

Inside the Pentagon by Tecumseh

U.S. must plan for irregular war

The final report of the Joint Low-Intensity Conflict Project has some sharp criticisms of the current, losing policies.

The Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) of the U.S. Army has completed a year-long study of the current status of U.S. capability to respond to the global pattern of low-intensity conflict—what is called in military terms, irregular war. It concludes that a comprehensive civil-military policy must be designed which will be able to “integrate all the national resources at our disposal, military and nonmilitary, lethal and non-lethal” to meet this growing threat.

The report specifically points to the need to overhaul current U.S. economic development policies and (International Monetary Fund-dictated) restrictions on aid to debtor nations if a successful war-fighting strategy is to be developed, and warns that “the day of reckoning for American interests is at hand in the Philippines, in Central America, and in the Middle East; soon it may come in Southwest Asia.” A long-overdue policy fight on these matters is now under way.

The study was conducted in order to identify the elements of current U.S. policy which must be changed if the nation is going to be able to defend itself and its allies in a conflict which has been ongoing since the end of World War II, and is escalating dramatically today. Not surprisingly, it concludes that the government bureaucracy and the postwar policy establishment have ignored this reality, and persist in pursuing policies, particularly economic policies, which act

to the detriment of our allies, and ultimately threaten the U.S. with isolation and defeat.

The bureaucracies and institutions which have created this condition must be shaken up by a broad, public discussion of the crisis we face, and the authors consider this report to be the first step in that direction.

The unclassified portions of the report offer a series of broad recommendations which should guide U.S. policy in matters of irregular warfare. Principal among these are the recommendation that there be a review of U.S. economic assistance programs: “Current legislation greatly restricts our ability to effectively assist developing nations. Restrictions that require review include providing aid to nations which are in arrears in debts owed to the United States; assistance to indigenous police and internal security forces; and military authority to conduct civic action and humanitarian assistance programs.”

All of these problem areas result from a variety of legislation, passed by Congress during the “Watergate era,” which was designed to prevent the U.S. military from developing counter-insurgency and counter-terror forces among allied nations, and which still severely restricts the scope of U.S. efforts to crush narco-terrorism in Central America.

The military leaders responsible for implementing U.S. policy in this area have been the most vociferous in

pointing out the need for an effective nation-building strategy as the cornerstone of long-term success. (See *EIR* vol. 13 No. 4, Jan. 24, 1986, p. 60 for a report on the conference at which these issues were publicly debated.) To do this successfully, the report argues, there must be a re-thinking of logistical and programmatic support for our allies. “Failure to provide the requisite support increases the probability that combat forces will be needed to protect our threatened interests. . . . Our RDA [research, development, and acquisition] and sustainment efforts focus on supporting large combat formations on the battlefields of conventional and nuclear war. This is not wrong, but it is insufficient. A similar effort is required for low-intensity conflict.

“In many cases, our whole sustainment philosophy of support needs to be reversed. Our logisticians, engineers, and medical personnel, for example, often become the nose, not the tail, of any direct United States involvement. Great ingenuity and nontraditional thinking are required to develop the doctrine and capability to ‘attack’ with our traditional sustaining organizations.”

The true depth of the policy crisis in this area is seen when one examines the charter of the project which produced the report. The assumptions constraining the study limit it to an examination of the data accumulated by the U.S. Southern Command, and also assert that economic turmoil will continue to plague the Third World, the U.S. will be involved in no major wars, and there will be no major wars in Europe—despite which, the authors find themselves forced to criticize the cornerstones of postwar global strategy.

Next week, we will look at the TRADOC report’s critique of the “Guam Doctrine” of Henry Kissinger.