administration over the long-simmering question of whether military retaliation is an appropriate response to terrorism. No longer do top-level meetings agonizingly debate **whether** to retaliate with military force; the only question nowadays is **when** and **how** to strike back.
Reagan administration official[4]

Popular perceptions of America's military leaders conjure up visions of cigar-chomping, table-pounding warmongers, of a phalanx of aggressive and activist advisers poised against the

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[1]Unnamed officer quoted in Charles Doe, "Did U.S. Miss the Boat in MiG Episode?" Army Times, 26 November 1984, p. 40.

[2]Quoted in Steven Roberts, "War Powers Debate Reflects Its Origin," New York Times, p. 4E.

[3]Lydia Chavez, "The Odds in El Salvador," The New York Times Magazine, 24 July 1983, p. 48.

[4]Quoted in Daniel Greene, "U.S.-Libya Qausi-War Escalates," Army Times, 21 April 1986, p. 6.

country's civilian leadership.[5] There is a common assumption that during crises, the military, in Pavlovian fashion, urge the use of arms. "We must not be surprised, and still less persuaded," McGeorge Bundy wrote in 1967, "when generals and admirals recommend additional military action -- what do we expect them to recommend?"[6] According to Arthur Schlesinger, as was noted in chapter I, a major cause of America's "imperial drift" was the "incessant pressure of the professional military...constant demands...more military involvement, more military intervention."[7]

Such images, however, are not supported by the evidence in the post-Vietnam era.[8] Vietnam tempered any activist tendencies in the military leadership. In those cases since 1973 where presidents have considered committing American forces to combat, or even considered the employment of military elements as a dramatic signalling device, the military have rarely been as aggressive as the presidents' principal civilian advisers -- and

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[5]Popular perceptions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are described in David C. Martin and Michael A. Lerner, "Why the Generals Can't Command," Newsweek, 14 February 1983, p. 22; See also Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 4.

[6]McGeorge Bundy, "A Communication," Washington Post, 11 September 1967, p. A21.

[7]Arthur Schlesinger, The Crisis of Confidence (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1969), p. 172.

[8]In fact, stereotypes of military leaders as Dr. Strangeloves in uniform have never been very accurate. See Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

never more aggressive.

Not surprisingly, the lessons that U.S. military leaders took from Vietnam have weighed heavily on their minds, influencing their advice on the use of force in any situation that has resembled Vietnam. The ghost of Vietnam past has haunted military leaders throughout the evolution of U.S. policy toward Central America and was ever present during the deliberations over the Marine "presence" mission in Lebanon. The senior leadership, examination of those cases will show, has not been interested in "another Vietnam."

The conservatism and caution that springs from the lessons of Vietnam, however, also may have affected military advice on cases that have had few similarities to Vietnam. Senior leaders in the post-Vietnam era have been cautious in approaching any potential use of American military forces abroad. Having experienced the devastating loss of public confidence, dramatic cuts in defense spending, and difficulty in personnel recruiting and retention that followed Vietnam, today's generals and admirals want, above all else, to avoid not just another Vietnam, but the erosion of public support that would accompany military failure in virtually any endeavor. In short, the so-called "military conservatism" described by Samuel Huntington has been a more universal characteristic of America's generals and admirals since Vietnam than it was when Huntington espoused the concept in the 1950s, or for that matter, in any other post-World War II

period.[9]

Analyzing Military Influence

In analyzing the influence of the military on decisions concerning the use of force, there are three principal questions to be considered. First, when the use of force was an issue, what did military advisers recommend compared to civilian advisers? Second, what effect did the advice or influence of the military have on presidential decisions? And third, what appears to account for the advice proffered, or the influence exerted, by the military leadership?[10] These will be the questions addressed in examining the cases that follow.

Before turning to those cases, it should be noted that there are, of course, limitations in trying to reconstruct who said what in highly classified National Security Council and other White House deliberations less than 15 years after the most distant took place. The most reliable records -- the minutes of the actual meetings and internal memoranda -- will certainly remain classified for years to come. Nonetheless, the civilian participants in such deliberations have been surprisingly open in describing what took place. While the key military participants have been somewhat less forthcoming in print, they too have been relatively open in interviews and letters. And the lack of

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[9]Huntington's concept of military conservatism is described in chapter 1.

[10]Richard Betts addressed the same questions in his <u>Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises</u>.

contradictions in the civilian reports, as corroborated by interviews with key military participants, provides for a reasonable degree of confidence in the findings of this dissertation.

The Yom Kippur War Alert -- 1973

In October 1973 the United States took significant military steps in response to the perceived threat of Soviet intervention in the Middle East.[11] By all accounts, the principal architect of the American response was Henry Kissinger. The military appear to have played a minor role.

The Yom-Kippur War began with Egyptian and Syrian attacks against Israel on October 6, 1973. Hostilities were initiated exactly two weeks after Henry Kissinger became Secretary of State -- while retaining the position of Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA). With President Nixon consumed by his Watergate problems, Kissinger quickly took the lead in

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[11]One may dispute whether the deliberations over the alert in this case really constituted considerations of the use of force in combat. John Steinbruner has made the point, for example, that "the American military command structure did not appear to consider that the actual use of strategic forces had become a serious possibility" (John Steinbruner, "An Assessment of Nuclear Crises," in The Dangers of Nuclear War, ed. by Franklyn Griffiths and John C. Polanyi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 43). While this may appear true in retrospect (especially regarding the commander in chief, Strategic Air Command, who continued playing golf throughout a critical point in the affair), the memoirs of the participants indicate that at the time many of those involved saw a distinct possibility for some employment of U.S. troops, perhaps in a direct clash with Soviet forces.

formulating the U.S. response.[12] Upon learning of the imminence of hostilities, in fact even before receiving confirmation of the actual attacks, Kissinger directed the preparation of plans for movement of the Sixth Fleet into the Eastern Mediterranean and for reinforcement of U.S. Mediterranean naval units. Through Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, his deputy in the White House, Kissinger instructed the Department of Defense that "no troop movements should take place, but the readiness of our

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[12]Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, Kissinger (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), p. 450. Other valuable accounts of the U.S. decision-making during the Yom Kippur War crisis include: Henry A. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), pp. 450-613 (see p. 567 on Nixon's "all-consuming preoccupation" with Watergate); Richard M. Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), pp. 920-942; Anwar el-Sadat, In Search of Identity (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 248-267; Golda Meir, My Life (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), pp. 420-442; Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. On Watch: A Memoir (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1976), pp. 432-449; William B. Quandt, Decade of Decisions (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 165-206; Insight Team of the London Sunday Times, The Yom Kippur War (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 375-420; Barry Blechman and Douglas M. Hart, "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons," International Security, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Summer 1982), pp. 132-156; Scott D. Sagan, "Lessons of the Yom Kippur Alert," Foreign Policy, No. 36 (Fall 1979), pp. 160-177, and "Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management," International Security, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Spring 1985), pp. 99-139; John Steinbruner, "An Assessment of Nuclear Crises," in The Dangers of Nuclear War, ed. by Franklyn Griffiths and John C. Polanyi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), pp. 41-48; and Bruce Hurwitz, "Threat Perception, Linkage Politics and Decision Making: The October 1973 Worldwide Alert of US Military Forces," The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1985), pp. 135-144. An excellent chronology of events during the Yom Kippur War may be found in The Impact of the October Middle East War, Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, October/November 1973 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), pp. 109-114.

forces should be enhanced."[13] Establishing a pattern of autonomy that was to characterize his actions throughout the crisis, Kissinger did not discuss the situation with President Nixon until well after the hostilities began and he had issued his initial instructions.

Although the war initially went against the Israelis, American officials anticipated that the conflict would be a repetition of the Six Day War of 1967 -- culminating in a swift victory for Israel. To the surprise of Washington, however, the war settled into a stalemate within several days. The events in the Middle East took on a dramatically new dimension on October 9, moreover, when the Soviet Union began an airlift of military supplies to Egypt and Syria. In response, the U.S. began its own massive resupply of Israel on the 12th of October. By October 16, Israel had finally repulsed the Egyptian offensive and begun to counterattack.

The time seemed right for diplomatic resolution of the war, but despite efforts at shuttle diplomacy by Kissinger -- that included stops in Moscow, Tel Aviv, and London -- the fighting continued. A hotline message from Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev to President Nixon late on October 23 conveyed in no uncertain terms Moscow's displeasure with the failure of Kissinger's mission.[14]

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[13]Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), p. 455; Zumwalt, On Watch, pp. 434-435.

[14]Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, p. 936; Blechman and Hart, "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons," p. 136.

The Soviets acted quickly. By October 24, signs of Soviet preparations for military intervention in Egypt had become a source of serious concern in Washington. All seven Soviet airborne divisions and a number of Soviet Air Force units were on alert. Preparations for imminent departure were visible at several bases used by the airborne divisions. In addition, an unprecedented number (about 85, eventually to reach 100) of Soviet ships and amphibious assault vessels was deployed in the Mediterranean. Electronic intercepts indicated that a major Soviet operation could be expected.[15] On the afternoon of the 24th, Brezhnev warned that if the United States was unwilling to participate in a joint undertaking with Soviet forces to separate the Israelis and Egyptians (as requested by Egyptian President Sadat earlier that day and subsequently rejected by President Nixon), then the Soviets would be forced to consider unilateral action.[16]

At 11:00 p.m. on October 24, Kissinger convened a meeting of the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG), the forum for crisis management during the Nixon administration. Kissinger chaired the meeting, with the other principal members of this group being: Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger; Director of Central Intelligence William Colby; the Deputy APNSA Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft; Admiral Thomas Moorer, the Chairman of

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[15]Nixon, RN, p. 937; Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, pp. 584-585; Blechman and Hart, "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons," pp. 136-138.

[16]Nixon, RN, p. 938.

the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and the White House Chief of Staff, General Alexander Haig (who had recently resigned from the Army to take the White House post).[17] President Nixon, traditionally not a participant in past WSAG deliberations, did not attend, although he had earlier suggested that Haig and Kissinger hold a meeting "to formulate plans for a firm reaction to what amounted to a scarcely veiled threat of unilateral Soviet intervention."[18]

By the time the WSAG convened, "all evidence pointed to serious preparations by the Soviets for an intervention in Egypt...within 24 hours." All participants agreed, Barry Blechman and Douglas Hart later wrote, that "if the U.S. had not reacted to [the Soviet] military preparations, it would have been imprudent in the extreme."[19]

Recognizing the need for a U.S. response, the members of the WSAG recommended advancing the alert status of U.S. military

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[17]Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, p. 586. Kissinger describes the WSAG on page 316 of Ibid.

[18]Nixon, RN, p. 938; Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, pp. 586-587. Since Nixon was not a WSAG member his absence was not noteworthy. A larger question is why the decisions were not taken in National Security Council meetings, in which the president would, of course, have participated. The obvious answer appears to be that he was preoccupied with the ongoing domestic crisis -- Watergate -- and, in any case, had confidence in the abilities of Kissinger and Haig to determine the appropriate U.S. response. (There was no vice-president at this time. Spiro Agnew had resigned the office and Gerald Ford's nomination was still pending confirmation.)

[19]Blechman and Hart, "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons," p. 137; Admiral Thomas H. Moorer (USN, Ret.), letter to William J. Taylor Jr. concerning a paper written by Taylor and me, subject "Report for Conference at West Point -- Comments on Pages 14 and 15," 7 May 1985, p. 1.

forces as a message to the Soviet Union.[20] Whether and when Nixon concurred is unclear, but in any event the order went out in the middle of the night.[21] The alert status of all major commands was increased, including that of the Strategic Air Command.[22] Additionally, about sixty B52 bombers were moved from

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[20]Barry Blechman and Douglas M. Hart, "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons," International Security, Vol. 1, No. 7 (Summer 1982), p. 137.

[21]Blechman and Hart, "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons," p. 139; Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, p. 589; Sagan, "Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management," pp. 125-126; Nixon, RN, p. 939; The Yom Kippur War, pp. 413-415. None of these sources specifies whether Kissinger or Haig actually consulted with Nixon before ordering the alert, although Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb wrote that Kissinger did talk to the president on the phone once during the night (Kissinger (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), pp. 490-492). Kissinger himself wrote later that he "did not know what conversations Haig...had with Nixon in the early hours of the morning" (Years of Upheaval, p. 593). William Quandt, a Middle East expert on the NSC staff at the time, later wrote that Nixon "had not participated in the deliberations of the NSC [sic], but he had approved the orders" (Decade of Decisions, p. 198). But Quandt did not participate in the deliberations and, in fact, seems to have drawn extensively on Kalb and Kalb, one of the earliest accounts of the crisis, and one that has since been shown to be inaccurate in some places. Finally, Admiral Moorer believes that "Kissinger did leave the room to consult with [Nixon] on more than one occasion" ("Report on Conference at West Point," p. 2), but Moorer may have mistaken Kissinger's departure to meet with Israeli Ambassador Dinitz for a meeting with Nixon.

[22]The level of alert was Defense Condition 3, on a scale of 5 possible "DEFCONS," with DEFCON 5 being normal peacetime readiness and DEFCON 1 maximum force readiness. Although portions of the American nuclear arsenal have been placed on a higher state of alert in numerous other instances, there appear to have been only three cases in which global American military forces have been put at DEFCON 3 or above during a crisis with the Soviet Union: for 24 hours during the U2 crisis in May 1960 (as a result of misinterpretation of Secretary of Defense Gates' order for a "quiet increase in command readiness"); for the 30-day period of the Cuban missile crisis in October and November 1962; and on 24 October 1973. See Scott D. Sagan, "Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management," International Security, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Spring 1985), pp. 100-101; and Walter Laqueur,

their bases in Guam to the United States, the aircraft carrier **John F. Kennedy** was dispatched towards the Mediterranean, and the 82d Airborne Division was told to be ready to move by 6:00 AM the following morning.[23]

The Soviet Union got the message, and Egypt and Israel--impressed by the gravity of the situation (and in Israel's case, by a tough call from Kissinger) -- finally accepted conditions that would allow a cease fire to hold. The alert was relaxed the following day.[24]

The question here, of course, is what part the military played in the brief deliberations over the U.S. response. In this case, the "military" was Admiral Thomas Moorer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. General Haig, recently retired, participated as a representative of President Nixon, and General Scowcroft was Kissinger's deputy APNSA. Neither could be

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Confrontation: The Middle East and World Politics (New York: Quadrangle, 1974), p. 199. (Laqueur contends that DEFCON 3 was ordered after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963).

[23]Blechman and Hart, "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons," p. 140. The DEFCON 3 alert went out first, at 11:41 p.m., followed within an hour by the orders alerting the 82d Airborne Division and instructing the movement of the aircraft carriers. A list of the military actions taken may be found in Zumwalt, On Watch, p. 443, and in Sagan, "Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management," pp. 125-126. The alert of the 82d Airborne Division, the movement of the bombers, and the assembly of three aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean (the **Kennedy** would join the **Roosevelt** and the **Independence**, already in the Mediterranean, south of Crete) were measures taken additional to DEFCON 3 actions to ensure that Soviet intelligence would notice "the change rapidly enough to affect their diplomacy." Hurwitz, "Threat Perception," p. 41; Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, p. 589.

[24]Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, pp. 586-598.

regarded as in any formal sense representatives of the military.

All indications are that with the President preoccupied with Watergate (the "Saturday Night Massacre" had been carried out on October 20) Kissinger was in charge.[25] Confident in his mastery of the national security apparatus and never one to rely heavily on the military for advice (nor to hold that advice in high regard), Kissinger shaped the WSAG's recommendations and then presumably relayed them (in the case of the alert "recommendation," apparently through Haig, if at all) to the President.[26] The President apparently approved the recommended actions and "empowered Kissinger to take charge of the American response."[27] Considering the seriousness Kissinger later ascribed to the crisis, it is revealing of his level of autonomy that during the night of October 24, he never saw the President.

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[25]A revealing point is that Kissinger had wanted to manage the crisis in the State Department and only moved the WSAG meetings to the White House at the insistence of Alexander Haig. See Alexander M. Haig, Caveat (New York: MacMillan, 1984), p. 142. Admiral Moorer confirmed Haig's account, writing that he was told by Kissinger's assistant Lawrence Eagleburger that the October 24 meeting would be at the State Department, only to find upon arrival there that the location had been switched to the White House situation room. Moorer, "Report for Conference at West Point," p. 1.

[26]Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, p. 593. Kissinger never held the military's strategic thinking in high regard. "The 'agreed' JCS submissions," he wrote later, "were usually nonaggression treaties among the various services unrelated to a coherent strategy." Kissinger, The White House Years (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 398. Another instructive remark by Kissinger came while he was APNSA: "In my experience with the military," he said, "they are more likely to accept decisions they do not like than any other group." Quoted in Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, Kissinger (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), p. 450.

[27]Kalb and Kalb, Kissinger, pp. 490-492.

If he talked to the President at all during the deliberations over the response it was only once, and then over the phone. All other messages were apparently relayed through Nixon's Chief of Staff Alexander Haig.[28]

Admiral Moorer appears to have provided largely technical input. His contribution was, in his own words, to "describe the degrees of alert...and the actions which would be generated by setting DEFCON 3," and to remind Kissinger that "in a situation like this the inclination of the local commanders is...to do just a little more [than required by the alert system] since they don't want to get caught unprepared."[29] He also reportedly described the unfavorable balance of forces in the Eastern Mediterranean.[30] Finally, he wisely followed the alert order with "a secure telephone call to the unified and specified commanders in order to explain the purpose of the alert in greater detail than was possible in an operational order."[31]

In this case then, the "military" were neither very aggressive nor very influential in their contribution to the

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[28]See footnote 17.

[29]Moorer, "Report for Conference at West Point," p. 2.

[30]Zumwalt, On Watch, p. 446; and Moorer, "Report for Conference at West Point," p. 2. Journalist Tad Szulc has claimed that only Kissinger and Schlesinger "met" when "the recommendation order was given for Defcon 3." See Szulc, The Illusion of Peace (New York: Viking Press, 1978), pp. 746-747. Moorer's "Report for Conference at West Point," appears to refute that claim.

[31]Sagan, "Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management," footnote 83, p. 128; and John Steinbruner, "An Assessment of Nuclear Crises," p. 43.

deliberations that produced a very significant military response, the global nature of which was later privately acknowledged by Kissinger as having been too extreme.[32]

The Mayaguez Incident -- 1975

When the U.S. merchant ship **Mayaguez** was seized by Cambodian gunboats on May 12, 1975, President Gerald Ford -- America's first "appointed" President -- had been in office for nine months. The prestige of the United States was at a low ebb in Southeast Asia. The fall of Phnom Penh on April 17 and Saigon on April 30 had signalled the end of the American presence in Indochina. For a variety of reasons, President Ford chose to personally oversee the crisis management process and used the National Security Council as the forum for deliberations on U.S. actions.[33] Thus the key participants were: President Ford; Vice

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[32]Kalb and Kalb, Kissinger, p. 499. An excellent analysis of the alert is contained in Sagan, "Lessons of the Yom Kippur Alert."

[33]Among reasons analysts have offered for President Ford's high degree of personal involvement and for the Ford administration's desire to respond firmly in the **Mayaguez** incident have been: a desire to prop up the administration's sagging domestic support, with the presidential election six months away; a perceived need to shore up the country's international credibility (with allies and adversaries alike); a hope of preventing further losses in Southeast Asia; an effort on the part of President Ford to assert his personal authority and that of the presidency; and a desire to avoid a repeat of the **Pueblo** tragedy. See Roger Morris, "What to Make of **Mayaguez**," New Republic, 14 June 1975, pp. 9-12; Robert T. Hartmann, Palace Politics: An Inside Account of the Ford Years (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), p. 324; and Douglas W. King, "The Seizure of the **Mayaguez**: An Analysis of Presidential and Congressional Response to a Crisis in Foreign Policy" (Harvard University: Senior Thesis, 19 March 1981), pp. 7-12.

President Nelson Rockefeller; Secretary of State (and still APNSA) Henry Kissinger; Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger; Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General David Jones (the Chairman, General George Brown, was in Europe); Deputy APNSA General Brent Scowcroft; and Director of Central Intelligence William Colby.[34]

In the first NSC meeting, held at noon on May 12, the key actor was Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. He argued strongly "that the issues at stake went far beyond the seizure of a U.S. civilian ship to the question of international perceptions of power and national will."[35] "At some point," he continued, "the

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[34]Roy Rowan, The Four Days of the **Mayaguez** (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975), pp. 67-68. Other participants included White House Staff Chief Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements, and senior NSC staffer for East Asia Richard Smyser.

Other valuable accounts of the decision-making during the **Mayaguez** crisis include: Gerald R. Ford, A Time to Heal (New York: Harper, 1979), chapter 5; Jules Witcover, "The **Mayaguez** Decision," Washington Post, 17 May 1975, pp. A1, A10; King, "The Seizure of the **Mayaguez**: An Analysis of Presidential and Congressional Response to a Crisis in Foreign Policy,"; Commander in Chief, Pacific, Command History, 1975 (Appendix VI: The **SS Mayaguez** Incident), Declassified Documents, 1981, no. 33B; Richard G. Head, Frisco W. Short, and Robert C. McFarlane, Crisis Resolution: Presidential Decision Making in the **Mayaguez** and Korean Confrontations (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 108-131 (see appendix A for an excellent chronology); Chris Lamb, "Belief Systems and Decision Making in the **Mayaguez** Crisis," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 99, No. 4 (Winter 1984-85), pp. 681-702; 94th Congress, 2d Session, House Committee on International Relations Hearings: "Seizure of the **Mayaguez**," parts I-IV (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1976); and Lieutenant Colonel Donald Carlile, "The **Mayaguez** Incident -- Crisis Management," Military Review, Vol. 56, No. 10 (October 1976), pp. 3-14.

[35]Head, et. al., Crisis Resolution, p. 110. See also Ford, A Time to Heal, p. 276; and Lamb, "Belief Systems and Decision Making in the **Mayaguez** Crisis," pp. 687-692.

United States must draw the line. This is not...the best such situation...But we must act upon it now, and act firmly."[36] Consensus within the NSC was reached after only forty-five minutes of discussion. The option of ignoring the seizure was ruled out and the participants agreed on the two foremost U.S. objectives: "to recover the ship and its crew; and to do so in such a way as to demonstrate firmly to the international community that the United States could and would act with firmness to protect its interests."[37]

Additionally, President Ford made three decisions: first, to have Kissinger pursue diplomatic efforts through the Peoples' Republic of China (necessary because the U.S. had no diplomatic relations with the Khmer Rouge regime in Phnom Penh) to gain the release of the ship and its crew; second, to have Navy reconnaissance planes maintain constant surveillance of the **Mayaguez**; and third, to order the closest available military resources to converge toward the **Mayaguez**, and to commence further planning and preparations of military and diplomatic options.[38] General Jones' initial contribution is unclear, although the JCS perception at the time of the meeting was that the "location and status of the **Mayaguez** were highly uncertain and that the entire situation was changing rapidly." Military planning, Jones later noted, was complicated by the lack of air

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[36]Ford, A Time to Heal, p. 276.

[37]Head, et. al., Crisis Resolution, p. 110.

[38]King, "The Seizure of the **Mayaguez**," pp. 12-13.

and naval forces in the region, and the lack of ground elements closer than Okinawa.[39] In fact, JCS alternatives were not forthcoming until the following day, as General Jones was "reluctant to offer premature options that would inevitably be based on 'soft' or inadequate information."[40]

The second NSC meeting was held on May 13. By then the **Mayaguez** and the Cambodian gunboats had been precisely located (after a night of conflicting intelligence reports), although the whereabouts of the crew were still in question. Additionally, the diplomatic effort through the PRC had yielded nothing, and two U.S. reconnaissance planes had been shot at by Cambodians. Due to the still rapidly changing nature of the situation, President Ford chose not to make a final decision. He did, however, order the deployment of appropriate military forces to

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[39]As the NSC was deliberating, the Commander in Chief, Pacific was taking steps to assemble the nearest available vessels for possible military action. Reconnaissance aircraft had been launched at the order of the Acting CJCS at approximately 7:30 a.m. that morning (Washington time) and surveillance was continued throughout the remainder of the incident. See "The **S.S. Mayaguez** Incident," pp. 13-22; and Central Intelligence Agency, "Post-Mortem Report: An Examination of the Intelligence Community's Performance Before and During the **Mayaguez** Incident of May 1975," dated August 1975, Declassified Documents, 1978 (microfiche), no. 5D:7.

"'Mayday' for the **Mayaguez**," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. CII (November 1976), pp. 93-111 consists of accounts written by five military participants in the rescue operation: a patrol squadron skipper; a destroyer escort skipper; the commander of the Marine force that assaulted the **Mayaguez**; the operations officer of the Marine battalion that assaulted the island where the **Mayaguez** was anchored; and the skipper of a guided missile destroyer. See also Tom Bartlett, "**Mayaguez**," Leatherneck Magazine, Vol. 58, No. 9, pp. 50-55.

[40]Head, et al., Crisis Resolution, pp. 111-112.

Utapao, Thailand to provide the capability for concerted U.S. action should the use of military force prove necessary, and directed further that the **Mayaguez** and Koh Tang (the island off which the ship was anchored) be isolated from the mainland by the use of Thailand-based U.S. aircraft.[41] With Kissinger on a trip in Kansas City, President Ford clearly dominated the crisis management process at that point.

The third meeting of the NSC was held that night, at 10:40 p.m. on May 13. Following the usual review of developments since the previous meeting, the discussion over the appropriate U.S. response began to bring out the differences of opinion between the key participants, particularly between Secretary of State Kissinger (back from his trip to Kansas City) and Secretary of Defense Schlesinger. Kissinger was "emphatic on the use of force," feeling that it was important for the American action to have a dramatic impact on other countries prone to similar provocations against the United States (especially North Korea). Schlesinger, on the other hand, "stressed the need to recover the ship and punish the Cambodians, but was less eager to use the incident as an example for Asia and the world." General Jones did not participate in the debate, but did present five military options developed by the JCS.[42]

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[41]Head, et. al., Crisis Resolution, p. 115; "The **S.S. Mayaguez** Incident," pp. 21-22.

[42]Rowan, The Four Days of **Mayaguez**, pp. 141-142; King, "The Seizure of the **Mayaguez**," pp. 31-33; "New Test for U.S.: Why Ford Moved So Fast," U.S. News and World Report, Vol. 78, No. 21 (26 May 1975), p. 20.

At the end of that meeting, the President ordered the JCS to prepare for the use of force to rescue the crew and recapture the ship, selecting as his favored option one which "included a heliborne Marine assault on Koh Tang [island] to rescue any of the crew transported there, boarding of the **Mayaguez** by another group of Marines..., and select air strikes" against military targets on the coast of the Cambodian mainland. While ordering the JCS to prepare for that option, he directed, nonetheless, that options of both greater and lesser severity be kept open. At that point, the question of timing became the primary consideration. Secretary Kissinger pressed for the earliest possible commitment of forces, and called for mounting the operation a day earlier than planned. General Jones replied, however, that the JCS could not recommend such action, and planning continued in accordance with the JCS timetable.[43]

The final NSC meeting of the crisis was held on the afternoon of May 14. General Jones presented the JCS options that had been developed in accordance with the guidance of earlier meetings.[44] The basic plan of Marine assaults on the island and the ship had been settled, but other options remained to be considered. As Ford later recalled, these options ranged

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[43]Head, Crisis Resolution, pp. 114-115;

[44]Ford, A Time to Heal, p. 279. General George Brown, the CJCS, having by then returned from Europe, also attended that meeting, but General Jones conducted the review of the military options. Admiral James Holloway, Chief of Naval Operations, also attended the meeting. King, "The Seizure of the **Mayaguez**," p. 39.

from "minimum use of force" -- helicoptering Marines to Koh Tang to rescue **Mayaguez** and her crew and then withdrawing them as soon as possible -- to "maximum display of force" -- accompanying the rescue assaults with air strikes against the Cambodian mainland.[45]

Once again, Kissinger and Schlesinger differed over the proper course. Kissinger, Vice President Rockefeller, and Scowcroft argued for the rescue operations plus B-52 air strikes against the mainland, while Schlesinger was concerned that the bombing plans were too extensive, opposed use of B-52s for the strikes, and -- according to President Ford's recollection-- seemed to be against any bombing at all. General Jones concurred with Schlesinger's opposition to use of B-52s.[46] President Ford initially sided with Kissinger, but came to feel that massive B-52 strikes would have constituted "overkill," and thus opted to "have Navy jets from Coral Sea make surgical strikes against specific targets" on the Cambodian mainland. Instead of retaliation, the strikes were to prevent Cambodian aircraft and

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[45]Ford, A Time to Heal, p. 279.

[46]According to President Ford's account, JCS Chairman General George Brown also argued in favor of hitting the mainland, but with carrier-based aircraft (A Time to Heal, p. 250). There is some question, however, whether General Brown attended the final NSC meeting or not. The Head, et. al. account does not mention General Brown's attendance, but does note that Admiral Holloway, Chief of Naval Operations, was present (Crisis Resolution, p. 122). Edgar Puryear's George S. Brown (Presidio Press, 1983), also implies that Brown did not attend the final meeting but that Admiral Holloway did. My conclusion is that Admiral Holloway was mistaken for General Brown in President Ford's later recollections.

Khmer Rouge soldiers from moving against the Marines at Koh Tang island.[47] At 4:45 p.m. Ford ordered the assault to begin, with the air strikes to be timed to coincide with the recapture of the Mayaguez.[48]

Once again the military (in the form of the Acting CJCS General Jones, joined in the final meeting by Admiral Holloway) were not the aggressive party in presidential deliberations over the use of force -- Kissinger, Rockefeller, and Scowcroft were. In fact, the military's representatives do not appear to have been a determining influence in the decision to use force. Their opposition to the use of B-52s reinforced the similar opposition espoused by Secretary Schlesinger. Finally, it does not appear that General Jones presented the JCS options in such a way as to strengthen the case of either Secretary Kissinger or Secretary Schlesinger. Jones' influence appears to have been primarily that of informing the NSC members of what was possible and what was not, specifically with regard to the timing of the operation, and then, with General Brown, to counsel against the use of massive B-52 strikes.

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[47]Ford, A Time to Heal, pp. 279-280; and King, "The Seizure of the **Mayaguez**," pp. 40-41; Ron Nessen, It Sure Looks Different From the Inside (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 128; John Osborne, White House Watch (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Books, 1977), pp. 139-140; Witcover, "The **Mayaguez** Decision," pp. A1, A10. Interestingly, it appears that President Ford's decision against massive air strikes was influenced significantly by points raised by David Kennerly, the White House photographer, who happened to be taking pictures of the meeting. See Ford, A Time to Heal, pp. 279-280.

[48]For a synopsis of the operation, see "The **S.S. Mayaguez** Incident," pp. 25-30.

The Korean Demilitarized Zone Incident -- 1976

On August 18, 1976, North Korean soldiers assaulted a group of American and South Korean soldiers who were trimming a large tree in the Joint Security Area (JSA) of the Korean Demilitarized Zone. Two American officers were killed, and four American and five South Korean enlisted men were wounded.[49] This brutal and unprovoked incident triggered a series of American responses in which senior military leaders -- the field commander in particular -- played an influential role.

The initial responsibility for managing the crisis in Washington fell to Secretary of State (and no longer also APNSA) Henry Kissinger. President Ford and General Scowcroft, recently resigned from the Air Force and appointed APNSA, were in Kansas City, site of the Republican National Convention. Upon being notified of the incident, the President directed Kissinger to convene the WSAG to develop options for a U.S. response.

The first WSAG meeting was convened about 13 hours after the incident took place. The key participants were: Secretary of State Kissinger; Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements (Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld was ill); Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral James Holloway (General George Brown, the Chairman, was out of the country); and Director of Central

[49] Edgar F. Puryear, Jr., George S. Brown (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1983), p. 261. "The trimming of trees and cutting and clearing of brush had been carried on for years in the Joint Security Area without serious incident, although like almost all activity there, it had been the source of many disagreements and disputes." See Head, et. al., p. 156.

Intelligence George Bush.[50] The meeting opened with an intelligence update and discussion of the incident. It became quickly apparent that there was, among the participants, no early consensus on the precise course of action. Secretary Kissinger, however, quickly expressed his outrage at the actions of the North Koreans. As later described,

> The others were less inclined to support offensive action, but [Kissinger's] forceful appeal, keyed to the essentialness of redressing a premeditated act of such brutality, was persuasive and successful in bringing them to a consensus. They then agreed on the need to deploy aircraft and ships to the area and to increase the readiness level of U.S. forces in Korea.[51]

Kissinger then discussed the WSAG's recommendations with President Ford and General Scowcroft by phone, and, with Scowcroft's endorsement, the President approved each of them.[52]

At that point, the field commander assumed a significant role in the development of the eventual response. In a message that arrived in Washington after the first WSAG meeting, General Richard Stilwell, commander of the United Nations Command and U.S. forces in Korea, proposed what was to become Operation Paul Bunyon -- the plan to enter the JSA and cut down the tree the American element had been trimming when the North Koreans

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[50]Also in attendance were Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Morton Abramowitz (chief of the International Security Affairs' Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs); Undersecretary of State Philip Habib; and William G. Hyland, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. See Head, et. al., Crisis Resolution, p. 180.

[51]Head, et al., Crisis Resolution, p. 181.

[52]Head, et. al., Crisis Resolution, p. 182.

attacked and killed the two U.S. officers. General Stilwell's proposal refocused attention on a response within the JSA, and was later described by three National War College researchers as

> a quid pro quo that did not escalate the situation and at the same time prevented escalation by the adversary....[a proposal that] reflected not only an understanding of military capabilities and limitations, but also an appreciation of international political, legal, and moral standards and domestic political values.[53]

A second WSAG meeting took place on the morning of August 19. At it there was tentative agreement on military deployments to Korea as a show of force, and on acceptance of General Stilwell's concept to enter the JSA and cut down the tree. With these recommendations in hand, Secretary Kissinger flew to Kansas City where he met with President Ford and General Scowcroft. Kissinger presented the options to the President and outlined the WSAG recommendations, but then proceeded to recommend "more forceful action," which he argued was necessary to "demonstrate the U.S. will to defend its interests." Scowcroft agreed, but

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[53]Head et al., Crisis Resolution, p. 245. Before dispatching the message, General Stilwell had called from Korea and talked to Lieutenant General Ray Sitton of the Joint Staff in the National Military Command Center over a secure line. Stilwell expressed his feeling that there was no alternative to cutting the tree down, but acknowledged the risks of doing so. However, he added, the North Koreans "admire strength and understand nothing else." Thus, as Admiral Holloway later observed, the issue became one of how to cut the tree down without starting another war. Deputy Secretary of Defense Clements, according to Admiral Holloway, thought that such action was unnecessarily dangerous, and proposed instead other alternatives (such as placing a bag of napalm at the base of the tree and then igniting it with a tracer round, or using an anti-tank guided missile or artillery to demolish the tree). 28 February 1985 phone call between Admiral James Holloway (USN, Ret.) and Dr. William J. Taylor.

"stressed the importance of assuring that the means chosen would not result in a North Korean reply in which the U.S. would be at a disadvantage."[54] President Ford approved the deployments recommended by the WSAG and gave a tentative go-ahead on the tree chopping option, withholding final approval until a detailed plan arrived from Korea.[55]

The final plan called for a small task force to enter the JSA early in the morning -- thirty minutes before the North Korean guards usually manned their posts. The task force would cut down the tree and remove two illegal North Korean road barriers in the JSA. Meanwhile, a second task force would stand by to provide cover, and, if necessary, reinforcement to counter

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[54]On the basis of an interview with President Ford, Head et. al. wrote afterward that Scowcroft "pointed out that the use of U.S. artillery near the [demilitarized] zone (one 105mm howitzer battery) could result in an artillery duel in which the U.S. would be at a serious disadvantage. In sum, some other means such as a tactical aircraft strike might be preferable." See Crisis Resolution, p. 190.

[55]Head, et. al., Crisis Resolution, p. 190. According to Admiral Holloway, Kissinger's desire to pursue more aggressive action than that recommended by the WSAG was not clear in the WSAG meetings. I am inclined to accept the Head, et. al. account, however, because one of the authors (Robert McFarlane) was General Scowcroft's military assistant at the time of the incident and saw the decision-making process at the White House level more completely than did Admiral Holloway. Additionally, the authors of Crisis Resolution conducted exhaustive interviews with the participants in the decision-making process within a year or two after the crisis.

Benjamin F. Schemmer, editor of Armed Forces Journal International, recently wrote that Secretary of State Kissinger "proposed [firing] off a nuclear weapon" in response to the North Korean action. See Schemmer's "The Military Belongs on the NSC," Wall Street Journal, 25 February 1987. Schemmer said, in a phone conversation on 9 March 1987 that although his report was based on a single source, that source could have been "better" only if it had been President Ford or Secretary Kissinger.

any North Korean actions. Upon being completed, the final plan was sent to Washington where it was approved by the Joint Chiefs, the Defense and State Departments, and the National Security Council staff. It was then forwarded to Kansas City for presidential review. After discussions with Secretary Kissinger and General Scowcroft on the morning of April 20, President Ford approved the plan and ordered that it be executed.[56]

Operation Paul Bunyon was successfully carried out in Korea less than eight hours later.[57] The U.S. actions were unchallenged by the North Koreans, and the crisis was effectively ended with a message from North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung which termed the incident "regretful" [sic].[58]

The Korean tree cutting crisis was notable for the extent to which the field commander influenced the final response. Of special note, that influence very likely limited the scope and amount of force employed in the military retaliation. Had Secretary Kissinger prevailed, it seems likely that a more forceful action would have been taken. Thus, in this case, the military did play a central role in a decision to use force, although the military's input served to limit the response rather

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[56]Head, et. al., Crisis Resolution, pp. 192-193.

[57]The operation was carried out at 7:00 a.m. August 21 Korea time, which corresponded to 6:00 p.m. August 20 in Washington. For an account of the operation at troop level, see Captain Wayne A. Kirkbride (USA), Timber: The Story of Operation Paul Bunyon (New York: Vantage Press, 1980). See also Puryear, George S. Brown, p. 263.

[58]Murray Marder, "U.S. Says Message Fails to Admit Guilt in Brutal Murders," Washington Post, 23 August 1976, p. A1.

than to expand it.

The Horn of Africa -- 1978

The Carter Administration inherited a complex and dynamic situation in the Horn of Africa. Events in that region eventually took on near-crisis proportions, and at least one member of the administration advocated a show of military force-- a move resisted by the President and his other civilian and military advisers.

The Horn of Africa was the scene of a long-standing territorial dispute between Somalia and Ethiopia.[59] During the first half of 1977, matters there were complicated when the Soviet Union shifted its support from Somalia to Ethiopia (although some Soviet advisers remained in Somalia).[60] The subsequent deployment of Cuban military forces to Ethiopia greatly worried some administration officials, especially Zbigniew Brzezinski, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.[61] In response, the United States decided, in

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[59]For a more detailed description of the Horn of Africa crisis, see Larry Napper, "The Ogaden War: Some Implications for Crisis Prevention," in Managing U.S.-Soviet Rivalry: Problems of Crisis Prevention, ed. by Alexander L. George (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 233-237.

[60]An in-depth discussion of the diplomatic maneuverings may be found in Steven David, "Realignment in the Horn: The Soviet Advantage," International Security, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Fall 1979), pp. 69-90.

[61]Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), p. 178; Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith (New York: Bantam, 1982), p. 222.

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's words, to "help other countries...meet Somalia's needs for defensive equipment."[62]

Such American assistance did not materialize, however. In late July 1977, Somali regular forces were identified attacking towards the main population centers in the disputed Ogaden region. Because of the Somali offensive in the Ogaden, the U.S. refused to implement the agreement to help other countries provide arms to Somalia.[63]

In the fall of 1977, the Somalis renounced their treaty with the Soviet Union, expelled their remaining Soviet military advisers, and broke relations with Cuba. The United States, nonetheless, remained unwilling to assist Somalia as long as its forces were fighting in the Ogaden. The ensuing debate over the appropriate American policy toward Somalia came to revolve around the question of whether or not the issue was "purely a local one," as it was viewed by Secretary of State Vance, or had more global implications, as argued by APNSA Zbigniew Brzezinski.[64] Secretary of Defense Brown was "skeptical of the feasibility of any U.S. countermoves," and later explained that "Soviet actions, direct or through surrogates, in Angola and Ethiopia do not directly endanger U.S. security -- unless they portend similar

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[62]Cyrus Vance, Hard Choices (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 73.

[63]Vance, Hard Choices, p. 73.

[64]Vance, Hard Choices, p. 73; Brzezinski, Power and Influence, p. 179; and Bernard Gwertzman, "Top Carter Aides Seen in Discord on How to React to Soviet Actions," New York Times, 3 March 1978, p. A3.

behavior in Southwest Asia, which is vital to U.S. and allied security."[65]

By mid-January 1978, the several thousand man Cuban force in Ethiopia had shifted from an advisory to a combatant role. The Cubans and a massive influx of Soviet equipment began to turn the tide of the Ogaden conflict to Ethiopia's favor.[66] Brzezinski initiated Cabinet level meetings to discuss the situation there on the grounds that the issue was escalating into a crisis. Encouraged by President Carter's strong stand on the issue in a meeting with a Soviet Politburo member, Brzezinski pressed for a more direct American response, asserting that some show of force was important and that U.S. credibility was at stake. He was convinced that the United States should take "measures to make Soviet adventurism more costly."[67]

In the end, Brzezinski failed to carry the day. In a meeting of the administration's senior foreign policy and national security officials on February 21, 1978, Brzezinski raised the idea of U.S. military countermoves, and proposed the deployment of a carrier task force to the region. His views were unanimously opposed. As he wrote in his journal following the meeting:

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[65]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 179; and Harold Brown, Thinking About National Security (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), p. 268.

[66]Napper, "The Ogaden War: Some Implications for Crisis Prevention," pp. 233-237.

[67]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 181-182; and Vance, Hard Choices, p. 84.

> The Defense Department speaking through Harold [Brown], the JCS speaking through General Jones, and State speaking through Cy [Vance] -- all of them seem to me badly bitten by the Vietnam bug and as a consequence are fearful of taking the kind of action which is necessary to convey our determination and to reassure the concerned countries in the region.[68]

Despite reminding the President of his earlier expressed concern about what American lack of resolve was signalling to the Soviets, Brzezinski remained outnumbered and unable to sway the President to his side. Though the military played only a minor role in the deliberations, they clearly opposed, along with the President's senior civilian advisers, any military involvement in a region they perceived to be of only peripheral interest to the United States.[69]

The Iran Hostage Crisis -- 1979-1980

The November 4, 1979 militant Iranian students seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and some sixty-six American hostages, touching off a crisis that was to last for the next 15 months and to produce a U.S. military debacle when a rescue attempt failed in April 1980.[70] The decision-making process that led to the

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[68]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 183. The sentiments Brzezinski expressed in this quotation were confirmed in a lengthy discussion I had with him in the fall of 1984.

[69]Discussion with Brzezinski.

[70]For a description of the seizure of the embassy and hostages, see "Blackmailing the U.S." Time, 19 November 1979, pp. 14-26; and Vance, Hard Choices, pp. 374-376. According to Secretary Vance, there were sixty-three Americans taken hostage in the embassy. Three others, including charge d'affaires Bruce Laingen, were incarcerated at the Foreign Ministry, and six others hid in the Canadian Embassy -- eventually to be

rescue mission provides an example of the senior military playing what might be termed the "professional neutral" in discussions on the use of force.

Once again, Zbigniew Brzezinski took the lead in urging evaluation of possible military responses, instructing the Secretary of Defense on the day after the hostages were seized to "have the JCS proceed with the development of a plan for a rescue mission."[71] And once again disagreement surfaced over the extent of preparations for military action. At a meeting two days after the hostages were taken, Brzezinski recommended that defense planners

> look at three military contingencies: a rescue operation; a retaliatory action if any or all Americans were killed; and in the event that Iran disintegrated as a political entity, a military reaction focused on the vital oil fields in Southwestern Iran.[72]

In response, both Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and JCS Chairman General David Jones "stressed the difficulties involved

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clandestinely spirited out of the country in late January 1980. The story of their rescue is in Carter, Keeping Faith, pp. 483-484. Several of the hostages were released in coming months, but 52 of them would remain in captivity for the entire 444 days. See Ed Magnuson, "An End to the Long Ordeal," Time, 2 February 1981, pp. 24-29.

[71]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 493. Brzezinski also organized and chaired a special coordination committee which met secretly two or three times a week to oversee the development of military courses of action. Members included Defense Secretary Harold Brown, CIA Director Admiral Stansfield Turner, JCS Chairman General David Jones, and Assistant to the JCS Chairman Lieutenant General John Pustay. See Power and Principle, pp. 476-487; and Paul B. Ryan, The Iranian Rescue Mission (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1985), p. 12.

[72]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 482.

in undertaking any of these tasks," while Secretary Vance and his deputy, Warren Christopher, were "notably cool to any serious consideration of military options."[73]

As the crisis continued and various diplomatic initiatives achieved no success, more of the President's civilian advisers began to feel, as did Secretary Brown by early December, "that the time had come to consider seriously some military operation." But the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late December temporarily arrested the trend toward more serious consideration of military action, for, as Brzezinski later explained, the occupation of Afghanistan by Soviet troops made it "more important to mobilize Islamic resistance against the Soviets--and that dictated avoiding anything which might split Islamic opposition to Soviet expansionism."[74]

Toward the end of February 1980, however, the Iranians increased their demands on the United States. This led Brzezinski to revive White House interest in the military contingency, including the rescue option -- planning for which had continued since the hostages had been seized.[75] Brzezinski

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[73]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 482; Gary Sick, "Military Options and Constraints," in American Hostages in Iran, ed. by Warren Christopher, et. al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 144-145.

[74]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 484-485; Gary Sick, All Fall Down (New York: Random House, 1985), pp. 282; Vance, Hard Choices, p. 398.

[75]In fact, in January General Jones told Gary Sick of the NSC staff that "the likelihood of a successful operation was greatly improved from two months earlier" (All Fall Down, p. 282; and interview with Sick at West Point, New York, 9 December

favored very aggressive actions, wanting to combine the rescue mission with a retaliatory strike.[76] In fact, prior to the invasion of Afghanistan, Brzezinski had leaned toward what he termed a "generalized military response, designed to put Iran under pressure to release our hostages." In particular, he was "drawn to the notion of seizing Iran's Kharg Island (in the Persian Gulf) and imposing a military blockade on Iran, combined perhaps with some air strikes."[77]

By February 1980, President Carter increasingly shared his national security adviser's sense of impatience, and, after another month's diplomatic efforts produced no progress, he scheduled a March 22 NSC meeting at Camp David to review U.S. strategy toward Iran and consider a military attempt to free the hostages.[78] General Jones, representing the JCS, provided a detailed briefing on the prospective rescue mission. As he

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1986). The best accounts of the planning for the rescue mission are in: Colonel Charlie A. Beckwith (USA, Ret.) and Donald Knox, Delta Force (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), pp. 187-252; Ryan, The Iranian Rescue Mission, pp. 17-43; and Special Operations Review Group, Rescue Mission Report (also known as the Holloway Report, for Admiral James L. Holloway, III (USN, Ret.) the senior member of the review group) (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 1980). The report released was later published verbatim in three consecutive issues of Aviation Week and Space Technology, 15, 22, and 29 September 1980.

[76]Brzezinski describes his desires in Power and Principle, pp. 486-488.

[77]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 485-487, and "The Failed Mission," p. 28

[78]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 490-491; Carter, Keeping Faith, p. 501; Sick, All Fall Down, p. 284; and Vance, Hard Choices, pp. 406.

explained, the rescue plan contemplated was a two-day operation, not including the time required to preposition men and equipment in the Middle East and Indian Ocean. During the first night, the rescue force would be flown in C-130 aircraft from Oman into Iran, where they would rendezvous with helicopters (flown off the aircraft carrier **Nimitz** in the Northern Arabian Sea) at "Desert One," a site over 500 miles into the Iranian desert. The helicopters would be refueled and the rescue force would transfer to the helicopters for a flight (still under the cover of darkness) to a location southeast of Tehran where the team would conceal itself during the next day -- the helicopters flying on to a remote site in the mountains above Tehran to hide. The actual assault would take place during the second night, with the team transported into Tehran by local vehicles obtained by country agents already in Iran. One group would penetrate the embassy compound and rescue the hostages there, while a separate element would go to the Foreign Ministry to release the three Americans being held there. The hostages and the rescue force would then move to a nearby soccer stadium from which the helicopters would transport them to an abandoned airfield near Tehran where the helicopters would be abandoned and from which U.S. transport aircraft would fly the Americans out of the country under heavy air cover.[79]

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[79]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 490-491; Sick, All Fall Down, p. 287; Carter, Keeping Faith, pp. 508-510; Beckwith and Knox, Delta Force, pp. 253-257; "Iran: Consequences of the Abortive Attempt to Rescue the American Hostages," Conflict, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1981), pp. 55-60; Sick, "Military Options and

General Jones noted that the plan was "exceptionally complex." As Gary Sick later recounted:

> The chairman felt better about the viability of each of the parts of the plan, than about the operation in its entirety. Making each of the parts fit together on time gave him the greatest concern. Secretary Brown observed that in weighing the risks of this plan, it was necessary to consider the alternatives...A blockade and mining of Iranian ports had been examined... However, each of these also held very serious risks, including the possibility of physical retaliation against the hostages, possible widespread political repercussions in the Islamic world, pushing the Iranians into the arms of the Soviets, and the creation of severe difficulties for U.S. allies...In short, the risks and costs of the rescue mission were comparable to those of other military courses of action that had been considered.[80]

President Carter observed that "he did not want to undertake a rescue operation unless there was no choice." He would prefer to wait, he said, rather than conduct an operation that would result in the deaths of the hostages. General Jones pointed out, Gary Sick wrote later, "that the nights were becoming progressively shorter in Iran, thereby reducing the time available to insert the team and conduct the assault on the embassy."[81]

President Carter made it clear that he did not regard negotiations as finished and that he was not prepared to attempt a high-risk venture while the negotiating track still held opportunities. He did, however, authorize certain preparatory

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Constraints," pp. 157-158.

[80]Sick, All Fall Down, p. 287.

[81]Sick, All Fall Down, p. 287.

steps to lay the groundwork for a possible future rescue operation.[82]

By the first week of April, however, all hope of a negotiated release had vanished. The time had come to take firmer steps, Carter announced at an April 7 NSC meeting. Within the NSC staff, Gary Sick recounts, the rescue mission became the favored alternative. On April 10, APNSA Brzezinski gave the President a memorandum in which he "argued that further negotiations were futile and that [they] had to choose between the rescue operation or a direct application of force." Since the latter was likely to "drive Iran into the hands of the Soviet Union," Brzezinski recommended that the "President consider seriously coming to a decision on the rescue mission."[83]

The decisive NSC meeting was held on April 11. Nonbelligerent options proposed by Deputy Secretary of State Christopher (representing Secretary Vance, who was in Florida) were dismissed, and President Carter asked for the reactions of

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[82]Sick, All Fall Down, p. 287; Carter, Keeping Faith, p. 501.

[83]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 491, and "The Failed Mission," p. 31. NSC Iran expert Gary Sick reports in All Fall Down (p. 290) that on 8 April he sent a memorandum to Brzezinski in which he argued for conducting the rescue mission. It was apparently this memorandum that was the basis for the one Brzezinski sent to the President. Sick's memorandum concluded with the following statement:

> In my opinion, a carefully planned and boldly executed rescue operation represents the only realistic prospect that the hostages -- any of them -- will be freed in the foreseeable future. Our policy of restraint has won us well-deserved understanding throughout the world, but it has run out. It is time for us to act. Now.

his advisers to the rescue mission.[84] Vice President Mondale said he was "inclined to attempt the rescue." Brzezinski made a "forceful statement in favor of the mission." Admiral Stansfield Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence, was "positive, but cautioned" that conditions inside and around the compound could change any day. Press Secretary Jody Powell and Presidential Aide Hamilton Jordan echoed the sentiment of Secretary of Defense Brown, agreeing that the rescue mission was the "best option." Deputy Secretary Christopher said he had not discussed the mission with Secretary Vance and could not represent Vance's views. After a little more than an hour of discussion, President Carter decided that the rescue mission should be undertaken at the earliest possible date.[85]

During the decisive meeting, General Jones avoided the issue of whether or not the mission should be undertaken, and "focused...on how the rescue would be implemented" if approved.[86] This followed the pattern adopted by the senior military throughout the crisis. Following a March 24 update briefing on the preparations for the rescue mission, for example, Hamilton Jordan asked General John Pustay of the Joint Staff about the

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[84]Gary Sick notes that President Carter arrived at the meeting "with his mind all but made up." See All Fall Down, p. 292. On Deputy Secretary Christopher's participation, see Vance, Hard Choices, p. 409.

[85]Hamilton Jordan, Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1982), p. 251; Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), pp. 506-507; Sick, All Fall Down, p. 292; and Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 493.

[86]Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 493.

official posture of the Joint Chiefs. "Are they recommending the mission?" asked Jordan. "That's not our job." Pustay said, carefully choosing his words. "The President asked us to come up with a plan for a rescue and we have. It obviously will be his decision if he decides to attempt it."[87]

Despite the "strong objections" to the rescue mission voiced subsequently by Secretary Vance at an NSC meeting on April 15 and in private conversations with the President, Carter held to his earlier decision to go ahead with the rescue mission. "No one supported my position," Vance later noted in his memoirs.[88]

The final military briefing to the President was conducted on April 16. It was professional, and, with one exception, devoid of "can-do, gung-ho" sentiment. Although the military briefers assessed the prospects for success to be high, they noted that any number of unforeseen factors could jeopardize the mission. The most worrisome of those cited were: the desert weather, Iranian forces turning up in the wrong place, a last minute move of the hostages, and equipment failures -- especially of the helicopters. Although the commander of the ground forces (Colonel "Chargin" Charlie Beckwith) told the President: "I hope that you will let us go...we want to do it and we think we can," participants reported that after the briefing, President Carter knew thac it "might fail, and that there could be casualties,

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[87]Jordan, Crisis, pp. 228-229.

[88]Vance, Hard Choices, p. 411; Jordan, Crisis, p. 252; and Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 494.

even among the hostages."[89]

The eventual failure of the rescue attempt on April 24 need not be recounted here.[90] The important point for this study is that the rescue mission was not urged on the President by his military advisors, who (with the exception of Colonel Beckwith, the only non-flag rank officer to brief the President) studiously avoided the question of whether or not the mission should be undertaken.[91] In addition, the military were not hesitant in pointing out problem areas and things that could go wrong.

In sum, the military were not among the hawks in this case.

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[89]Benjamin F. Schemmer, "Presidential Courage and the April 1980 Iranian Rescue Mission," Armed Forces Journal International, May 1981, pp. 60-61; Jordan, Crisis, p. 264; Carter, Keeping Faith, pp. 507-508; Beckwith and Knox, Delta Force, p. 258.

[90]For the accounts of the failed rescue attempt, see: Rescue Mission Report; Beckwith and Knox, Delta Force, pp. 262-284; "Debacle in the Desert," Time, 5 May 1980, pp. 12-23; David C. Martin, "Inside the Rescue Mission," Newsweek, 12 July 1982, pp. 16-25; Ryan, The Iranian Rescue Mission, pp. 63-94; and Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Failed Mission," The New York Times Magazine, 18 April 1982, p. 18.

[91]The President's principal military advisers on the hostage rescue operation were: General Jones, the CJCS; Lieutenant General Pustay, Joint Staff; Major General James B. Vaught, Commander of the Joint Task Force organized to conduct the mission; Lieutenant General Phillip Gast, an assistant to Vaught (despite being senior in rank) brought in due to his knowledge of Iran and named Deputy Task Force Commander 12 days prior to the operation; and Colonel Beckwith, the commander of the Delta Force (America's anti-terrorist element) and the other ground elements. There were also other officers of the same rank as Beckwith who commanded the helicopters, the air force aircraft, and the landing zone support element. Beckwith was clearly the preeminent non-flag rank officer, however, because it was Delta around which the entire effort was built, and because Beckwith had played such an important role in the planning of the operation. Nonetheless, although Colonel Beckwith was important, he was not the central figure -- General Vaught was.

Nor were they overly influential in the decision to exercise the military rescue option. If anything, the military may have contributed to the dismissal of the more aggressive options proposed by Brzezinski -- such as taking Kharg Island hostage-- by emphasizing the difficulties in executing such ideas.

"Presence" in Lebanon -- 1982-1984

U.S. Marines arrived in Beirut, Lebanon on August 25, 1982 to oversee, along with French and Italian contingents, the exodus of Palestinian and Syrian forces from the city following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon two and a half months earlier. The mission was regarded with some misgivings in several quarters of the United States. Concerns were voiced in Congress, by the media, and in the Pentagon, where Secretary of Defense Weinberger and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John W. Vessey, most notably, saw the introduction of U.S. forces as having several drawbacks. The problems identified by the senior military were later summed up by Colonel Ralph Hallenbeck, who during the Marine mission served in the operations center of the U.S. European Command, the unified command assigned operational control over U.S. military forces committed in Europe and the Mediterranean area:

> First, the purpose of involving the U.S. military in Lebanon was suspect. The presence of 800 Marines was merely a risky placebo for the paranoic government of Lebanon. The force was too small to fight successfully if required to do so, but too large to avoid being visible (and therefore vulnerable to acts of terrorism and other forms of provocation). Second,...the risks of hostility were great; the probable constraints on

> American provocation would unacceptably endanger the lives of the Marines, and the potential political and military consequences of being baited into even defensive military involvement were not clearly understood... If the American government (and American public) were not prepared to go to war over Lebanon, America's military leaders were opposed to risking America's military credibility in order to obtain only an ephemeral ceasefire. Once ashore in Lebanon, the American military would be held accountable for controlling political forces that were way beyond their means. Thus, from the military point of view, Lebanon had many of the same potential drawbacks that had brought ruin in Vietnam (emphasis added).[92]

In short, the military was apprehensive about and resisted becoming "an instrument of ambiguous diplomatic bargaining strategies."[93]

The Initial Deployment

Because of these apprehensions, considerable efforts were made by Secretary Weinberger and the military to minimize the danger to U.S. forces. The results were that despite the desires of Secretary of State Shultz and special envoy Phillip Habib for a sixty-day deployment, President Reagan limited the duration of the American presence to thirty-days, at the end of which the port of Beirut would be turned over to the Lebanese Army.

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[92]Colonel Ralph A. Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy: Examining America's Strategy in Lebanon, 1982-1984 (Pennsylvania State University: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1986), pp. 85-86. See also: Walter Isaacson, "Sending in the Marines," Time, 19 July 1982, pp. 30-31, 36; and Don Oberdorfer, "Plan to Send in Marines Caught Up in Controversy," Washington Post, 11 July 1982, p. 1.

For more on the chain of command for the mission in Lebanon, see "Operational Chain of Command," Army Times, 9 January 1984, p. 7; and Report of the DOD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, October 23, 1983 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 20 December 1983), pp. 55-58.

[93]Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, p. 89; Oberdorfer, "Plan to Send in Marines Caught Up in Controversy," p. 1.

Additionally, Reagan mandated, U.S. forces would arrive only after the PLO evacuation was well under way, and would be withdrawn immediately if the PLO deviated from the agreed upon evacuation schedule. Finally, it was decided that while U.S. troops were in Lebanon, they would remain in the relatively protected area of Beirut's port.[94]

To the relief of all involved, the initial deployment went quite well. The multinational forces accomplished their mission successfully in the very tense environment of Beirut. The ceasefire was respected, and 15,000 PLO combatants and Syrian Army forces were evacuated. The evacuation complete, the Marines departed after 16 days, their withdrawal accelerated at the urging of Secretary of Defense Weinberger, who, less than a week after the Marines arrived, declared that they "had accomplished their main task." Concurring with U.S. officials in the American Embassy in Beirut, he saw no need for the Marines to stay the full 30 days. The President sided with his Defense Secretary and the military, overriding the objections of Secretary Shultz and Ambassador Habib, who urged the President to keep the Marines in Lebanon for the full thirty days in order to help reduce the risk of domestic Lebanese violence in Beirut in the wake of the PLO's

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[94]Roy Gutman, "Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes," Long Island Newsday, 8 April 1984, p. 37; Gutman, "Battle Over Lebanon," Foreign Service Journal, June 1984, pp. 30-31; Jay Ross, et. al., "Weinberger Says Troops Have Completed Their Duties in Lebanon," Washington Post, 2 September 1982, p. 1; and "Lebanon: Plan for the PLO Evacuation From Beirut," (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, Current Policy 415, August 1982), esp. the "President's Letter to the Congress, August 24, 1982," pp. 11-12.

withdrawal. Thus, on 8 September, Weinberger sent the order to withdraw the Marines, and within two days they (and the other members of the Multinational Force) had pulled out of Lebanon.[95]

Return to Beirut

Events in Beirut then took a turn for the worse. On September 14th, four days after the withdrawal of the Multinational Force (MNF), Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel was assassinated. Israeli troops entered West Beirut the following day, and between 17 and 19 September, in Israeli-occupied territory, more than 700 Palestinian refugees were massacred by Lebanese Christian militia in refugee camps near Beirut. Within a day, the Lebanese Cabinet requested the return of the Multinational Force to Beirut. President Reagan agreed and on September 29, 1982, 1200 Marines from the 32d Marine Amphibious Unit began landing at the Port of Beirut and taking up positions in the vicinity of Beirut International Airport, thereby interposing themselves between the Israeli units and the populated areas of Beirut. Contingents from France and Italy (and in February 1983, from Great Britain as well) joined the Marines in trying to help restore peace and stability to the

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[95]Ross, "Weinberger Says Troops Have Completed Their Duties in Lebanon," p. 1; Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, pp. 92-94; Report of the DOD Commission, p. 29; Gutman, "Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes," p. 36; and Nathan Pelcovits, "The Multinational Force in Beirut: What Went Wrong," paper presented at the International Workshop on the Multinational Force in Beirut, Oslo, Norway, October 28-30, 1985, pp. 2-3.

troubled city of Beirut.[96]

The Marines' subsequent peacekeeping mission was never popular with the Joint Chiefs of Staff or their chain of command. Reportedly the Joint Chiefs "unanimously advised President Reagan against deploying Marines in Lebanon in the first place." That advice notwithstanding, the Marines were to "hang tough" in Beirut for over sixteen months until their withdrawal in early February 1984.[97]

The principal architects and proponents of the Marine mission in Lebanon were in the State Department and White House, which "seemed eager to 'lay down a marker' and take a stand militarily." Both of the Secretaries of State during President Reagan's first term -- Alexander Haig (who left office a month before the first deployment) and his successor George Shultz-- desired, as Haig told an early staff meeting, "to get Vietnam behind us." The White House, particularly national security advisors William Clark and Robert McFarlane, shared that desire. The administration was determined to reassert the global role of American military might -- "to protect our interests whatever it

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[96]Walter Isaacson, "Weighing the Proper Role," Time, 7 November 1983, pp. 43-44; and Report of the DOD Commission, pp. 29-30.

[97]Bill Keller, "Military Reportedly Opposed Use of U.S. Marines in Beirut," New York Times, 22 August 1985, p. A6. See also Steve Berg, "Nation's Top Soldier Prepares for Assault on Walleyes," Minneapolis Star and Tribune, 25 August 1985, p. 1; William Greider, "Retreat From Beirut," a television documentary in the Public Broadcasting System's series Frontline, 26 February 1985, as transcribed by the Department of Defense, pp. 4-5; and Richard Halloran, To Arm A Nation (New York: Macmillan, 1986), p. 29.

costs."[98]

The Pentagon had a more proprietary view of those costs. Secretary of Defense Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, led by General John Vessey, the Chairman, reportedly expressed "strong dissent over the military role" in Lebanon.[99] Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs, Nathan Pelcovits later observed, held "grave reservations about the open-ended and growing commitment to sustain the Lebanese government and army...fearing the Marines would become caught in a Vietnam-like quagmire."[100] The Pentagon's leaders were, in the words of General Vessey, "wary of symbolic displays of power, feeling that the armed forces should

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[98]Isaacson, "Weighing the Proper Role," pp. 42-44; Sloyan, "U.S. In Lebanon," p. 34; Greider, "Retreat from Beirut," p. 15; and Lou Cannon, "McFarlane's Appointment Tipped the Scales, But Not to the Left," Washington Post, 14 October 1983, p. A3. General Haig resigned as Secretary of State on 25 June 1982 and left office two weeks later, prior to the first deployment of U.S. Marines. However, his objectives in Lebanon -- the withdrawal of all foreign forces, the emergence of a sovereign Lebanese government, and the security of Israel's borders with Lebanon -- remained largely the American policy objectives after his departure. See Haig's discussion of U.S. policy toward Lebanon in his Caveat (New York: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 317-352.

[99]Greider, "Retreat From Beirut," p. 4. Confirmed by military interviews.

[100]Pelcovits, "The Multinational Force in Beirut: What Went Wrong?" p. 16. See also Roy Gutman, "Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes," Newsday, 8 April 1984, p. 36.

The influence of Vietnam was also reportedly the reason a larger force was not sent. As Colonel Ralph Hallenbeck noted, sending "a large American force (15,000+), as was done during the 1958 Lebanese crisis, was also considered but not recommended. The lessons of Vietnam were too fresh in the minds of all concerned." See Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, p. 105. Presumably a larger force would have made the commitment in Lebanon even more irrevocable and more difficult to bring to an end.

be used for precise military missions and not for vague diplomatic goals."[101] Added to these concerns was a belief that carrying out a neutral peacekeeping role in such a volatile area might prove untenable. The military feared, Pelcovits wrote, that the Marines "would become much more hostage than deterrent."[102] Although Secretary Weinberger and his subordinate military commanders were unable to avoid a deployment into Lebanon, they did still attempt, Colonel Hallenbeck noted later, "to insure that any deployment [would be] kept small, militarily non-committal, and ready to be withdrawn as soon as politically

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[101]Richard Halloran, "A Commanding Voice for the Military," New York Times Magazine, 15 July 1984, p. 52. In the same article, General Vessey is quoted as stating in 1983, that he was "absolutely, unalterably opposed to risking American lives for some phony sort of military and political objectives that we don't understand." Army Chief of Staff General John Wickham echoed Vessey's sentiments in 1985. "Once we commit force," he cautioned, "we must be prepared to back it up as opposed to just sending soldiers into operations for limited goals." Quoted in George C. Wilson, "War's Lessons Struck Home," Washington Post, 16 April 1985, p. A9.

Secretary Weinberger expressed similar sentiments in "The Uses of Military Power," his November 24, 1984 speech to the National Press Club (reprinted in the January 1985 issue of the Department of Defense publication Defense). Terry Deibel has written that Secretary Weinberger's "caution about committing American troops reflects a military view of the use of armed force: that force should be used only to 'win'." See Deibel's "Why Reagan Is Strong," Foreign Policy, No. 62 (Spring 1986), p. 124.

See also Isaacson, "Weighing the Proper Role," p. 44; and Roy Gutman, "Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes," Newsday, 8 April 1984, p. 36.

[102]Pelcovits, "The Multinational Force in Beirut: What Went Wrong?" p. 17.

Additionally, at least General Vessey believed that "more often it's a mistake to use superpower troops as part of a peacekeeping force." See Berg, "Nation's Top Soldier Prepares for Assault on Walleyes," Minneapolis Star and Tribune, 25 August 1985, p. 1.

possible."[103]

The First Year

The first twelve months of the peacekeeping mission were relatively uneventful. The leaders of all the Lebanese factions, including the Druse and the principal Moslem parties, had urged the MNF to return to Beirut on humanitarian grounds and as a counterweight to the Lebanese Christian militia. The opposition elements had not only given their consent, they had welcomed the return of the MNF. There was, as President Reagan reported to Congress, "no expectation that U.S. armed forces would become involved in hostilities."[104]

The original mission of the U.S. contingent of the Multinational Force, as drafted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) was:

> To establish an environment which will permit the Lebanese Armed Forces to carry out their responsibilities in the Beirut area. When directed, USCINCEUR will introduce U.S. forces as part of a multi-national force presence in the Beirut area to occupy and secure positions along a designated section of the line from south of the Beirut International Airport to a position in the vicinity of the Presidential Palace; be prepared to protect U.S. forces; and, on order, conduct retrograde operations as required.[105]

"Presence" was not, of course, a traditional military mission, and the phrase "establish an environment" had a somewhat

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[103]Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, pp. 108; and "Why Send in the Marines," Washington Post, 26 September 1982, p. 37.

[104]"Text of Reagan's Letter to Congress on Marines in Beirut," New York Times, 30 September 1982, p. A12.

[105]Report of the DOD Commission on Beirut, p. 35.

unsettling similarity to the Vietnam-era terms "nation building" and "winning hearts and minds." Nonetheless, as Colonel Hallenbeck observed later,

> if the MNF could "establish an environment" merely by being "present" in "the Beirut area," well and good. If this "presence" was not enough...well, that was another matter. The mission statement did not commit USEUCOM to do anything for the Lebanese Armed Forces except as might obtain from a multi-national force "presence." [It was] very explicit that the military was not going to Lebanon to engage in combat. In fact, if the Beirut environment degenerated into open hostilities, the expectation (as stated in the JCS concept of operations) was that the force would be withdrawn.[106]

Initially, U.S. policy-makers hoped for an operation of short duration. This hope was not completely ill-founded. The 1200 Marines were warmly welcomed by the local populace. The environment was, in the words of the Long Commission Report, "benign," and it continued that way into the spring of 1983.[107] There was reason to believe that American forces would not have to engage in combat. Were there violence, however, U.S. units were enjoined to exercise maximum restraint in responding, and instructed to act only in self-defense so as not to escalate any conflict, endanger innocent lives, or become embroiled in factional disputes. The neutrality of the MNF was to be

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[106]Hallenbeck, <u>Force and Diplomacy</u>, p. 110; See also the considerable discussion of the mission in Hearings of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC 98-58), <u>Review of Adequacy of Security Arrangements for Marines in Lebanon and Plans for Improving that Security</u> (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985); and in the <u>Report of the DOD Commission on Beirut</u>, pp. 35-45.

[107]Greider, "Retreat from Beirut," p. 6; <u>Report of the DOD Commission</u>, p. 3.

maintained, with U.S. forces avoiding the taking of sides politically or militarily, or giving the perception of doing so.[108]

The predominant military concern, as voiced by Air Force General W. Y. Smith (Deputy Commander-in-Chief, USEUCOM), "was that the United States military not become committed, as it had in Vietnam, to an open-ended combat or combat support role."[109] In fact, General Smith personally drafted that part of the mission statement which read "occupy and secure positions along a designated section of the line..." to eliminate any potential for inferring that the US forces would be responsible for the security of any area other than that around their own immediate positions (i.e., self-defense).[110]

The destruction of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut on April 18, 1983, however, indicated that the political/military situation had deteriorated significantly since the arrival of the Marines seven months previously. By the end of the summer, civil strife

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[108] Report of the DOD Commission, pp. 42-51.

[109] Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, p. 114. It should be noted that the DCINC has special importance in USEUCOM because the Commander-in-Chief serves also as the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, with headquarters in Mons, Belgium, where the SACEUR lives. Hence the DCINC, who lives in Stuttgart, Germany where USEUCOM headquarters are located, performs many of the functions that the CINC might perform were he not so burdened with allied duties and responsibilities. See the discussion of this point by General Bernard Rogers, SACEUR and CINC USEUCOM, in Review of Adequacy of Security Arrangements for Marines in Lebanon and Plans for Improving that Security, p. 590.

[110] Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, p. 114; and Report of the DOD Commission, p. 36.

in Lebanon had intensified; the Lebanese Armed Forces were locked in conflict with factional militias and the Marine positions at the Beirut International Airport began receiving hostile fire.[111]

The Marines Join the Fight

After the Israeli withdrawal from the Shouf Mountains and the Beirut area in late August, the Lebanese Army seemed on the verge of disintegrating along factional lines.[112] American-backed Lebanese President Amin Gemayel pleaded with President Reagan's special Middle East envoy Robert McFarlane -- who had replaced Habib in late July -- for American military

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[111] Report of the DOD Commission, pp. 29-32. By this point in time, also, the U.S. MNF had developed (over the objections of the JCS and US EUCOM) a closer relationship with the Lebanese Armed Forces, and the United States had begun to provide significant military equipment and training assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces. "LAF-USMNF training would establish," Colonel Hallenbeck later wrote, "a visible reinterpretation of the USMNF's 'neutrality' in the eyes of many Lebanese." See Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, pp. 134-136; and Review of Adequacy of Security Arrangements for Marines in Lebanon and Plans for Improving that Security, pp. 116-117.

[112] The withdrawal of the Israeli units from the Beirut area in late August 1983 was particularly significant because, as Eric Hammel later observed, "no matter what political pronouncements were made in world capitals, it was known beyond doubt that the Israeli Defense Force was the force that made peace work in Beirut." Eric Hammel, The Root, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1985), p. 212. The Israeli withdrawal created, Patrick Sloyan observed, "a vacuum that the United States was not equipped to fill." Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," p. 34.

Hammel contends that the disintegration of the Lebanese Army along factional lines was less feared than the defeat of one of the American-trained Moslem-Christian units - the 8th Brigade- that had to that point in the fighting stuck together. The fear seems to have been that neither the Lebanese Armed Forces nor the concept of a united Lebanon could survive a defeat in Suq-al-Gharb. This fear was heightened by the appearance of Syrian forces as active participants in the effort to dislodge the 8th Brigade (The Root, pp. 216-217).

assistance.[113] McFarlane agreed with Gemayel; without U.S. military support the strategic mountain village of Suq-al-Gharb (a Christian town to which the Lebanese Army forces had withdrawn following a defeat in Bhamdoun) would fall, perhaps taking the Gemayel government with it. Syrian intervention, in particular, had changed the odds facing Gemayel's forces in Suq-al-Gharb.[114]

The Marines and the 12 warships off the coast of Lebanon, however, were specifically prohibited by the JCS from engaging in combat. Force was to be used, in accordance with the War Powers Act, only for self-defense in response to a hostile act.[115] McFarlane reasoned, however, that if Suq-al-Gharb fell, the Marines -- five kilometers away at Beirut International Airport-- would be endangered. He sought, in essence, a more expansive definition of the term "self-defense," and over the objection of

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[113]Eric Hammel notes that it was Lieutenant General Ibrahim Tannous, Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, who "formally asked" McFarlane to provide direct U.S. support for the Lebanese Armed Forces elements fighting in Suq-al-Gharb. Hammel, The Root, p. 216.

McFarlane's desire to use U.S. military power on the side of the Lebanese Armed Forces against Lebanese factional forces illustrated a continuing difference between the American diplomats and the U.S. military: the diplomats constantly emphasized the importance of strengthening the government of Lebanon, while the military sought to maintain what it saw as a "neutral presence." See Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, p. 121; and Bernard Gwertzman, "Marines in Lebanon: How Many and How Long?" New York Times, 14 October 1982, p. B16.

[114]Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," p. 34.

[115]For a description of the mission statements and rules of engagement, see the Report of the DOD Commission, pp. 35-54. See also Lou Cannon and George C. Wilson, "Marines Get Broad Powers," Washington Post, 14 September 1983, pp. A1, A10.

the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, Robert Dillon, he cabled the White House recommending American military support for the Lebanese Army. President Reagan supported McFarlane. He approved the recommendation despite the reservations of Secretary Weinberger and General Vessey, and authorized naval gunfire and airstrikes against the Syrian-backed Druse.[116] On September 12, 1983 the JCS were told that "direct support of the Lebanese Armed Forces was to be considered as an act of self-defense under the existing rules of engagement." This instruction was promptly relayed by the JCS, with the added proviso that U.S. firepower could be used only "when the U.S. ground commander determined that Suq-al-Gharb was in danger of falling." Colonel Timothy Geraghty, commander of the Marines at the Beirut airport, was charged with making that determination.[117]

Convinced that wider American involvement in the Lebanese strife would be a departure from an ostensibly neutral

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[116]Lou Cannon and George C. Wilson, "Marines Get Broad Powers," Washington Post, 14 September 1983, pp. A1, A10; Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan to Let Marines Give Some Aid to Lebanese Army and European Peace Forces," New York Times, 14 September 1983, pp. A1, A14; Fred Hiatt, "Shelling Approved at Highest Levels," Washington Post, 20 September 1983, p. 1; and Hedrick Smith, "Beyond Self-Defense," New York Times, 14 September 1983, pp. A1, A15. Patrick Sloyan's report qualifies Ambassador Dillon's objections to McFarlane's request, quoting Dillon as arguing that the plan was to support the Lebanese Army and should have been so stated. Sloyan, "U.S. In Lebanon," p. 35.

[117]Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," pp. 35-36; Greider, Retreat From Beirut," pp. 16-17; Hammel, The Root, p. 218.; and Report of the DOD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, p. 46. Geraghty's title was actually "Commander, U.S. Forces Ashore Lebanon." See "Operational Chain of Command."

peacekeeping role and endanger the vulnerable Marine force, Colonel Geraghty initially refused to call for U.S. naval bombardment, and resisted pressure to share with the Lebanese Armed Forces intelligence from American target acquisition radars and reconnaissance flights.[118] As Eric Hammel later described events,

> If the U.S. [Multi-National Force] contingent was to remain neutral in the civil war -- if [Geraghty] was denied access to prudent measures [such as fortifying the Marine positions] to protect his Marines in the name of that neutrality -- he was not going to be a party to actively siding with the [Lebanese Armed Forces] in the civil war.[119]

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[118]Nathan Pelcovits of Johns Hopkins University has argued persuasively that "the gradual entanglement of the MNF with the Lebanese Armed Forces in its military clashes with opposition militias" was the crucial factor in eroding the peacekeeping character of the Marine actions. See his "The Multinational Force in Beirut: What Went Wrong?" pp. 8-11.

As a result of the movement of the Lebanese Armed Forces into West Beirut on 27 August, the Marines found themselves becomingly increasingly embroiled in the factional dispute between the LAF and Druse and Shia militias. On August 28, the Marines returned fire for the first time, and the following day, two Marines were killed and 14 wounded in a rocket attack on Marine positions during battles between the factions. On September 6, two more Marines were killed by mortar fire, and on September 7, the Marines used artillery for the first time to answer the attacks on their positions. In following days, naval gunfire was also used to suppress hostile fire directed at Marine positions. Based on interviews at West Point (14 November 1985) and in Washington (11 March 1986) with Colonel Mark Gatanas, military assistant to Ambassador McFarlane in Beirut during August and September 1983. See also Report of the DOD Commission, p. 31

[119]Hammel, The Root, p. 218. A discussion of the measures Geraghty felt were prudent, but were not permissible, is in pages 212-216 of The Root. One should note, however, that Hammel's account is not completely objective; The Root is frequently biased in favor of the Marines and Colonel Geraghty. It is unclear, for example, just who would not permit Geraghty to take the precautions he felt desirable. See, for example, the discussion of this issue by the Chairman, JCS and CINC, USEUCOM

For six days Geraghty refused to request naval gunfire despite pressure from McFarlane, and McFarlane's JCS/DOD Advisor-Representative Brigadier General Carl Stiner. "We'll pay the price," Geraghty told McFarlane in a heated -- and prophetic-- discussion recorded inadvertently by the Marine base communications center. "We'll get slaughtered down here."[120] McFarlane, wanting not just to ensure the survival of the 8th Brigade but to show Syria (and perhaps even the Soviet Union)[121] that the United States meant business, tried to put pressure on the Pentagon to change Geraghty's stand. Reportedly, McFarlane invoked the full authority of Reagan's office. "To me," Geraghty later said, "[he] was speaking for the Commander in Chief." McFarlane's efforts were stymied by the senior military, however, who backed Geraghty, their commander in the field. Geraghty was also supported by Army Lieutenant Colonel Tom Fintel, head of the American mission training the Lebanese Armed Forces; Fintel's sources at Suq-al-Gharb reported that the 8th Brigade was holding

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in Review of Adequacy of Security Arrangements for Marines in Lebanon and Plans for Improving that Security, pp. 592-593, 602, 610, 620-622.

[120] Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," p. 36; Hammel, The Root, p. 220; and Greider, "Retreat From Beirut," p. 17. A very detailed discussion of the efforts to change the rules of engagement and to get Colonel Geraghty to approve fire support for the Lebanese Army is contained in Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, pp. 199-206. See also the testimony by Colonel Geraghty in Review of Adequacy of Security Arrangements for Marines in Lebanon and Plans for Improving that Security, pp. 528-581.

[121] Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," pp. 37-38.

up relatively well and that attacks on Suq-al-Gharb were smaller than reported by the Lebanese Ministry of Defense.[122]

Finally, on September 19, following reports that a tank column was approaching Suq-al-Gharb, Geraghty relented. Realizing that the 8th Brigade could not hold out against an assault by armored vehicles, he ordered his own officers to plot the naval gunfire mission. That morning three U.S. warships -- a missile-cruiser, a destroyer, and a frigate -- fired a total of 338 rounds on Moslem positions overlooking Suq-al-Gharb.[123]

McFarlane's instincts appeared to have been validated when six days later Syria agreed to a ceasefire and peace talks. There was considerable optimism. Beirut International Airport was patched up again and reopened. The U.S. Congress was also caught up by the euphoria of the moment, and acted on 21 September to authorize keeping 1,200 Marines in Lebanon for up to 18 months.[124] But with the clarity of hindsight, it is now obvious that the perceived progress toward restoration of central authority in Lebanon was purely illusory.

Ominous indicators were quick to appear. In mid-October the Marines came under significant sniper fire for the first time, as did the other nations' MNF units. It was soon apparent that the

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[122]Hammel, The Root, pp. 219-220; Sloyan, "The Warnings Reagan Ignored," p. 412; Greider, "Retreat from Beirut," pp. 15-16.

[123]Hammel, The Root, pp. 221-222.

[124]Hammel, The Root, p. 222; T. R. Reid, "Congress Clears 18 Month Marine Stay in Lebanon," Washington Post, 30 September 1983, p. 1.

Marines' image as neutral peacekeepers had been shattered. As the Long Commission concluded:

> "Although the [Marine] actions could properly be classified as self-defense and not 'engaging in combat'...The image of the [Marines] in the eyes of the factional militias had become pro-Israel, pro-Phalange, and anti-Moslem."[125]

As Frederic Hof observed recently: "Whereas the United States may have perceived its support of Lebanese President Gemayel as being purely in the service of nonpartisanship and legitimacy, others chose to view matters quite differently."[126] Through their backing of the Christian cause in the Shouf Mountains, the Marines had "been plunged into the cesspool of factional hate."[127]

The increase in American casualties touched off a new round of arguments between the Pentagon and the White House over the

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[125]Report of the DOD Commission, p. 40.

[126]Frederic C. Hof, "The Beirut Bombing of October 1983: An Act of Terrorism?" Parameters, Vol. 15, No. 2, p. 70. Hof described the use of naval gunfire in support of the Lebanese Armed Forces as the final "volatile ingredient" that made "the combustible mixture complete" (p. 71). Mid-East expert Lieutenant Colonel Augustus R. Norton characterized the naval bombardment as "burning the remaining bridges over the Rubicon." The "Rubicon" had been crossed, Norton contends, in a series of U.S. actions that included the McFarlane-mandated breaking off of contact with Walid Jumblatt, leader of the Druse community. McFarlane's order was issued -- over the objection of U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Robert Dillon -- on 1 August, shortly after his arrival in Lebanon. The action was rescinded in mid-August by President Reagan after it was appealed by Dillon, but by then considerable damage had been done to U.S. relations with the Druse community. Interview with Norton, West Point, New York, 19 February 1986. See also Patrick J. Sloyan, "The Warnings Reagan Ignored," The Nation, 27 October 1983, p. 411.

[127]Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," p. 38.

Marine deployment. As reported by Newsday's Patrick Sloyan, the concerns of the Joint Chiefs culminated in a memorandum written by General Bernard Rogers, the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. European Command. Dated 18 October and apparently written at the direction of the JCS, Rogers' memorandum posed what were termed "alternatives to the airport deployment." The options, Sloyan reported, included transferring the Marines to ships, redeploying them to another part of Beirut, or augmenting them with additional combat forces. Secretary Weinberger presented the alternatives at a National Security Council meeting held the same day. With Secretary Shultz and McFarlane (just back from Lebanon and appointed Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs on October 17) opposed, however, Weinberger apparently was persuaded to drop his formal recommendation -- thus obviating the need for the President to make a decision one way or the other on any specific redeployment proposal.[128]

Hostilities escalated in Beirut, meanwhile, as the Marines,

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[128]Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," pp. 5, 36. Sloyan reported elsewhere that General Vessey had informally proposed to MCFarlane a few days earlier that the Marines be pulled out of their vulnerable base at Beirut Airport and returned to ships cruising offshore. See "The Warnings Reagan Ignored," p. 410. See also: Greider, "Retreat From Beirut," p. 19; Hammel, The Root, p. 279.

It should be noted that there is disagreement about the significance of the deployment alternatives presented by the military. Some officers report that the options presented by Secretary Weinberger merely represented the continuation of previous efforts to get the Marines out of what was perceived as an undesirable mission. In this view, the options were thus less dramatic than they came to be regarded in the wake of the bombing of the Marine compound five days later. Interview with Colonel Ralph Hallenbeck, Washington, D.C., 11 March 1986; and Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," p. 5.

to counter the continuing Shiite sniper fire, formed their own sniper teams. "Using specially designed rifles with high-powered telescopes, the Marines on October 15 began picking off their attackers, and announcing their 'confirmed' kills to the press." The publicity given these actions was not helpful. Lebanese Moslem leaders increasingly echoed the view of Walid Jumblatt who openly accused the United States of supporting the Christian Phalange.[129] News of the Marine sniper victories apparently increased tensions further. On October 25, disaster struck: the Marine barracks at the airport was destroyed by a suicide truck bombing attack, taking the lives of 241 Americans. A simultaneous attack on the French headquarters left 56 dead.[130]

The Aftermath

It would be an understatement to write that the terrorist bombing reinforced the uneasiness of the JCS about the continued employment of the Marines in Lebanon. The senior military's worst fears had been surpassed. No one, however, wanted the United States to appear to have been run out of Lebanon. Thus the months of November and December were spent in a search for relatively risk-free displays of American military power in Lebanon and Syria, while simultaneously the search for an exit from Beirut took on new emphasis -- although the JCS did not support openly Secretary Weinberger's urging to redeploy the

[129] Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," p. 38.

[130] Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," p. 39.

Marines until early December.[131] Military reconsideration of the Marines' mission may, in fact, have been slowed by Secretary Weinberger's appointment of a Commission to investigate the Beirut bombing, as well as by simultaneous House Armed Services Committee hearings on the same subject. As Colonel Hallenbeck later reasoned, in the face of these inquiries, "the military chain-of-command braced itself to explain...[the] rationale for a [rules of engagement] reinterpretation it had consistently opposed."[132] Withdrawing the Marines immediately in the wake of the bombing would undoubtedly have been perceived as evidence that the entire mission had been a mistake. And as recent events have shown, admission of mistakes does not come naturally to national leaders -- civilian or military. Furthermore, America's credibility was at stake. As President Reagan asked several days after the bombing: "If we were to leave Lebanon now, what message would that send to those who foment instability and terrorism?"[133]

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[131] Gutman, "Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes," p. 37; Glen Frankel, "Marine Force Pulls Out of Beirut Position," Washington Post, 9 November 1983, p. 1.

[132] Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, p. 231. See also DOD Commission on Beirut; and Review of Adequacy of Security Arrangements for Marines in Lebanon and Plans for Improving that Security. Reading the latter provides considerable evidence of senior military leaders doing their best to rationalize the conduct of America's military commitment in Lebanon.

[133] Ronald Reagan, "America's Commitment to Peace" (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 27 October 1983, Current Policy No. 522), p. 2. Undersecretary of State Kenneth Dam would emphasize this theme again in January 1984 when he told the Senate: "America's credibility is at stake in Lebanon. Every regional state, friend and foe alike, is watching our actions for

Meanwhile, the military continued to wrestle with the day-to-day operations in Lebanon. Following the bombing, President Reagan promised that: "Those who directed this atrocity must be dealt justice and they will be." But the President also did not want to cause the death of innocent civilians in retaliating for the bombing, and, furthermore, the administration was once again divided. The President was torn between the "State Department hawks" and the "Pentagon doves." U.S. units, for example, came very close to conducting a combined air strike against Syria with the French. The French moved alone, however, because the Joint Chiefs and Secretary Weinberger were not ready to go ahead.[134] "There was," Weinberger later explained, "no public support at all for anything remotely resembling a war against the Syrians."[135] And the Joint Chiefs, throughout the months immediately after the bombing, apparently held "serious reservations about some of the options" considered by the administration as retaliation for the terrorist attack. Moreover, the JCS kept a tight rein on the use of the 16-inch

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proof of America's strength and its ability to promote peace." See his "Policy Options in Lebanon" (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 11 January 1984, Current Policy No. 536), p. 2.

[134]Gutman, "Division at the Top Meant Half-Measures, Mistakes," p. 37; Lou Cannon and David Hoffman, "Sentiment for Pullout Increasing," Washington Post, 30 November 1983, p. 1; and Fred Hiatt, "US, France United in Goal to Quit Beirut," Washington Post, 3 December 1983, p. 25.

[135]Gutman, "Battle Over Lebanon," p. 32.

guns of the battleship New Jersey.[136]

The policy impasse was finally broken when the Joint Chiefs openly threw their support behind Secretary Weinberger in early December. The catalyst appears to have been the 4 December downing of two Navy planes and the capture of Lieutenant Robert Goodman during airstrikes against Syria, in retaliation for the repeated firing of surface to air missiles at U.S. reconnaissance planes. Shortly thereafter, the Commission appointed by Secretary Weinberger issued its report, questioning the American policy in Lebanon. That report led to further debate within the military, and sparked a firestorm of criticism from Capitol Hill when Congress returned in early January. The result was that, by late January 1984, the military and civilians in the Pentagon had developed a "deep-seated fear over U.S. vulnerability in Lebanon...[and had begun] challenging Secretary Shultz's flawed policy of hanging tough and hoping." The on-scene commanders, in particular, were worried about the safety of the Marines, who by this time had given up patrolling and were reduced to surviving in heavily sandbagged shelters ringing the Beirut airport.[137]

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[136]Fred Hiatt, "Use of 16-Inch Guns Authorized in December 1983," Washington Post, 15 December 1983, p. A40. According to Hiatt, the Sixth Fleet Commander did not have permission to fire the guns of the **New Jersey** without approval from "higher up the chain of command." The fear apparently was that the "huge shells could harm civilians and further ensnare U.S. forces in Lebanese hostilities." See also Review of Adequacy of Security Arrangements for Marines in Lebanon and Plans for Improving that Security, p. 595.

[137]Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Lebanon: A Divided Administration," Washington Post, 30 January 1984, p. All; Richard Halloran, "US Said to Draw Plan for Shifting Marines in

In late January the President approved a redeployment plan that was an attempt to satisfy Weinberger and the Chiefs -- who wanted the Marines out -- and McFarlane and Secretary Shultz-- who wanted them to stay. The compromise plan called for a phased withdrawal running until June, and actually proposed greater use of U.S. naval gunfire to support the Lebanese Armed Forces.[138] There were objections from Weinberger and the military, however. As Roy Gutman later reported:

> To avert complaints that [the greater military involvement and use of naval gunfire] would violate the War Powers Act, the announcement would state that the firing was to defend U.S. personnel in Beirut from outside shelling. But the joint chiefs resisted transmitting the orders authorizing naval gunfire. McFarlane...devised a novel maneuver. He went to the chiefs and insisted they put specific military instructions for firing on paper. He then took this paper to Reagan, who signed it, and the plan fell into place.[139]

In the end, of course, the redeployment plan was accelerated significantly when the Lebanese Army lost control of West Beirut. The barrage of naval gunfire was unleashed as originally planned, but the possibility of an orderly handoff to the Lebanese Armed Forces disappeared when the Shiites took over West Beirut. Day by day the redeployment plan was advanced, with the Joint Chiefs,

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Beirut," New York Times, 8 December 1983, p. 1; James McCartney, "Many Officers Said to Want US Pullout," Philadelphia Inquirer, 16 December 1983, p. 1; Steven Strasser, "The Politics of Blame," Newsweek, 9 January 1984, pp. 18-20; and Gutman, "Battle Over Lebanon," p. 33.

[138]Gutman, "Battle Over Lebanon," pp. 32-33.

[139]Gutman, "Battle Over Lebanon," p. 33; See also Sloyan, "Lebanon: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Failure," p. 39.

in the words of a State Department official, "desperate to get [the Marines] out." Finally, on February 26, the Marines boarded their ships, and, one month later, the President dissolved the MNF.[140]

Conclusions

The military (and their civilian bosses in the Pentagon) were, in this case, neither as hawkish nor as influential as popular stereotypes would have predicted. The Marine mission in Beirut had all the features disliked by the military -- a relatively "fuzzy" objective, ambivalent public support, and little prospect for quick resolution of the situation.[141] The military made their reservations known -- although perhaps not as vigorously as they should have. Regardless, the early military

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[140]Gutman, "Battle Over Lebanon," p. 33; Hammel, The Root, pp. 423-424; David Ignatius, "Reagan Expected to Announce This Week Redeployment of Marines in Beirut to Ships," Wall Street Journal, 15 February 1984, p. 5; Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan Orders Marines Moved to Ships Off Beirut," New York Times, 8 February 1984, p. A1; and Richard Halloran, "The Marines' Move May Take a Month," New York Times, 8 February 1984, p. A8.

[141]The military were particularly disturbed by President Reagan's statement on 28 September 1982 that "The Lebanese government will be the ones to tell us when they feel they're in charge and [the Marines] can go home." Amanda Bennett, "U.S. Backtracks on Reagan Statements About When Marines Will Leave Lebanon," Wall Street Journal, 30 September 1982, p. 2.

The exception to the generalizations about the senior military in this paragraph is Brigadier General Stiner, DOD/JCS Representative to the Special Negotiator (Ambassador McFarlane), who joined McFarlane in urging Colonel Geraghty to call for naval gunfire support for the Lebanese Army fighting in the Shouf Mountains. General Stiner was, according to an officer in Lebanon, worn down by Ambassador McFarlane and influenced by his growing closeness to the Lebanese military (Stiner had established an operations center in the Lebanese Armed FOrces Ministry of Defense on 29 August 1983).

concerns about the use of American troops in Lebanon seem to have had little effect on the overall policy -- at least until late 1983 and early 1984 when the JCS joined Secretary Weinberger (and White House Chief of Staff James Baker) in urging withdrawal of the Marines.[142]

It is difficult to determine, just how firmly the military reluctance was expressed to the President, just as it is hard to establish how significant military caution was in restraining U.S. actions in Lebanon. Perhaps the military's lack of decisive early influence resulted from the JCS not opposing the policy at the outset firmly enough.[143] It does not appear that their influence was limited by insufficient contact with the president; as the Armed Forces Journal International's LuAnne Levens and Benjamin Schemmer noted in 1983, the JCS met with President Reagan more during General John Vessey's first eight months as Chairman than they did in any recent four year presidential term -- a trend that continued throughout the period of the Beirut mission.[144] Undoubtedly, the military was chastened by President Reagan making it clear during the planning stages for the second

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[142]Perhaps the military should have made their views known more forcefully -- that reportedly was the advice given some members of the JCS by Admiral Long following his investigation.

[143]There is, in fact, a rumor that Admiral Long, the head of the DOD Commission lectured one or more members of the JCS on their failure to have stated strongly enough their opposition to the Marine mission at the outset of the policy.

[144]LuAnne K. Levens and Benjamin F. Schemmer, "General John W. Vessey, Jr.," Armed Forces Journal International, May 1983, p. 53.

deployment that he "didn't want to hear any objections."[145] And it appears that military misgivings about the second deployment were discredited somewhat by feelings in the administration that the Sabra and Shatilla massacres might not have occurred had the Pentagon been less eager to accelerate the withdrawal of the Marines after completing the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut.[146] Definitive answers to such questions must await the memoirs of the participants and the declassification of internal documents -- and even then will be difficult to determine.

In any event, as the senior military look back on the Marine mission, they undoubtedly agree with General John Vessey who, when asked to reflect on the decision to deploy the Marine contingent to Lebanon, replied: "I wish we hadn't."[147]

Intervention in Grenada -- 1983

In one of the most dramatic moves of his first term in office, President Ronald Reagan sent Marines, Army rangers, and Army paratroopers into the island of Grenada on October 25, 1983 to rescue American citizens, restore order, and halt Cuban-Soviet advances in the hemisphere. The decision to intervene appears to have been made by the President together with his civilian

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[145] Lou Cannon, "Reagan Sees Credibility of US at Stake," Washington Post, 21 September 1982, p. 1; Gutman, "Battle Over Lebanon," p. 31.

[146] Hallenbeck, Force and Diplomacy, p. 130; Gutman, "Battle Over Lebanon," p. 31; Interviews with Gatanas.

[147] Quoted in Richard Halloran, "Reflections on 46 Years of Army Service," New York Times, 3 September 1985, p. A18.

advisors, with the military apparently playing only a small part in that decision. The conduct of the operation, on the other hand (apart from establishment of the rules of engagement) was left almost completely to the military.

Although there are still only limited sources on the internal discussions that preceded the invasion of Grenada, it does not appear that the military were overly eager to go into the island. Reportedly, both Secretary Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs "wanted to wait for more intelligence and planning" before conducting the operation.[148] The "activists," according to these reports, were in the State Department and the White House; they saw in the intervention a chance to "cure the U.S. of the so-called Vietnam syndrome" and reverse the image of America as a timid superpower.[149] For in addition to rescuing U.S. citizens, restoring order, and reestablishing democratic institutions, the operation in Grenada also provided the perfect opportunity to, in the words of a State Department official, "keep the United States from being perceived as a 'paper tiger' in the eyes of both

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[148]Eliot Cohen wrote that the JCS initially opposed the Grenada operation. See his "Constraints on America's Conduct of Small Wars," International Security, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Fall 1984), p. 168. Richard Halloran reported an Administration official as saying "[General] Jack Vessey was the last one to jump aboard on Grenada." See Halloran's "Reagan As Military Commander," The New York Times Magazine, 15 January 1984, p. 68. See also Walter Isaacson, "Weighing the Proper Role, Time, 7 November 1983, p. 44.

[149]Walter Isaacson, "Weighing the Proper Role," Time, 7 November 1983, p. 44.

friendly and hostile Latin American nations."[150]

Military planning for possible intervention in Grenada apparently began following an October 17 inter-agency meeting called by Assistant Secretary of State Langhorne A. Motley. After receiving reports on October 14 of the arrest of Grenadian Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, Motley had become worried about the safety of the U.S. citizens on the island -- principally the over 600 Americans attending medical school there. Fearing "another Tehran," Motley urged after the October 17 meeting that serious planning begin for a noncombatant evacuation operation. The President, briefed on Motley's recommendation by APNSA Robert McFarlane, ordered that such planning proceed.[151] Two days later, with the situation in Grenada perceived as deteriorating, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a warning order to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Command, directing him to initiate planning for the conduct of a noncombatant evacuation operation in

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[150]Bernard Gwertzman, "Steps to the Invasion: No More "Paper Tiger'," New York Times, 30 October 1983, p. A1; see also "Transcript of Shultz News Conference on Invasion of Grenada," New York Times, 26 October 1983, p. A18.

[151]Statement by Langhorne A. Motley before the House Armed Services Committee, "The Decision to Assist Grenada," (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, Current Policy No. 541, 24 January 1984), p. 2; and Ralph Kinney Bennett, "Grenada: Anatomy of a 'Go' Decision," Reader's Digest, Vol. 124, No. 2 (February 1984), pp. 72-73.

According to Motley's testimony, an inter-agency group (apparently a lower-level group than that which he chaired on October 17) had first discussed the growing unrest in Grenada and the possible dangers to Americans there on October 13, asking the JCS on October 14 to review its contingency evacuation plans. See Motley, "The Decision to Assist Grenada," p. 2.

Grenada, and requesting submission of possible courses of action.[152]

The murder in Grenada of Grenadian Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and several top officials and union leaders on October 19, and the establishment of a 24-hour, shoot-on-sight curfew led to activation of the National Security Council's crisis management mechanisms and to serious planning for a possible "nonpermissive" evacuation -- an evacuation in which the host government impedes the departure of foreign citizens.[153] At 8 a.m. on October 20 McFarlane's deputy, Rear Admiral John Poindexter, convened a meeting of the Crisis Pre-Planning Group (CPPG) in the White House. Following a discussion of the unsettling developments in Grenada, the participants determined that the situation was serious enough for immediate consideration by the NSC's Special Situation Group (SSG), chaired by Vice President George Bush. The CPPG also spurred several other important activities: more intense discussions in the Pentagon on the logistical requirements for a military operation; drafting by the NSC staff

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[152]Lieutenant Colonel Michael J. Byron (USMC), "Fury from the Sea: Marines in Grenada," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 110, No. 5 (May 1984), p. 124.

[153]Motley, "The Decision to Assist Grenada," p. 2. For a discussions of national security policy-making during President Reagan's first term, see Robert C. McFarlane, with Richard Saunders and Thomas C. Shull, "The National Security Council: Organization for Policy Making," in The Presidency and National Security Policy, ed. by R. Gordon Hoxie (New York: Center for the Study of the Presidency, 1984), pp. 261-263; and Les Janka, "The National Security Council and the Making of American Middle East Policy," Armed Forces Journal International, Vol. 121, No. 8 (March 1984), pp. 84-86.

of a National Security Decision Directive, which would include maps, aerial photographs, diplomatic cables, intelligence reports, and other information necessary for subsequent discussions and decisions; and, as a preliminary precaution later that day, orders to the **USS Independence** battle group and Amphibious Squadron Four with the embarked 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit -- enroute for Lebanon -- "to change course and steer closer to Grenada on their transit across the Atlantic."[154]

Vice President George Bush convened the Special Situation Group in the White House at 4:45 p.m that afternoon. Upon the meeting's conclusion, National Security Adviser McFarlane conveyed the group's recommendations to the President, who ordered the planning to proceed, approved the diversion of the naval task force, and instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to "undertake urgent contingency planning for the invasion of Grenada," something which apparently had not previously been initiated.[155]

The following afternoon President Reagan signed an initial National Security Decision Directive that directed detailed planning to proceed, and then boarded Air Force One for a golfing

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[154] Byron, "Fury from the Sea," p. 124; Bennett, "Grenada: Anatomy of a 'Go' Decision," p. 73. Early reports (see, for example, Gwertzman, "Steps to the Invasion," p. A20) on the decision-making during the crisis indicated that the initial course change was not ordered until after the first SSG meeting convened by Vice President Bush, but such reports now appear to have been inaccurate.

[155] Bennett, "Grenada: Anatomy of a 'Go' Decision," pp. 73-74; Gwertzman, "Steps to the Invasion," p. A20; Byron, "Fury from the Sea," p. 124.

weekend in Augusta, Georgia with Secretary Shultz and McFarlane. Back in the White House, Admiral Poindexter chaired a meeting at 5 p.m. with the question still open as to whether the military would be conducting just a noncombatant evacuation operation or would seek complete seizure of the island. The group decided to instruct the JCS to plan for both.[156]

In Barbados, meanwhile, Charles Gillespie, the ranking U.S. diplomat in the Caribbean, awaited the results of a discussion of the Grenadian situation by Caribbean leaders. Late that evening, October 21, the Prime Minister of Dominica emerged to tell Gillespie that the members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, joined by non-OECS members Jamaica and Barbados, wanted the United States to "join them" in a military operation to restore "order and democracy" on Grenada. Gillespie cabled the news to the State Department.[157]

The OECS request was forwarded to Secretary Shultz in

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[156]Bennett, "Grenada: Anatomy of a 'Go' Decision," p. 74. This meeting presumably included CPPG members, although reports are not clear.

[157]Bennett, "Grenada: Anatomy of a 'Go' Decision," p. 74; Motley, "The Decision to Assist Grenada," p. 3; James Feron, "Barbadian Leader Describes Disputes and Confusion in Arranging Invasion," New York Times, 28 October 1983, p. A16; Magnuson, "D-Day in Grenada," p. 27; and Gwertzman, "Steps to the Invasion," p. A20. At the request of the United States, a "formal [written] request" from the OECS members (minus Grenada, of course) for military help was received by Washington on October 23. Two U.S. emissaries (Ambassador Francis McNeil and Major General George Crist) had been dispatched to Barbados on October 21 (after Washington received the original OECS plea) to obtain a written request, taking with them a draft prepared in Washington. The draft was agreed to by the OECS members and arrived in Washington on October 23. See Gwertzman, "Steps to the Invasion," p. A20; and Motley, "The Decision to Assist Grenada," p. 2.

Augusta, who was awakened at 2:45 a.m. the following morning. Shultz discussed the matter with McFarlane, and then, by secure phone, with Vice President Bush and other NSC officials in Washington. Shortly before 5 a.m., President Reagan was awakened and briefed by McFarlane and Shultz on the plea for U.S. assistance from the OECS and Jamaica and Barbados. The President felt that the U.S. could not refuse the Caribbean nations' call for help, and phoned Vice President Bush, directing him to hold an SSG meeting at 9 a.m. In the meantime, McFarlane, Shultz, and he would go ahead with their golf game, the President said, in order to prevent any speculation that a crisis was brewing.[158]

Back in Washington, Vice President Bush convened the SSG again at 9 a.m.. The draft National Security Decision Directive had been refined, and specified three objectives: "Ensuring the safety of American citizens in Grenada; in conjunction with OECS...participants, the restoration of democratic government in Grenada; and elimination of current, and prevention of further, Cuban intervention on Grenada." The scope of the operation contemplated clearly had expanded to become far more than a mere evacuation of U.S. citizens. Everyone at the SSG, one participant later said, "was gung-ho." Secretary of Defense Weinberger and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General John Vessey had some reservations, however, and at the least reportedly "wanted to learn more about the weapons and willingness to fight

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[158]Bennett, "Anatomy of a 'Go' Decision," p. 74; Isaacson, "Weighing the Proper Role," p. 48; Gwertzman, "Steps to the Invasion," p. A20.

of the Cubans in Grenada." Apparently, as a Time magazine article later observed, "the haste worried some top U.S. military planners." Nonetheless, President Reagan approved of the expanded mission. Participating by speaker phone from Augusta, President Reagan weighed the risks of going beyond a rescue mission, and then agreed with the new objectives. "If we've got to go there," he is reported to have judged, "we might as well do all that needs to be done."[159]

Following the meeting, military planning to accomplish the new objectives was initiated, and late on October 22, in response to Presidential direction, the JCS provided Admiral Wesley McDonald, Commander in Chief, Atlantic Command, with confirmation of the expanded mission. The operation was scheduled for not later than dawn October 25 -- giving Admiral McDonald little more than 48 hours to assemble his forces, plan, and execute the operation.[160]

More deliberations on the decision to intervene in Grenada took place in Washington on October 23. President Reagan had been awakened early that morning with the tragic news of the

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[159]Bennett, "Grenada: Anatomy of a 'Go' Decision," pp. 74-75; Magnuson, "D-Day in Grenada," p. 26-27; Bennett, "Fury from the Sea," p. 124. Reportedly, the invasion planning was given even more impetus on October 22 when Donald Cruz, a U.S. consular officer from Barbados who had flown into Grenada on 21 October, cabled an alarming report back to Washington. See Thomas DeFrank and John Walcott, "The Invasion Countdown," Newsweek, Vol. 102, No. 19 (7 November 1983), p. 75; Motley, "The Decision to Assist Grenada," pp. 2-3; and Frank J. Prial, "U.S. Envoys Traveling to Grenada to Check on Safety of Americans," New York Times, 23 October 1983, p. A1.

[160]Byron, "Fury from the Sea," p. 124.

suicide bombing of the Marine compound in Beirut. He quickly returned to Washington and immediately convened a meeting of the NSC. Reagan refused to allow the bloodshed in Lebanon to influence the discussion. "If [Grenada] was right yesterday," he is said to have reasoned, "it's right today." In fact, the President reportedly decided, "the Beirut bombings made it even more imperative that the U.S. act decisively in the Caribbean, especially since the island nations would know if their request for action had been turned down." As Reagan is said to have declared: "We cannot let an act of terrorism determine whether we aid or assist our allies in the region. If we do that," reports say he asked rhetorically, "who will ever trust us again?"[161] The President expressed the same convictions in a second meeting that afternoon. He again acknowledged the potential consequences of failure in light of the bombing in Beirut, but contended that he had an obligation both to U.S. citizens in danger and to the Caribbean nations that asked for help. That night the President reportedly signed a final National Security Decision Directive with one word: "Go."[162]

The following day, Monday, October 24, a final military

[161]Magnuson, "D-Day in Grenada," p. 28; Bennett, "Grenada: Anatomy of a 'Go' Decision," pp. 75-76; DeFrank and Walcott, "The Invasion Countdown," p. 75.

[162]Bennett, "Grenada: Anatomy of a 'Go' Decision," p. 76. On October 23, President Reagan also received via the Prime Minister of Barbados a request for help from Grenada's Governor General, Paul Scoon. See Motley, "The Decision to Assist Grenada," p. 2; and DeFrank and Walcott, "The Invasion Countdown," p. 75.

planning meeting was held from 2:15 to 3:30 p.m.. General Vessey reaffirmed an earlier estimate that casualties would be light. The President gave approval to proceed. At 6 p.m. that evening he gave the final go-ahead, and the invasion kicked off at 5:30 the following morning.[163]

Once again, it does not appear that the military were eager to employ military force. In fact, substantial journalistic attention was subsequently paid to what was termed "a curious role reversal" in discussions about the use of force. These reports observed that during the deliberations over intervention in Grenada, the State Department was eager to take a stand. By contrast, the caution of Defense Secretary Weinberger and the JCS that was evident with respect to the peacekeeping mission in Lebanon was again exhibited during the discussions on Grenada. While Secretary of State Shultz is said to have urged: "Let's strike while the iron is hot," Weinberger and the military counselled waiting for more intelligence and planning.[164]

In any event, the military did not emerge in any of the reports on the Grenada discussions as the aggressive party, nor as a particularly influential participant in the decision to intervene. The military did, however, design and run the operation without the level of civilian (not to mention press)

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[163]Magnuson, "D-Day in Grenada," p. 28; DeFrank and Walcott, "The Invasion Countdown," p. 75; Motley, "The Decision to Assist Grenada," p. 2.

[164]Isaacson, "Weighing the Proper Role," p. 44; Halloran "Reagan as Military Commander, p. 68.

oversight customary throughout the Vietnam period and much of its aftermath.[165] And once committed, the commanders involved insisted on employing overwhelming force as rapidly as possible. Nothing succeeds with the American public like success, the military recalled, and they sought (understandably) to achieve it as quickly as possible. Within three days, over 6,000 Rangers, paratroopers, and Marines -- supported by a naval carrier battle group, the aviation assets of an amphibious squadron, and Air Force close air support -- were committed to overwhelm the 784 Cubans and 2,000 dispirited Grenadian soldiers on the island.[166]

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[165]See, for example, Gerald F. Seib, "No More 'Micromanagement' of the Military," Wall Street Journal, 8 November 1983, p. 24. Also, conversations with Admiral James Metcalf, the Joint Task Force Commander, at Princeton University (7 February 1984) and West Point, New York (31 May 1985). On the recommendation of Vice Admiral Metcalf, the press were not permitted on the island until over two days after the invasion began. See "Admiral Says It Was His Decision to Tether the Press," New York Times, 31 October 1983, p. A12; Marjorie Hunter, "U.S. Eases Restrictions on Coverage," New York Times, 31 October 1983, p. A12; and Janice Castro, "Keeping the Press from the Action," Time 7 November 1983, pp. 65-66.

[166]Ryan, The Iranian Rescue Mission, p. 148; "Reports on the Island of a Weak, Dispirited Foe," Philadelphia Inquirer, 6 November 1983, p. A20; Conversations with numerous participants.

As noted, there were about 6,000 soldiers and Marines on the Island at the height of the U.S. commitment. Another 10,000 personnel were aboard the ships of the naval task force. There were also a number of Air Force crew members and other individuals involved. In fact, officials eventually announced that as many as 19,600 personnel could be awarded the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for participation in the campaign. See "8612 Soldiers Earn Awards For Grenada Mission," Army Times, 16 April 1984, p. 44.

According to Richard Halloran, General Vessey had sought to employ a larger force than that which Secretary Weinberger approved. See Halloran's "Reagan as Military Commander, p. 68, and his To Arm A Nation (New York: Macmillan, 1986), p. 29.

Two days into the operation, the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Command estimated -- based on captured documents -- that

Central America -- 1981-1987

The debate within the Reagan administration over U.S. policy for Central America has provided an opportunity to observe a

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there were over 1,000 Cubans on Grenada. Within a week of the intervention, the State Department revised that estimate downward, and accepted the Cuban government statement that there were 784 Cubans on the Island. Of that number, it appears that 25 performed specifically military functions. The bulk of the rest were construction workers, about 640 in number. All of them had undergone significant military training in Cuba (as all Cuban men have since the early 1960s), but nearly 50% were reportedly over 40 years old, and, according to military officers quoted by the Philadelphia Inquirer, "fewer than 250 Cubans took up arms against the invasion force." For a more complete discussion, see Anthony Payne, Paul Sutton, and Tony Thorndike, Grenada: Revolution and Invasion (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 162-163; Richard Halloran, "U.S. Reduces Force in Grenada By 700," New York Times, 31 October 1985, pp. A1, A10; U.S. Departments of Defense and State, Grenada: A Preliminary Report (Washington, D.C., 16 December 1983), p. 1; "Reports on the Island of a Weak, Dispirited Foe," p. A20; Stuart Taylor, Jr., "In Wake of Invasion, Much Official Misinformation by U.S. Comes to Light," New York Times, 6 November 1983, p. A20; and "Grenada Collective Action," Gist (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, January 1984).

A 300-man element made up of police from Jamaica and other Caribbean states was landed on Grenada once the airport area was secure. This element apparently was included to give the force a multinational character; the members of the police element did not participate in any significant fighting and suffered no casualties, but did guard the 600 or so Cubans captured in the early hours of the fighting.

For accounts of the military operation, see: Lieutenant Colonel Michael J. Byron (USMC), "Fury From the Sea: Marines in Grenada," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 110, No. 5 (May 1984), pp. 118-131; Operational Overview 1-84 (Quantico: U.S. Marine Corps Development and Education Command, January-March 1984); Dorothea Cypher, "Urgent Fury: The U.S. Army in Grenada," and Frank Uhlig Jr., "Amphibious Aspects of the Grenada Episode," in American Intervention in Grenada, ed. by Peter M. Dunn and Bruce M. Watson (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 89-108. U.S. Army Studies Group (Office of the Chief of Staff, Army), "1-75 Rangers in Grenada," (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1985); and "Grenada: Special Report," Airman, Vol. 28, No. 2 (February 1984), pp. 37-42.

An excellent chronology of events concerning Grenada is contained in American Intervention in Grenada, pp. 149-182.

significant effort by the military to influence national policy. In the debate over Central America, more than in the debate over any other post-Vietnam issue involving the potential use of U.S. troops, America's senior soldiers have been willing to make their views known in public, as well as in private.

With few exceptions, the military's apprehensions about American involvement in Central America can be summed up by the titles of two Op-Ed pieces on El Salvador in the March 11, 1983 Washington Post, where Stephen Rosenfield's "El Salvador Isn't Vietnam..." was accompanied by Philip Geyelin's "...But There Is A Chilling Resemblance."[167] Many of the senior military have feared a Central American Vietnam, and by making their views known in advance they have sought to shape the debate and preempt certain policies. Most important, the military have advised publicly against the commitment of U.S. combat units in the region except under certain conditions -- conditions developed with an eye to avoiding another Vietnam.

There are, of course, factors beyond the "no more Vietnams" sentiment that have influenced the military's views on U.S. policy toward Central America. The military -- especially those actually in Latin America -- have been quite sensitive to the legacy of "Yankee imperialism" under which U.S. policy for the

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[167] See page A17. As journalist Adam Smith observed in 1983, for senior officers in the Army in particular, the similarities between El Salvador and Vietnam in the early 1980s were a "silent obsession." Vietnam, he wrote after a visit to the Army War College, "lurks in ellipses and nuances, even when the discussion is about something else." See his "Will You Go to El Salvador?" Esquire, Vol. 100, No. 3 (September 1983), pp. 12.

region labors. There has also been widespread recognition that military means are not the solution to many of the region's problems. But always lurking in the senior leadership's subconscious has been the fear of American troops bogged down in another unpopular, nasty little war that gradually consumes the institution they have worked for the past decade to revive.

Ever since the Reagan administration took office in 1981, there has been disagreement among the President's advisers over U.S. policy toward Central America, particularly, of course, with regard to El Salvador and Nicaragua. In the early days of the administration, Secretary of State Haig urged the President to make a stand in Central America. Haig argued that the way to avoid another Vietnam was to pursue U.S. objectives "with enough resources to force the issue early" -- to avoid incremental commitment. Haig favored "giving military and economic aid to El Salvador while bringing the overwhelming economic and political influence of the United States, together with the reality of its military power, to bear on Cuba in order to treat the problem at the source."[168]

Arrayed against Haig, for varying reasons, were several of the President's key advisers in the White House, as well as Defense Secretary Weinberger and the military. As Haig later wrote:

> The Joint Chiefs of Staff, chastened by Vietnam, in which our troops performed with admirable success but were declared to have been defeated, and by the steady

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[168] Haig, Caveat, pp. 125, 129.

decline of respect for the military -- and the decline of military budgets -- resisted a major commitment in Central America.[169]

As noted in chapter V, Haig also sensed military doubts about the political will to follow through to the end of such a commitment.

As the situation in El Salvador deteriorated in the early 1980s, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary Weinberger reluctantly sent U.S. military trainers there, and supported calls by the administration and the theater commander for emergency aid to that country. The Joint Chiefs and the theater commander repeatedly affirmed, however, their opposition to the use of U.S. combat troops in Central America. Testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in March 1982, for example, General David Jones, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, said that he did not "see any circumstances under which [America] would intervene with United States forces" in El Salvador. And, as described earlier, Jones' successor -- General Vessey -- and a number of other senior officers stated publicly that they did not advocate trying to implement an American military solution to the problems in Central America.[170]

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[169]Haig, Caveat, pp. 128-129.

[170]Richard Halloran, "No Plans to Send G.I.'s to Salvador, Gen. Jones Asserts," New York Times, 11 March 1982, p. A1; "Review of Role in Salvador Urged," New York Times, 16 November 1981, p. A2; Isaacson, "Weighing the Proper Role," p. 44; David Wood, "U.S. Says El Salvador 'Can Be Lost'," Los Angeles Times, 23 February 1983, pp. I-1, I-20; "Pentagon is Opposed to Use of Troops in Central America," New York Times, 5 June 1983, p. A5; Drew Middleton, "U.S. Generals Are Leery of Latin Intervention," New York Times, 21 June 1983, p. A9; George C. Wilson, "Top U.S. Brass Wary on Central America," Washington Post, 24 June 1983, p. A20; and Walter S. Mossberg, "The Army Resists a Salvadoran

While seeing danger in any victory for leftist elements in El Salvador, or in the expansion of Nicaraguan influence in the region, American military leaders by 1983 did "not see the Central American situation as a peculiarly military one." Instead, they stressed that the region's problems were "economic, political, social, and military." In some countries, they saw the military problem as the least important. In others, such as El Salvador, they saw it as "reflecting underlying economic and social strains."[171] As America's senior military reasoned, Drew Middleton reported in June 1983,

> In such situations [as those in Central America] wholehearted support of the local populations for United States intervention would be questionable...The appearance of even one American brigade in El Salvador would push the peasants toward the leftist insurgents, who would call the arrival of the troops another example of "Yankee imperialism"...Any military intervention should be considered only after the Administration has identified the political goals and stated the military objectives. At the same time, the public must understand the cost to the country in military manpower, money, and time.[172]

By August 1983, the key advocates of a U.S. "hard line" in Central America were Assistant to the President for National

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Vietnam," Wall Street Journal, 24 June 1983, p. 22.

[171]Middleton, "U.S. Generals Are Leery of Latin Intervention," p. A9. The view that the root problems are frequently political, social, or economic was expressed again in 1985 by General John Galvin, the current Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command, when he told an Armed Forces Journal interviewer that "the essential problem here isn't military, and the answer to the problem isn't military." See the interview with General Galvin in Armed Forces Journal International (December 1985), p. 35.

[172]Middleton, "U.S. Generals Are Leery of Latin Intervention," p. A9.

Security Affairs William Clark, White House Chief of Staff James Baker, Undersecretary of Defense Fred Ikle, and the President himself -- who was reportedly determined "not to lose El Salvador on his watch." Secretary of State Shultz was emphasizing diplomatic solutions for the problems of the region, and the Pentagon's main concern still appeared to be to prevent involvement of American combat troops.[173]

A new military actor appeared about that time -- General Paul Gorman, the new Commander in Chief of the U.S. Southern Command, the unified command with its headquarters in Panama and responsibility for all American military activities in Latin America. General Gorman quickly achieved prominence when he briefed administration officials on proposed construction of a network of permanent bases in Honduras for use by U.S. forces in emergency, stressing the long-term potential of such bases. His proposal was supported by General John Wickham, the Army's new Chief of Staff, who added, however, that he did not "see the potential for widening involvement of the U.S. military" in

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[173]Undersecretary Ikle caused a stir in September 1983 when he delivered a speech in Baltimore calling for a military victory in El Salvador and saying negotiations alone could not solve the problem. See Fred Hiatt, "Undersecretary Urges More Salvadoran Aid," Washington Post, 13 November 1983, pp. A1, A4; Lou Cannon, "The President's Aides Are Losing Their Boss in Translation," Washington Post, 3 August 1983, p. A3; and Lou Cannon, "President's Strong Man Stretches South," Washington Post, 3 August 1983, pp. A1, A12.

There are those who have questioned the true desire of Secretary Shultz for a negotiated solution to the differences with Nicaragua. See, for example, Doyle McManus, "Dateline Washington: Gipperdammerung," Foreign Policy, No. 66 (Spring 1987), p. 156.

Central America.[174]

General Gorman quickly emerged as a major figure in the debates over U.S. policy in Central America, not just in the military but in the political sphere as well. As the Washington Post's Leon Jenkins noted: "In a region where the military rules or is likely to be the power behind the presidency, a U.S. general who dispenses arms and commands military advisors often wields authority with governments." In fact, Gorman began to appear to many as Washington's "virtual proconsul" to the area, "frequently overshadowing senior diplomats and at times overruling them." When Gorman replaced Lieutenant General Wallace Nutting, Jenkins explained, he brought not only an extra general's star to the newly upgraded command, but also

> increased access to the Administration, and the ear of many of the President's closest advisors, some of whom felt Central American policy was suffering from an excess of political and diplomatic -- rather than military -- emphasis...Gorman...[took] the military view that force must be met with counterforce if U.S. strategic interests [were] to be protected in Central America. But like many U.S. military officers who have analyzed the costs and implications of a direct U.S. military intervention in the region, he is said to favor using Central American military force rather than that of the U.S. whenever a counterwieght is mustered. Gorman's position is that the way to win in Central America is to upgrade the region's own military through training, military assistance, and increased regional military coordination and cooperation.[175]

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[174]George C. Wilson, "U.S. Bases Considered for Honduras," Washington Post, 6 August 1983, pp. A1, A12; Joanne Omang, "New Army Chief Doesn't See Widening Latin Involvement," Washington Post, p. A10.

[175]Leon Jenkins, "U.S. Officer Influential in Latin Region," Washington Post, 3 January 1984, p. A1, A13.

Jenkins' observations highlighted an important distinction in the thinking of the American military on Central America at that time -- and today. The senior military consistently have favored training and arming the forces of friendly governments in the region. They have advocated building bases in countries like Honduras and holding exercises to demonstrate and test deployment capabilities. They have gradually sought to prepare for any eventuality. Most have maintained that the United States should join with the Organization of American States in support of any country overtly invaded by Nicaragua -- although in such an event, they have insisted, "the heart and soul of Nicaragua must be put at risk" and there must be "no sanctuaries permitted as in Vietnam."[176] But the military have drawn the line at any other introduction of U.S. combat forces. There was one report in 1983, in fact, that for some time the JCS had even "resisted drawing up contingency plans for sending U.S. troops to fight in Central America, partly for fear that civilian leaders in a crisis atmosphere would order the plans implemented before they are assessed adequately." Too often in the past, General Meyer said at the time, "war plans shaped national policy when it

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[176]George C. Wilson, "U.S. Urged to Meet Honduran Requests," Washington Post, 20 June 1983, pp. A1, A4; Doyle McManus, "U.S. Draws Contingency Plans for Air Strikes in El Salvador," New York Times, 13 July 1984, p. A27; Richard Halloran, "Army Plans for 'What If' Latin War," New York Times, 4 May 1985, p. A4; and Bill Keller, "U.S. Military is Termed Prepared for any Move Against Nicaragua," New York Times, 4 June 1985, p. A1.

should be the other way around."[177] In short, the military have sought to enjoy the benefits of continued U.S. influence in the region, while simultaneously attempting to avoid the liabilities of American troops in active fighting.

An important difference exists, therefore, between willingness to train and build up the military forces of other countries (or even those of the United States), and willingness to commit U.S. troops to combat. That distinction is sometimes glossed over, as it was in an April 1984 New York Times article by Hedrick Smith which announced: "The Pentagon is now in a position to assume a combat role in Central America should President Reagan give the order." Smith went on to describe General Gorman as a "hard-charging, vocal anti-Communist" intent on expanding America's military role in Central America. There was substance to his description; after all, few officers of any rank are not vocally "anti-Communist," and one does not attain four-star rank without being "hard-charging." Still, the tone of Smith's article resounded with the stereotypical view of the military as just "itchin' for a fight." Smith ignored the military's deep desire to keep U.S. soldiers out of combat in Latin America, except under very specific circumstances. In fact, the three generals he noted as "important advocates of the buildup" had publicly expressed what the Washington Post's George

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[177]Wilson, "U.S. Urged to Meet Honduran Requests," p. A4; Doyle McManus "U.S. Draws Contingency Plans for Air Strikes in El Salvador," Washington Post, 13 July 1984, p. A27. Some contingency plans have been developed since then.

Wilson had described as "opposition to committing U.S. forces to the region unless the American public supports it and commanders are given a freer hand in waging war than they had in Vietnam."[178]

Congressional testimony by General Gorman in August 1984 reinforced Wilson's description of the military's views on the use of American troops in Central America. In a discussion of the situation in El Salvador, for example, General Gorman asserted that he "could foresee no circumstances when it would be useful" to commit American troops to combat in that country. It would be a mistake for the United States, he stated, to use combat forces in El Salvador even if the Salvadoran government appeared to be in danger of being overthrown by guerrillas. The arrival of American forces, he continued, would likely

> transform the conflict from an indigenous struggle into a very different kind of fighting in which nationalism might cut against the United States...We carry a very historic burden in that region and for the United States to send troops to fight could very well precipitate the kind of events we are trying to foreclose.[179]

General Gorman's views were echoed in 1985 by General

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[178]Hedrick Smith, "U.S. Latin Force in Place If Needed, Officials Report," New York Times, 23 April 1984, pp. A1, A8; and George Wilson, "Top U.S. Brass Wary on Central America," Washington Post, 24 June 1983, p. A20.

[179]Philip Taubman, "General Doubts G.I. Role in Salvador," New York Times, 2 August 1984, p. 3; General Gorman's full testimony is in Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Western Hemispheric Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, August 1, 1984 (H381-37), The Role of the U.S. Southern Command in Central America (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985), esp. pp. 25-26, 32.

Nutting, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Readiness Command, and himself a former Commander in Chief of the Southern Command. Discussing Nicaragua with a reporter shortly before his retirement, Nutting noted that he was strongly opposed to an American invasion of Nicaragua. Talk about invading Nicaragua, he said, was "counterproductive to the long-term coalition we ought to be building in the hemisphere." An invasion of Nicaragua, he continued, would jeopardize relations between North America and Latin America; "the less visible we are militarily," he said, "the better it will be." General Nutting's views were apparently shared by many others in the military. As Richard Halloran reported,

> Officers in Washington said General Nutting's opposition to invading Nicaragua reflected a view widely held among senior military officers and echoing recommendations made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the President and the Secretary of Defense.[180]

It is clear that General John Galvin, who succeeded General Gorman in 1985, holds similar views.[181]

Certainly some of the military's public statements -- and those of others as well -- have been made to reassure Congress and the American people.[182] But such statements appear to

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[180]Richard Halloran, "General Opposes Nicaragua Attacks," New York Times, 30 June 1985, p. A3.

[181]Numerous conversations in Central America with General Galvin, June-July 1986.

[182]Even Salvadoran President Duarte has affirmed to Congress that he "will never" ask American troops to fight in his country. See Hedrick Smith, "Duarte Declares He'll Never Call For U.S. Troops," New York Times, 22 May 1984, p. A1.

reflect the true views of the military. The desire to keep U.S. troops out of Central America is not just for public consumption.

To be sure, as U.S. involvement in Central America has grown, the American military, led by General Gorman and General Galvin, have sought to prepare for the possible commitment of U.S. troops against Nicaragua.[183] These efforts have not been accompanied by any new desire to actually employ U.S. troops, however, but rather to keep from having to use them by building up the militaries of the other countries in the region, by supporting the development of democracy and military professionalism in those countries, and by demonstrating to Nicaragua (and America's friends in the region) that the United States possesses extraordinary military capabilities and, under certain circumstances, the will to employ them.[184] On two

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[183]After all, the military is supposed to prepare for contingencies. See Bill Keller, "U.S. Military Is Termed Prepared For Any Move Against Nicaragua," New York Times, 4 June 1985, pp. A1, A10; and Joel Brinkley, "Nicaragua and the U.S. Options: An Invasion Is Openly Discussed," New York Times, 5 June 1985, pp. A1, A8.

[184]For recent statements of the strategy pursued by the U.S. Southern Command, see General John R. Galvin, "Challenge and Response: On the Southern Flank Three Decades Later," Military Review, Vol. 66, No. 8 (August 1986), pp. 4-15; and "Statement of General Paul F. Gorman, Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command," in Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate (Washington: USGPO, 1985), 23 February 1984, pp. 1120-1128.

For a representative sample of stories on the U.S. exercise, military construction, and security assistance programs, see: Frank Greve, "U.S. Aides Split on Combat Role in Latin Nations," Philadelphia Inquirer, 2 July 1984, p. 1; Keller, "U.S. Military Is Termed Prepared for any Move Against Nicaragua," pp. A1, A10; Fred Hiatt and Joanne Omang, "New U.S. Latin Maneuvers Planned," Washington Post, 30 June 1984, pp. A1, A23; Jay Finegan, "Buildup in Honduras," The [Washington] Times Magazine, 2 July 1984, pp.

occasions, U.S. helicopters have even been used to airlift Honduran soldiers to counter cross-border excursions by Nicaraguan forces attacking Contra base camps located inside Honduras.[185] And inevitably the military have been drawn into the debate over U.S. support for the Contras -- although the CIA and the NSC staff have exercised virtually exclusive control over U.S. involvement with the Contras until recently, when the military were assigned the mission of training some Contra leaders in the United States.

The military have generally been cautious (or even skeptical) in their assessment of the Contras' chances for a

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4-10; Joanne Omang and Margaret Shapiro, "125 U.S. Military Trainers Requested for El Salvador," Washington Post, pp. A1, A22; Gordon Mott, "Honduras: Key to U.S. Role in Central America," New York Times Magazine, 14 October 1984, beginning on p. 84; Michael Duffy, "U.S. in Honduras: Why the Buildup," Military Logistics (September 1985), pp. 28-30; Larry Carney, "Benning to Be Interim Home of Americas School," Army Times, 7 January 1985, p. 15; Don Hirst, "Special Forces Team to Train Costa Ricans," Army Times, 27 May 1987, p. 26; "Air Force Officer's Memo Suggests U.S. Plans Long Stay in Honduras," New York Times, 18 July 1985; Richard Halloran, "G.I. Training: Build a Road in Honduras," New York Times, 30 August 1985, p. A4; James LeMoyne, "U.S. Army Units to Build 6th Airfield in Honduras," New York Times, 3 March 1986; George C. Wilson, "U.S. Training Sought for Contra Leaders," Washington Post, 27 October 1986, pp. A1, A7; James LeMoyne, "First Group of the Contras Completes Florida Training," New York Times, 9 January 1987, p. A10; and Richard Halloran, "U.S. Will Increase Latin War Games," New York Times, 22 February 1987, p. A16.

185 Accounts of these operations are in James LeMoyne, "U.S. Army Copters Carry Hondurans to Border Region," New York Times, 27 March 1986, pp. A1, A6; David Shipler, "Copters to Go On Aiding Hondurans," New York Times, 28 March 1986, p. A5; Jill Smolowe, "Pouncing on a Transgressor," Time, Vol. 127, No. 14 (7 April 1986), pp. 24-25; "U.S. Copters Ferry Honduran Troops to Face Nicaragua," New York Times, 8 December 1986, pp. A1, A19; James LeMoyne, U.S. Copters Finish Honduran Mission; Clashes May Go On," New York Times, 9 December 1986, pp. A1, A16.

military victory -- while still supporting American aid to the Contras. This paradoxical position has been adopted for several reasons. First, the military would, of course, like to see the Sandinista regime overthrown. While few of the senior military have held any hope that the Contras might oust the Sandinistas militarily, there is always the chance that a miracle might occur. Second, continued support is perceived as better than the two most likely alternatives -- a negotiated settlement or employment of U.S. troops.[186] At the least, the military reason, the Contras keep the Sandinistas focused on internal security problems rather than on fomenting instability elsewhere in the region -- actions most military believe the Sandinistas would take were it not for the Contras. This point has special relevance to the Salvadoran counter-insurgency for, as General Gorman observed in 1986: "My Salvadoran colleagues are entirely convinced that if it were not for the...[Contras], the

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[186]Military views on the chances for Contra success are in: Bill Keller, "U.S. General Says Nicaragua Rebels Cannot Win Soon," New York Times, 28 February 1985, pp. A1, A11; George C. Wilson, "Generals Who Contradict the Contras," Washington Post, 13 April 1986, p. C2; Transcript of 11 March 1986 "Testimony from the Commanders of the Unified Commands," Senate Armed Services Committee, pp. 33-37, 54-62, 70-73, 77-78, 80-89, 109; General John R. Galvin, "Sandinistas, Contras, and U.S. Policy," unpublished Op-Ed piece, June 1986; Roy Gutman, "Ex-General Voices Doubts on U.S. Policy in Nicaragua," Newsday, 15 November 1986; George C. Wilson, "Contras Need a Success Soon, Crowe Says," Washington Post, 13 February 1987, p. 31; Don Harrison, "Galvin Says Contras Have 'Fighting Chance'," Army Times, 9 February, 1987, p. 4; David Fulghum, "Gorman Changes Mind on Contra Prospects," Army Times, 9 March 1987, p. 6; Elaine Sciolino, "Joint Chiefs' Head Warns Contras; Shultz in Aid Plea," New York Times, 13 February 1987, p. A3; and James M. Dorsey, "Contras Need 3 Years to Win -- U.S. General," Washington Times, 24 February 1987, p. 4.

Salvadorans would have significantly increased military problems."[187] Finally, supporting the Contras is Reagan Administration policy. Generals who wish to question or oppose that policy do so at their own risk. Nonetheless, they have still tried to maintain some distance from the Contras, in an effort, I think, to avoid contributing to a perception that the United States has a vital interest in the success or failure of Contras.

It is difficult, of course, to gain perspective on an ongoing internal debate over such a divisive issue as U.S. policy toward Central America. It does seem clear, however, that the military have consistently been very wary of committing U.S. troops to Central America. Some of their apprehension has sprung from sound strategic logic and an understanding of the region; it has also been founded, however, on a desire to avoid another Vietnam -- which many have feared would result were American troops committed there except under certain conditions. The result has been a military effort to avoid employment of U.S. combat troops unless the desired preconditions obtain. The military has exercised considerable influence to this end and has willingly lent support to policies that have held out the hope of an alternative to direct U.S. military involvement.

The Persian Gulf -- 1984

Military caution was again on display briefly in late May

[187]Wilson, "Generals Who Contradict the Contras," p. C2.

1984 during deliberations over the U.S. response to an increase in Iranian attacks against ships in the Persian Gulf carrying oil from Iraq and Saudi Arabia.[188]

President Reagan and the White House initially seemed willing to deploy U.S. military units (principally fighter squadrons) to the Gulf region. In responding to a query from the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Washington, for example, the President sent a message to King Fahd on May 21 "affirming support for Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries in any potential confrontation with Iran." While noting the stated desire of the Gulf countries to handle the problem by themselves, the President said "the United States would be willing to help if requested to do so."[189] During a news conference two days later, however, the President sought to dampen speculation about possible U.S. actions in the Persian Gulf. "We have not volunteered to intervene, nor have we been asked to intervene," Reagan said. He did note, however, that the United States was consulting with allies about the possibility of military aid to protect shipping the Persian Gulf.[190]

One reason for the President's retreat from his position of

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[188]A list of the Iranian (and Iraqi) strikes against shipping in the Gulf is in "The Gulf War: Attacks on Shipping Since 1981," New York Times, 24 May 1984, p. A10.

[189]Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan Affirms U.S. Would Guard Shipping in Gulf," New York Times, 22 May 1984, pp. A1, A12.

[190]Steven R. Weisman, "Reagan Says U.S. and Allies Weigh Persian Gulf Aid," New York Times, 23 May 1984, p. A1; and "President's News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Issues," New York Times, 23 May 1984, p. A22.

two days earlier appears to have been the caution of the senior military. Although details of the decision-making process are still relatively scarce, it is clear that Secretary of Defense Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were quick to advise President Reagan "to avoid, if at all possible, the use of American forces in the Persian Gulf region." The practical difficulties of operating 7,000 miles from the east coast of the United States were cited as the principal reason for the military's caution. But many observers felt that the post-Vietnam wariness of a commitment that lacked clear objectives, sufficient American forces, and public support also contributed heavily to the military's thinking. "Let the nations over there work it out for themselves," one officer told Richard Halloran. "The Saudi Arabians and their Gulf allies should employ their own forces before Americans are involved," another added; "The feeling here is that they should get bloodied first." Pentagon leaders also advised that should the Saudis and their allies become involved in hostilities and need help, the United States should respond only if American help was requested publicly, and only after an understanding was reached with America's NATO allies. Furthermore, the military advised, any U.S. assistance should be carried out overtly. Fighter squadrons or other American elements should not be deployed to the Gulf without their presence being acknowledged by governments in the region. Finally, in the event U.S. forces were deployed, the military wanted them held in reserve behind those of Saudi Arabia and its

Gulf allies.[191]

The advice of the Secretary of Defense and the top military apparently had an impact. In the week after the release of his message to King Fahd, President Reagan dropped serious consideration of using U.S. units in a possible combat role, and instead sought to display America's support for Saudi Arabia by sending the Saudis 400 Stinger short-range air defense missiles, accelerating the delivery of extra fuel tanks for Saudi F-15 fighter planes, and sending an American KC-10 aerial refueling tanker to augment the U.S. refueling tanker unit already in Saudi Arabia.[192] Military conservatism had tempered the initial activist leanings of the President and his White House advisers.

Hijacking the Hijackers -- 1985

October 1985 witnessed a dramatic exercise of America's military capabilities, as Navy fighters intercepted and diverted an Egyptian plane carrying the hijackers of the Italian cruise ship **Achille Lauro** -- hijackers who had earlier slain an American

[191]Richard Halloran, "Pentagon Said to Urge Caution on a U.S. Role in Gulf," New York Times, 27 May 1984, p. A18; Steve Berg, "Nation's Top Soldier Prepares for Assault on Walleyes," Minneapolis Star and Tribune, 25 August 1985, p. 1; and Bernard Gwertzman, "As Tension Rises in the Gulf, Role for U.S. Becomes Issue," New York Times, 24 May 1984, p. A1.

[192]Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan Formally Announces Sale of 400 Missiles to Saudis," New York Times, 30 May 1984, pp. A1, A4; "Text of U.S. Statement on Missiles for Saudis,"New York Times, 30 May 1984, pp. A4; Bernard Gwertzman, "Aides Say Reagan Is Forced to Limit Missiles for Saudis," New York Times, 26 May 1984, p. A6; Richard Halloran, "400 Missiles Sent to Saudi Arabia, Officials Report," New York Times, 29 May 1984, pp. A1, A8.

citizen on board the ship. Although only incomplete details of the decision-making process are known, it appears that the military and civilians alike were united in supporting the action.

All involved, it appears, were frustrated by the repeated sense of American impotence in the struggle against international terrorism. They were, therefore, eager to strike a blow against terrorists -- assuming a plan could be developed that had a high probability of success and minimized the potential for injury to innocent civilians and to the U.S. troops who would carry it out.[193] Thoughts of Vietnam do not seem to have had any impact on the advice of the military in this case: the mission was clear; the target, a civilian airliner, would be easy to force down -- once located; public and Congressional support were

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[193]The sense of frustration was particularly marked, noted several observers, because of the failure of the administration to take any retaliatory action after the seizure of a jetliner and American passengers aboard four months earlier. In that case, a U.S. Navy diver was beaten to death, and the plane and hostages were held for 17 days in Beirut before being released. Military actions were apparently contemplated, but the difficulty of identifying targets and of minimizing danger to innocent bystanders prevented U.S. action. I have not discussed that case here due to the lack of details of the military's participation in the decision-making process (although it is clear that U.S. counter-terrorist elements were moved to the region, as they had been on several other occasions previously). Presumably, the military felt as they did in this case. For discussions of the previous crisis, see "The Military Option," Hijacking (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense News Summary, 30 September 1985), pp. 7-8; Lou Cannon, "The 'Wait It Out' Pitfall," Washington Post, 23 June 1985, pp. A1, A26; David Hoffman, "U.S. Has Reached 'Limits' On Terrorism, Reagan Says," Washington Post, 21 June 1985, pp. A1, A31; Nora Boustany, "Captive TWA Passengers Reject a Military Rescue," Washington Post, 21 June 1985, pp. A1, A30; and George Church, "The Dilemma of Retaliation," Time, 24 June 1985, p. 27.

virtually guaranteed in advance (especially since, if all went as planned, there would be no civilian or U.S. military casualties); and the military recognized that there was no reason that they would be constrained in the conduct of the operation. Most important, although the mission did require skillful intelligence gathering, swift operational coordination, and expert flying, it was still relatively straight forward.

The plan was apparently conceived in the White House by Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North of the NSC staff. It was North who, upon receiving intelligence reports early on 10 October indicating that the hijackers had not left Egypt after releasing the **Achille Lauro**, proposed forcing their plane down in Sicily if they tried to leave by air. Deputy National Security Adviser Poindexter quickly blessed North's idea, and told him to discuss it with Vice Admiral Arthur Moreau, the Joint Chiefs of Staff representative on the administration's counterterrorism task force. Moreau believed the Sixth Fleet could do the job, and a team of Pentagon officers went to work, developing a plan to intercept the terrorists if they tried to fly out of Egypt. Admiral William Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reviewed the plan and thought it was sound. "I think [our boys] can do it," he advised Secretary Weinberger. "I think we should let them try."[194]

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[194]John Walcott, "Getting Even," Newsweek, Vol. 106, No. 17 (October 21, 1985), pp. 22-23; and Scott Truver, "Maritime Terrorism," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 112, No. 5 (May 1986), p. 168.

By 11 o'clock that morning, intelligence sources had reported that the terrorists were still trying to leave Egypt. The plane they planned to use had been located, and there were signs that they meant to fly to Tunis. North met again with Admiral Poindexter, and presented the plan for intercepting the plane and forcing it to land in Sicily. The time had come, Poindexter instructed, for North to send it to National Security Adviser McFarlane, travelling aboard Air Force One with President Reagan. McFarlane discussed it with the President, and Reagan approved the plan in principle but requested more specifics. He insisted, in particular, on knowing more about the risk of casualties before giving final approval. With the President's tentive green light, Pentagon planners went ahead with refinement of the final plan, giving special attention to the rules of engagement.[195]

Meanwhile, Secretary Weinberger (also on a trip) expressed some reservations about the operation. He was afraid, he told the President, that the operation might "destroy our relations with Egypt" (who would not be notified of the action in advance). He also voiced concerns about the possibility of Navy pilots firing across the nose of an unarmed civilian plane. The President, however, brushed Weinberger's concerns aside; he was reassured by the State Department's judgment that the risks of

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[195]Walcott, "Getting Even," p. 23; Truver, "Maritime Terrorism," p. 168; and "President's Remarks, October 11, 1985," Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 85, No. 2105 (October 1985), p. 75.

hijacking the hijackers were far outweighed by the benefits. Upon receiving word shortly after 3 p.m. that the terrorists had arrived at the airport and that their pilots had filed a flight plan for Algiers, the President -- still aboard Air Force One-- snapped "Let's do it." The word went out, the chase was on, and within two hours the plane was on the ground at Sigonella Air Base in Sicily.[196]

Given the successful outcome of the operation, it is not surprising that in its aftermath military and civilians alike praised it and implied their prior approval as well -- which, after all, seems to have been the case.[197] Admiral James Watkins, Chief of Naval Operations, seemed to sum up the military's feelings. "We've all been frustrated at our inability to grab a hold of one of these [terrorist] events and deal with it," he said. "I'm extremely pleased that [President Reagan] made the decision he did."[198]

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[196]Walcott, "Getting Even," pp. 23-24; Truver, "Maritime Terrorism," p. 168; and "President's Remarks, October 11, 1985," p. 75. For descriptions of the operation, see: Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Intercepts Jet Carrying Hijackers," New York Times, 11 October 1985, pp. A1, A10; Bernard Weinraub, "'We Want Justice, Reagan Declares'," New York Times, 12 October 1985, pp. A1, A6; Francis X. Clines, "U.S. Heads Off Hijackers: How the Operation Unfolded," New York Times, 12 October 1985, pp. A1, A9; "If F-14s Failed, Special Forces Were Ready," Army Times, 21 October 1985, pp. 2, 28, 51; and Hugh Sidey, "Let's Do It," Time, 28 October 1985, p. 37.

[197]Secretary of State Shultz later asserted that there had been "absolute" unanimity of thought within the administration on the conduct of the operation. See "Secretary's Interview, the Today Show, October 11, 1985," Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 85, No. 2105, p. 77.

[198]"If F-14s Failed, Special Forces Were Ready," p. 2.

Libya -- 1986

In the final case to be examined here -- the deliberations over Libya in 1986 -- the senior military were once again more cautious than several of the President's civilian advisers, and in fact contributed to the January 1986 decision to defer military action. The military's cautions, however, seemed due principally to sound operational and geostrategic concerns, and only slightly to the worries associated with the legacy of Vietnam.[199]

The eventual decision to conduct airstrikes against Libya in April 1986 developed over a long period of time, and was preceded by diplomatic initiatives and imposition of economic sanctions, as well as by military shows of force and even small military clashes. By the spring of 1986, Libya had been linked to several terrorist actions in European countries that had killed not only numerous Europeans, but American citizens as well. President Reagan had already come very close to ordering military action against Libya in January of that year, following Libyan involvement in terrorist attacks at airports in Rome and Vienna. However, some uncertainty as to the precise location of the terrorist leader responsible for the attacks, fear for the safety

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[199]The one exception was when, shortly before the period discussed here, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were asked to draw up contingency plans for an American invasion of Libya. Not overly enamored of that idea, the JCS reportedly sought to discourage it by arguing that the operation would require six divisions and up to 90,000 men. See Stephen Engelberg, "Egypt-U.S. Plan to Raid Libya Reported," New York Times, 21 February 1987, p. A3; Bob Woodward, "U.S. Decided to Give Libya Firm Message," Washington Post, 26 March 1986, p. A26.

of Americans in Libya, and worries about the impact on U.S.-European relations led the President to employ diplomatic and economic measures instead of a military response.

During the deliberations in January, Secretaries Shultz and Weinberger had again been split on the issue of using force against terrorists. Secretary Shultz, who had long campaigned for military retaliation, and was supported strongly by National Security Adviser McFarlane, favored American military action against Libya. He argued that the United States consistently had appeared paralyzed in the face of terrorist attacks abroad, and that a forceful response was in order.[200]

Secretary Weinberger, on the other hand, opposed military actions for several reasons. He was concerned that military strikes would inflame Arab nations and thus create problems for American military forces in the region. He was also concerned about a Congressional and public backlash if the operation failed and Americans or many Libyan civilians were killed or wounded. And Weinberger and the military were especially worried about the risk of losing American planes to Libyan antiaircraft systems, as had happened in December 1983, when Syrian surface-to-air missiles downed two Navy bombers over Lebanon. Finally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned that the satellite photos used in

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[200]Fred Hiatt, "Shultz Says U.S. Should Strike Back," Washington Post, 16 January 1986, pp. A1, A28; Bernard Weinraub, "Response to Terrorism: How President Decided," New York Times, 12 January 1986, pp. A1, A12; Geoffrey Kemp, "An Insider's View of Our Frustrating Joust With Qaddafi," Washington Post, 12 January 1986; Seymour M. Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," New York Times Magazine, 22 February 1987, p. 71.

targeting were not sufficient to tell whether people unrelated to the terrorist group responsible for the airport attacks would be inside the tents and buildings.[201]

The President, though furious at the terrorist attacks, sided with the Pentagon, and decided to forego military action against Libya. Instead he severed economic ties with Libya and ordered the Americans there to depart immediately. He also observed that by taking those measures he was able to "untie [America's] hands with regard to whatever action might be necessary in the future" -- a remark Secretary Shultz sought to reinforce several days later when he told a Washington audience that "the United States should strike back at terrorists and be prepared to use military force even without assurance of clear victory or total public support." It was clear that, as one official said, "the next time military will be the only option."[202]

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[201]Bernard Gwertzman, "Why Reagan Shuns Attack," New York Times, 8 January 1986, pp. A1, A7; Weinraub, "Response to Terrorism: How President Decided," pp. A1, A12; George C. Wilson, "Military Ponders Strike Targets Amid Mixed and Missing Cues," Washington Post, 7 January 1986; Kemp, "An Insider's View of Our Frustrating Joust With Qaddafi;" Hiatt, "Shultz Says U.S. Should Strike Back," pp. A1, A28; Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," p. 71; George C. Wilson and David Hoffman, "U.S. Warplanes Bomb Targets in Libya In Attempt to Deter Qaddafi Terrorism," Washington Post, 15 April 1986, pp. A20.

[202]Gwertzman, "Why Reagan Shuns Attack," pp. A1, A7; "President's News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Issues," New York Times, 8 January 1986, pp. A6, A7; "Executive Order for Sanctions Against Libya," New York Times, 8 January 1986, p. A6; "Allies Are Cool to Reagan's Sanctions," New York Times, 9 January 1986; Weinraub, "Response to Terrorism: How President Decided," pp. A1, A12; Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan Lists Terms for Lifting Libyan Sanctions," New York Times, 12 January 1986,

In March 1986, President Reagan decided to conduct a military show-of-force in the Gulf of Sidra -- claimed by Libya as its territorial waters but considered as international waters by most other nations.[203] The planning for the operation apparently began after the airport bombings in December 1985, but the President did not decide to exercise the show-of-force option until intelligence reports showed that Qaddafi was continuing to send terrorists to European capitals.[204] While claiming that the purpose of the naval exercise was solely to demonstrate freedom of navigation in international waters, it was clear that the exercise might provoke a military confrontation with Qaddafi--which the White House saw as a "chance to underscore Reagan's determination to deal firmly with international terrorism." As one journalist observed, "It was taken for granted that Colonel Qaddafi would respond with force." Reportedly, the only military input was to insist that three, rather than the usual two,

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p. A12; Kemp, "An Insider's View of Our Frustrating Joust With Qaddafi;" Hiatt, "Shultz Says U.S. Should Strike Back," pp. A1, A28; Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," p. 71.

[203]John Burlage, "U.S. Asserts Right of Free Navigation," Army Times, 7 april 1986, pp. 37, 40; Colonel W. Hays Parks (USMC Reserve), "Crossing the Line," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. 112, No. 11 (November 1986), pp. 41-43. The latter article was written by the Chief of International Law in the office of the Judge Advocate General of the Army, and is particularly good on the legal aspects of Qaddafi's claim to a portion of the gulf of Sidra to be Libya's "internal waters." It also contains a detailed discussion of the incidents in the gulf of Sidra that preceded the period discussed here.

[204]David Hoffman and Lou Cannon, "Terrorism Proved Catalyst," Washington Post, 25 March 1986, pp. A1, A12; Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," pp. 48, 71.

aircraft carriers be on station in the Mediterranean, and that "everything be in place" before the exercise began. While Secretary Shultz was again described as providing the "primary impetus," Secretary of Defense Weinberger and JCS Chairman Admiral Crowe approved of the action as well.[205]

The White House "expected [Qaddafi] to come after us," officials said later -- and he did. Qaddafi was provoked into action by American Navy ships and aircraft crossing Qaddafi's so-called "line of death" -- the line in the Gulf of Sidra Qaddafi claimed marked the extent of Libya's territorial waters. Over a six-hour period on March 24, at least four Libyan surface-to-air missiles were fired at Navy jets -- all four misses. U.S. forces responded, and during the next 18 hours, attacked a Libyan antiaircraft site and two guided missile patrol boats.[206] The exercise was ended the following day with the hope that Colonel Qaddafi would heed the Administration's warning that the United States would tolerate no more Libyan-sponsored terrorist

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[205]Hoffman and Cannon, "Terrorism Provided Catalyst," p. A12; R.W. Apple, Jr., "U.S. Said to Hope Clashes Prompt Moves in Libya to Oust Qaddafi," New York Times, 3 April 1986, p. A1; Gerald M. Boyd, "Reagan Based Mission Approval on Reports of Danger to Envoys,' New York Times, 26 March 1986, pp. A1, A8; and Parks, "Crossing the Line," p. 44.

[206]George C. Wilson, "U.S. Planes Retaliate for Libyan Attack," Washington Post, 25 March 1986, pp. A1, A13; Boyd, "Reagan Based Mission Approval On Reports of Danger to Envoys," p. A1; Richard Halloran, "Navy Jets to Fly Over Libya Gulf," New York Times, 22 March 1986; Richard Stengel, "Sailing in Harm's Way," Time, 7 April 1986, pp. 16-24; George C. Wilson and Fred Hiatt, "U.S. Again Strikes Libyan Boats, Radar; Qaddafi Is Warned," Washington Post, 26 March 1986, pp. A1, A22; Parks, "Crossing the Line," pp. 44-45.

attacks.[207]

Not surprisingly, there was "little opposition" to military action against Libya when "indisputable evidence" implicated Libyan agents in the April 5 bombing of a Berlin nightclub, which resulted in the deaths of two American soldiers and a Turkish woman and wounded about 229 others. Once again the strongest supporter of military action was Secretary of State George Shultz. He was backed by National Security Adviser John Poindexter (who had just replaced McFarlane) and Vice President Bush. According to Lou Cannon, Secretary of Defense Weinberger "expressed 'reservations about some aspects of the military operation' but did not -- as he [had] in the past -- oppose any sort of military retaliation." As in January, Weinberger voiced concern about the risk to U.S. servicemen under some of the options considered.[208]

The military, meanwhile, represented by Admiral Crowe,

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[207]Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Says Navy Has Completed Exercise," New York Times, 28 March 1986, pp. A1, A12.

[208]Lou Cannon, "President Based His Decision on 'Incontrovertible' Evidence," Washington Post, 15 April 1986, pp. A1, A21; David K. Shipler, "Trying to Use the Military as An Instrument of Diplomacy," New York Times, 30 March 1986, pp. D1; Gerald M. Boyd, "How President Decided On Raid Against Libya," New York Times, 15 April 1986, p. A11; "Briefing by Shultz and Weinberger on Strikes Against Libya," New York Times, 15 April 1986, p. A13; Leslie H. Gelb, "Libyan Link: Sorting It Out," New York Times, 12 April 1986, pp. A1, A4; Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Officials Appear Uncertain on Further Raids to Fight Terror," New York Times, 27 April 1986, pp. A1, A14; Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," pp. 71, 74, 84; Leslie H. Gelb, "U.S. Aides Deny Attack Is Start of an Escalation," New York Times, 16 April 1986, p. A15; Lou Cannon and Bob Woodward, "Reagan's Use of Force Marks Turning Point," Washington Post, 16 April 1986, p. A1; Parks, "Crossing the Line," p. 41.

called for adding firepower to U.S. forces before any strike was made. This request (apparently made initially by General Bernard Rogers, Commander in Chief of the U.S. European Command) resulted in holding the aircraft carrier **USS Coral Sea**, which was due to return to Norfolk, in the Mediterranean, and adding F111 bombers based in Britain to the strike force. The only military concern seemed to be ensuring that the United States had overwhelming military power in the Mediterranean.[209] In fact, Defense Department spokesman Robert Sims took pains to point out that there was "uniform consensus and support" for the operation from Weinberger and the Joint Chiefs.[210]

When it came to the final decision, the President and his advisers were "united in the need for a military response in the

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[209]Leslie H. Gelb, "Reagan Is Weighing Libya Retaliation; Carriers Kept at Sea," New York Times, 10 April 1986, pp. A1, A8; Cannon, "President Based His Decision on 'Incontrovertible' Evidence," pp. A1, A21; George C. Wilson and David Hoffman, "U.S. Warplanes Bomb Targets in Libya In Attempt to Deter Qaddafi Terrorism," Washington Post, 15 April 1986, pp. A1, A20; Shipler "Trying to Use the Military as An Instrument of Diplomacy," pp. D-1; Boyd, "How President Decided On Raid Against Libya," p. A11; Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Officials Appear Uncertain on Further Raids to Fight Terror," New York Times, 27 April 1986, pp. A1, A14; Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," pp. 71, 74, 84; Gelb, "U.S. Aides Deny Attack Is Start of an Escalation," p. A15; Cannon and Woodward, "Reagan's Use of Force Marks Turning Point," p. A1; Military interviews.

The rather sensational account by Seymour Hersh reports that Admiral Crowe discouraged ideas of using Navy SEAL teams to go ashore and use laser designators to guide bombs to their targets. Crowe said no to such proposals -- reportedly from the ubiquitous Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North -- contending that it would be a mistake to put Americans at risk in that way. See Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," p. 84.

[210]Cannon and Woodward, "Reagan's Use of Force Marks Turning Point."

hope of sending a message to Colonel Qaddafi about aiding terrorism."[211] As one participant later observed: "For the first time we weren't debating whether to use military force against state-supported terrorism, but the best way to use it."[212] The orders went out, and on April 14, twenty-five Air Force and Navy jets attacked five terrorist-related targets around Tripoli and Benghazi.[213]

As mentioned earlier, lessons from Vietnam weighed little on the minds of the military participants in this case. That is not surprising; naval maneuvers and airstrikes against a self-admitted supporter of terrorism who has little capacity to fight back have little in common with the massive ground, sea, and air commitment in Vietnam against a determined enemy for a cause little appreciated at home. The military were cautious at times in the deliberations over the policy toward Libya, but that caution did not derive from any fear of a Libyan Vietnam.

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[211]Cannon, "President Based His Decision on 'Incontrovertible' Evidence," pp. A1, A21; Boyd, "How President Decided On Raid Against Libya," p. A11; Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," pp. 71, 74, 84; Cannon and Woodward, "Reagan's Use of Force Marks Turning Point," p. A1.

[212]Cannon and Woodward, "Reagan's Use of Force Marks Turning Point," p. A1.

[213]George Church, "Hitting the Source," Time, Vol. 127, No. 17 (28 April 1986), pp. 17-27; George C. Wilson and David Hoffman, "U.S. Warplanes Bomb Targets in Libya In Attempt to Deter Qaddafi Terrorism," Washington Post, 15 April 1986, pp. A1, A20; and Parks, "Crossing the Line," pp. 47-52.

Chapter VI

MILITARY INFLUENCE AND THE POST-VIETNAM USE OF FORCE

One day I read that the Joint Chiefs are weak and never consulted, and another day that they are controlling the country.
Admiral Thomas Moorer[1]

Vietnam was, of course, another limited war,...and in a sense was an extension of the Korean War. But Vietnam shook the morale of our fighting men to a far greater degree than did Korea. It left our military leaders confounded, dismayed, and discouraged.
General Bruce Palmer[2]

The generals and admirals have learned and overlearned the lesson of Vietnam. They instinctively recoil from applying small doses of force in messy wars for obscure political purposes....In practice, the skepticism of the military about applying force weighs far more on the president than does the sniping of the political opposition. For on security matters, the professional soldiers carry weight with everybody in the country.
Joseph Kraft[3]

My recommendations on the commitment of military force have very little to do with any Vietnam syndrome. They are based more on the principles of war, the first of which is to know the objective....We don't learn new lessons. We relearn old lessons that we haven't paid attention to.
General John Vessey[4]

As the case studies in the preceding chapter showed, the stereotype of the military as the most aggressive and influential

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[1]Quoted in Lawrence J. Korb, The Joint Chiefs of Staff (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 204.

[2]General Bruce Palmer (USA, Ret.), The 25-Year War (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), p. 204.

[3]Joseph Kraft, "Power and the Pentagon," Washington Post, 8 April 1984, p. C7.

[4]Quoted in Colonel Harry Summers, Jr. (USA, Ret.), "American Military Is in 'A Race to Prevent War'," U.S. News and World Report, 21 October 1985, p. 40; and in Steve Berg, "Nation's Top Soldier Prepares for Assault on Walleyes," Minneapolis Star and Tribune, 25 August 1985, p. 1.

of presidential advisers on the use of force has not held true in the post-Vietnam era. The military's voice in presidential counsels of war since 1973 has been neither the most commanding nor the most bellicose. America's senior soldiers have not, however, been doves in uniform or of insignificant influence in decisions surrounding the use of force. The military frequently have influenced intervention decisions -- even when they have sought to avoid the issue of whether force should be used. And when the discussion has turned to considerations of how to use force in a particular situation, senior military leaders have exerted considerable influence.

Military Advice

When presidents have considered the commitment of American troops abroad since 1973, the military generally have been more cautious than the president's most aggressive principal civilian advisers. No military leader argued for the use of force as vehemently as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, or a number of Reagan administration officials. The leading "hawks," in short, have been civilian, not military, leaders.

There have been cases, to be sure, where military leaders have recommended the use of force, or at least added their concurrence to the recommendations of civilian policy-makers. But such instances have been rare since 1973, occurring only in relatively clear-cut, well-bounded situations such as the bombing of Libya and the aerial interception of the Achille Lauro

hijackers -- during which the senior civilians also recommended the use of force. In all other cases, especially in those where the commitment contemplated was significant (and posed some of the undesirable features associated with Vietnam), the military have been more cautious than the most aggressive civilians. Most notably, the military resisted the Marine mission in Lebanon, advised against potential U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa, sought to discourage White House officials considering the use of American forces to invade Libya, and made it clear that military approval of the use of American troops in Central America would be contingent on the presence of specific conditions. In several other cases, moreover, the military members of the president's inner circle sought refuge in "professional neutrality," and thereby avoided the issue of whether or not force should be used, maintaining that such questions were not within the province of the military.

Once the decision to use force has been made, however, the military have frequently, and understandably, sought to employ as much force as they have felt necessary to bring the commitment to a speedy and victorious conclusion. On several occasions, that tendency has led the military to be the most aggressive of the president's advisers in their recommendations on the amount of force appropriate. Recognizing the perishability of public support for military action abroad, the post-Vietnam military have come to regard time as the principal limit in limited wars. Thus when early resistance in Grenada proved to be greater than

was anticipated, the military poured forces onto the island to assure that the enemy entertained no ideas of holding out.[5] When President Reagan decided to take action against Libya, the Joint Chiefs of Staff counseled against moving until a third aircraft carrier was in the Mediterranean -- irritating several senior civilians who questioned the necessity for such precautions.[6] And if a decision is made to use U.S. combat troops in Central America, the military undoubtedly will argue for a massive American commitment in order to bring U.S. military involvement there to as swift a conclusion as possible -- thereby presenting the U.S. public with a quick victory before the surge of support that typically follows the commitment of American troops abroad is eroded.

The military have not always recommended, however, the use of more force than civilian policy-makers have deemed necessary. The acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs argued against Secretary of State Kissinger and the use of B-52 bombers during the Mayaguez crisis. The military proposal for the response to the Korean Demilitarized Zone incident also was more restrained than what Kissinger had in mind. More striking still was the military restraint during the Marine mission in Lebanon, where, even after U.S. troops had been deployed on the ground, the military never

[5]In fact, as noted in the previous chapter, General Vessey sought to use more troops from the outset than Secretary Weinberger thought necessary.

[6]See Seymour Hersh, "Target Qaddafi," New York Times Magazine, 22 February 1987, p. 71.

sought to employ force as aggressively as Presidential Envoy McFarlane or Secretary of State Shultz advocated. The military's actions in each of those cases seem attributable to their fundamental apprehension of new commitments, for in each case the military perceived that the use of additional force might result in a significantly wider military commitment than already existed. A more generalized response in the Korean DMZ crisis, the military feared, might lead to greater U.S. involvement were the American action to provoke North Korea into further action. Similarly, escalation of the U.S. involvement in Lebanon undoubtedly would have engaged the United States more deeply in what the military increasingly perceived as a no-win situation. In neither case would the use of more force (unless it was vastly more than that contemplated by policy-makers) have brought the U.S. commitment to a successful conclusion more swiftly.

Military Influence

But has what the military advised made a difference? Has military influence, in other words, been influential? To answer that question, it is necessary to distinguish between military influence on decisions to intervene, and military influence during the subsequent deliberations over how to employ force once intervention has been decided upon.[7]

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[7]In practice, of course, it frequently is difficult to separate the two decisions -- as will be discussed presently.

To Intervene or Not to Intervene

In the post-Vietnam era, the military have exercised relatively insignificant direct influence -- leverage which flows from formal and explicit military recommendations -- on decisions regarding whether or not to commit American forces abroad. Indeed, military recommendations on whether or not to use force have not always been solicited by civilian policy-makers, or even been forthcoming from the military when requested. And when military views have been presented, they generally have been accorded little weight -- except in those rare cases where the military have voiced outright opposition, as they did in the final months of the Marine mission in Lebanon (and, of course, in that case the military sought to end a commitment rather than to prevent a new one). Mild military skepticism about intervention, in particular, has had little impact (perhaps because it has come to be expected). The decisions to invade Grenada and to commit U.S. Marines to Lebanon, for example, were taken in spite of the reluctance (but not outright opposition) voiced by the Joint Chiefs.

In many post-Vietnam cases, moreover, the military have either avoided, or not been asked, whether they thought force should be used.[8] In several other cases, most notably that of

[8]Presidents often have not asked the military's opinion on whether or not force should be used. As Brigadier General Amos Jordan (USA, Ret.) and Colonel William J. Taylor, Jr. (USA, Ret.) have noted: "In the United States, the military's leaders are not asked by their political superiors when and where to wage war. They are asked a far more restricted question: How can the military instrument be most effectively used at a particular time

the decision to attempt to rescue the hostages held in Iran, the military studiously sought to remain neutral professionals. The decision to use force, they maintained in that case and in several others, was the president's decision to make, not theirs. The military's job, they insisted, was to come up with the plans.

The military have not been without influence, however, on questions regarding intervention. Even when they have not voiced their opinion on the use of force or have seen their views accorded little weight, military leaders have had an impact through their considerable indirect influence -- leverage which flows from other than formal and explicit recommendations. The military have, most importantly, influenced the decision to use force by the way they have answered the question the military always have been asked: How can force be used most effectively in a specific case to accomplish a specific mission?

The military's answers to that question have inevitably been of importance.[9] The military estimate of a reasonable chance for

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for a given strategic purpose? In 1962 President Kennedy did not ask the military's leaders if the Soviets should be pressured to remove their missiles from Cuba; he asked them how it could be done. During the Vietnam War the JCS was not asked whether the U.S. should intervene on behalf of the South Vietnamese but rather, how the intervention could occur with minimal disruption and maximum effect." See American National Security (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, rev. ed.), p. 174.

[9]Options and estimates of success take on particular importance because, as will be discussed at more length in coming pages, the military control most of the information and expertise used to develop those options and estimates (at least when there are no Ollie Norths on the NSC staff). Information and expertise are power in the counsels of war, and the military control most of both commodities.

The military usually have tried to answer questions about

success in the Iran hostage rescue attempt, for example, was a major factor in the eventual decision to conduct that operation. Military confidence played an even bigger role in the decision to intercept the **Achille Lauro** hijackers. Failure of the military to be very vocal in their opposition to the Marine mission in Lebanon until December 1983, on the other hand, removed an important potential obstacle to that mission. And low-level White House officials exploring in 1985 the possibility of overthrowing Libya's Qaddafi through a joint U.S.-Egyptian invasion were dissuaded from further considerations of such an operation when the military estimated that it would require up to six American divisions (one-third of the U.S. Army's active divisions -- about 100,000 troops), not to mention supporting air and naval forces.[10]

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how to use force as objectively as possible. On some occasions, however, it appears that estimates about the size of forces required for particular contingencies have been so large as to suggest that the military were trying to discourage consideration of those contingencies. (See the discussion in the next footnote.)

[10]See George C. Wilson, "Tit-for-Tat in Vietnam Is What the Brass Hated," Parameters, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 83. General Ridgway employed the same technique in 1954 -- presenting an estimate that huge forces would be required for intervention in Indochina -- in what may have been an effort to not just state the forces that would be required, but to discourage policy-makers considering U.S. involvement in Indochina as well.

A similar technique would be to understate the chances of operational success, but it does not appear that leaders who have risen to the top of the military profession have been willing to resort to such mendacious behavior. In my judgment, the military in the post-Vietnam period have not deliberately understated the chances for success to discourage a particular use of force-- although military estimates of success often have tended to be cautious and to stress the need for sufficient forces. Neither do I believe that there were any post-Vietnam cases in which

Indirect military influence also has been exercised through various military actions aimed at influencing the overall environment within which decisions on the use of force are taken.[11] The military, for example, reportedly dragged their feet in the development of contingency plans for the use of U.S. units in Central America -- a commitment about which they have held considerable reservations. "Too often in the past," the Army Chief of Staff observed in 1984, "war plans shaped national policy when it should be the other way around." If there is no plan, he implied, it cannot be employed quickly in a crisis. For several years there was no plan.[12]

Additionally, Army forces were structured in the 1970s so as to force a mobilization decision before any sizable commitment of U.S. troops can take place. The gradual shift of certain support functions to the reserve components, and the integration of National Guard brigades into one-third of the active Army divisions, meant that even for contingencies involving America's rapidly deployable forces, a limited callup of reserve component

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military deliberately understated force readiness in order to prevent the use of force in a particular case.

[11]Most of these techniques have been applicable, however, only where there has been a long debate over a particular use of force.

[12]General E. C. Meyer, quoted in the Washington Post, 20 January 1983, p. A4. See the more complete discussion of this case in the concluding chapter.

units would be required.[13]

The military also may have mobilized prominent retired officers, such as General Westmoreland or General Meyer, to make public statements that active duty leaders preferred not to make -- although active duty generals also used speeches and interviews to express their views, particularly when in their final days before retirement.[14] Speeches and interviews have, in fact, been a particularly important part of the Army leadership's efforts to make explicit the specific conditions they have argued should exist before American troops are committed in Central America or elsewhere. And Army officers have not been alone in employing this technique. A number of naval officers also expressed their views on issues involving the use of force through speeches. In fact, the Chief of Naval Operations used a widely publicized Naval Academy graduation address to announce the conditions which he felt should obtain before the United

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[13]Of course, this restructuring has been motivated by a number of other factors as well, the most important of which has been active force end strength limitations which have forced greater use of National Guard brigades to "roundout" active divisions, and also have led to a considerable portion of the Army's combat service support elements being placed in the National Guard and Army Reserve. Nonetheless, an equally important factor has been the desire to force a mobilization decision before committing U.S. troops to any sizeable contingency. See the discussion in the concluding chapter's analysis of the institutionalization of the lessons of Vietnam.

[14]An example of retired officers speaking out on an issue is reported in George C. Wilson, "Generals Who Contradict the Contras," Washington Post, 13 April 1986, p. C2. This article also includes comments by a number of unnamed active duty officers, including a four-star general.

States used military force to retaliate against terrorists.[15]

Like any other bureaucratic body, moreover, the military have been willing to give "backgrounders" to the press in order to influence policy debates. This option has been exercised by the top military only sparingly in the post-Vietnam period, but has been another way in which the senior military have explained what they felt Vietnam taught about the use of force. Finally, some senior military officers have cultivated relationships with key members of Congress (as Admiral Zumwalt did with the late Senator Henry Jackson), and occasionally used those relationships to have questions asked of them during Congressional testimony-- which they are obligated to answer -- on issues that they could not have prudently raised on their own in public.[16]

How to Use Force

The military have exercised the most influence, however, once the decision to use force has been made -- when the focus has become how to use force, and when decision-makers have turned

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[15]See Admiral James D. Watkins, "Address at the U.S. Naval Academy Graduation," 23 May 1984 (OASD-Public Affairs Press Release no. 271-84); George C. Wilson, "Reagan Will Hear Conflicting Advice About Retaliation for Terrorism," Washington Post, 23 June 1985, p. A23; and Walter Mossberg, "The Army Resists a Salvadoran Vietnam," Wall Street Journal, 24 June 1983, p. 22.

[16]See Admiral Elmo Zumwalt (USN, Ret.), On Watch (New York: Quadrangle, 1976), pp. 409-410, 504-505. Admittedly, the latter form of indirect influence has been more applicable in budgetary and arms control issues. For earlier discussions of the military's use of various bureaucratic politics techniques, see: Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 372-394, 395-414; Korb, The Joint Chiefs of Staff, p. 10; and Richard J. Barnet, The Roots of War (New York: Atheneum, 1972), p. 290.

to consideration of the options available to accomplish the objectives established by the president. Options are the military's area of expertise, and expertise, particularly when concentrated in the hands of one institution, yields influence.

The development of military options is a complex undertaking that requires knowledge, experience, and creativity, not to mention detailed and timely information about one's own forces, and current intelligence on the target of the military action. An understanding of the systems established for the planning, coordination, and command and control of military operations is necessary as well. In short, planning for the use of military forces is a complex affair, and only senior military officers fully master it. As a result, the military have enjoyed virtual monopoly power over the development of military options.[17]

In the post-Vietnam period, as in previous periods, this monopoly power has generated considerable influence for the military over how force has been used. There have been during this period, to be sure, individuals in positions outside the formal military hierarchy with expertise in the employment of military forces. Several of the national security advisers, in particular, have had considerable experience in the military field. Vice Admiral Poindexter even remained on active duty

[17]And, of course, the military has jealousy guarded its monopoly power -- not just for "turf" reasons, but because they feel that they are the experts. The military's concern with maintaining their control in this area helps explain the negative military reaction to perceived White House micro-management of the Vietnam war effort in the 1960s.

while President Reagan's national security adviser.[18] Once options were submitted, these individuals were very important in the discussion of which option was best. But such individuals typically have played only a peripheral role in the actual development of the options because they have lacked a trained military planning staff of their own, and because they generally have had many other duties that, even in a crisis, have prevented them from focusing exclusively on how military forces might be employed.[19] Development of options has, therefore, been largely

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[18]Brent Scowcroft retired from the Air Force as a Lieutenant General before assuming the position of APNSA for President Ford. Robert McFarlane was a retired Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel who also co-authored an important work on the decision-making during the **Mayaguez** and Korean DMZ incidents (in addition to serving as Kissinger's military assistant during those incidents), Crisis Resolution: Presidential Decision Making in the **Mayaguez** and Korean Confrontations (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978). Henry Kissinger's only military service was as an enlisted man in World War II, but he had studied and written prolifically on national security policy and process prior to joining the Nixon White House. Zbigniew Brzezinski was primarily a Soviet and Eastern bloc expert, but also had written widely on international security issues. Current National Security Adviser Frank Carlucci is a former Deputy Secretary of Defense (where his focus was more in the realm of defense acquisition and management than in the employment of military forces), who also served as Deputy Director of the CIA and in a variety of posts as a foreign service officer. Richard Allen, the first of President Reagan's national security advisers, had served on Kissinger's NSC staff, and had been a member of several foreign policy think tanks. Judge William Clark, Allen's successor, was the most lacking in experience in national security matters, having served two years in the Army in the early 1950s, and having spent a year as Secretary of State Haig's Deputy.

[19]The most notable exception to this generalization was the actions of NSC staffer Lieutenant Colonel North in 1985 when he was the central figure in the conception of and planning for the interception of the **Achille Lauro** hijackers. (By my definition of "the military" as being only active duty officers serving within the Department of Defense, Colonel North was not a

the province of the military.

The result has been that the military in the post-Vietnam period have exercised considerable influence over how force has been used -- particularly in those cases where the missions have been especially demanding and complex, thereby increasing the dependence of civilian policy-makers on military judgment, expertise, and information. In no case where force was used, in fact, did the military fail to influence the way in which it was employed -- although the military's impact has not resulted consistently in either more or less aggressive use of force than key civilians have desired. Military influence led to more restrained use of force than the most aggressive civilians wanted, for example, in the Korean DMZ incident and the Marine mission in Lebanon. In the case of Grenada and the bombing of Libya, on the other hand, military advice led to the use of greater force than many civilians initially thought necessary. In some other cases, finally, the military played an important role in designing the operation without apparently influencing the level of force used. The military were, in this way, of great significance in the planning of the Iran hostage rescue mission and the interception of the **Achille Lauro** hijackers. And in the Yom Kippur War alert -- where Secretary of State Kissinger dominated the decision-making process -- the military suggestion of conducting highly visible measures in addition to those normally triggered by DEFCON III was of great importance. In

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"military" officer during his time on the NSC staff.)

short, military influence, though of varied importance in presidential decisions on whether or not to use force, always has been of significance in post-Vietnam deliberations over how force was used.

The Exercise of Influence: JCS and Field Commanders

Three different categories of military officers have influenced decisions on the use of force: the Joint Chiefs of Staff -- their Chairman especially; senior members of the Joint Staff; and field commanders. Not surprisingly, the most influential military position in the post-Vietnam era has been that of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the only military post whose occupant routinely participates in National Security Council meetings.[20] The other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff -- the four chiefs of the military services -- rarely have participated in deliberations on the use of force during swift-moving crises, except when serving as acting chairman or when their service was providing the bulk of the military forces

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[20]Additionally, it appears that Chairmen of the JCS have more influence when they have been nominated by the incumbent administration. General David Jones, for example, was almost replaced when the Reagan administration took office and had little influence during the remainder of his tenure. See Richard Burt, "Reagan Might Oust Head of Joint Chiefs," New York Times, 20 December 1980, p. A11; Michael Getler, "Brown Cautions Against Ousting Joint Chiefs Head," Washington Post, 22 December 1980, p. A1; and General Maxwell D. Taylor (USA, Ret.), "Should They Fire General Jones?" Washington Post, 22 January 1981, p. A17.

General John Vessey, on the other hand, was chosen by President Reagan, and enjoyed an unprecedented amount of contact with the White House during his tenure, as has his successor Admiral Crowe. See Rudy Abramson, "Reagan Moves to Establish Closer Ties to Joint Chiefs," Los Angeles Times, 29 March 1982, pp. I-1, I-12; and the sources in the next footnote.

involved (the employment of Navy forces in the **Mayaguez** incident, for example, led to Admiral Holloway's attendance at the final NSC meeting on that crisis). In fact, the chiefs of the services generally have had very infrequent contact on any issues with presidents in the post-Vietnam era, at least until the appointment of General John Vessey as JCS Chairman in 1982, when regular meetings between the president and the JCS were begun.[21] The influence of service chiefs, therefore, has come more through the JCS Chairman and through their impact on the plans developed for the use of force, rather than through direct participation in White House deliberations.

Several senior Joint Staff officers in the Pentagon also have had an impact on the use of force, although generally in cases that have developed over a long period of time -- such as the Marine mission in Lebanon and the Iran hostage rescue attempt -- although one Joint Staff officer also played a key role in the very swift-moving **Achille Lauro** case.[22] Characteristically,

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[21]Gerald Seib, "Vessey of Joint Chiefs Helps Give the Military Clout in the White House," Wall Street Journal, 22 March 1984, p. 27; LuAnne K. Levens and Benjamin F. Schemmer, "General John W. Vessey, Jr.," Armed Forces Journal International, May 1983, p. 53; and Richard Halloran, "Steering an Uncharted Course," New York Times, 2 March 1987, p. A14. The pattern of contact that began with the appointment of General Vessey slowed, however, after his retirement in 1985. Although the goal remains for the President to meet with the Joint Chiefs quarterly, Mr. Reagan actually saw them as a corporate body only twice in 1986. That frequency is anticipated to hold throughout 1987 as well. Interview with Lieutenant Colonel John Fairlamb, Department of the Army, 27 March 1987, Washington, D.C..

[22]In general, the longer a crisis drags on, the less the Chairman of the JCS is able to attend the frequent, routine meetings held at the sub-cabinet level. The Chairman typically

these officers have been high-ranking members of the Joint Staff -- such as Lieutenant General John Pustay during the planning for the Iran hostage rescue mission, or Vice Admiral Moreau during the planning to intercept the **Achille Lauro** hijackers -- who have represented the JCS on a White House task force (such as the one on counter-terrorism) or working group (such as the special coordinating committee that developed military options during the Iran hostage crisis). Their impact has, however, been in the realm of how force might be employed, rather than in direct recommendations on whether or not force should be used at all.

Finally, commanders in the field often have had an impact on the use of force in their geographical or functional area of responsibility -- although once again more on how force was used than on whether or not force was employed at all. Field commanders always have been an integral part of the planning process, not only because it is the field commanders who carry out most operations, but because of the natural tendency to defer to the responsible commander -- the man on the spot.[23] That tendency has been especially evident in those post-Vietnam cases where field commanders have submitted plans that satisfied the objectives of the decision-makers in Washington, as well as those

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appoints a three-star Joint Staff officer to represent him at such meetings. It may be that the officer holding the recently created position of Vice Chairman will represent the Chairman at such meetings in the future.

[23]As advances in intelligence gathering increasingly allow the White House to have information as good as, if not better than, what the commanders in the field have, there undoubtedly will be a tendency toward more centralized control from Washington.

of their particular theaters or area of operations -- and submitted them early in the planning process. General Richard Stilwell, the field commander during the Korean DMZ crisis, did precisely that. As a result, he played a central role in the determination of how force was used in that case. Similarly, the theater commander played an important role in the development of options prior to the Grenada intervention. Successive commanders in chief of the U.S. Southern Command have played important roles in the determination of policy in Central America as well. And, because of the delegation of key decision-making authority to the commander on the ground in Beirut, a Marine Colonel was a central figure in determining how force was used during the Marine mission in Lebanon.[24]

The Military and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era

The senior military have universally been more cautious since Vietnam than before and during Vietnam. The Vietnam experience has had a chastening impact on the willingness of the

[24] Additionally, the commanders of the Joint Special Operations Command and the Delta Force, America's counter-terrorist headquarters and principal counter-terrorist operational element respectively, reportedly have played key roles in the employment of teams from Delta Force. The deployments of these teams have, however, always been highly classified, and open sources on the decision-making surrounding their activities are relatively few. Among the best sources have been Stephen Engelberg, "Officials Say U.S. Team Was Sent to Help Pakistanis End Hijacking," New York Times, 8 September 1986, pp. A1, A6; Robert Manning and Stephen Emerson, "Special Forces: Can They Do the Job?" U.S. News and World Report, 3 November 1986, pp. 36-47; and Judith Miller, "Maltese Reported to Have Barred Role for U.S. Officers in Jet Raid," New York Times, 3 December 1985, pp. A1, A14.

top military -- especially the leadership of the Army and Marine Corps -- to have troops committed to combat unless specific conditions obtain. U.S. units should not be committed, the military have maintained, unless public support is assured, military objectives are clear and reasonably attainable, and commanders are provided sufficient forces and the freedom necessary to accomplish their missions. The unquestioning, can-do attitude of the 1960s, it is clear, has given way to a more sober view that incorporates a greater understanding of the limits of military power and includes a conviction that the military leadership has not just a right, but a duty, to question those who would send American soldiers to war. In comparison to their pre-Vietnam predecessors, therefore, the contemporary senior military have a more restricted view of the utility of their own instrument in the implementation of foreign policy.[25]

The difference between military thinking on the use of force in the 1960s and in the post-Vietnam period matters. As we have seen, the military influences American foreign policy, and that influence has been more resistant to the use of force over the past decade and a half than it was previously.

The generational change that has taken place, nonetheless, is not quite as distinct as it may appear. As is clear from the

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[25]As Edwin Marks has observed, these changes support the "old observation that armies represent the societies they were raised from." The differences described "could be used to portray the changes in American society from the Kennedy era to the post-Watergate period." See "The Vietnam Generation of Professional American Military Officers," Conflict, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1983), p. 48.

chapter on the lessons of Korea and the deliberations over intervention in Indochina, there have been earlier periods during which some military leaders have approached the use of force with considerable caution. Richard Betts also found instances of caution among military leaders in his study of the period 1945-1973 -- but he also found many cases where certain military leaders were the least cautious and most bellicose of the president's advisers.[26] The difference, thus, is more of nuance than of unprecedented change. Indeed, the military seem merely to hold more firmly, and especially more universally, the attributes that Samuel Huntington attributed to the "professional military man" in the mid-1950s -- attributes which Huntington felt contributed to a "cautious, conservative, restraining voice to the formulation of state policy."[27] There are similarities, furthermore, between the lessons of Korea and those derived from Vietnam; both experiences led to "all or nothing" prescriptions from the military -- although the impact of Korea was not as long-lived as the impact of Vietnam already has been.

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[26]See Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises.

[27]Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 69. Huntington's assertions were, however, based largely on anecdotal evidence and deductive logic, rather than on rigorous empirical analysis. In fact, as his graduate student Richard Betts later showed in Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, Huntington's contentions frequently were inaccurate -- at least until the post-Vietnam period. As Stephen Ambrose observed, "Huntington's concern [was] to defend the military, not understand it." See Ambrose's, "The Military Impact on Foreign Policy," in The Military and American Society, ed. by Ambrose and James A. Barber, Jr. (New York: MacMillan, 1972), p. 125.

In short, Vietnam reinforced and gave dramatic new impetus to views that many officers already held, rather than generating the development of completely new ones. The military are more cautious than before, rather than newly cautious. The factors which the military have said should be present before force is used are more explicitly stated and detailed, but not completely new.

Most important, caution is a much more widely shared sentiment than before; the lessons of Vietnam are shared far more universally than were similar principles in the past. There have been since Vietnam, in fact, no senior officers who displayed the consistent aggressiveness of earlier military leaders such as Admiral Arthur Radford or Air Force Generals Curtis LeMay, Thomas Powers, and Nathan Twining. There has been tough talk--particularly by naval and Air Force officers after their retirement -- but when the commitment of American troops to combat has been in the balance, no senior military leader has been more aggressive than the most aggressive of the civilian advisers.

Did Vietnam Cause the Change?

Implicit in this discussion, of course, has been an assumption that the changes since Vietnam have in fact been caused by Vietnam, rather than by other factors. That seems to be the case, but establishing causation is one of the most difficult and elusive, if not downright impossible, tasks in

political science.

Even if one accepts that Vietnam contributed to the change, something that few analysts would dispute, the extent to which Vietnam has been responsible for military advice and influence in the post-Vietnam era is still open to debate. Vietnam is one of only a number of factors that may account for military views on the use of force -- although I would argue that it has been the most important factor in certain cases since 1973.

We should not discount, nonetheless, the prudence that one would expect to find in any military establishment. Caution among military leaders is, in fact, predictable. It is, after all, the senior military's institutions -- the services to which they have devoted their lives -- that have the most to risk in intervention abroad. As General of the Army Douglas MacArthur said so eloquently, "the soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."[28] One would expect America's generals and admirals to be very circumspect in their approach to commitments that would involve, and possibly damage, those institutions--even had there been no Vietnam.[29] Generally conservative by

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[28]In his "Duty, Honor, Country" speech at the U.S. Military Academy, on receiving the Thayer Award, 12 May 1962.

[29]Interestingly, the only official in the post-Vietnam period who has consistently been as cautious as, and sometimes even more cautious than, the military has been the Secretary of Defense. Morton Halperin would have predicted this finding. "Career officials," he wrote in the early 1970s, "...often develop their position largely by calculating the national interest in terms of the organizational interests of the career service to which they belong. Even in-and-outers are sometimes

nature, few senior soldiers eagerly would seek commitment of their organizations in anything but "sure-thing" operations. The chance of gaining personal glory, or even greater funding and manning levels, does not seem worth the possible cost of many commitments -- especially in the nuclear age and in a world where superpowers do not automatically get their way by mere saber-rattling or sometimes, as Vietnam and Afghanistan have shown, even by large military involvement for extended periods of time.[30] And perceiving the United States as already overcommitted, furthermore, America's senior military have been very cautious in considering new commitments, especially those that hold the potential for combat.[31]

There would appear to be some logic, therefore, to the arguments of senior soldiers like General John Vessey who maintained repeatedly during his tenure as JCS Chairman that "his

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'captured' by the organizations which bring them into government." See Halperin's Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1974), p. 62.

Stephen Walt has suggested that, in addition to the insitutional interests that undoubtedly contribute to military caution, there may be a tendency toward what Walt terms "preemptive scapegoating" -- a desire to be on the record as having been reluctant and cautious in case the exercise of force fails.

[30]I do not argue, however, that military leaders do not appreciate the benefits to their organizations of a significant threat to their nation's security. Without a threat, after all, the need for military organizations would be far less, funding and manning would be decreased, and it would be even be more difficult to inspire the remaining units to train as if their services might be required at any moment.

[31]Military statements about being overcommitted may be found in Richard Halloran, To Arm A Nation (New York: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 212, 222-223, 226.

attitudes toward the use of force were largely unaffected by the U.S. experience in Vietnam."[32] Retired Army Chief of Staff E. C. Meyer also has questioned whether the so-called lessons of Vietnam are really anything new. Both these officers, and several others, have argued that the lessons of Vietnam are not lessons at all, but rather "truisms" long honored by prudent military leaders.[33]

There is one major problem with such contentions, however. During the pre-Vietnam (post-World War II) period, senior military leaders frequently did not honor what Vessey, Meyer, and others have termed truisms regarding the use of force.[34] Such truisms were never as widely shared, as deeply institutionalized, or as explicitly applied as they have been since the final days

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[32]Quoted in P.J. Budahn, "Vessey Sees Need to Ease Up-or-Out Policy," Army Times, 16 September 1985, pp. 4, 26. See also the comments by Vessey in Colonel Harry G. Summers (USA, Ret.), "American Military in 'A Race to Prevent War'," U.S. News and World Report, 21 October 1985, p. 40; and in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter.

[33]Comments by General E.C. Meyer in April 1985 on Colonel William J. Taylor (USA, Ret.) and Major David H. Petraeus (USA), "The Legacy of Vietnam for the American Military," a paper subsequently presented at the U.S. Military Academy Senior Conference in June 1985.

The protestations of Generals Vessey and Meyer are interesting because those two officers have been among the most vocal proponents of what I have termed the lessons of Vietnam. One is tempted to observe that they "doth protest too much." Richard Betts found similarly that five of the officers most closely identified with the post-Korea "Never Again Club," rejected their "membership" in that "organization." Four of those five then went on, in talking with Betts, to espouse the views popularly associated with the never again designation. See Betts' Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises, p. 266, note 9.

[34]Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises.

of America's involvement in Vietnam. Even during the heyday of the post-Korea "Never Again" club there was never the kind of universal subscription to lessons on the use of force as has characterized the period since 1973. The military super-hawks of the 1950s and 1960s have no counterparts in the contemporary landscape. It is, moreover, hard to imagine either General Vessey or General Meyer, for example, acquiescing in military commitments as their 1960s predecessors did. Vietnam, in short, made a difference with the military.

The Significance of Military Conservatism

The widespread acceptance of the lessons of Vietnam has produced a military leadership that, as noted earlier, conforms more closely to Samuel Huntington's concept of military conservatism than in any other period since World War II. This finding is significant.

As we have seen, the military do influence whether and how force is used; indeed, the senior military have had an impact on the use of force in the post-Vietnam era. Military leaders have exercised leverage through direct advice to presidents, through the indirect influence they wield because of their virtual monopoly on military expertise and information, and through their efforts to mold the decision-making environment in which the use of force is considered.

The military have, to be sure, influenced the *way* force has been used more than they have influenced *whether* or not it was

used. Even in the deliberations over whether or not to intervene, nonetheless, the military have not been inconsequential, especially when opposing the use of force. Military opposition was instrumental in bringing the Marine commitment in Lebanon to an end, in halting further thoughts of invading Libya, and in tempering the thinking of those who entertained notions of using American troops in Central America. As in the period from 1945 to 1973, soldiers in the post-Vietnam era have exerted the greatest leverage on intervention decisions when they have vetoed them.[35]

What the military think about the use of force, therefore, has a direct bearing on how the United States employs its foreign policy tool of last resort -- American military troops in a combat role. An observation by Graham Allison in the early 1970s emphasized this point:

> No military action is chosen without extensive consultation of military players. No decision for a substantial use of force, short of nuclear war, will be made against their advice, without a delay during which an extensive record of consultation is prepared.[36]

It matters, therefore, that in the wake of Vietnam America's senior military leaders agree with a foreign policy prescription proffered by Hans Morgenthau in 1967. The United States,

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[35]Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 5.

[36]Graham Allison, Essence of Decision (Boston: Little, Brown, 197), p. 181.

Morgenthau argued, should "intervene less and succeed more."[37] The post-Vietnam military could not have put it better.

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[37]Hans Morgenthau, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 45, No. 3 (April 1967), p. 436.

Chapter VII

THE DURATION OF THE VIETNAM LEGACY

The more elementary the experience, the more profound its impact on a nation's interpretation of the present in light of the past.

Henry A. Kissinger[1]

...stereotyped interpretations of dramatic historical events, especially wars and revolutions...have a particularly strong impact upon the thinking of younger people whose opinions about the world are still highly impressionable. Images formed by adolescents and young adults can still shape their approach to international problems years later when they may occupy positions of authority.

Richard Ned Lebow[2]

Some events -- like wars -- leave such an impression that equally dramatic developments are required to displace them.

Robert Jervis[3]

The "never again" sentiment that followed the Korean War influenced military leaders -- particularly those in the Army-- for a decade, eventually losing its power in the early 1960s when America became involved in Southeast Asia and a more "can do" mood took hold. The "no more Vietnams" paradigm can be expected to be even more durable. Prescriptions derived from Vietnam have already exercised intellectual sway for over a decade, and would appear likely to remain a very important influence on the thinking of the military for at least the rest of the 1980s, if

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[1]Henry A. Kissinger, A World Restored (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), p. 29.

[2]Richard Ned Lebow, Between Peace and War (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 104.

[3]Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 217.

not beyond.

The "Half-Life" of the Vietnam Legacy

A number of factors will determine the resilience of the Vietnam legacy for American's senior soldiers. Not surprisingly, several are similar to those which undermined the influence of the Never Again club in the early 1960s. The factors that one can anticipate as being the most important determinants of the half-life of the Vietnam legacy will be:

1) the military's perception of domestic American sentiment on the use of military force;

2) the foreign policy orientation of future presidential administrations;

3) the state of relations between the senior military and civilian policy makers;

4) world events -- in particular, those that threaten U.S. interests;

5) foreign and American experiences in the use of military force;

6) the views of senior military leaders on the use of force; and

7) developments in the capabilities of American forces.

If the American military senses public support for American adventurism overseas, senior officers undoubtedly would be less cautious in their advice on the use of force. One of the

significant lessons of Vietnam would be partially negated since the military would worry less about being committed to another war without popular backing. In fact, believable evidence of domestic support for military action abroad probably would be among the most important factors that could lead the military to adopt more aggressive views on the use of force.

Such a shift in public view is, however, unlikely. Polls in the 1980s repeatedly have shown that while the American public would like to see the United States reassert itself in the world, there is little support for most hypothetical employments of American forces in combat.[4] The public foreign policy permissiveness of the 1950s and 1960s has been replaced in the wake of Vietnam by caution and fear -- and the military knows it.[5] Given the experience of Vietnam, furthermore, where the public did support American involvement for three years of heavy fighting -- until 1968 -- it is likely that the military would remain skeptical and cautious even if public support for

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[4]The most important of these polls have been those on the possible commitment of U.S. troops to Central America. See the Central America case study in chapter V, and Everett Carll Ladd, "Public Opinion on Central America," Public Opinion, Vol. 6, No. 4 (August/September 1983), pp. 20-41, esp. p. 27; "Central America: The Public's Ambivalence," Public Opinion, Vol. 7, No. 2 (April/May 1984), pp. 37-38; "A Reluctance to Get Involved," Public Opinion, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 1986), pp. 30-31; and "American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1987," ed. by John E. Reilly (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1987), pp. 32-33.

[5]George C. Herring, "Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Uses of History," in Kenneth M. Coleman and George C. Herring, ed., The Central American Crisis (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1985), p. 105.

intervention abroad were to materialize.[6] The military would still be concerned that the public would eventually withdraw its support for any overseas involvement that was not hastily concluded. In short, public backing will continue to be of great concern to the military leadership, probably will not be forthcoming in a way that the military find convincing, and therefore will tend to prolong the influence of the Vietnam legacy for the military. Of course, should the military perceive that the public had become less supportive of intervention, the half-life of the Vietnam legacy would be prolonged even more.

The foreign policy orientation of U.S. administrations will also have an impact on the duration of the Vietnam legacy. If successive administrations adopt an assertive foreign policy (as the Reagan administration has had to some degree,[7] and as the Kennedy administration did in the early 1960s), it will be increasingly difficult for military leaders to consistently restrain their civilian superiors and retain either influence or their jobs. There will be pressures to "get on board," to support the commander in chief, as there were in the early 1960s.

Since Vietnam, admittedly, there have been few signs of such pressure. With the exception of then presidential envoy McFarlane's attempts to influence the Marine commander in Beirut,

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[6] For an excellent analysis of American public opinion and the war in Vietnam, see John E. Mueller, War, Presidents and Public Opinion (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973).

[7] As Stephen Walt noted to me, the Reagan administration's foreign policy may be described as "symbolic activism, but policy passivity and complete unwillingness to tolerate casualties."

and, possibly, Reagan administration pressures on the senior military in Central America, explicit encouragement to support the prevailing policy has not been evident.[8] Of course explicit encouragement is not the only way to get the message across. The Washington version of "body language" can be quite as effective. Unspoken displeasure, when expressed in the currency of bureaucratic politics (such as reduced access to senior policy-makers, decreased influence, or smaller budgetary authority), can be as clear as the most direct memorandum -- especially in dealing with the leaders of a profession that places great stock in loyalty. The Kennedy administration, as we have seen, effectively used promotion policies and reassignments to encourage the military to support administration efforts to develop counterinsurgency capabilities. Since Vietnam such bureaucratic techniques have not been similarly employed. But Washington insiders have reported displeasure among a handful of key political appointees in each of the post-Vietnam administrations at the military's cautious approach to the use of

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[8]The senior military in Latin America may have sensed some of this sentiment on the issue of the Contras. During my two months as temporary duty special assistant to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command (in the summer of 1986), I sensed that my boss felt he had to "take sides" on the Contra issue, and that were he to not support the administration position, he should resign. For an example of his recent statements on the Contras, see Don Harrison, "Galvin Says Contras Have 'Fighting Chance'," Army Times, 9 February 1987, pp. 4, 24; and General John R. Galvin, "Sandinistas, Contras and U.S. Policy," (an Op-Ed piece distributed in August 1986).

force.[9] And if the military perceive this displeasure as undermining their influence, they may alter their views to be more in line with the prevailing administration sentiment.

To date, however, no secretary of defense has pressured the military to throw off the legacy of Vietnam. The absence of any such pressure points to another important factor that will influence the longevity of the Vietnam legacy -- the relationships between the military's senior leaders and several key civilian policy makers in the Department of Defense. A particularly important relationship is that between the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense. The respective views of the Chairman and the Secretary on the lessons of Vietnam are, of course, important factors in that relationship and in the confidence each has in the other. If, as is the case currently, the Secretary of Defense and his senior military share generally the same reaction to Vietnam, the military will be protected from others in the executive branch who do not subscribe to similar views.[10] If there is a divergence between the military and

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[9]Zbigniew Brzezinski, for example, expressed such feelings during my interview with him in 1985, and in his comments on the Carter administration cases studies in this dissertation. He felt the senior military repeatedly displayed inordinate caution during deliberations over the use of force. James Schlesinger has voiced similar sentiments in Congressional testimony. Finally, it has been well known in Washington that several Reagan administration officials were frustrated by the military's cautious approach to the use of force -- frustrations confirmed in a conversation with then Undersecretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger in July 1984.

[10] The 1984-1985 "debate" between Defense Secretary Weinberger and Secretary of State Shultz over when force should be used showed Weinberger's views to be akin to those of the

civilian views, the short run result would depend on who outlasts whom. Assuming Secretary of Defense Weinberger retains his post through the remainder of the Reagan administration, it is only when the next Secretary of Defense is chosen that this factor may become important in influencing the intellectual dominance of the Vietnam analogy.

The world situation will also have a major impact on the endurance of the Vietnam legacy. A number of international developments could force the military to rethink the prescriptions they have derived from the American experience in Vietnam -- just as the rise of insurgencies in Southeast Asia during the early 1960s undermined the lessons the military took from Korea. The rise of terrorism, for example, has forced military and civilians alike to recognize the need for some American capability for response. Anti-terrorist forces have been developed and employed, and a general consensus has emerged which holds that more must be done about terrorism.[11] Lessons drawn from Vietnam that seemed relevant to counter-terrorist activities (e.g. lessons about the efficacy of force in

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senior military. See, for example, Richard Halloran, "U.S. Will Not Drift Into A Latin War, Weinberger Says," New York Times, 10 December 1984, p. 1; and George J. Church, "Force and Personality," Time, Vol. 124, No. 26 (24 December 1984), p.13. The increase in terrorist attacks against Americans, and numerous critical examinations of the Weinberger criteria appear, however, to have led him to modify his stance. See Daniel Greene, "U.S. Officials Use Seminar to Bolster Terrorism Policy," Army Times, 2 February 1987, p. 10.

[11]See, for example, "Dealing With Terrorism," Public Opinion, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 1986), p. 27.

international politics) have been modified. Even in the area of counter-terrorism, however, the military have been more cautious about retaliation for terrorist attacks than many civilian policy-makers. As the frequency of terrorist actions against Americans has increased, nonetheless, restrained responses have become less and less viable.[12] The military have gradually moved toward the position expressed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps to a Baltimore audience in August 1985. The time has come, General Kelley declared, to "get even" with terrorists who attack Americans abroad.[13]

Outright aggression in regions of vital interest to the United States undoubtedly would result in American military involvement overseas regardless of public opinion or military suspicions of politicians.[14] Depending on the circumstances, rapid success in such ventures could put much of the Vietnam legacy behind us, assuming we survived. Failure would do the opposite. In the nuclear age, however, it is unlikely that attacks on vital interests of the United States will take place. And if they do, the status of the Vietnam legacy probably would

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[12]For a discussion of recent deployments of the Delta force, America's counter-terrorist element, see Stephen Engelberg, "Officials Say U.S. Team Was Sent To Help Pakistanis End Hijacking," New York Times, 8 September 1986, pp. A1, A6.

[13]Dennis O'Brien, "Marine Commandant: Get Even," Baltimore News American, 14 August 1985, p. 4.

[14]Assuming the region is universally regarded as vital, the military would expect the public to support the action, and one of the most important prescriptions derived from the lessons of Vietnam would be satisfied.

be the least of our concerns in the aftermath.

The use of force by the United States and other countries since Vietnam has already had some impact on the lessons of Vietnam, and will continue to do so in the future. Those that seem similar to Vietnam will have the most impact as they will be seem to confirm or invalidate what was taken from the U.S. misadventures in Southeast Asia. The French intervention in Chad in 1984 and the Belgian rescue of Europeans trapped at Kolwezi in 1978, for example, have reminded America's military leaders that small operations with limited objectives can be successfully carried out, even if, as in Chad, events drag on for some time.[15] The successful American intervention in Grenada served a similar purpose (despite its widely publicized faults), as have the airstrikes against Libya in April 1986 and the interception of the Achille Lauro hijackers in October 1985. Each of the latter operations reinforced the military recognition that nothing succeeds with the American public like success. If an operation can be concluded quickly and with minimal costs, it will not only be acceptable, it may even be popular.

Such carefully staged shows of force have proved little more in the eyes of the military, however. They have not made a significant dent in the Vietnam legacy. A number of other events, in fact, have appeared to validate the lessons of

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[15]See, for example, Lieutenant Colonel Michel L. Castillon (French Army), "Low-Intensity Conflict in the 1980s: The French Experience," Military Review, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 1986), pp. 68-77.

Vietnam. The American peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, for example, seems to have reinforced the lessons of Vietnam -- not just for the Marines, but for the other services as well given the perceived similarities to certain aspects of Vietnam.[16] As retired Rear Admiral Henry Eccles argued in 1984 while still an influential professor at the Naval War College: "The conclusions to be drawn from the U.S. experience in Lebanon...are in essence the same as those to be drawn from...Vietnam."[17] Similarly, the Israeli difficulties in Lebanon, culminating in a politically expedient withdrawal after two and a half years of bloodshed with little to show for their efforts, seemed to reinforce certain lessons of Vietnam, particularly those about a democracy fighting a prolonged, relatively inconclusive conflict. Finally, as noted earlier, the Soviet inability to achieve a decisive result in Afghanistan has reminded some military observers of the problems of counterguerilla warfare in rugged terrain where the enemy enjoys sanctuaries. The sum of these experiences has reinforced the military's belief in the necessity for concluding military operations as quickly as possible, and for avoiding lengthy,

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[16]General Paul Gorman, then Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command attributed the Marine Corps reluctance in 1984 to provide Marines to safeguard the intelligence gathering devices on Tiger Island (off El Salvador) to the Corps' devastating experience in Beirut and the resulting desire to avoid any other potentially dangerous stationary activity. (Based on my service in the Office of the Army Chief of Staff during the summer of 1984.)

[17]Rear Admiral Henry E. Eccles (Ret.), "Lebanon Commentary," (Newport: Naval War College, unpublished manuscript, 1984), p. 56.

inconclusive commitments of U.S. troops. In fact, one retired officer went so far as to suggest, only slightly tongue in cheek, that the United States should contract out such tasks rather than attempt to carry them out with American soldiers.[18]

Those who lead the military, naturally, will influence the duration of the Vietnam legacy. As with any organization, those at the top of the military hierarchy set the tone for their subordinates. If the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and some of the individual Service Chiefs launch a concerted campaign to reduce the influence of the lessons of Vietnam, for example, one would expect their effort to significantly affect their subordinates.[19] A concerted and sustained campaign would be necessary, however, given the extent to which the lessons of Vietnam have been internalized by an entire generation. Nonetheless, if the Chiefs were selected for their willingness to disregard the conventional wisdom on Vietnam and for their level of evangelical zeal in overturning that conventional wisdom (or, more realistically, for an activist approach to the use of force), their bias would reverberate through the military. Selection of officers for joint positions from the Navy -- the service which seems least affected by the Vietnam legacy -- might

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[18]Comment by Colonel William J. Taylor (USA, Ret) at the National Defense University conference on low-intensity conflict 14-15 January 1986. For a transcript of Taylor's remarks, see Proceedings of the Low-Intensity Conflict Warfare Conference (Panama: U.S. Southern Command, 1986), pp. 62-63.

[19]Such a "campaign" would not be directed at the lessons of Vietnam, but rather at the cautious approach to the use of force that derives from those lessons.

send a similar signal.[20] No such trend presently seems to be taking place, however. In fact, given the near universal acceptance of the conventional wisdom by the top officers, finding officers at that level who think differently would not be easy.[21]

Developments in the capabilities of American forces also can be expected to influence the impact of the Vietnam legacy. If, for example, the Army develops forces it believes capable of rapid deployment to various regions or of conducting counter-insurgency warfare (and those two missions require distinctly different capabilities), senior leaders understandably would be

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[20] Admiral James Watkins, the Chief of Naval Operations, for example, said in March 1984 that America must cast off the "Vietnam syndrome of humiliation and defeat, which hounds our capability to implement positive change...The country must be ready, and must be seen as being ready, to use military power when forced to do so by our adversaries. We must show American power...not American paralysis." His Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Policy, Vice Admiral James Lyon, followed up in June 1984 saying that the practical effect of the War Powers Resolution of 1973 has been to "undercut the effectiveness of a classic tool of diplomacy, demonstration of military power." See Tom Burgess, "Lebanon Actions Intensify Debate Over War Powers," Army Times, 10 September 1984, p. 46; also Philip Geyelin, "Less Noise From the Brass Section." Washington Post, 29 June 1984, p. 19; and Fred Hiatt and Walter Pincus, "Admiral Decries Military Restraints." Washington Post, 23 July 1984, p. 1.

The selection in 1986 of Admiral William Crowe as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs does not, however, appear to have had a marked effect on the general military views toward the use of force -- perhaps because Admiral Crowe, unlike some of his naval colleagues, seems to share the conventional lessons of Vietnam.

[21] Nor would it necessarily be desirable in my view, since the caution associated with the conventional wisdom is preferable to many of the alternatives.

less wary of committing soldiers to such conflicts.[22] The

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[22] Development of military capabilities for some missions in the "low intensity" end of the conflict spectrum is under way, but until 1986, the emphasis was more on developing forces capable of rapid deployment than on counter-insurgency skills. See Michael R. Gordon, "The Charge of the Light Infantry - Army Plans Forces for Third World Conflicts," National Journal, 19 June 1984, pp. 968-972; "U.S., Panama Plan Counter-Insurgency Exercises in February," Army Times, 28 January 1985, p. 16; Jim Tice, "High-Tech Division Becoming Reality," Army Times, 10 September 1984, p. 32; Jim Tice, "7th Division Shed Equipment, Soldiers," Army Times, 1 October 1984, p. 1.

An overview of the "decade of neglect" of special operations forces is contained in Lyn Rylander, "U.S. Special Operations Forces," paper presented at the CSIS Conventional Force Structure Study Conference in June 1985.

It is only in the past year and a half that the Department of Defense, with prodding from the Congress (see, for example, H.R. 5109, 90th Congress, 2d Session), has begun to place significant emphasis on the development of "special operations forces" other than counter-terrorist elements. Significant steps taken include: a very high-level conference on low-intensity conflict conducted 14-15 January 1986 at Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.; a joint study of low-intensity conflict undertaken by the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command; announcement of Army and Navy plans to build up their special operations capabilities (such as the Army's Special Forces units) over the next five years; announcement of a joint Air Force and Army examination of their ability to deal with low-intensity conflict; creation of a new Assistant Secretary of Defense position (for Special Operations); creation of a new joint command for special operations forces. See Daniel Greene, "Conferees Face Challenges of Low-Level Wars," Army Times, 27 January 1986, pp. 2, 26; Larry Carney, "Army Plans 5-Year Expansion Of Special Operations Forces," Army Times, 30 December 1986, p. 4; "Navy's SEAL Force to Grow to 2,700 by 1990," Army Times, 2 December 1985, p. 50; Leonard Famiglietti, "Army-Air Force Team to Study Low-Intensity Conflict," Army Times, 9 December 1985, pp. 59, 60; Bernard E. Trainor, "Special Military Forces: Congress Sees Room for Improvement," New York Times, 6 September 1986, p. A9;Daniel Greene, "Laws Urged to Correct Special Forces' Faults," Army Times, 20 October 1986, pp. 13, 24; P. J. Budahn, "Legislation Sets Up Unified Command for Special Forces," Army Times, 27 October 1986, p. 41; Robert A. Manning and Steven Emerson, "Special Forces: Can They Do the Job?" U.S. News & World Report, 3 November 1986, pp. 36-47; James B. Motley, "Washington's Big Tug-of-War Over Special Operations Forces," Army, November 1986, pp. 16-25; Richard Halloran, "U.S. Moving to Expand Unconventional Forces," New York Times, 26 November 1986, p. A20;John H. Cushman Jr., "Special Attention for Special Forces,"

development of capable anti-terrorist forces already seems to have had this effect -- although, as pointed out earlier, the lessons of Vietnam are of less relevance to terrorist operations than to other forms of low-intensity conflict.

The Next Generation

Ultimately, however, the longevity of the Vietnam legacy will depend on forthcoming generations of military leaders, the lessons _they_ took from Vietnam, and the impact on them of the factors just discussed. On balance, the next generation of military leaders seems to have reacted to Vietnam similarly to their predecessors, with one important difference. In addition to sharing their elders's resentment of the political appointees who they blame for micromanaging the war effort, the younger generation also blames the older generation for some of the problems the United States experienced in Vietnam. Of course, today's lieutenant colonels and colonels retain strong allegiance and respect for the leaders of the Vietnam era.[23] They still

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New York Times, 23 December 1986, p. 18; Jim Tice, "Plan Would Exchange Readiness for Special Operations," _Army Times_, 2 February 1987, p. 6; "US and Soviet Special Operations," _Armed Forces Journal International_, February 1987, pp. 48-52.

A brief but interesting discussion of how America might assist allies in countering insurgencies is Colonel Rod Paschall's "Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine: Who Needs It?" _Parameters_, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn 1985), pp. 33-45.

[23] I have not even tried to hypothesize about the impact of Vietnam on today's junior officers -- the lieutenants and captains who did not serve during Vietnam. Indeed, there is no empirical evidence on, or articles by, junior officers, to indicate what they have taken from American involvement in Vietnam. Even if there were evidence, one would expect to find

feel a lump in their throat when they see General Westmoreland leading the Vietnam veterans down a Washington street or at a West Point alumni reunion parade, and they listen attentively to what officers of that generation have to say. But at the same time, they are wrestling with nagging doubts about the Vietnam experience and the reasons for America's failure. "If things were so screwed up," they wonder, "why didn't anyone resign? If America's political leaders had it so wrong, why didn't some generals and admirals quit?" Colonel Andrew O'Meara, Jr., a member of the "next generation," expressed these doubts in a 1978 article in <u>Parameters</u>:

> The President does not stand alone in bearing the burden of responsibility for past failure. Where were the military advisers who understood the limitations of our conscript Army? Our national defense colleges have taught for years that national purpose is the foundation of national strategy, which in turn sets political objectives, which ultimately shape strategic military plans. Yet we fought a war with a democratic Army, with inadequate popular support, and without clearly defined political objectives. Where were the military advisers to the President? Did they have access to the President? Was their advice offered? Why were the fundamentals cast aside?[24]

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it heavily influenced by the youthful exuberance that characterizes lieutenants and captains. Those feelings will be tempered by the weight of responsibility that comes with higher rank. In short, what today's junior officers think about Vietnam -- which is fast becoming ancient history -- is likely to undergo significant change before they assume positions of power and influence.

24 Lieutenant Colonel Andrew P. O'Meara, Jr. (USA), "The Democratic Army and the Nation-State," <u>Parameters</u>, Vol. 8, No. 2 (June 1978), p. 44. See also the excellent article by Edward Marks, "The Vietnam Generation of American Officers," <u>Conflict</u>, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1983), p. 46; Fox Butterfield, "The New Vietnam Scholarship," <u>The New York Times Magazine</u>, 13 February 1983, p. 28; and Colonel Donald P. Shaw, "Comments on the Papers of

Such doubts call into some question the stab-in-the-back theory, the idea that the political leaders of the 1960s did the military in, and cause the next generation to wonder if the military itself should not share some of the blame. Members of the National War College class of 1982 (colonels or senior lieutenant colonels on the fast track), for example, believed that the Vietnam-era military leadership played "a passive role in the national decision-making apparatus in the very area of governmental operations which is their special responsibility."[25] Such sentiments have led to increasingly closer examination of, and questions about, the conduct of the Vietnam war.

These feelings should not be confused with the self-flagellation that went on within the officer corps of the early 1970's. The senior field grade officers of today seem to have adopted a more pragmatic approach, with the objective of figuring out what went well and what did not. And in analyzing the situation, they think that maybe -- in addition to all the political and other factors -- the military's approach to Vietnam was flawed; maybe America's doctrine, tactics and personnel practices were inappropriate. Such questioning within the

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Session IV," in Lieutenant Colonel Charles R. Schrader, ed., The Impact of Unsuccessful Military Campaigns on Military Institutions, 1860-1980 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1984), p. 324.

[25]Marks, "The Vietnam Generation of American Officers," p. 46. For another recent example of a senior field grade officer noting the failure of U.S. military leaders during Vietnam, see Colonel David Jablonsky (USA), "Strategy and the Operational Art of War: Part I," Parameters, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 69.

military is, of course, not new, but it does seem to have become more widespread and could spawn the type of reexamination that might lead to some revision of the lessons of Vietnam.[26]

Any questioning of the conventional wisdom on Vietnam will, however, have to overcome the considerable institutionalization of the lessons of Vietnam.[27] Those who criticize the conventional wisdom do so at their own risk.[28] The lessons of

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[26] For an example of an article showing military acceptance that "part of the fault was ours," see Major Marc B. Powe, "The U.S. Army After the Fall of Vietnam: A Contemporary Dilemma," Military Review, Vol. 61, No. 2 (February 1976), pp. 3-17. In another example, see Brigadier General John R. Galvin, "Cincinnatus Recidivus: A Review Essay," Parameters, Vol 11, No. 1 (March 1981). On page 18 Galvin warned that "the American military must stop blaming politicians for inhibiting tactical success in the war and must instead study carefully the...lessons that are there to be learned." Another recent example is Major Andrew Krepinevich, The Army and Vietnam (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

[27] Colonel Paul Miles, Deputy Head of the U.S. Military Academy's History Department, recently mused that the cumulative effect of the institutionalization process may actually magnify the conventional wisdom for the younger generations of military officers. Interview at West Point, New York, 14 March 1986.

[28] Reviews in professional journals of an impressively researched Harvard dissertation-turned-book by an Army major who challenges the conventional wisdom are enough to make any internal critic think twice (Major Andrew F. Krepinevich, The Army and Vietnam, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). Krepinevich asserts that the Army never pursued a true counter-insurgency effort in Vietnam, that it preferred instead to pursue search and destroy operations with big units--operations with which the Army was more comfortable. Although his book has received a number of favorable reviews, it has also come in for some significant criticism. See, for example, the review by General Bruce Palmer in Parameters (Vol. 16, No. 3, 1986, pp. 83-85). Although General Palmer notes some merit in Krepinevich's analysis of the Army's failings in Vietnam, he decries the "lack of balance...and objectivity," the book's "abrasive" tone, and its "crippling naivete...lack of historical breadth and objectivity." Such comments in the Army's top journal by a former Acting Chief of Staff of the Army can be

Vietnam have come to be viewed as the "school solution," and are presented as such at the National War College, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, the Army War College, the Command and General Staff College, and the Naval War College. Future officers are imbued with the school solution at West Point and in their ROTC programs.[29] Colonel Harry Summers' view of the military instrument and the lessons of VIetnam -- virtually identical with those described in chapter IV -- has been widely subscribed to, especially as his book On Strategy has been extensively adopted as a text and has been placed on many professional reading lists.[30]

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unsettling to say the least. Anticipation of such treatment (though it is doubtful that the reviews would have been as vituperative) may explain why then Colonel Peter M. Dawkins chose not to publish his doctoral dissertation, The United States Army and the "Other" War in Vietnam (Princeton University, 1979). Dawkins theme was that because of organizational impediments, the Army never prosecuted the "other" war -- the advisory effort-- energetically and well.

[29]Marks, "The Vietnam Generation of American Officers," p. 49; my experience as a member of the Army Command and General Staff College class of 1983; "Strategy and Policy," syllabus used at the Naval War College, 1986-1987; my experience as a member of the faculty at the U.S. Military Academy; and Colonel Roger H. Nye, The Challenge of Command (Wayne, New Jersey: Avery Publishing, 1986), pp. 138-139.

For an excellent discussion of the nation's war colleges and their important role in the education of future military leaders, see Williamson Murray, "Grading the War Colleges," The National Interest, No. 6 (Winter 1986/87), pp. 12-19.

[30]The impact of the writings of Colonel Harry G. Summers Jr. cannot be overstated. (University of Maryland Ph.D. candidate Bob Buzzanco concurs; he has argued that Summers is one of the two most important revisionists on Vietnam, the other being Richard Nixon (presumably on the basis of Nixon's No More Vietnams). See "The American Military's Rationale Against the Vietnam War," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 101, No. 4 (1986), p. 560.) Parade magazine claimed in 1983 that "in

Students at military schools are also frequently reminded of the conventional wisdom on Vietnam by retired senior officers who address them. Virtually all military schools have extensive guest speaker programs, and a number of those guest speakers are retired generals who hold to the conventional wisdom and seize such opportunities to pass on their views to their audiences.

There was also, until very recently, institutionalized

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military circles," Colonel Summers was the "man of the hour" (14 August 1983, p. 9).

Summers' book On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context is the statement of the conventional wisdom. (In fact, it was critiqued in draft by an internal editorial board at the Army War College and by officials in the Pentagon, and originally published by the U.S. Army War College, before being published commercially by Presidio Press with a slightly different title. See John P. Lovell, "Learning to Cope With Failure," paper presented at the USMA Senior Conference, West Point, 1985, p. 31.) As noted, Summers' book has been widely distributed and read (it was, for example, issued to every general officer, many retired generals, and every student at the Army Command and General Staff College and the Army War College). In some places it came to be regarded as the gospel. It received very favorable views initially in both civilian and military journals, and was selected by Ohio State for the 1983 Furniss Award (more recently, some of his analysis has been attacked on a number of fronts). Summers also published literally scores of articles -- in all the military journals and in numerous civilian ones as well -- and he was a very influential teacher at the Army War College, where he was retained on active duty beyond the normal 30 year retirement date for Colonels and where he held the prestigious MacArthur Chair from the late 1970s until his retirement in 1985.

Furthermore, Summers held a number of speech writer and special assistant jobs in the Office of the Army Chief of Staff in the early-to-mid-1970s (under Generals Abrams and Weyand), and, not surprisingly, many of the speeches he wrote echo the themes Summers espoused in On Strategy. Summers also played an important role in the writing of Field Manual 100-1, The Army, the service's capstone manual, in which Summers' concepts again found expression.

Finally, Summers' influence did not cease with his retirement in 1985, as he became the senior military correspondent for U.S. News & World Report. In short, to understand the conventional wisdom on Vietnam, one must understand the arguments of Harry Summers.

disinterest in low-intensity conflict in the military schooling system as well. There were drastic reductions in the amount of classroom hours spent on small wars issues in military courses. "Counterinsurgency has virtually become a non-subject in the U.S. military educational system," declared Colonel John Waghelstein in 1985.[31] In 1979, for example, the ten month Command and General Staff College course devoted eight hours to the study of low-intensity conflict, and in the branch schools the subject was discontinued altogether. In recent years, to be sure, low-intensity has made a comeback in the military school system. The Command and General Staff College core curriculum for 1985 included 32 hours, and in 1986, low-intensity conflict was the fashionable topic. Nonetheless, 32 hours of instruction at the Army's mid-level staff college (the final military schooling for all but the handful of officers chosen for one of the War Colleges as a colonel), hardly constitutes a renaissance for the study of low-intensity conflict.[32]

The other services are even less interested in the study of low-intensity conflict. The Air Force devotes 26 hours to its study at the Air Command and Staff College, and the Navy seems

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[31]Colonel John D. Waghelstein, "Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency Doctrine," Military Review, Vol. 65, No. 5 (May 1985), p. 44. The instruction on low-intensity conflict during my year at the Command and General Staff College (1983) was conducted at the very end of the course, almost as an afterthought, and had to compete for the interest of the students with preparation for the post-graduation rush to leave for new assignments.

[32]Waghelstein, "Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency Doctrine," pp. 46-47.

largely unconcerned with the whole subject (somewhat understandably given the lesser relevance to its mission). Neither the Air Force nor the Navy have foreign area officer programs to prepare officers for duty in advisory or training roles in support of U.S. actions in countries like El Salvador.[33] In general, there remains a widespread fear among officers that assignment to counterinsurgency, special forces type missions will be the end of their career. Command and staff duty with troops -- American troops -- remains the perceived fast track to the top, as it did throughout American involvement in Vietnam.

The lessons of Vietnam have also found their way into potentially even more enduring expressions than military school instruction and reading lists. The military force structure has, in fact, been changed in response to the perception that, in the words of then Army Chief of Staff E.C. Meyer, "the nation's attempt to carry on a major military effort in Vietnam without mobilization was a major error." The military has been restructured to prevent a similar error in the future, by closer integration of reserve and active component forces, to the point that even the rapid deployment forces would find it difficult to go to war without the National Guard and reserve elements that make up an important part of their structure.[34] In General

[33]Waghelstein, "Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency Doctrine, p. 47.

[34]For example, the third brigade of the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), the "heavy" division of the rapid deployment forces based in the United States, is the 48th Brigade of the Georgia Army National Guard. Additionally, 68% of the

Meyer's words, "we are structured today in such a way that, except for the most modest contingency, a callup of Reserves is an absolute necessity."[35] When it comes to units most needed in low-intensity conflict in particular, a callup would be required for even modest assistance efforts. Civil affairs and

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U.S. Army's engineers and 55% of its medics are in the reserve components.

[35]General E.C. Meyer in a letter to a student published in a collection of his speeches, articles, Congressional testimony, and selected correspondence titled E.C. Meyer (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1983), p. 314.

According to the Washington Post's George Wilson, General Creighton Abrams came home in 1972 after commanding in Vietnam, and as Army Chief of Staff "started restructuring the division of labor between the active and reserve forces so it would be virtually impossible for a future president to go to way without activating the reservists" See "War's Lessons Struck Home," Washington Post, 16 April 1985, p. A9. See also Michael R. Gordon, "The Charge of the Light Infantry -- Army Plans Forces for Third World Conflict," National Journal, 19 May 1984, p. 972; Summers, On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context, p. 113; Summers, "Army Rebuilds Its Confidence," Washington Times, 26 April 1985, p. E15; and Bill Keller, "Reserves Move to the Forefront of Defense," New York Times, 10 March 1985, p. E3 (in which James Webb, then Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, was quoted as saying that "the United States Army cannot got to war -- go to war -- without using the guard and reserves.")

A form of institutionalization of the lessons of Vietnam that has diminished in recent years is in the area of military contingency planning. As noted in the case study of American involvement in Central America, the reluctance to get involved in Central America with U.S. troops was translated into military reluctance to develop plans for such potential operations, based apparently on the theory that if one has no plans, they cannot be executed. (See George Wilson, "U.S. Urged to Meet Honduran Requests," Washington Post, 20 June 1983, p. A4; and Doyle McManus, "U.S. Draws Contingency Plans for Air Strikes in El Salvador," Washington Post, 13 July 1984, p. A27.) In the past two years, however, it appears that this initial reluctance has given way in the face of recognition that the administration might commit troops in Central America even in the absence of plans, and that therefore prudence dictated planning for some possible contingencies.

psychological operations units have all but disappeared from the active forces. The Army, which possesses most of them, now has 98% of its civil affairs personnel and 61% of its psychological operations personnel in the reserve components.[36]

The extensive institutionalization of the lessons of Vietnam gives special weight to historian Ernest May's observation that

> "the bureaucracy has immense intellectual inertia...Rapid changes of opinion occur in bureaucratic organizations only when there is some large-scale change in structure or personnel...Looking ahead, one should therefore assume that the bureaucracy will continue to think tomorrow what it thought yesterday and that such a forecast will prove wrong only if major shake-ups occur.[37]

In sum, how long the Vietnam experience will pervade military thinking will depend on the interaction of a number of factors. Recent developments associated with several of these factors -- the greater emphasis on low-intensity conflict in U.S. national security affairs, the increase in terrorism, Congressional urging to revitalize special operations forces, and recognition of ambiguities that reside in the lessons of Vietnam[38] -- have catalyzed military reevaluation of the lessons

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[36]General Paul Gorman, "Low Intensity Conflict: Not Fulda, Not Kola," (unpublished manuscript, 1984), p. 13; and Rick Maze, "Growing Reliance on Reserve Raises Concerns," Army Times, 13 April 1987, p. 8.

[37]Ernest May, "Lessons" of the Past (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 162.

[38]See the discussion of the problems and ambiguities of lessons of history in general, and the lessons of Vietnam in particular in the following chapter.

derived from Vietnam. It seems safe, nonetheless, to predict that the legacy of Vietnam will influence the military for years to come. Whether what I have identified as the conventional wisdom will remain the dominant paradigm in military thinking is more difficult to forecast. Although institutions have considerable inertia, Major Andrew Bacevich, writing in 1982 about the pacification effort in the Philippines at the turn of the century, noted that: "Our...penchant for forgetting nasty tropical wars is well known."[39]

Vietnam, however, seems the exception to that generalization. America's frustrations in Southeast Asia weigh heavily on the generation of military officers now assuming the mantle of leadership. We should not forget that today's colonels and generals fought at the platoon, company, and battalion level in Vietnam. They were on the ground, where the term "low-intensity conflict" seemed very inappropriate. For the infantry platoon leader or company commander in Vietnam, there was nothing low intensity about the firefights, ambushes, and air strikes in which he participated. His generation, even more than that of his predecessors, experienced first hand the costs of Vietnam, and it collectively remains very skeptical about the policies that put them there and controlled how they fought. Given the next generation's experiences, the lack of any factors that would catalyze sweeping reassessment of the conventional wisdom on

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[39] Major Andrew J. Bacevich (USA), "Disagreeable Work: Pacifying the Moros, 1903-1906," Military Review, Vol. 62, No. 6 (June 1982), p. 50.

Vietnam, and the absence of any competing analogies -- in the way the lessons of Korea had to compete with lessons derived from the loss of China, Chamberlain at Munich, British experiences in Malaysia, or American involvement in the Philippines -- one may anticipate that the Vietnam legacy will continue to lurk in the depths of the military's consciousness throughout the 1980's-- at least.

Chapter VIII

LESSONS OF HISTORY AND THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM

One of the few unequivocally sound lessons of history is that the lessons we should learn are usually learned imperfectly if at all.

Bernard Brodie[1]

Trying to use the lessons of the past correctly poses two dilemmas. One is the problem of balance: knowing how much to rely on the past as a guide and how much to ignore it. The other is the problem of selection: certain lessons drawn from experience contradict others.

Richard K. Betts[2]

Of all the disasters of Vietnam, the worst may be the "lessons" that we'll draw from it...Lessons from such complex events require much reflection to be of more than negative worth. But reactions to Vietnam...tend to be visceral rather than reflective.

Albert Wohlstetter[3]

Of all the disasters of Vietnam the worst could be our unwillingness to learn enough from them.

Stanley Hoffmann[4]

It may be that we have learned the lessons too well. Vietnam will never happen again exactly as it happened once. And if this nation should respond to every future international crisis with the simple bromide of "No More Vietnams!" then we are in serious trouble.

Philip A. Crowl[5]

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[1]Quoted in Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, American Leadership in World Affairs (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1984), p. 25.

[2]Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 164.

[3]Quoted in No More Vietnams?, ed. by Richard M. Pfeffer (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 4.

[4]Quoted in Ibid, p. 6.

[5]Philip A. Crowl, "The Strategist's Short Catechism: Six Questions Without Answers," in John F. Reichart and Steven R. Sturm, ed. American Defense Policy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, 5th edition), p. 88.

In the second chapter of this dissertation I sought to establish that in seeking solutions to problems, occupants of high office frequently turn to the past for help. I noted that this tendency is understandable. History is an enormously rich resource; what was done before in seemingly similar situations and what the results were can be of great assistance to policy-makers.

I will contend in this chapter, however, that history can mislead and obfuscate as well as guide and illuminate.[6] Those who use the past as a guide should be aware of the pitfalls that await them. Lessons of the past in general, and the lessons derived by the military from Vietnam in particular, contain not only policy-relevant analogies, but ambiguities and paradoxes as well. Acknowledging the limitations of lessons of the past is the first step toward effective use of history.

The Use of History

The use of historical analogies by statesmen is frequently flawed. Many scholars concur with Ernest May's judgment that "policy-makers ordinarily use history badly."[7] Numerous pitfalls

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[6]An earlier version of this chapter was published in Parameters, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1986), pp. 43-53.

[7]Ernest R. May, "Lessons" of the Past (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. xi. See also George C. Herring, "Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Uses of History," in The Central American Crisis, ed. by Kenneth M. Coleman and George C. Herring (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1985), pp. 97-110; and David Hackett Fischer, Historians' Fallacies (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

await those who seek guidance from the past, and policy-makers have often seemed adept at finding them. Those who employ history, therefore, should be aware of the common fallacies to which they may fall victim. For as Alexis de Tocqueville warned in the nineteenth century, misapplied lessons of history may be more dangerous than ignorance of the past.[8]

The first error that policy-makers frequently commit when employing history is to focus unduly on a particularly dramatic or traumatic event which they experienced personally.[9] The last war or the most recent crisis assumes unwarranted importance in the mind of the decision-maker seeking historical precedents to illuminate the present. This inclination frequently is unfounded. There often is little reason why those events that occurred during the lifetime of a particular leader should in fact be the best guides to the present or future. Just because the decision-maker happened to experience the last war is no reason that it, rather than earlier wars, should provide guidance

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[8]Cited in Holsti and Rosenau, American Leadership in World Affairs, p. 8. It is noteworthy that in the thirteen crises examined in their book Conflict Among Nations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 321), Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing found "no examples...[in which] historical analogies produced a correct interpretation of a [signal from an adversary]. Jervis's hypothesis that statesmen usually draw incorrect or over-generalized inferences from historical analogies is strongly confirmed."

[9]Undesirable past events prove particularly influential. Writes Abraham Lowenthal: "Policy-makers seize on evils they have experienced and wish to avoid in order to organize their information about events they do not have time to analyze from scratch." See Lowenthal's The Dominican Intervention (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 161.

for, or most closely resemble, the contemporary situation.[10]

The fallacy of viewing personal historical experience as most relevant to the present -- without carefully considering alternative sources of illumination -- often is compounded by a tendency to remove analogies from their unique contextual circumstances. Having seized on the first analogy that comes to mind, policy-makers do not search more widely. Nor, contends Ernest May, "do they pause to analyze the case, test its fitness, or even ask in what ways it might be misleading."[11] Historical outcomes are thus absorbed without paying careful attention to the details of their causation, and the consequence is lessons that are superficial and overgeneralized -- analogies applied to a wide range of events with little sensitivity to variations in the situation.[12] The result is policy made, in Arthur Schlesinger's words, through "historical generalization wrenched illegitimately out of the past and imposed mechanically on the

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[10]Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, p. 281. Examples of policy-makers relying upon their own experiences and lessons drawn therefrom as guides, especially during crises, can be found in: Glenn D. Paige, "Comparative Case Analysis of Crisis Decisions: Korea and Cuba," International Crises: Insights From Behavioral Research, ed. by Charles F. Hermann (New York: Free Press, 1972), p. 48; Thomas W. Milburn, "The Management of Crises," International Crises, p. 265; Chris Lamb, "Belief Systems and Decision Making in the Mayaguez Crisis," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 99, No. 4 (Winter 1984-85), pp. 681-702; and Ole R. Holsti and Alexander L. George, "The Effects of Stress on the Performance of Foreign Policy-Makers," Political Science Annual, Vol. 6 (1975), p. 281.

[11]May, "Lessons" of the Past, p. xi.

[12]Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, p. 281.

future."[13]

Finally, once persuaded that a particular event or phenomenon is repeating itself, policy-makers are prone to narrow their thinking. They see only facts that conform to the image they have chosen as applicable. Contradictory information is filtered out. "As new information is received," observes Lloyd Jensen, "an effort is made to interpret that information so that it will be compatible with existing images and beliefs."[14]

In sum, lessons of the past are not always used wisely. Proper employment of history has been, as Ernest May, Robert Jervis, and others have found, the exception rather than the rule. Historical analogies are often poorly chosen and overgeneralized. Their contextual circumstances are frequently overlooked. Traumatic personal experiences often exercise unwarranted tyranny over the minds of decision-makers. History is so often misused by policy-makers, in fact, that many

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[13]Schlesinger, The Bitter Heritage, p. 98. Hans Morgenthau has argued that the mechanistic use of history was one of the factors that led to the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam. President Johnson, he contended, equated without investigation Nazism and Communism, Vietnam in 1968 and Czechoslovakia in 1938, and retreat from Vietnam and appeasement preceding the Second World War. Official thinking on Vietnam was dominated by "reasoning by analogy without awareness of the unique character of historic events." See Morgenthau's A New Foreign Policy for the United States (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), p. 144; and May, "Lessons" of the Past, pp. 112-115.

[14]Lloyd Jensen, Explaining Foreign Policy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1982), p. 39. See also May, "Lessons" of the Past, p. xi; Lowenthal, The Dominican Intervention, p. 162; and John D. Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 65-71.

historians agree with Arthur Schlesinger that George Santayana's aphorism -- "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" -- should be restated to proclaim instead that "those who can remember the past are condemned to repeat it."[15]

Using the Lessons of Vietnam

Not surprisingly, the examination of the post-Vietnam crises in which the use of force was considered revealed that lessons taken from America's experience in Indochina have influenced the views and advice of U.S. military leaders. While there have been other factors involved, of course, the character of military advice on the use of force since 1973 has corresponded closely to prescriptions derived from the lessons of Vietnam. This has been particularly evident in those cases, such as American policy toward Central America, where the similarities to U.S. involvement in Indochina have been perceived to be most striking.

The prescriptions America's senior military have derived from Vietnam do, however, have their limitations. While they represent the distillation of considerable wisdom from America's experience in Southeast Asia, they nonetheless give rise to certain paradoxes and should not be pushed beyond their limits.

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[15]George Santayana, The Life of Reason (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, one-volume edition, 1953), p. 82. Schlesinger, The Bitter Heritage, p. 102. There is, of course, a final problem with using lessons of history. It resides in the fact that history, as Barbara Tuchman has warned, "will often capriciously take a different direction from that in which her lessons point." See her Practicing History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), p. 251.

As will be explained, complete resolution of the paradoxes and dilemmas that reside in the lessons of Vietnam is not possible. Nonetheless, understanding of the limitations of the lessons of Vietnam is necessary if they are to be employed with sound judgment.

Users of the lessons of Vietnam should, first of all, recognize and strive to avoid the general pitfalls that await anyone who seeks useful analogies in the past. Most importantly, the fact that Vietnam was America's most recent major military engagement is no reason that it, rather than earlier conflicts, should be most relevant to future conflicts. Senior officials, not to mention their staff members (who frequently write the crucial "first draft" of policy papers), should remember the circumstances of American involvement in Vietnam -- the social fragmentation there, the leadership void, the difficult political situation, the geostrategic position, and so forth. They would be wise to recall Stanley Karnow's reminder that each foreign event "has its own singularities, which must be confronted individually and creatively. To see every crisis as another Vietnam is myopic, just as overlaying the Munich debacle on Vietnam was a distortion."[16] Hence guidelines for the use of force that draw on Vietnam -- such as those discussed earlier and

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[16]Stanley Karnow, "Vietnam As An Analogy," New York Times, 4 October 1983, p. A27.

those announced by Secretary of Defense Weinberger[17] -- should be applied with sensitivity to specific cases and their circumstances, rather than in the rote manner that memorized one-line principles of war are sometimes employed.

Policy-makers employing the lessons of Vietnam -- or the lessons of any other past event -- thus should resist the American tendency for over-generalization. Decision-makers must seek to overcome what George Kennan has termed the "congenital aversion of Americans to taking specific decisions on specific problems." They must strive to avoid the "persistent urge [of Americans] to seek universal formulae or doctrines in which to clothe and justify particular actions."[18] For if nothing else, Vietnam should teach that global, holistic approaches do not work.[19] Instead each case must be examined on its own merits,

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[17]In a November 1984 speech titled "The Uses of Military Power," Secretary of Defense Weinberger outlined six tests that he said would apply when deciding whether to send military forces into combat abroad. His six tests were very similar to the lessons drawn by the military from Vietnam. See "Excerpts From Address of Weinberger," New York Times, 29 November 1984, p. A5; and Richard Halloran, "U.S. Will Not Drift Into A Latin War, Weinberger Says," New York Times, 29 November 1984, pp. A1, A4.

[18]George F. Kennan, Memoirs: 1925-1950 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 322. A recent article by George F. Kennan contained a similar admonishment. See his "Morality and Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Winter 1985/86), pp. 205-218. General Paul F. Gorman (USA, Retired), past Commander-in-Chief U.S. Southern Command, also emphasized the need to "generalize against generalizations" when examining any specific case of American involvement abroad (interview, 1 June 1985, West Point, New York).

[19]Paul Kattenburg makes a particularly good case for this in The Vietnam Trauma in American Foreign Policy, 1945-1975 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1980), p. 321.

with an appreciation for the context of past and contemporary events, and a sharp distinction made between what is typical and what is unique in comparing events.[20] In short, when drawing on the lessons of Vietnam, senior officers would do well to recall the advice of Mark Twain:

> We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it -- and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove lid. She will never sit down on a hot stove lid again -- and that is well; but also she will never sit down on a cold one.[21]

Beyond recognizing such general pitfalls that can befall users of any historical analogies, military leaders also should be aware of the paradoxes that reside in certain of the prescriptions derived from the lessons of Vietnam. In particular, the guidelines derived from America's experience in Vietnam contain a significant dilemma about when to use force, embody a potentially counterproductive approach to civil-military relations, create a prescriptive quandary over counterinsurgency doctrine and force structuring, and foster unrealistically dichotomous thinking about international politics.

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[20]On this point, see Hans Morgenthau, A New Foreign Policy for the United States (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), p. 144. For illustrative analyses of the differences between El Salvador and Vietnam, see George C. Herring, "Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Uses of History," in The Central American Crisis, ed. by Kenneth M. Coleman and George C. Herring (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1985), pp. 97-110; and Major David H. Petraeus, "El Salvador and the Vietnam Analogy," Armed Forces Journal International, Vol. 124, No. 7 (February 1987), pp. 40-45.

[21]Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens), Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1899), p. 125.

As explained earlier, many military leaders have concluded on the basis of the Vietnam experience that the United States should not intervene abroad militarily unless: there is support at home; there are clear political and military objectives; success appears achievable within a reasonable amount of time; and military commanders will be given the freedom to do what they believe is necessary to achieve that success. One problem with such guidelines is that, as Robert Osgood has observed, "acting upon them presupposes advance knowledge about a complicated interaction of military and political factors that no one can predict or guarantee."[22]

Still, making judgments about such factors has always been part of decisions to use military force. Statesmen and soldiers have always had to assess the amount of time and force required for success, the likelihood of public support, and the potential gains and losses associated with any particular intervention or escalation. Eliminating the uncertainty inherent in such determinations has never been completely possible. But Vietnam and the relative decline in U.S. power over the past two decades have heightened the importance of these judgments and decreased America's margin for error. The normal response to this kind of uncertainty is -- and has been -- caution and restraint.

Restraint rests uneasily, however, with another lesson of Vietnam -- that if the United States is going to intervene it

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[22]Robert E. Osgood, Limited War Revisited (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1979), p. 50.

should do so quickly and massively in order to arrive in force while the "patient" still has strong vital signs.[23] But getting there faster next time implies making the decision to intervene in force early on. It requires massive commitment from the outset so that, as George Fielding Eliot prescribes, "we shall...look like military winners from the start of hostilities" and thereby "win popular support at home and confidence abroad." The American effort, therefore, should be designed to raise immediate doubt that the United States will permit a war to become protracted.[24]

Eliot does not address, however, how long the <u>appearance</u> of winning will satisfy the American public in the absence of <u>actual</u> victory. Furthermore, getting there earlier next time is more easily said than done. Several post-Vietnam (and post-Watergate) developments -- the 1973 War Powers Act, the decline of the "imperial presidency," increased Congressional involvement in national security policy, and public wariness about involvement in another "quagmire" -- pose obstacles to swift American action. Coupled with the short-term focus of political leaders and the constitutional separation of powers, these new phenomena (at

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[23]See, for example, George Fielding Eliot, "Next Time We'll Have to Get There Faster," <u>Army</u> (April 1970), pp. 32-36.

[24]Eliot, "Next Time We'll Have to Get There Faster," pp. 32-33. It was such reasoning that led the Reagan administration in the early 1980s to oppose the Congressional desires for an explicit limit on the number of American military in El Salvador. For a discussion of the different viewpoints of Congress and the administration on that issue, see my "El Salvador and the 55-Man Limit: A Case Study in Post-Vietnam Executive-Legislative Relations," (unpublished manuscript, 1987).

least in post-World War II terms) make it difficult for the United States to decide early to intervene in any but the most clear-cut of circumstances. It usually takes what can be presented as a crisis before the United States is able to swing into action. The result is the oft-heard judgment that America is good only at fighting crusades.

Military leaders are, of course, well aware of the obstacles to early intervention. They realize that these obstacles, together with America's general inclination against involvement in situations that pose only an indirect threat to U.S. interests, have the potential for incomplete public backing. As a result, the senior military respond with a tendency to caution rather than haste, all the while cognizant of the dilemma confronting them: that the country that hesitates may miss the opportune moment for effective action, while the country that acts in haste may become involved in a conflict which it may wish later it had avoided.

Another difficulty posed by the lessons taken from the Vietnam experience surrounds the issue of civil-military relations. During the Vietnam era, the traditional military suspicions of civilians hardened into more acute misgivings about civilian officials.[25] This feeling lingers despite the apparently close philosophical ties on the use of force between the incumbent Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, and the

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[25]The suspicions, of course, move in the opposite direction as well; traditional civilian reservations about the military were also heightened by Vietnam.

Joint Chiefs of Staff.[26]

Yet such misgivings pose potential risks. Two post-World War II developments at either end of the so-called "spectrum of conflict" -- the advent of nuclear weapons and the rise of insurgencies -- have made close political-military integration more essential than ever before.[27]

Counterinsurgency operations, in particular, require close political-military integration. Unfortunately, this requirement runs counter to the traditional military desire, reaffirmed in the lessons of Vietnam, to operate autonomously and resist political "meddling" and "micromanagement" in operational concerns. Though most military officers quote flawlessly Clausewitz' dictum that "war is a continuation of politics by other means," many do not appear to accept fully the implications of his logic.[28] This tendency can result in problems, for while military resistance to political "micromanagement" may often be

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[26]The best example of these close philosophical ties is Secretary's Weinberger's speech to the National Press Club on November 28, 1984. That speech is reprinted, with minor modifications, as an article, "The Use of Force and the National Will," The Baltimore Sun, 3 December 1984.

[27]This should not be interpreted, however, as an argument for "politicization" of the military. It is not; politicization -- the identification of military leaders too closely with one political party, politician or appointee -- is not desirable. What is desirable is a close and healthy relationship between the military leadership and the senior civilians.

[28]In an incisive letter to Military Review (March 1987, p. 84), William J. Olson has noted that among the military "there seems to be a tendency to argue that using war as an extension of politics really means letting military realities determine what policy should mean."

well founded, it can be counterproductive if carried to excess. As Eliot Cohen has noted:

> Small war almost always involves political interference in the affairs of the country in which it is waged; it is in the very nature of such wars that the military problems are difficult to distinguish from the political ones. The skills of manipulation which successful coalition warfare in such circumstances requires are not only scarce, but in some measure anathema to the American military. The desire of the American military to handle only pure "military" problems is...understandable in light of its Vietnam experience, but unrealistic nonetheless.[29]

Hence, particularly in such "small wars," military leaders should not allow the experience of Vietnam to reinforce the traditional military desire for autonomy in a way that impedes the crucial integration of political and military strategies. The organizational desire to be "left alone" must not lead those who bear the sword to lose their appreciation for the political and economic context in which it is wielded. For while military force may be necessary in a counterinsurgency, it is seldom

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[29]Eliot A. Cohen, "Constraints on America's Conduct of Small Wars," International Security, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Fall 1984), p. 170. Cohen cites the "apparent failure" of the U.S. Army trainers in Lebanon to understand the impact of Lebanese politics on Lebanon's Army -- which disintegrated suddenly in early 1984--as the most recent example of American insensitivity to local conditions. On that see also Joel Brinkley, "The Collapse of Lebanon's Army: U.S. Said to Ignore Factionalism," New York Times, 11 March 1984, pp. A1, A12.

Richard Betts has written that American military leaders in Vietnam "recognized the political complexity of the war but insisted on dividing the labor, leaving the politics to the civilians and concentrating themselves on actual combat." See his Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 138.

Another insightful discussion of the importance of civil-military relations during limited wars is in Stephen P. Rosen, "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War," International Security, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall 1982), esp. pp. 100-104.

sufficient.

Another paradox posed by the lessons of Vietnam concerns U.S. preparations for counterinsurgency warfare. The Vietnam experience left the military leadership feeling that they should advise against involvement in counterinsurgencies unless specific, perhaps unlikely, circumstances obtain -- i.e. domestic public support, the promise of a quick campaign, and freedom to employ whatever force is necessary to achieve rapid victory. In light of such criteria, committing U.S. units to counterinsurgencies appears a very problematic proposition, difficult to conclude before domestic support erodes and costly enough to threaten the well-being of all America's military forces (and hence the country's national security), not just those involved in the actual counterinsurgency. The senior military remember that Vietnam cost not only 60,000 lives, but also a generation of investment in new weapons and other equipment.[30] Morale plummeted throughout the military, and relations between the military and the wider American society were soured for nearly a decade.

A logical extension of this reasoning is that forces designed specifically for counterinsurgencies should not be given high priority, since if there are not sizable forces suitable for counterinsurgencies it will be easier to avoid involvement in

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[30]This sentiment is clearly evident, for example, in Halloran, "Vietnam Consequences: Quiet From the Military."

that type of conflict.[31] An American president cannot commit what is not available. Similarly, this line of thinking counsels, plans for such contingencies should not pursued with too much vigor.[32]

There are two problems with such reasoning, however, and the senior military seem acutely aware of them. First, presidents may commit the United States to involvement in a conflict whether optimum forces exist or not. President Truman's decision to commit American ground troops to the defense of South Korea in 1950, for example, came as a surprise to the military, who expected to execute a previously approved contingency plan that called for withdrawal of all American troops from the Korean peninsula in the event of an invasion. The early reverses in the ensuing conflict resulted in large measure from the inadequate military readiness for such a mission.[33] So prudence requires a certain amount of flexibility in forces, especially if the

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[31]There is some evidence of such feelings. An article by Tom Donnelly in Army Times (1 July 1985, pp. 41-43), for example, was descriptively titled "Special Operations Still a Military Stepchild;" See also "A Warrior Elite For the Dirty Jobs," Time, 13 January 1986, p. 18.

[32]Indeed some journalists reported that the military was very slow in developing plans for certain contingencies in Central America. See George C. Wilson, "U.S. Urged to Meet Honduran Requests," Washington Post, 20 June 1983, p. A4; and Doyle McManus, "U.S. Draws Contingency Plans for Air Strikes in El Salvador," Washington Post, 13 July 1984, p. A27.

[33]Joseph C. Goulden, Korea: The Untold Story of the War (New York: Times Books, 1982), pp. 57-58. Senior military men took from that experience the necessity to have a force structure flexible enough to respond to such unanticipated decisions. See the comments of Lieutenant General Vernon Walters in Summers, On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context, p. 120.

overall national strategy -- as it currently appears to -- holds the possibility of involvement in operations throughout the spectrum of conflict. If commitment to counterinsurgency operations is in the realm of the possible, therefore, the military should be prepared for it.

The second problem posed by such reasoning is that American involvement in counterinsurgencies is almost universally regarded as more likely than in most other types of combat -- more likely, for example, than involvement in high intensity conflict on the plains of NATO's Central Region (though, of course, conflict in Europe would have potentially more significant consequences, and one reason it is unlikely is the amount of preparation for it).[34] Indeed, the United States is already involved in counterinsurgencies -- albeit not with U.S. combat troops. American trainers in El Salvador are assisting an ally combatting an insurgency, and depending on one's definitions, U.S. military elements also are providing assistance to a number of other countries fighting insurgents, among them: Chad, Columbia, Ecuador, Honduras, Morocco, Peru, the Philippines, Sudan, and Thailand.

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[34]Among the many sources that make this point, see Robert H. Kupperman and William J. Taylor, editors, Strategic Requirements for the Army to the Year 2000 (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1984), esp. 51-69, 125-142, and 171-186; Lieutenant General Fred K. Mahaffey (USA), "Structuring Forces to Need," Army, Vol. 34, No. 10 (October 1984), pp. 204-216; and Richard H. Shultz, Jr. and Alan N. Sabrosky, "Policy and Strategy for the 1980s: Preparing for Low Intensity Conflict," in Lessons From an Unconventional War, ed. by Richard A. Hunt and Richard H. Shultz, Jr. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), pp. 191-227.

The senior military thus find themselves in a dilemma. The lessons taken from Vietnam would indicate that, in general, involvement in a counterinsurgency should be avoided. But prudent preparation for a likely contingency (and a general inclination against limiting a president's options) lead the military to recognize that significant emphasis should be given to counterinsurgency forces, equipment, and doctrine. Military leaders are thereby in the difficult position of arguing for the creation of more forces suitable for such conflicts, while simultaneously realizing they may advise against the use of those forces unless very specific circumstances hold.[35]

Until recently the inclination against involvement in counterinsurgencies seemed to outweigh the need for a sufficient counterinsurgent capability. There was relatively little emphasis given to preparation for this form of conflict, either to assisting other governments helping themselves or to developing American capabilities for more direct involvement.[36]

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[35]These tensions are well described in Tom Donnelly, "Special Operations Still a Military Stepchild, Army Times, 1 July 1985, pp. 41-43.

[36]Discussions of the shortcomings of U.S. preparations for low intensity conflict may be found in Major Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr. (USA), The Army Concept and Vietnam: A Case Study in Organizational Failure (Harvard University: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1983), subsequently published as The Army and Vietnam (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); The TRADOC Joint Low Intensity Conflict Project (Fort Monroe, Virginia: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, final draft report, 1986);Paschall, "Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine: Who Needs It?"; Douglas S. Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era (New York: The Free Press, 1977), pp. 286-311; Tammy Arbuckle, "A Vietnam Lesson Unlearned? Same Hardware, Same Tactics, Same Conclusions in El Salvador?" Armed Forces Journal International,

As General Wallace Nutting noted in a 1984 letter to the Army Chief of Staff:

> As a nation, we do not understand low intensity conflict (LIC). We are poorly organized to cope with it and, as a consequence, our LIC operations fall short of what is required for a prudent national defense. Yet, if...forecasts are correct, it is precisely this form of conflict with which we shall be increasingly preoccupied in the years ahead.[37]

Stimulated by observations such as General Nutting's, there has been gradual recognition that involvement in small wars is not only likely, it is upon us. It would seem wise, therefore, to come to grips with what appears to be an emerging fact for the U.S. military, that American involvement in low-intensity conflict is unavoidable given the more assertive U.S. foreign policy of recent years and the developments in many Third World countries, particularly those in our own hemisphere. It would be timely to seek ways to assist allies in counterinsurgency operations, ways consistent with the constraints of the American political culture and system, as well as with the institutional

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Vol. 123, No. 6 (December 1985), pp. 46-58 (See letters in response to Arbuckle in the February 1986 Armed Forces Journal International, pp. 8-10); and Cohen, "Constraints on America's Conduct of Small Wars."

[37]General Wallace H. Nutting in a letter to General John A. Wickham, 15 November 1984. General Nutting's letter was the catalyst for a major joint study of low-intensity conflict conducted at the direction of the Army Chief of Staff. The results were published as the Joint Low-Intensity Conflict Project Final Report (Fort Monroe, Virginia: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1 August 1986).

agendas of the military services.[38] One conclusion may be that in some cases, contrary to prescriptions derived from the lessons of Vietnam, it would be better to use American soldiers in small numbers than "in strength" to assist a foreign government counter insurgents. Indeed, given the example of Congressional limits on the number of trainers in El Salvador, the Army in particular should be figuring out how best to assist others within what might be anticipated as similar limits in other situations--while always remembering that it is the host country's war to win or lose.[39]

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[38]As this dissertation was being written several steps in this direction were taken. The most significant were: a very high-level conference on low-intensity conflict conducted 14-15 January 1986 at Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.; a joint study of low-intensity conflict undertaken by the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command; announcement of Army and Navy plans to build up their special operations capabilities over the next five years; an announcement of a joint Air Force and Army examination of their ability to deal with low-intensity conflict; and the preparation of a National Security Decision Directive on Low-Intensity Conflict. See Daniel Greene, "Conferees Face Challenges of Low-Level Wars," *Army Times*, 27 January 1986, pp. 2, 26; Larry Carney, "Army Plans 5-Year Expansion Of Special Operations Forces," *Army Times*, 30 December 1986, p. 4; "Navy's SEAL Force to Grow to 2,700 by 1990," *Army Times*, 2 December 1985, p. 50; Leonard Famiglietti, "Army-Air Force Team to Study Low-Intensity Conflict," *Army Times*, 9 December 1986, pp. 59, 60; Norman Black, "Special Forces: Better Status, More Unity," *New York Times*, 23 April 1987, p. 21; and interviews with various Army, Air Force, and National Security Council Staff officials.

A brief but interesting discussion of how America might assist allies in countering insurgencies is Colonel Rod Paschall's "Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine: Who Needs It?" *Parameters*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn 1985), pp. 33-45.

[39]Particularly important books on the role of the United States in counterinsurgencies are Robert Komer's *Bureaucracy at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986); and Douglas Blaufarb's *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present* (New York: The Free Press, 1977).

Given that conclusion, the military should look beyond critiques of American involvement in Vietnam that focus exclusively on alternative conventional military strategies that might have been pursued. For all their value, such studies seldom address important unconventional elements of struggles such as Vietnam (although, of course, what eventually defeated South Vietnam was a massive invasion by North Vietnam forces) and several contemporary cases. As Professor John Gates wrote in a 1984 Parameters article,

> Any analysis that denies the important revolutionary dimension of the Vietnam conflict is misleading, leaving the American people, their leaders, and their professionals inadequately prepared to deal with similar problems in the future...Instead of forcing the military to come to grips with the problems of revolutionary warfare that now exist in nations such as Guatemala or El Salvador, [such an] analysis leads officers back into the conventional war model that provided so little preparation for solving the problems faced in Indochina by the French, the Americans, and their Vietnamese allies. Such a business-as-usual approach is much too complacent in a world plagued by the unconventional warfare associated with revolution and attempts to counter it.[40]

The conventional war model alluded to by Professor Gates--an important element of the lessons of Vietnam -- not only downplays the importance of the low-intensity portion of the spectrum of conflict, it also tends to foster an unrealistic approach to the use of force in contemporary international politics by encouraging consideration of war and peace as mutually exclusive conditions. Such thinking accentuates the

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[40]John M. Gates, "Vietnam: The Debate Goes On," Parameters, Vol 14, No. 1 (Spring 1984), pp. 24-25.

traditional military affinity for an "all or nothing" approach to the use of force. Such an approach can be very misleading, however. For while going all-out for victory makes considerable sense under certain circumstances, MacArthurian "no substitute for victory" logic has little relevance to many of the most troubling situations facing the United States today. The all or nothing approach that springs from the lessons of Vietnam offers little of use, for example, to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command, who is trying to assist a nascent democracy in El Salvador in its fight against insurgents, and must do so within "real world" domestic and international constraints. The war-peace dichotomy must seem terribly unrealistic also to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, contending with a similar situation in the Philippines where American military advisers are helping the Philippine military in their struggle with insurgents. The clear-cut distinction between peace and war that resides in the lessons of Vietnam thus is distinctly unrepresentative of many of the contemporary challenges that confront America's military leaders, and provides few intellectual guidelines for policy that much address situations short of conventional war.

The most serious charge leveled at the lessons of Vietnam is made by those who perceive them as promising national paralysis in the face of international provocation. This contention is also, however, the most difficult to contend with because of its generality. The argument is that insistence on domestic

consensus before employing U.S. forces is too demanding a requirement -- that if it were rigorously applied it would, in the words of former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, "virtually assure other powers that they can count on not facing American forces." Schlesinger does not concur with what he describes as the "emerging belief that the United States must only fight popular, winnable wars."[41] He clearly accepts Eliot Cohen's judgment that "American participation in small wars remains an inevitable concomitant of America's world role."[42] On this line of reasoning it is worth recalling Schlesinger's recent testimony before a Senate committee:

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[41]"Excerpts From Schlesinger's Senate Testimony," New York Times, 7 February 1985, p. A14. The 1984 "debate" between Secretary of State Shultz and Secretary of Defense Weinberger addressed similar points, with Weinberger sympathetic to the military's lessons of Vietnam while Shultz's position was more akin to that of Schlesinger. See Caspar Weinberger, "The Use of Force and the National Will," The Baltimore Sun, 3 December 1984; George J. Church, "Force and Personality," Time, 24 December 1984, p. 13; Hedrick Smith, "Shultz-Weinberger Discord Seen in Nearly All Foreign Policy Issues," New York Times, 11 December 1984, pp. A1, A12; "U.S. Must Be Ready to Use Its Power, Shultz Declares," New York Times, 10 December 1984, pp. A1, A10, A11; and George H. Shultz, Low-Intensity Warfare: The Challenge of Ambiguity (Department of State: Current Policy No. 783, January 1986).

For critiques of Weinberger's six tests for using military forces abroad, see John G. Kester, "Armed Forces For What?" Military Logistics Forum (September 1985), pp. 9-11; William Safire, "Only the 'Fun' Wars," New York Times, 3 December 1984; and Lieutenant Colonel David T. Twining, "Vietnam and the Six Criteria for the Use of Military Force, Parameters, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Winter 1985), pp. 10-18. Even Weinberger himself now acknowledges that his attempt to define criteria for the use of armed force was "simplistic." See Philip Gold, "The Shape of the Rearmed Pentagon," Insight, 9 March 1987.

[42]Cohen, "Constraints On America's Conduct of Small Wars," p. 181.

> The likeliest physical challenges to the United States come in the third world -- not in Europe or North America. If the more predatory states in the third world are given assurance that they can employ, directly or indirectly, physical force against American interests with impunity, they will feel far less restraint in acting against our interests. Americans historically have embraced crusades -- such as World War II -- as well as glorious little wars. The difficulty is that the most likely conflicts of the future fall between crusades and such brief encounters as Grenada and Mayaguez. Yet these in-between conflicts have weak public support. Even...with national unity and at the height of our power public enthusiasm for Korea and Vietnam evaporated in just a year or two. The problem is that virtually no opportunity exists for future crusades -- and those glorious wars are likely to occur infrequently. The role of the United States in the world is such that it must be prepared for, be prepared to threaten, and even be prepared to fight those intermediate conflicts--that are likely to fare poorly on television.[43]

As Schlesinger was quick to acknowledge, however, there is no ready solution to the perplexities he described.[44] Nor are there clear-cut solutions to the other ambiguities that reside in the lessons of Vietnam. The only certainty seems to be that searching reflection about what ought to be taken from America's experience in Vietnam should continue; for only with further

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[43]"Excerpts from Schlesinger's Senate Testimony," New York Times, 7 February 1985, p. A14. Schlesinger's testimony was also published as an article, "Maintaining Global Stability," The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Summer 1985), pp. 2-7.

[44]Schlesinger did suggest, however, that the administration should work harder to cultivate a national consensus on American foreign policy and the role of the armed forces in it. In an interview with the Washington Times, he argued that "Government itself must be more effective in making clear what our interests are...To arouse the American public, to create a consensus with regard to our foreign policy responsibilities will require sustained and unremitting effort -- not only an occasional speech by the President but an all-hands-on-board order to the entire Administration." (Quoted in Richard Halloran, To Arm A Nation, draft manuscript, 1986, p. 24.)

examination will thoughtful understanding replace visceral revulsion when we think about America's difficulties in Vietnam.

Conclusions

History in general, and the American experience in Vietnam in particular, have much to teach us, but both must be used with discretion and neither should be pushed too far.[45] The Vietnam analogy, for all its value as the most recent large-scale use of American force abroad, has limits. Most importantly, the applicability of the lessons drawn from Vietnam, just like the applicability of lessons taken from any other past event, always will depend on the circumstances of the particular situation at hand.

American involvement in Vietnam should nonetheless be studied in detail; there is much in that experience that may be relevant to the use of force in other situations. We should not conclude, as James Thomson did in 1968 (partially tongue in cheek), that Vietnam was so unique as to make its central lesson nothing more than "never again to take on the job of trying to defeat a nationalist anticolonial movement under indigenous communist control in former French Indochina."[46] On the

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[45]George Herring advanced a similar conclusion in "Vietnam, El Salvador, and Uses of History," p. 108. A systematic method for the use of history by decision-makers is described in Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers (New York: Free Press, 1986), esp. pp. 232-270.

[46]Quoted in No More Vietnams?, p. 258.

contrary, we should recognize the wisdom in George Herring's observation that "To regard Vietnam as an aberration, a unique experience from which nothing can be learned, would invite further frustration."[47] Dismissal of Vietnam, therefore, should not be the path taken. Searching reappraisal of America's involvement in Vietnam must be part of any effort to avoid a similar experience in the future. At the least, such study will provide valuable perspective.

Nonetheless, the Vietnam analogy should be used with care. It should not, first of all, be the only case considered. Nor should it be allowed to overshadow unduly other historical events that appear to offer insight and perspective. Vietnam should not be permitted to become such a dominant influence in the minds of decision-makers that it inhibits the discussion of specific events on their own merits. It would be more profitable to address the central issues of any particular case that arises than to debate endlessly whether the situation could evolve into "another Vietnam."[48] In their use of history, therefore, politicians and military planners alike would do well to recall historian David Fischer's judgment that "the utility of historical knowledge consists...in the enlargement of substantive contexts within which decisions are made,...in the refinement of

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[47]George C. Herring, America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975 (New York: John Wiley, 1979), p. 272.

[48]I have made this case with respect to policy-making toward El Salvador in my "El Salvador and the Vietnam Analogy," Armed Forces Journal International (February 1987), pp. 40-45.

a thought structure which is indispensible to purposeful decision making."[49]

Thus we should beware of literal application of lessons extracted from Vietnam, or any other past event, to present or future problems without due regard for the specific circumstances that surround those problems. Study of Vietnam -- and of other historical occurrences -- should endeavor to gain perspective and understanding, rather than hard and fast lessons that might be applied too easily without proper reflection and sufficiently rigorous analysis. "Each historical situation is unique," George Herring has warned, "and the use of analogy is at best misleading, at worst, dangerous."[50]

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[49]David H. Fischer, Historians' Fallacies (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 157.

[50]Herring, "Vietnam, El Salvador, and Uses of History," p. 110.

Appendix A

MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF [1]

Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy

	From	To
*Fleet Adm. William D. Leahy	20 Jul 42	21 Mar 49[b]

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff[c]

	From	To
*Gen. of the Army Omar N. Bradley, USA	16 Aug 49	15 Aug 53
*Adm. Arthur W. Radford, USN	15 Aug 53	1 Aug 57[d]
*Gen. Nathan F. Twining, USAF	15 Aug 57[e]	30 Sep 60[d]
Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer, USA	1 Oct 60	30 Sep 62
*Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, USA	1 Oct 62	1 Jul 64[f]
*Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, USA	3 Jul 64	2 Jul 70[g]
Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, USN	2 Jul 70	1 Jul 74[d]
*Gen. George S. Brown, USAF	1 Jul 74	20 Jun 78[d]
Gen. David C. Jones, USAF	21 Jun 78[h]	18 Jun 82[d]
Gen. John W. Vessey, Jr., USA	18 Jun 82[i]	30 Sep 85[d]
Adm. William J. Crowe, Jr., USN	1 Oct 85	

* Deceased.

[a] President Roosevelt established this position on 20 July 1942 to provide an officer to preside over JCS meetings and maintain liaison with the White House. The position lapsed in March 1949 when Admiral Leahy was detached.

[b] Date detached. Gen. of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, while president of Columbia University, at the request of President Truman, served as the principal military adviser to the President and the Secretary of Defense, and presiding officer of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, from February to August 1949.

[c] The position of chairman was created by the 1949 Amendments to the National Security Act of 1947 approved on 10 August 1949. The chairman is appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate for a two-year term with eligibility for a second two-year term only, except in time of war (Section 142, Title 10, U.S. Code). Where more than one beginning date for the chairman's term of office has been found, the effective date has been used.

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[1]Source: Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

[d] Date of retirement.

[e] Served as special assistant to Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson 1 July to 15 August 1957. He was formally sworn in as Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff at the White House on 15 August 1957.

[f] Retired 1 July 1959; recalled to active duty 1 July 1961; relieved from active duty 1 July 1964; reverted to retired status 2 July 1964.

[g] Reappointed for a two-year term in 1966, for a one-year term in 1968, and for an additional one-year term in 1969; retired 3 July 1970.

[h] His Presidential commission was dated 20 June 1978. General Jones became Acting Chairman on 21 February 1978 when General Brown entered the hospital; he was sworn in publicly as Chairman at a ceremony attended by President Jimmy Carter at the Pentagon on 30 June 1978. He retired 1 July 1982.

[i] Took oath of office privately on 18 June 1982; he was sworn in publicly at the White House on 21 June 1982.

Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff[a]

	From	To
Gen. Robert T. Herres	6 Feb 87	

[a] The position of vice chairman was created by the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, effective 1 October 1986. The vice chairman is appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate for a two-year term, with eligibility for two additional two-year terms, except in time of war when there is no limit on reappointment (Public Law 99-433, 1 October 1986, Title 2, Section 154).

Chief of Staff, U.S. Army[a]

	From	To
*Gen. of the Army George C. Marshall	9 Feb 42[b]	18 Nov 45
*Gen. of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower	19 Nov 45	7 Feb 48
*Gen. Omar N. Bradley	7 Feb 48	16 Aug 49
Gen. J. Lawton Collins	16 Aug 49	15 Aug 53
Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway	15 Aug 53	30 Jun 55[c]
*Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor	30 Jun 55	1 Jul 59[c]
Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer	1 Jul 59	30 Sep 60

*Gen. George H. Decker	1 Oct 60	30 Sep 62[c]
*Gen. Earle G. Wheeler	1 Oct 62	2 Jul 64
*Gen. Harold K. Johnson	3 Jul 64	2 Jul 68[c]
Gen. William C. Westmoreland	3 Jul 68	30 Jun 72[c]
Gen. Bruce Palmer, Jr. (acting)	1 Jul 72	11 Oct 72
*Gen. Creighton W. Abrams	12 Oct 72	4 Sep 74[d]
Gen. Fred C. Weyand[e]	3 Oct 74	1 Oct 76[c]
Gen. Bernard W. Rogers	1 Oct 76	21 Jun 79
Gen. Edward C. Meyer	22 Jun 79	22 Jun 83[c]
Gen. John A. Wickham, Jr.	23 Jun 83	

* Deceased.

[a] Since 1 January 1969 (under Public Law 90-22 approved 5 June 1967 which amended Section 3034(a) of Title 10, U.S. Code) the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, is appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate for a four-year term, and in time of war, is eligible for reappointment for a term of not more than four years.

[b] Date of first formal JCS meeting.

[c] Date of retirement.

[d] Date of death.

[e] Acting Chief of Staff, 4 September to 2 October 1974.

Chief of Naval Operations, U.S. Navy[a]

	From	To
*Adm. Harold R. Stark	9 Feb 42[b]	12 Mar 42
*Fleet Adm. Ernest J. King[c]	9 Feb 42[b]	15 Dec 45
*Fleet Adm. Chester W. Nimitz	15 Dec 45	15 Dec 47
*Adm. Louis E. Denfeld	15 Dec 47	2 Nov 49
*Adm. Forrest P. Sherman	2 Nov 49	22 Jul 51[d]
*Adm. William M. Fechteler	16 Aug 51	16 Aug 53
Adm. Robert B. Carney	17 Aug 53	17 Aug 55[e]
Adm. Arleigh A. Burke	17 Aug 55	1 Aug 61[e]
Adm. George W. Anderson, Jr.	1 Aug 61	1 Aug 63[e]
Adm. David L. McDonald	1 Aug 63	1 Aug 67[e]
Adm. Thomas H. Moorer	1 Aug 67	1 Jul 70
Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.	1 Jul 70	1 Jul 74[e]
Adm. James L. Holloway III	1 Jul 74	1 Jul 78[e]
Adm. Thomas B. Hayward	1 Jul 78	1 Jul 82[e]
Adm. James D. Watkins	1 Jul 82	30 Jun 86[e]
Adm. Carlisle A.H. Trost	1 Jul 86	

* Deceased.

[a] Since 1 January 1969 (under Public Law 9-22 approved 5 June 1967 which amended Section 5081(a) of Title 10, U.S. Code) the Chief of Naval Operations is appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate for a four-year term, and, in time of war, may be reappointed for a term of not more than four years.

[b] Date of first formal JCS meeting.

[c] At the initial JCS meetings both the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Stark, and the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, Admiral King, represented the Navy. By Executive Order 9096, 12 March 1942, the two positions were combined in one individual, Admiral King, who served as Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations. In accordance with Executive Order 9635, Admiral King's title became simply Chief of Naval Operations on 10 October 1945 and the title Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, ceased to exist.

[d] Date of death.

[e] Date of retirement.

Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force[a]

	From	To
*Gen. of the Army Henry H. Arnold[b]	9 Feb 42[c]	28 Feb 46
*Gen. Carl Spaatz[d]	1 Mar 46	30 Apr 48
*Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg	30 Apr 48	30 Jun 53[e]
*Gen. Nathan F. Twining	30 Jun 53	30 Jun 57
*Gen. Thomas D. White	1 Jul 57	30 Jun 61[e]
Gen. Curtis E. LeMay	30 Jun 61	31 Jan 65[e]
*Gen. John P. McConnell	1 Feb 65	1 Aug 69[e]
*Gen. John D. Ryan	1 Aug 69	31 Jul 73[e]
*Gen. George S. Brown	1 Aug 73	30 Jun 74
Gen. David C. Jones	1 Jul 74	20 Jun 78
Gen. Lew Allen, Jr.[f]	1 Jul 78	30 Jun 82[e]
Gen. Charles A. Gabriel	1 Jul 82	30 Jun 86[e]
Gen. Larry D. Welch	1 Jul 86	

* deceased.

[a] Position created by the National Security Act of 1947. Since 1 January 1969 (under Public Law 90-22 approved 5 June 1967 which amended Section 8034(A) of Title 10, U.S. Code) the Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, is appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate for a four-year term, and, in time of war, may be reappointed for a term of not more than four years.

[b] Served as member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

[c] Date of first formal JCS meeting.

[d] Commanding General, Army Air Forces, until sworn in as the first Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, on 26 September 1947.

[e] Date of retirement.

[f] Acting Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, from 21 to 30 June 1978.

Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps[a]

	From	To
Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr.	28 Jun 52	31 Dec 55[b]
*Gen. Randolph McC. Pate	1 Jan 56	31 Dec 59[b]
*Gen. David M. Shoup	1 Jan 60	31 Dec 63[b]
Gen. Wallace M. Greene, Jr.	1 Jan 64	31 Dec 67[b]
Gen. Leonard F. Chapman, Jr.	1 Jan 68	31 Dec 71[b]
*Gen. Robert E. Cushman, Jr.	1 Jan 72	30 Jun 75[b]
Gen. Louis H. Wilson	1 Jul 75	30 Jun 79[b]
Gen. Robert H. Barrow	1 Jul 79	30 Jun 83[b]
Gen. Paul X. Kelley	1 Jul 83	

* Deceased.

[a] By Public Law 416, 82d Congress, approved 28 June 1952, the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps was placed in co-equal status with the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when matters of direct concern to the Marine Corps were considered. In 1978, Section 141 of Title 10, U.S. Code, was amended by Public Law 485, 95th Congress, approved 20 October 1978, to provide full membership for the Commandant of the Marine Corps in the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Since 1 January 1969 (under Public Law 90-22 approved 5 June 1967 which amended Section 5201(a) of Title 10, U.S. Code) the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps is appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate for a four-year term, and, in time of war, may be reappointed for a term of not more than four years.

[b] Date of retirement.

Appendix B

COMMANDERS OF UNIFIED AND SPECIFIED COMMANDS ESTABLISHED UNDER THE UNIFIED COMMAND PLAN [1]

Commander in Chief, US Atlantic Command (USCINCLANT) (Commander in Chief, Atlantic (CINCLANT) until 28 October 1983; and Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANTFLT) until 4 October 1985)

William H. P. Blandy	ADM	USN	1 December 1947
William M. Fechteler	ADM	USN	1 February 1950
Lynde D. McCormick	ADM	USN	15 August 1951
Jerauld Wright	ADM	USN	12 April 1954
Robert L. Dennison	ADM	USN	29 February 1960
Harold P. Smith	ADM	USN	30 April 1963
Thomas H. Moorer	ADM	USN	30 April 1965
Ephraim P. Holmes	ADM	USN	17 June 1967
Charles K. Duncan	ADM	USN	30 September 1970
Ralph W. Cousins	ADM	USN	31 October 1972
Isaac C. Kidd	ADM	USN	30 May 1975
Harry D. Train II	ADM	USN	19 September 1978
Wesley L. McDonald	ADM	USN	1 October 1982
Lee Baggett, Jr.	ADM	USN	27 November 1985

Commander in Chief, US Central Command (USCINCCENT)

Robert C. Kingston *	LTG	USA	1 January 1983
George B. Crist, Jr.	GEN	USMC	27 November 1985

* Promoted to General 6 November 1984

Commander in Chief, Europe (CINCEUR) (largely an Army command, only nominally unified)

Lucius D. Clay	GEN	USA	15 March 1947
Thomas T. Handy	GEN	USA	23 August 1949

[1] Source: Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the command historians of the U.S. Military Airlift Command and the U.S. Special Operations Command.

Commander in Chief, US European Command (USCINCEUR) (a unified command)

Matthew B. Ridgway	GEN	USA	1 August 1952
Alfred M. Gruenther	GEN	USA	11 July 1953
Lauris Norstad	GEN	USAF	20 November 1956
Lyman L. Lemnitzer	GEN	USA	1 November 1962
Andrew J. Goodpaster	GEN	USA	5 May 1969
Alexander M. Haig, Jr.	GEN	USA	1 November 1974
Bernard W. Rogers	GEN	USA	1 July 1979
John R. Galvin	GEN	USA	25 June 1987

Commmander in Chief, Military Airlift Command (CINCMAC) (designated a specified command 1 February 1977; scheduled for disestablishment on 1 October 1987)

Paul K. Carlton	GEN	USAF	1 February 1977
William G. Moore, Jr.	GEN	USAF	1 April 1977
Robert E. Huyser	GEN	USAF	1 July 1979
James R. Allen	GEN	USAF	26 June 1981
Thomas M. Ryan, Jr.	GEN	USAF	30 June 1983
Duane H. Cassidy	GEN	USAF	20 September 1985

Commander in Chief, US Pacific Command (USCINCPAC) (Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) until 28 October 1983; also served as CINCPACFLT until 14 January 1958)

John H. Towers	ADM	USN	1 January 1947
Louis E. Denfeld	ADM	USN	28 February 1947
DeWitt C. Ramsey	ADM	USN	12 January 1948
Arthur W. Radford	ADM	USN	30 April 1949
Felix B. Stump	ADM	USN	10 July 1953
Harry D. Felt	ADM	USN	31 July 1958
Ulysses S. G. Sharp	ADM	USN	30 June 1964
John S. McCain, Jr.	ADM	USN	31 July 1968
Noel Gayler	ADM	USN	1 September 1972
Maurice F. Weisner	ADM	USN	30 August 1976
Robert L. J. Long	ADM	USN	31 October 1979
William J. Crowe, Jr.	ADM	USN	1 July 1983
Ronald J. Hays	ADM	USN	18 September 1985

Commander in Chief, US Readiness Command (USCINCRED) (Commander in Chief, US Strike Command (USCINCSTRIKE) until 30 December 1971. USCINCSTRIKE assumed additional responsibilities, under designation USCINCMEAFSA, 1 December 1963, coincident with disestablishment of US Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (NELM). The added responsibilities and the MEAFSA title terminated 31 December 1971. REDCOM will be disestablished in the Fall of 1987 on a date to be determined.)

Paul D. Adams	GEN	USA	9 October 1961
Theodore J. Conway	GEN	USA	1 November 1966
John L. Throckmorton	GEN	USA	1 August 1969
Bruce Palmer, Jr.	GEN	USA	1 February 1973
John J. Hennessey	GEN	USA	9 December 1974
Volney F. Warner	GEN	USA	1 August 1979
Donn A. Starry	GEN	USA	1 August 1981
Wallace H. Nutting	GEN	USA	22 June 1983
Fred K. Mahaffey	GEN	USA	28 June 1985
Harry A. Goodall **	LTG	USAF	30 September 1986
James J. Lindsay	GEN	USA	10 October 1986

** Acting Commander in Chief

Commander in Chief, US Southern Command (USCINCSO) (Commander in Chief, Caribbean (CINCARIB) until 6 June 1963)

Willis D. Crittenberger	LTG	USA	1 November 1947
Matthew B. Ridgway	LTG	USA	28 June 1948
William H. H. Morris, Jr.	LTG	USA	1 October 1949
Horace L. McBride	LTG	USA	1 April 1952
William K. Harrison, Jr.	LTG	USA	15 June 1954
Robert M. Montague	LTG	USA	5 January 1957
Truman H. Landon	MG	USAF	20 February 1958
Ridgely Gaither	LTG	USA	1 April 1958
Robert F. Sink	LTG	USA	12 July 1960
Andrew P. O'Meara	GEN	USA	1 February 1961
Robert W. Porter, Jr.	GEN	USA	22 February 1965
George R. Mather	GEN	USA	18 February 1969
George V. Underwood, Jr.	GEN	USA	20 September 1971
William B. Rosson	GEN	USA	17 January 1973
Dennis P. McAuliffe	LTG	USA	1 August 1975
Wallace H. Nutting	LTG	USA	1 October 1979
Paul F. Gorman	GEN	USA	24 May 1983
John R. Galvin	GEN	USA	1 March 1985
Frederick F. Woerner, Jr.	GEN	USA	5 June 1987

Commander in Chief, US Special Operations Command (CINCUSSOC)

James J. Lindsay ***	GEN	USA	16 April 1987

*** Acting CINC until confirmed by the Senate on 15 May 1987.

Commander in Chief, US Space Command (USCINCSPACE)

Robert T. Herres	GEN	USAF	23 September 1985
John L. Piotrowski	GEN	USAF	6 February 1987

Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command (CINCSAC)

George C. Kenney	GEN	USAF	14 December 1946
Curtis E. LeMay	GEN	USAF	19 October 1948
Thomas S. Power	GEN	USAF	1 July 1957
John D. Ryan	GEN	USAF	1 December 1964
Joseph J. Nazarro	GEN	USAF	1 February 1967
Bruce K. Holloway	GEN	USAF	1 August 1968
John C. Meyer	GEN	USAF	1 May 1972
Russell E. Dougherty	GEN	USAF	1 August 1974
Richard H. Ellis	GEN	USAF	1 August 1977
Bennie L. Davis	GEN	USAF	1 August 1981
Larry D. Welch	GEN	USAF	1 August 1985
John T. Chain	GEN	USAF	1 July 1986

Commander in Chief, US Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM)

Duane H. Cassidy ****	GEN	USAF	27 April 1987

**** Executive Agent pending confirmation by the Senate.

Disestablished Commands

Commander in Chief, Aerospace Defense Command (CINCAD)
(Commander in Chief, Continental Air Defense Command (CINCONAD) until 30 June 1975; Aerospace Defense Command established as a specified command 1 July 1975; CINCAD disestablished 19 December 1986)

Benjamin W. Chidlaw	GEN	USAF	1 September 1954
Earle E. Partridge	GEN	USAF	1 July 1955
Laurence S. Kuter	GEN	USAF	1 August 1959
John K. Gerhart	GEN	USAF	1 August 1960
Dean C. Strother	GEN	USAF	1 April 1965
Raymond J. Reeves	GEN	USAF	1 August 1966
Seth J. McKee	GEN	USAF	1 August 1969

Lucius D. Clay, Jr.	GEN	USAF	1 October 1973
Daniel James, Jr.	GEN	USAF	1 September 1975
James E. Hill	GEN	USAF	6 December 1977
James V. Hartinger*	LTG	USAF	1 January 1980
Robert T. Herres	GEN	USAF	1 August 1984

*Promoted to General 1 October 1981

<u>Commander in Chief, Alaska (CINCAL)</u> (ALCOM disestablished 1 July 1975)

Howard A. Craig	MG	USAF	1 January 1947
Nathan F. Twining	LTG	USAF	17 October 1947
William E. Kepner	LTG	USAF	1 July 1950
Joseph A. Atkinson	LTG	USAF	1 March 1953
Frank A. Armstrong, Jr.	LTG	USAF	1 October 1956
George W. Mundy	LTG	USAF	1 August 1961
Raymond J. Reeves	LTG	USAF	1 August 1963
Glenn R. Birchard	LTG	USAF	G USAF 29 June 1967
Robert G. Ruegg	LTG	USAF	1 August 1969
James C. Sherrill	LTG	USAF	1 August 1972
James E. Hill	LTG	USAF	1 September 1974

<u>Commander in Chief, Far East (CINCFE)</u> (Far East Command disestablished 1 July 1957)

Douglas MacArthur	GEN/ARMY	USA	1 January 1947
Matthrew B. Ridgway	GEN	USA	11 April 1951
Mark W. Clark	GEN	USA	9 May 1952
John E. Hull	GEN	USA	5 October 1953
Maxwell D. Taylor	GEN	USA	1 April 1955
Lyman L. Lemnitzer	GEN	USA	5 June 1955

<u>Commander in Chief, US Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (CINCNELM)</u> (US Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean disestablished 1 December 1963)

Richard L. Conolly	ADM	USN	1 November 1947
Robert B. Carney	ADM	USN	1 November 1950
Jerauld Wright	ADM	USN	14 June 1952
John H. Cassady	ADM	USN	19 March 1954
Walter F. Boone	ADM	USN	1 May 1956
James L. Holloway, Jr.	ADM	USN	21 February 1958
Robert L. Dennison	ADM	USN	1 April 1959
Harold P. Smith	ADM	USN	18 February 1960
David L. McDonald	ADM	USN	9 April 1963
Charles D. Griffin	ADM	USN	26 June 1963

Commander in Chief, Northeast Command (CINCNE) (Northeast Command disestablished 1 September 1956)

Lyman P. Whitten	MG	USAF	1 October 1950
Charles T. Myers	LTG	USAF	20 March 1952
Glenn O. Barcus	LTG	USAF	26 July 1954