

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE USE
OF ELITE MILITARY FORCES TO COUNTER TERRORISM:
THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN EXPERIENCE,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THEIR RESPECTIVE
EXPERIENCES IN THE EVOLUTION
OF LOW-INTENSITY OPERATIONS

BY

JOSEPH PAUL DE BOUCHERVILLE TAILLON

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ABSTRACT

J. Paul de B. Taillon

"International Co-operation in the Employment of Elite Military Forces to Counter-Terrorism: The British and American Experience With Special Reference to Their Respective Experiences in the Evolution of Low-Intensity Operations."

This thesis examines the employment of elite military forces in low-intensity and counter-terrorist operations, and in particular, placing the principal emphasis on the aspect of international co-operation in the latter. The experiences of Great Britain and the United States in such operations are the main elements of the discussion, reflecting their heavy involvement in such operations. However, to analyze the experiences of those two countries out of context would be difficult and would distort the perceptions of the problems and desiderata as they evolved historically. Therefore, a survey of contemporary international terrorism, and the reaction to it, is also incorporated within the body of this paper.

The British and American sections of the thesis begin by addressing their respective military experiences in the wider realm of low-intensity operations before dealing specifically with modern counter-terrorism. Equally necessary, for a balanced perspective, is the inclusion of the Israeli and West German experience in counter-terrorism; this is briefly addressed in two short case studies on Entebbe and Mogadishu. The main Anglo-American focus of the study gives primary

importance to the development and doctrine for the employment of special forces, as well as an analysis of more recent low-intensity and counter-terrorism operations, such as the 1980 Iranian embassy siege in London and the failure that same year of the American hostage rescue attempt in Tehran. At this point this thesis attempts to identify and highlight those key aspects of co-operation at an international level which have, at least in part, been the sine qua non of successful counter-terrorist operations in the past and seem to be destined to remain so in the future.

While it will be shown that international co-operation is essential in the areas of intelligence, exchanges and attachments between counter-terrorist forces, 'forward-basing' in relevant countries, as well as the acquisition of secure internal and external communications, it will also be argued, nonetheless, that the historical experience and state interest of different countries makes such co-operation more difficult than might appear at first sight. All of these, however, are impossible without the political will on the part of potential co-operating governments to undertake such initiatives. Particularly when one considers the very delicate nature of elite counter-terrorist force employment and the potential for embarrassment which is inherent in their activities and, therefore, cannot always be taken for granted.

The findings of this study suggest that such co-operation can indeed provide significant advantages when low-intensity operations call for a response including 'the final option' -- the employment of elite counter-terrorist forces. Also clear from this analysis is that the greatest progress in

such international co-operation is likely to come from joint activities by countries having a similarly heightened sense of the threat which also implies that they share a common 'sociology' in their view of these historical developments.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis proposes to demonstrate that terrorism in its current form has resulted in government and military reactions which, when successful, are often so because of the high degree of co-operation with other countries. In addition it appears from this research that elite forces, organized, armed, trained and structured for the counter-terrorist role can be, in such circumstances as the hostage-takings and aircraft hijackings included here, the most effective arm of such governments in dealing with terrorism. In this regard an overview of the development of terrorism is included, particularly its late twentieth-century expression in aerial-hijacking and hostage-taking. Accompanying this is a definitional section as well as a look at governmental reactions to the phenomenon.

A second chapter addresses the spread of terrorism onto the international scene and the ways governments have reacted to this type of warfare. That is to say warfare by which the weak wage a ruthless war against the strong. In order to underscore the international aspects of this response to terrorism two short case studies are included. Also discussed in detail are the experiences of Great Britain and the United States in low-intensity conflict up to their most recent and notable counter-terrorist operations.

Terrorism is not a specific phenomenon: it is a part of a continuum embracing low-intensity conflict, subversion and guerrilla warfare tactics to acts of spectacular violence

designed to make a political rather than a military point. Similarly, counter-terrorist operations are also a part of a continuum and are employed appropriately and concomitantly as required by the authorities to meet each of these eventualities. Furthermore, the employment of elite military forces is a political decision and depends upon, for the most part, the appropriateness of their use within the national and international context.

Based on these extended studies of British and American involvement in low-intensity conflict -- particularly the terrorist dimension -- the following conclusions are drawn: the importance of intelligence gathering and dissemination, the creation and organization and training of counter-terrorist forces, the requirement for forward-basing of these forces during international incidents, and the nature of the pre-crisis co-operation between the countries concerned are stark necessities if a counter-terrorist action is to be successful on the contemporary scene. All the issues identified above, including the technical and operational aspects of the problem, fit within an all encompassing factor of inter-governmental co-operation in the struggle against terrorist activity. The problem of maintaining the national will to co-operate in the face of all political costs lies behind the failure to advance in what might be considered full security co-operation.

Elite forces may then epitomize the national resolve to combat terrorism. This does not mean, however, that governments will consider the terrorist threat so serious that they would risk open co-operation with regimes with which they feel they have little in common. It is not even

certain that given the risks incurred by states in attempting to combat terrorism, that they will co-operate with their allies. However, in the end, it is the national will of governments to assist their friends and allies that has occasioned a number of successful counter-terrorist operations executed by elite military forces.

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CHAPTER I

AN OVERVIEW OF TERRORISM

Section I

The Use of Terrorism for Political Objectives

Man has always had to frighten adversaries, whether they were animals or other human beings. To survive, he tried to instill the fear of pain or death in his enemies. Extreme fear, or terror, has probably always been a feature of human existence. Throughout recorded history, terror has been used, first by individuals, then by groups and even, in some cases by entire societies to impose individual or collective wills on powerless, helpless or irresolute groups.

In a sense, the development of terrorism paralleled social change. Developments in social and political cohesion engendered the seeming requirement to impose fear not just on one's fellows, but also on other groups. Terrorism has thus evolved as mankind has progressed.

Although contemporary observers tend to see the post-1967 period as an "age of terrorism," close scrutiny reveals that this is a parochial historical view of the phenomenon for historical study is filled with examples of terrorist acts. As society has changed, terror has been used in different ways and at different levels. The development of nationalism, the modern state system, and particularly the vulnerable economic and social structures common to the late 20th century, have permitted the organized imposition of

terror in ways which differ radically from those available to early man in his relations with his neighbours and his predatory animal opponents.

The nature and complexity of this issue is reflected in the many definitions for terror and terrorism, moreover it is difficult to define in a nominalist way. Therefore, a totally acceptable, all-encompassing definition evades us still. It is always intended, often well-planned, and coldly executed. It has been said that, "One has to look at modern terrorism, contemporary terrorism, as a new type, new mode, new form of warfare."¹ Despite this apparent new look, it is really "one of the oldest techniques of psychological warfare."² One expert, Paul Wilkinson, suggests:

Terror, to state a truism, is a subjective experience: we all have different 'thresholds' of extreme fear and tend to be more easily terrified by certain experiences, images and threats than by others. It is the interplay of these subjective factors and individual irrational, and often unconscious, responses that makes the state of terror, extreme fear or dread a peculiarly difficult concept for empirical social scientists to handle. It has been the tendency recently in the social sciences to shy away from the study of phenomena that are extremely difficult to define and almost impossible to measure. Furthermore the concepts of terror and terrorism have obviously³ very strong evaluative and emotive connotations.

Violence today encompasses a broad panorama of real and potential threats emanating from many areas of the globe and linked to a variety of causes.

¹Global Television - Interview of Yonah Alexander, "Special Report: International Terrorism: Past, Present, Future," 15 March, 1981. Transcript.

²Paul Wilkinson, Terrorism And The Liberal State, (First Edition), p. 49.

³Ibid, pp. 47-48.

This paper is concerned with that aspect of terror which is politically motivated. Such systematic terrorism, orchestrated by cells, groups or states, employs death and destruction or the threat of them to achieve political aims. In contemporary terms, it is considered a mode of psychological or low-intensity warfare.

The simplicity and low cost of terrorism is both attractive and frightening. As Paul Wilkinson puts it:

A primary target for terrorisation is selected; the objective, or message to be conveyed, is determined; and credibility is established by convincing the target that the threat can actually be carried out. The victim or victims of the actual act of terrorist violence may or may not be the primary target, and the effects of relatively small amounts of violence will tend to be quite disproportionate in terms of the number of people terrorised: in the words of an ancient Chinese proverb, 'Kill one, frighten ten thousand.'⁴

In accomplishing their mission, the terrorists hope that the national and international media will exaggerate the terrorist threat or act and multiply the effect of a solitary outrage, while at the same time publicizing the terrorist cause. Terrorists prefer to have many people witness their activities on behalf of the cause rather than have many people dead or suffering due to it.⁵

Role of the Media

To comprehend fully the nature of modern terrorism, one must be cognizant of the role of the mass media (i.e., television,

⁴Ibid, p. 49. This is actually a saying of Sun Tzu.

⁵Ibid.

radio, movies, newspapers and magazines). As underlined by Hilde L. Mosse in her paper "The Media and Terrorism,":

Violence has entered their homes, glorified and in profusion, via the mass media. This has contributed mightily to the implicit acceptance of violence as a means of getting things done.⁶

Television is probably the single most powerful medium. It makes communication between people almost instantaneous, and allows individuals, from diverse nationalities to partake of the world's cultural and intellectual life. Television has thus been said to be "potentially the single most important antiviolence device."⁷ Consciousness of violence through the media, particularly television, has been pervasive in the social development of young people growing up during the brutal and turbulent decades of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. The Middle-East Wars, Vietnam, Northern Ireland, insurrection, invasions, revolution and street crime became a part of the daily diet for these generations. For this audience:

Violence is very effective in fact and in fiction. It attracts attention and therefore viewers faster and more predictably than any other theme. Fast, gory, brutal action is much easier to write about and to portray than the complicated subtleties of genuine and humane human relationships. To kill someone settles a conflict quickly. It takes time, careful reasoning, and emotional restraint to solve it nonviolently.

By definition terrorism uses violence, either expressed or implied. However, in doing so, it finds an unwitting ally in the press which, while carrying out its task of reporting the news, publicizes the deeds of terrorists and propagates their

⁶Hilde L. Mosse, "The Media and Terrorism," in Marius H. Livingston, (ed) et al., International Terrorism In The Contemporary World, p. 282.

⁷Ibid., p. 283.

⁸Ibid., p. 284.

cause. Because terrorist activities make news in an age of mass communication, the agents of the media serve the needs of the terrorists while they answer the demands of the citizens to be informed. At the same time it also gives the terrorists the upper hand in employing fear as 'the' psychological warfare weapon. However, the media could deny, or at least lessen, the impact of terrorist violence by how they report the incident and in doing so decrease the prospects and impact of this type of warfare.

The Future

It is probably safe to assume that this form of conflict will persist through to the next century particularly as societies become more vulnerable to this type of violence. Yonah Alexander has expressed the following problem:

What is particularly disturbing is the fact that the advances of science and technology are slowly turning the entire modern society into a potential victim of terrorism, with no immunity for the noncombatant segment of the world population or for those nations and peoples who have no direct connection to particular conflicts or to specific grievances that motivate acts of violence. Clearly, the globalization of the brutalization of modern violence makes it abundantly clear that we have entered a new Age of Terrorism with all its frightening ramifications.⁹

In general terms, terrorism can thrive wherever there exist grievances stemming from apparent injustice. This can include the complete lack of, or simply inadequate, participation in the political process, poverty, prejudice, or other forms of oppression. Where these grievances are not addressed, popular dissatisfaction will almost certainly spawn disorder and, eventually even terrorism. This 'centre

⁹Neil C. Livingstone, The War Against Terrorism, p. xi.

of gravity,' in Clausewitzian terms, for terrorism, would be more easily addressed if such grievances were resolved rather than simply dealt with through heavy-handed oppression, which can itself engender terrorist activities. This is, of course, extremely difficult because of differing views on the grievances and their legitimacy, entrenched interests, and issues outside of, but related to, the problems which result in a particular terrorist manifestation.

Societies with minimal political activities and the most injustice are often the most free from contemporary terrorism; perhaps this is because repression can be highly effective. Although in democratic nations, citizens may voice ideas across the spectrum and bring grievances to the surface, we must also be aware that we, as humans, are not perfect and in turn neither are our institutions. Therefore, the problems of a whole society may be reduced but never totally erased.¹⁰ In that light, it is well to accept that:

However democratic a society, however near to perfection the social institutions, there will always be disaffected and alienated people claiming that the present state of affairs is intolerable and there will be aggressive people more interested in violence than in liberty and justice.¹¹

Typology of Terrorism

Wilkinson has divided political terrorism into three types: revolutionary, sub-revolutionary, and repressive. He defines revolutionary terrorism as the employment of systematic tactics of terrorist violence with the aim of bringing about

¹⁰Walter Laqueur, Terrorism, p. 265.

¹¹Ibid., p. 266.

political revolution. He characterizes revolutionary terrorism as having several distinct traits: that it is always a group phenomenon no matter how small that group may be; that the revolution and the employment of terror in its promotion are incorporated within some sort of ideology; that the organization has leaders who motivate the members to pursue a revolutionary ideology; and that it develops "alternative institutional structures."¹²

Further, a more accurate assessment of politically motivated terrorism should incorporate the following features: that it is integral to a revolutionary strategy; that it employs socially and politically unacceptable violence in pursuit of its aims; that there is a pattern of symbolic or representative selection of targets; and that lastly the orchestrators of these activities aspire to achieve a psychological effect, thereby forcing an adjustment in political behaviour on the target audience.¹³

Wilkinson has further classified his definition of revolutionary terrorism into the following seven subtypes:

- (i) Organisations of pure terror (in which terrorism is the exclusive weapon),
- (ii) revolutionary and national/liberationist parties and movements in which terror is employed as an auxiliary weapon,
- (iii) guerilla terrorism - rural and urban,
- (iv) insurrectionary terrorism - normally short-term terror in the course of a revolutionary rising,

¹²Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 56.

¹³M.C. Hutchinson, "The Concept of Revolutionary Terrorism," Journal of Conflict Resolution, 1973, 6(3), p. 385.

(v) the revolutionary Reign of Terror - often directed at classes and racial and religious minorities,

(vi) propaganda of the deed, when this form of terror is motivated by long-term revolutionary objectives and

(vii) international terrorism (that is terrorism committed outside the borders of one or all of the parties to the political conflict), where it is motivated by revolutionary objectives.¹⁴

Wilkinson defines his second type, sub-revolutionary terrorism, as violence employed "for political motives other than revolution or governmental repression."¹⁵ He differentiates revolutionary from sub-revolutionary terrorism by suggesting that the former demands total change, while the latter aspires to achieve more limited or selected aims, as for example, making the government change its stated policy.

The third type, repressive terrorism, he defines as "the systematic use of terroristic acts of violence for the purposes of suppressing, putting down, quelling, or restraining certain groups, individuals or forms of behaviour deemed to be undesirable by the oppressor."¹⁶ This form of terrorism requires the services of an effective secret police force and an efficient intelligence service, both of which may be perceived by outsiders and themselves as elite. These

¹⁴Paul Wilkinson, Political Terrorism, p. 38. (It should also be underlined that acts orchestrated by two terrorist parties against each other would also be considered as terrorism.)

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 40.

organizations are directed against any opposition, as was the Shah of Iran's infamous SAVAK.¹⁷

Wilkinson finally defines, for himself, that terrorism is:

...the systematic use of murder and destruction, and the threat of murder and destruction in order to terrorise individuals, groups, communities or governments into conceding to the terrorists' political demands.¹⁸

Terrorism is separated from other types of violence by the political context of the act and its shock value.¹⁹ It is this psychological aspect which is often most disconcerting, rather than the act. While there are other typologies developed by other commentators on terrorism and despite the ambiguities and inadequacies noted above, the Wilkinson framework is used in this paper because of its clear definitions.

There are nonetheless some shortcomings in these definitions. Assuming that a series of individual acts can only be considered to be terrorist tactics if they are systematic, and acknowledging "that terrorism may be used by both insurgents and incumbent regimes,"²⁰ Grant Wardlaw defines political terrorism as:

...the use, or threat of use, of violence by an individual or a group, whether acting for or in opposition to established authority, when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety and/or fear-inducing effects in a target group larger than the immediate victims with the purpose of coercing

¹⁷Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, The Dictionary Of Espionage, p. 195.

¹⁸Wilkinson, Political Terrorism, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁹Grant Wardlaw, Political Terrorism: Theory, tactics, and counter-measures, p. 16.

²⁰Ibid.

that group into acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators.²¹

In conclusion, terrorism is seldom mindless or irrational. To those who employ this tactic, it remains a logical means to an end. To the uninformed, terrorist acts may seem random, harming persons and interests that may seem of little importance to the cause. However, the aim of instilling fear for coercive purposes is achieved. The following section provides a brief history of political violence in order to trace the development of terrorism today.

²¹Ibid.

Section II

An Historical Perspective on Terrorism

To fully appreciate the implications of terrorism today it is appropriate, at this juncture, to review and assess terrorism within the context of history. Wardlaw argues:

Part of the solution to the question of whether or not contemporary terrorism poses a unique threat to social order lies in an appraisal of its degree of continuity with previous manifestations of political terrorism.²²

It is not possible in this study to produce a complete history of terrorism. However, in order to place contemporary terrorist activities in a proper perspective, it is germane to identify some of the major historical benchmarks of terrorism.

Walter Laqueur has written that the term terrorism was defined in the 1798 supplement of the Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française as a "système, régime de la terreur."²³ From that moment on this word has been, and continues to be, employed to describe a spectrum of violent activities, many of which are not encompassed within the dictionary definition. Although the word terrorism is, in historical terms, relatively new, Laqueur argues that this form of political violence can be seen much earlier in history in the

²²Ibid., p. 18.

²³Laqueur, op. cit., p. 16. It is possibly no accident that the book includes the first definition of ideology.

activities of a movement known as the Sicarii, operating at the time of the Zealot movement in Palestine in the period 66-73 A.D.²⁴

Probably the most notable 'terrorist group' of early times was the Assassins who surfaced in Persia in the eleventh century, only to be smashed by the Mongols two centuries later. Contemporary political analysts have compared recent terrorist groups to the Assassins. The group's first leader, Hassan Sibai, understood:

...early on that his group was too small to confront the enemy in open battle but that a planned, systematic, long-term campaign of terror carried out by a small, disciplined²⁵ force could be a most effective political weapon.

An historical study would reveal the existence of other isolated organizations which employed terrorism. However, observers believe that the usefulness of the systematic deployment of political violence was not fully appreciated until the French Revolution²⁶ and the rise of nationalism in Europe. Laqueur writes of this phenomenon:

Systematic terrorism begins in the second half of the nineteenth century and there were several quite distinct categories of it from the very beginning. The Russian revolutionaries.... Radical nationalist groups such as the Irish, Macedonians, Serbs or Armenians used terrorist methods in their struggle for autonomy or national independence. Lastly, there was the anarchist 'propaganda by the deed', mainly during the 1890s in France, Italy, Spain and the United States.²⁷

²⁴Ibid., p. 18. See also S.G.F. Brandon, "The Zealots: the ancient Jewish Resistance against Rome," in Michael Elliot-Bateman (ed), The Fourth Dimension of Warfare, Volume 1: Intelligence, Subversion, Resistance.

²⁵Ibid., p. 19.

²⁶Wardlaw, op. cit., p. 18.

²⁷Laqueur, op. cit., p. 22.

His view suggests that terrorism, in all its manifestations, has a common and quite recent origin associated with the twin movements of democracy and nationalism. Adherents to both increasingly found political or national subordination unacceptable. They insisted that these conditions be improved and were not reluctant to employ violence if there seemed to be little prospect that their demands would be met.²⁸

Although it was active only from 1878 to 1881, the Russian Narodnaya Volya was one of the most important of the formative terrorist groups. This organization was responsible for the evolution of a sophisticated terrorist campaign against the Czarist authorities. According to one of Narodnaya Volya's foremost thinkers:

Terrorism ... was an altogether new fighting method, far more 'cost effective' than an old-fashioned revolutionary mass struggle. Despite insignificant forces, it would still be possible to concentrate every effort upon the overthrow of tyranny. Since there was no limit to human inventiveness, it was virtually impossible for the tyrants to provide safeguards against attacks.²⁹

Already, one can see the emergence of organized terrorists employing violence as a psychological weapon. However, for many, terrorism was simply a better ethical choice than initiatives which aimed at a mass insurrectional movement. Gerasim Romanenko, a Russian proponent of the terrorist approach perceived terrorism as a moral alternative. He argued that:

...terrorism was not only effective, it was humanitarian. It cost infinitely fewer victims than a mass struggle; in a popular revolution the best were killed while the real villains looked on

²⁸Ibid., pp. 22-23.

²⁹Ibid., p. 50.

from the sidelines. The blows of terrorism were directed against the main culprits; a few innocent people might suffer, but this was inevitable in warfare.³⁰

The terrorism orchestrated by the Narodnaya Volya was markedly different from the activities of their contemporaries, the Anarchists. "Anarchist terror was characteristically an individual activity whereas Russian terrorism was a directed campaign."³¹ In short, the Narodnaya Volya sponsored discriminate acts of terrorism.

Russian terrorism fell with the early demise of the Narodnaya Volya. It was another twenty years before major violence began again, with the assassination in 1902 of the Minister of the Interior, Dmitrii Sergevich Sipyagin by the political offspring of the Narodnaya Volya - the Social Revolutionary Party. Laqueur states that terrorism, in Russian revolutionary thinking "was not intended to replace the mass struggle; on the contrary it would strengthen and supplement the revolutionisation of the masses."³² It is from this idea of the role of terrorism as an adjunct or a stage of the revolutionary process where contemporary analysts have noted strong comparisons with the modern practitioners of terrorism. It should be underlined, however, that once terrorist acts become a part of a revolutionary process all discrimination is lost.

Russian terrorism in the early 1900s was more favourably received by the masses than had been the activities of the

³⁰Ibid., p. 51.

³¹Wardlaw, op. cit., p. 19.

³²Laqueur, op. cit., p. 55.

Narodnaya Volya, which had only succeeded in acquiring supporters from the middle and upper-class intelligentsia. Revolutionary parties continued to be at odds regarding the various ethical, operational and utilitarian aspects of terrorism for some time.³³

Several noteworthy political trends appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Russia. The two most prominent, the related theories of anarchism and nihilism were elaborated perhaps most completely in the writings of Mikhail Bakunin and Sergei Nechaev. With the publication of the former's Revolutionary Catechism in 1871, the characteristics of an anarchist revolution and an anarchist revolutionary were defined. This document begins with a list of rules for organization and defines the revolutionary as a nameless soldier absorbed by a single all-consuming aim - that of revolution. He is void of any human feelings, hard on himself and others, and revolution becomes his only "pleasure, gratification and reward."³⁴ To achieve his aim, this true revolutionary was to penetrate all aspects of society, even the bureaucracy, secret police and the Church. In the end the Catechism argued for total revolution; all "institutions, social structures, civilisation and morality were to be destroyed, root and branch."³⁵ In short it called for the complete annihilation of the existing order.

³³Wardlaw, op. cit., p. 19.

³⁴Laqueur, op. cit., p. 43.

³⁵Ibid., p. 44.

Bakunin is probably best known for the concept of 'propaganda of the deed' which insists that revolutionaries must plan and execute violent acts as "individual revolutionary statements." These would be essentially practical demonstrations, which once executed could not be ignored and would ideally stir the minds of the masses.³⁶

Anarchist attacks, particularly in the last decades of the nineteenth century, received extraordinary notoriety, thereby allowing their perpetrators to proclaim the positive virtues of violence. A perception of an international anarchist conspiracy was generated and while this movement was, initially, non-existent internationally, anarchist methods and thinking frequently influenced future foreign terrorists.³⁷ The acts of these pre-1914 anarchists and terrorists and the resulting publicity foreshadow today's controversy regarding the ends and means of terrorism, particularly in discussions of the differences between politically-motivated violence and ordinary criminal activities. In fact, examples exist throughout recent history where terrorism has become synonymous, at least in the general public's mind, with criminal acts.³⁸

The modern world is dominated by trends and influences which had their birth in the massive revolutionary changes of the period from 1914 to 1945. In this period, the political structure of the world was completely changed. The

³⁶Wardlaw, op. cit., p. 21.

³⁷Ibid., p. 22.

³⁸Ibid.

continental great powers saw their power positions decline while two peripheral powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, emerged as super-powers.

The destruction of the strength of, and the confidence in, the great imperial powers created a political vacuum in the Third World, and spawned frequent and sometimes ferocious conflict amongst those vying to succeed the imperial powers. Economic dislocation and rapid change accompanying these political revolutions brought about a new political order which arose during the initial four decades of European decline, and the subsequent four decades of restructuring of the international system. This loose bi-polar world has set the stage for the development of modern terrorism.

The nineteenth-century phenomena of democracy and nationalism, mentioned earlier as essential elements of the emergence of modern terrorism, have been exported mutatis mutandis to the Third World. Nationalism in particular has been accepted wholeheartedly by at least the governments, if not by all the segments of the successor regimes to the European empires. Questions of religion, frontiers, status, recognition of separate existence, irredentism, tribal or related differences, all have contributed to the vast difficulties in creating viable states in the Third World. Incorporating these states into an international system which is itself far from stable creates further difficulties. Many individuals and groups committed to a nationalist or separatist objective, such as the Israeli independence movement or the Palestine Liberation Organization, see that

the employment of limited force or low level revolutionary violence is required to achieve their aim.³⁹

The strength of anti-colonialist sentiment has increased. Since 1945, a much more sympathetic attitude has developed towards 'liberation' forces. As Kupperman and Trent argue, this trend connected easily with "the writings of Mao, Guevara, Frantz [sic] Fanon, and Carlos Marighella [which] illustrate strategy, foster a quasi-religious faith that history is on the side of the oppressed."⁴⁰ This situation has emerged during a period of a growing awareness of the interdependence of nations and the promotion of a wide spectrum of international organizations which are predicated upon this ideal.

A striking example of nationalist objectives and serious political grievances which were not being addressed by the international community, and the employment of a concerted terrorist campaign aimed at resolving these problems is that of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Without discussing the legitimacy of the movement or its aims, it is clear that the employment of terrorist methods, widely decried and denounced by much of the world community, has been effective. Certainly the acceptance of Yasser Arafat as the spokesman of the Palestinian people by the UN General Assembly meeting in 1974, indicated that the use of terrorist tactics did not itself detract from widespread acceptance of the legitimacy

³⁹Robert H. Kupperman and Darrell M. Trent, Terrorism: Threat, Reality, Response, p. 19.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 20.

of a cause. In particular, the tactics of terrorism employed by the PLO forced international attention to the Palestinian issue; attention that this cause may otherwise have not received on an international scale.

Section III

The Pre-1972 Response to Terrorism

The late 1960s witnessed a most dramatic evolution in terrorism. For the most part, governments experiencing the effects of terrorism did not know how to deal effectively with this type of violence. Furthermore, government leaders and their bureaucracies viewed this activity as just a passing phenomenon. They hoped, somewhat naively, that it would go away quickly. The following section will show how governments attempted to address this problem and how effective their measures were.

This violent trend had been spurred on, according to some analysts, by three major developments.⁴¹ The dramatic Israeli victory during the 1967 Six-Day War brought home to many Palestinians that their Arab allies either would not or could not assist them in achieving Palestinian political goals. This initiated the 1968 wave of 35 Palestinian orchestrated hijackings of commercial airlines, the terrorists seeking either the release of prisoners or ransom.⁴² The second notable occurrence was the killing of the Latin American guerrilla leader Ernesto Ché Guevéra. /a
The last and probably the most memorable event was the Vietnam War and, in particular, the unleashing of American domestic anti-war elements which manifested themselves in numerous student groups that "began to probe the cracks in

⁴¹Peter St. John, "Analysis and response of a decade of terrorism," International Perspectives, (September/October, 1981), p. 3.

⁴²Ibid.

American society with some well-aimed terrorist blows at the system."⁴³

Air Hijackings

The late 1960s also experienced a growing number of airline 'skyjackings' to Cuba particularly among aircraft crossing the southern United States. The problem by 1968 had become:

...so epidemic that one airline servicing Miami and other Southern cities in the U.S. has decided to equip pilots with approach charts for Havana's José Martí Airport and written instructions on dealing with hijackers. ("Do as they say").⁴⁴

A typical skyjacking of the day was the incident involving National Airlines Flight 1064 from Los Angeles to Miami. After a stopover in Houston, a Cuban identifying himself as R. Hernandez, seized a stewardess, using a gun and an object wrapped in a handkerchief which was believed to be a grenade. "Fidel ordered me back to Havana, dead or alive,"⁴⁵ Hernandez reportedly said in Spanish. The pilot convinced the hijacker that the aircraft required a fuel stop at New Orleans before attempting the flight to Cuba. The New Orleans police believed that they could not attempt the recovery of the aircraft without risking the lives of the crew and passengers. The flight continued to Havana where Hernandez revealed that his hand grenade was in reality a bottle of Old Spice aftershave lotion. Cuban authorities apprehended Hernandez and released the crew to return the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "Aviation: The Skyjackers," Time, 26 July, 1968, p. 29.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

DC-8 to Miami. A DC-6, chartered by the US government returned the passengers to the US. On reflection, it was apparent to all observers that "nothing has been done thus far to try to thwart skyjackers."⁴⁶

An earlier outbreak of similar skyjackings in 1961 had seen the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) permitting airline crews to be armed. This action was generally opposed by both the airlines and the pilots themselves. It was argued that a side trip to Cuba was "preferable to a mid-air gun battle."⁴⁷ The simple solution of locking the cockpit cabin during flight operations was also considered but it was not effective as the terrorist (or hijacker) could still take a stewardess hostage and thereby give orders to the crew over the aircraft's intercom system.⁴⁸

By the late 1960s the suggestion of searching each passenger was rejected as both "time-consuming and unsettling."⁴⁹ However, a detection device was being readied for demonstration by an aerospace manufacturer. This device, which used sensitive magnetic film, would alert security personnel to the presence of metal objects. The aviation industry had for many years sought such a device "capable of detecting metal objects as passengers pass through terminals and also distinguishing, for example, between an alarm clock

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

and a revolver."⁵⁰ While this endeavour continued, the airlines, in conjunction with the US State Department began to advertise the fact that anyone who wanted to travel to Cuba could purchase a ticket on one of the regular DC-7 flights that fly from Miami to Havana to bring back refugees.⁵¹ These special government flights are discussed later.

Hijackers at this time were simply viewed "as 'nuts and bolters,' but in addition to the borderline psychopaths there have been fugitives from justice, exhibitionist hippies, and several Cubans who may have been Castro agents hitching a ride home."⁵² Cuba, although granting asylum to those responsible for hijacks, reportedly "never let on whether they regard the hijackings as a welcome embarrassment for the U.S. or a simple nuisance for Cuba."⁵³

The character of the hijacking phenomenon took a dramatic and qualitative change when in 1968, EL AL Flight 426, from London via Rome to Tel Aviv, was seized just after leaving Rome by three well-dressed Arab passengers. Brandishing pistols and hand grenades, they entered the cockpit, assaulted the co-pilot and ordered Captain Oded Abarbanell to change course for Algiers. This time the political aims of the hijackers were obvious:

⁵⁰"Airlines VS. Skyjackers," Newsweek, 22 July, 1968, p. 13.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²"Aviation: The Skyjackers," Time, op. cit., p. 30.

⁵³Ibid.

...this was no ordinary case of skyjacking and...the Palestinians who commandeered the plane were interested not in a free ride to Algeria but in humiliating the Israeli Government.⁵⁴

It was reported that one of the hijackers moved up and down the airline's aisle speaking of his dedication to the cause.

"I have no father or mother - they were killed in the six-day war,' he shouted. 'I don't care if I'm blown into small pieces with the rest of you.'"⁵⁵

The Boeing 707 was impounded upon reaching Algier's Dar-el-Beida Airport and the next day all non-Israeli passengers were released by the hijackers and flown on to Paris. However, the crew of ten and 12 Israeli passengers were held. The hijackers were identified as members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The PFLP had been competing with other Arab terrorist groups for political power, support and money, and this was an occasion "to score a publicity coup. More important yet, the PFLP wanted to exchange the Israeli passengers for some of its guerrillas who had been captured by Israel."⁵⁶ The Israeli government immediately appealed to the United Nations and international air organizations to obtain the release of its plane, passengers and crew. It was reported:

It may take a while. Algeria formally declared war on Israel a year ago and rejected the cease-fire that ended the six-day Arab-Israeli conflict. Because El Al carried military cargo in

⁵⁴"Mideast: Coup in the Sky," Newsweek, 5 August, 1968, p. 41.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 42.

⁵⁶Ibid.

the war, Algeria considers it a paramilitary organization.⁵⁷

At this juncture it was safe to assume that if Israeli diplomacy failed, Tel Aviv would likely retaliate directly against Algeria. This action might have taken the form of "punitive raids to redress alleged Arab wrongdoing."⁵⁸ It was further noted:

Air Algérie flights call regularly at Cairo, which is not far from Israeli airspace. It would be a relatively simple matter for Israeli fighter-interceptors to force one to land at Tel Aviv for use as a bargaining weapon.⁵⁹

Now that hijacking as a means for trips to Cuba and monetary gain gave way to politically-motivated hostage-taking on air carriers, several nations sought ways to establish an air crimes convention. One of the more important international agreements was the Tokyo Convention, formulated with the aim of establishing a continuity of jurisdiction over crimes committed on air carriers in international services.

Although this convention had been drawn up in Tokyo in 1963, by 1968 it had been signed by only 29 nations including the United States. Twelve ratifications were required before the treaty could be put into effect. Yet, even after a full five years had elapsed, only six nations had deposited their ratification, so the treaty was still not in force.⁶⁰

⁵⁷"Algeria: Skyway Robbery," Time, 2 August, 1968, p. 52.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Laurence Doty, "Air Crimes Convention Supported Heavily," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 18 November, 1968, p. 60. The nations that had ratified the agreement as of November 1968 were the Republic of China, Denmark, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal and Sweden.

Nonetheless, it established an international agreement among those nations which had ratified it. It acknowledged that the country in which an aircraft is legally registered is "competent to exercise jurisdiction over offenses committed aboard it when in international or overseas flight."⁶¹

Although not establishing any single country's exclusive jurisdiction, the convention permits the exercise of concurrent jurisdiction by concerned nations. However, the acceptance of one's claim to shared jurisdiction is dependent upon the degree of national interest in the incident. The convention further noted that a contracting country, although not the state of registration, may attempt to foil a criminal act in flight when the:

- Offense has effect on the territory of such a state.
- Offense has been committed by or against a national or permanent resident of the state.
- Offense is against the security of the state.
- Offense consists of a breach of any rules relating to the flight of aircraft in force in the state.
- Exercise of jurisdiction is necessary to ensure the obligation of the state⁶² under other multilateral agreements.

The convention further acknowledges the authority of the chief pilot or captain, and that he "may take 'reasonable' measures...to protect the safety of the aircraft, maintain discipline onboard or to deliver the offender to the proper authorities."⁶³ This convention enables the captain to turn over to the authorities of a signatory to the agreement anyone who he believes has perpetrated an offence as defined

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

by the laws of his country. Further, any "Offenses committed in an aircraft will be treated as if they had occurred in the state of registration of the aircraft."⁶⁴ In short the Tokyo Convention on offences and certain other acts committed on board aircraft required contracting states:

- (i) to make every effort to restore control of the aircraft to its lawful commander and,
- (ii) to make every effort to ensure the prompt onward passage or return of the hijacked aircraft together with its crew, passengers and cargo.⁶⁵

By late 1968 the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), concerned by the rash of airline hijackings to Cuba, began urging the US government to take action to halt such offences. This forced the State Department to look for ways in which alleged hijackers could be returned for prosecution in the United States. ALPA, during their biennial meeting of November, 1968 decided to send messages to both President Johnson and the Transportation Secretary, Alan S. Boyd asking for governmental action to stop aerial hijackings.⁶⁶ However, a State Department spokesman said that they were "pursuing all possible angles to meet this hijacking problem, but we are not in a position to talk about what is being done."⁶⁷ Due to the strained political situation in the late 1960s between Cuba and the United States, all regular diplomatic contact was maintained through the Swiss legation

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Wilkinson, Terrorism And The Liberal State, op. cit., p. 220.

⁶⁶Harold D. Watkins, "Air Transport: Federal Action in Hijackings Urged," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 2 December, 1968, p. 24.

⁶⁷Ibid.

in Havana. This complicated the use of diplomatic channels and made any attempts to extradite extremely difficult.⁶⁸

Indeed, according to some American sources, the climate of relations during this period between Cuba and the US had actually worsened as a result of "the diversions, which the Cuban government has no particular desire to stop."⁶⁹

A new approach was made by the State Department in July of 1968 when it offered free transportation to anyone wanting to go to Cuba from the United States.⁷⁰ This could be viewed as a pre-emptive move on behalf of the government to deal with this issue. However, this initiative did not address the problem as both the airline carriers and the US government expressed "a general state of helplessness in devising any clearcut preventative for the forcible seizure of an airliner in flight that does not endanger everyone onboard."⁷¹

Nevertheless the airline industry looked for an antidote. It was then concentrating its anti-hijacking effort upon detection equipment in the hope of apprehending potential hijackers before they boarded. However, the detection equipment available during this period was not fully developed and did not perform satisfactorily. The airlines were worried that these detection devices would jeopardize passenger relations. In resignation, one airline

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

representative said that "compliance with the hijacker is about the only thing we've been able to come up with."⁷²

The FAA began a Sky Marshal programme by hiring 1,500 customs security officers to provide security on the nation's aircraft and prevent, forcibly if necessary, hijackers from seizing aircraft. The airlines themselves were concerned about high-altitude shootouts and asked that the Sky Marshal programme be abandoned. As with many other responses to aircraft hijackings the oft-held view of this initiative was that, "the number of FAA personnel available is so small in relation to the number of flights ...that the program is relatively meaningless."⁷³

By the end of 1968 it was apparent that both the US Government and the major airlines had no solution for the problem of aerial hijacking.⁷⁴ Most of the methods focussed on dealing with the hijacker himself while the aircraft was airborne. Some of the proposals consisted of "shooting him, gassing him, isolating him, locking him off from the pilot, even dropping him through a trapdoor into the baggage compartment."⁷⁵ Inevitably it was felt that any attempt at disarming or neutralizing the air pirate would result in the use of a weapon, which could have disastrous results in mid-flight. One suggestion was the "squirting [of] a nerve

⁷²Ibid., p. 25.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴"The Search For A Way To Stop 'Skyjacking,'" U.S. News and World Report, 30 December, 1968, p. 34.

⁷⁵Ibid.

gas at the hijacker in hopes of paralyzing him."⁷⁶ Experts noted, however, the risk to passengers and crew if the gas were to enter the aircraft's air circulating system.

The standing order of the day to airline personnel as quoted from United Air Line President George E. Keck was: "Do what the man with the gun says, fuel supplies permitting."⁷⁷ This order remained, even though the airlines still sought preventive measures. In particular, they concentrated on finding a way of detecting weapons being carried by the potential sky pirates. However, no satisfactory technical breakthrough was obtained at this time. Although airline crew members were permitted to carry weapons, few did. Thus, it appears that by the end of 1968, airline officials and those in government both hoped that hijacking would turn out to be just "a passing fad."⁷⁸ In addition, each continued to feel that responsibility for dealing with this 'fad' belonged to the other.

The International Federation of Air Line Pilots Association (IFALPA) drafted a resolution to boycott those countries which failed to release seized aircraft within 48 hours. This resolution, if adopted, would have had little effect as the Cuban government had been punctilious in returning both

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

the aircraft and their passengers with no more than an overnight delay.⁷⁹

Again, the FAA regularly sent "Sky Marshals" along randomly-selected flights heading to Miami. It soon became apparent that there was little a law enforcement officer "could do to prevent plane piracy without increasing the already considerable danger to all on board."⁸⁰ Further it was readily recognized that the costs of assigning marshals on board many hundreds of daily flights would be exorbitant.⁸¹

Meanwhile, metal detectors, costing around \$1,000.00 (1969) each, were viewed by air carriers as too expensive even though the cost of a hijacking to the airline was approximately \$8,550.00. Moreover the airlines were reluctant to spend the necessary sums to search properly every passenger boarding those aircraft that could possibly be skyjacked.⁸² The air carriers were apparently sensitive to the possibility of lawsuits should a passenger be unjustifiably searched.⁸³ This view would only delay the institution of effective airport security procedures as we know them today.

⁷⁹"What Can Be Done About Skyjacking?," 31 January, 1969, p. 20.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³"Hijack Detector Tested by FAA," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 22 September, 1969, p. 53.

The FAA were, by September of 1969, cautiously optimistic that, with airline personnel tasked to observe passenger behaviour, and the use of ferrous metal detectors to detect weapons, would-be hijackers could be foiled.⁸⁴ The US government's Justice Department informed FAA officials that the employment of both techniques would "provide adequate legal grounds for asking to search a suspicious passenger who is carrying sufficient ferrous metal to trigger the magnetic detection equipment."⁸⁵

The procedure was to have airline-passenger boarding-agents check for individuals whose general appearance and overall behavior resembled that of the profile of a hijacker.⁸⁶ Those people would then undergo a metal detector test. If the test proved positive, the passenger would undergo a more thorough search. An FAA spokesman stated that this was not an infallible method. Nonetheless, it was somewhat of a positive move and did not seem to greatly trouble the public. A well-publicized experiment, conducted in nine cities, using this combination of observation and detector devices, was benignly received.⁸⁷

At the same time, the United States' State Department was formulating a presentation to the United Nations calling for the strengthening of the procedures for extradition of hijackers. Although the Tokyo Convention dealt with

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

hijacking, it did not call for extradition. Moreover neither the United States nor Cuba had ratified this agreement.⁸⁸

In mid-January, 1969, a Federal court in Brooklyn issued an arrest order for the hijackers of an Eastern Airlines DC-8 seized earlier that month. Although there was little hope of prosecution, the federal judicial system signalled that action would be taken against hijackers.⁸⁹ This was predicated on a 1961 US law that imposed prison sentences of up to 20 years, and in some cases the death sentence, for aircraft seizure. As one airline attorney argued, "one arrest followed by full conviction might solve the whole problem."⁹⁰ The reality was that the majority of hijackers, at this time, did find political asylum.

Although Knut Hammarskjold, the International Air Transport Association Director-General, contacted the Cuban authorities regarding the issue of airline hijacks, it was reported that, because so few states had experienced this potentially disastrous phenomenon, chances were slim that the UN could assist in resolving the problem at that time.⁹¹

By February, 1969, "frustration over high-flying hijackers had risen well past the fever point."⁹² Further, "An air of desperation hung over the ...meeting of the International Air

⁸⁸"Airlines, Government Accelerate Efforts at Hijacking Prevention," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 27 January, 1969, p. 33.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²"Skyjacking: Holding Pattern," Newsweek, 17 February, 1969, p. 34.

Transport Association."⁹³ As one very concerned IATA official reportedly announced, "Anything that can be done to deter hijacking without inconvenience or risk will be a good thing."⁹⁴ This sentiment carried through to special hearings organized on behalf of the US House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee. There, James G. Brown, a once hijacked pilot employed by National Airlines, noted that the aircraft-seizure phenomenon "is a tragedy waiting for some place to happen."⁹⁵ Concurrently, the FAA confirmed that "no new methods of detecting concealed weapons were currently feasible on a day-to-day basis."⁹⁶ A spokesman for the US State Department could:

...offer little more than veiled reports of diplomatic efforts aimed at seeing if Fidel Castro might eventually accede to proposed international agreements requiring the extradition of skyjackers -- be they political refugees or psychopaths acting out some inscrutable fantasy.⁹⁷

The pirating of a Trans World Airlines aircraft, Flight 840, by members of the Che Guevara Commando unit of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) led by Lelia Ali Khaled in August of 1969, was an ominous change in the tone of hijacking. Hitherto it had been the preserve of homesick exiles or deranged psychopaths. Now, it appeared that skyjacking had become a tool to help attain political, rather than personal, aims. It presented the:

Serious possibility that a major international political crisis could be triggered by the hijacking of aircraft ...underscoring the

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

vulnerability of⁹⁸ commercial transports in global air operations.

This action was described as follows:

Shortly after takeoff, a woman and a man forced their way into the cockpit brandishing a knife and hand grenade and told the pilot, Capt. Dean Carter, to divert to Tel Aviv. The two hijackers were later identified as Arabs, Lelia Ali Khaled, 23, and Salim Issawi, 30. They had flown from Beirut to Rome the day before the hijacking.

Miss Khaled appeared to be familiar with cockpit procedures, according to the TWA crew, and had even calculated the fuel consumption of the 707. When the aircraft reached Tel Aviv, she ordered Carter to an altitude of 12,000 ft. and radioed propaganda messages to the Tel Aviv tower. As she was moving around the cockpit, the crew noticed that she had a map and a typewritten operations plan. The map⁹⁹ showed a line drawn from Tel Aviv to Damascus.

The saga of TWA Flight 840 revealed the growing sophistication of some terrorists and demonstrated their efficiency and technical competence. In the wake of this hijacking, IATA continued to argue that it is the responsibility of governments to stop aircraft hijacking and more importantly, that tough laws are necessary to deter future aircraft hijackings.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately there appears to be, at this time, a definite lack of international will to undertake the required action.

The fall of 1969 saw the voluntary return of six Americans to stand trial for diverting aircraft to Cuba. This act was hailed in an editorial as the "first glimmers of hope on the

⁹⁸"IFALPA Mounts Anti-Hijack Drive," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 8 September, 1969, p. 22.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

otherwise dark horizon of air piracy."¹⁰¹ These individuals, who had been in Cuba for six months or more preferred to undergo trial in the United States than continue to live in Cuba.¹⁰² It was hoped that the publicity regarding the trials would deter those who might consider hijacking an aircraft as an easy means of leaving their personal troubles.¹⁰³

Meanwhile other countries soon developed sterner measures to combat hijacking than did the Americans. After two Ethiopian airliners were hijacked, plain clothes security personnel were assigned to scheduled flights. Ignoring the basic rule put in place by most other airlines, "do not attempt to argue with a hijacker,"¹⁰⁴ the Ethiopians employed a rapid counter-violence response to foil a hijack attempt. On an Ethiopian airliner flying from Madrid to Addis Ababa, two armed men ordered the pilot to head for Aden. The three Ethiopian security officers on board quickly intervened. One hijacker, a 19-year old Yemeni student, was tackled by a security officer and killed by his own gun in the ensuing struggle. His Senegalese companion was despatched with a knife. Both terrorists, identified as members of an Ethiopian separatist group, were pronounced to be "the first would-be hijackers to be slain in mid-air."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹Robert Hotz, "More on Hijacking," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 10 November, 1969, p. 11.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴"Death to Hijackers," Newsweek, 22 December, 1969, p. 50.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

In September, 1970, a crisis of a new kind captured the world's attention when PFLP commandos declared a terrorist war on the West. They orchestrated a triple-hijack operation. The capture of a Swissair DC-8, a Trans World Airline (TWA) 707 and a Pan-American 747, their passengers and crew, was described as "political extortion on a grand and unprecedented scale -- a gross, new horror in a century already horrified by the enormity of its atrocities."¹⁰⁶ On 12 September, the three aircraft were blown up where they had landed at Dawson Field in Jordan. Although the terrorists sought vengeance against Israel, the 'war' affected the hostages -- unarmed men, women and children. The action was condemned in the UN by U. Thant as "savage and inhuman,"¹⁰⁷ while in Washington, President Nixon denounced the seizure and announced that security personnel would be on board a majority of American overseas flights. The President further recommended that all nations "take joint action to suspend airline services with those countries which refuse to punish or extradite hijackers involved in international blackmail."¹⁰⁸

On 11 September, President Nixon demanded that the problem of air piracy must be addressed rapidly and described the implementation of a series of measures to counter this threat.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶"The Hijack War," Newsweek, 21 September, 1970, p. 20.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹"Terror Attacks On Air Travel -- What Can Be Done," U.S. News and World Report, 21 September, 1970, p. 17.

- 1) The employment of armed guards on both domestic and international flights assessed as susceptible to hijacking.
- 2) Wider usage by U.S. airlines of electronic and other surveillance devices at international airports.
- 3) Emphasis on research into new methods of detecting weapons and explosives. The installation of x-ray machines and metal detectors in airports.
- 4) Urge other countries to boycott nations that refuse to punish or extradite hijackers. The President emphasized that countries are responsible for American lives and property, if hijacked aircraft land in their territory.¹¹⁰

At the same time President Nixon was considering other proposals such as:

- 1) A quarantine area to search outgoing passengers.
- 2) Prohibiting all carry on luggage thereby removing a means of taking onboard weapons and explosive devices.
- 3) The employment of 'project managers' to review passenger lists and inspect passengers.
- 4) The placing of a delay on all airline ticket sales several days after the reservations are made to check the background of the passengers.¹¹¹

These steps resulted from a sober assessment of the new direction of terrorism inherent in the PFLP hijackings. The assessment was that this:

...latest round of air piracy involved far more than 'crackpot' individual hijackings such as marked [the previous] diversion of plans to Castro's Cuba. This was a form of international warfare that, unless halted, threatened to hit civilians of all lands.¹¹²

Historically, the seizure of a country's nationals and their property had often brought about armed intervention by great, and even not-so-great, powers. Now, however, the

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 18.

¹¹²Ibid.

Historically, the seizure of a country's nationals and their property had often brought about armed intervention by great, and even not-so-great, powers. Now, however, the international community was paralyzed by the threat that any retaliatory action could witness the murder of the hostages.¹¹³ The PFLP thus demonstrated the potential use of classic terror tactics vis-a-vis the US and other nations through this triple-hijack operation.

The spate of anti-hijack measures was shown to be a knee jerk reaction of dubious value, "halfhearted, hobbled by fears of inconveniencing passengers and the high cost of protective forces."¹¹⁴ Yet, more importantly, there was little co-ordinated international co-operation.

One aspect of the PFLP hijack operation in particular caused concern for American intelligence, as it was reported that "secret NATO documents" were on board the Pan American 747 which was hijacked and later blown up. The CIA subsequently issued a directive that all their couriers carrying classified documents must travel on US Armed Forces aircraft.¹¹⁵

By September, 1970, the profile of a hijacker had broadened to include Arab commandos who were described as "highly trained, disciplined people, armed with the best weapons for

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 19. See also "Overseas: Guards, Detectors, Searches," U.S. News and World Report, 21 September, 1970, p. 19.

¹¹⁵"Washington Whispers," U.S. News and World Report, 28 September, 1970, p. 8.

the job."¹¹⁶ What the world was seeing now was the evolution of a virtually professional terrorist.

In January, 1971, representatives of 74 nations and eight international organizations met in Washington to "exchange information on ways to eliminate aerial hijacking and piracy."¹¹⁷ This forum, organized under the auspices of the FAA, drew representatives from major air carrier nations including those of the Warsaw Pact, who attended as observers.¹¹⁸ Discussion covered many topics, including both ground and inflight security, intelligence exchanges on likely hijackers, and recent developments in metal detectors, as well as more technical prevention systems.¹¹⁹ The conference provided the following conclusions:

- 1) That the employment of sky marshals will likely decrease as metal detectors and other screening devices become more effective.
- 2) There was no indication of concern by the representatives regarding passenger disapproval of the screening systems.
- 3) Officials noted that the arrangements for the passage of intelligence should continue under the auspices of Interpol and IATA rather than constructing new organizations for this task.
- 4) Carl Maisch the air transport security director of the FAA noted that 259 arrests were made since September 1971 and mostly through the use of the screening system in place.

¹¹⁶"When Armed Guards Ride Your Plane...", U.S. News and World Report, 28 September, 1970, p. 23.

¹¹⁷"Conference Exchanges Anti-Hijacking Data," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 18 January, 1971, p. 19.

¹¹⁸Ibid. These included the U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

- 5) One representative from the United Kingdom revealed that progress has been made in the training of dogs to uncover explosives.¹²⁰

Meanwhile, by mid-January, IFALPA began to pressure governments to ratify The Hague¹²¹ and Tokyo Conventions. By April, those initiatives, called 'T-Plus', incorporated a large number of pressure tactics involving pilot action and raising passenger awareness of the risks involved.¹²²

Although the machinery of national and international law responded very slowly to skyjacking, airlines acknowledged the complexities of dealing with hijackers and began to deal with them. For example on 2 July, 1971, a Braniff flight was commandeered just after departing from Mexico City. Although this was the first pirating of one of that company's aircraft, "such an event has [had] been included in its emergency operations plans."¹²³

In support of this operation, Braniff management set up command posts with the appropriate communication links including satellite relay. This command set-up was paralleled by emergency operations centres (EOC) in the State Department, FAA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹The Hague Convention for the Suppression of the Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft required contracting states to extradite apprehended hijackers to their country of origin or to prosecute them under the judicial code of the recipient state. Significant clauses were included allowing political offense exceptions to the requirement of extradition.

¹²²"Pilots Spur Anti-Hijacking Drive," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 18 January, 1971, p. 19.

¹²³"Command Posts Manned by Key Braniff Officials During Hijack," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 12 July, 1971, p. 20.

Throughout this situation, the FAA monitored all air-ground communications and received situation reports from the Braniff EOC. The flight ended after 43 hours in Buenos Aires, with no casualties. The hijacker, Robert Lee Jackson, a US Navy deserter, wanted the flight to continue to Algeria, however, Argentine authorities would not allow the aircraft to be refuelled, and they surrounded it with police.

What is important about this incident is that an airline which had never experienced an act of aerial piracy, reacted efficiently and effectively in co-ordination with United States federal agencies. Just after the Braniff flight was hijacked, the Chairman of the airline, Harding Lawrence, and the airline president, Edward Acker:

...had set up a command post in Braniff's administrative headquarters, in direct communication with the airline's operations and control center at its Love Field maintenance base here, which was headed by vice president - flight operations Herman Rumsey. The two posts were connected with open lines to Washington and, as the flight progressed from San Antonio to Monterrey, Mexico, Lima, Peru, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, to these cities. Braniff personnel in the airport control towers relayed running accounts of the scene to Dallas.¹²⁴

Nor did this communications net cease there. The ability of Braniff Airlines to respond to Jackson's requirement was most impressive, particularly when he demanded that \$100,000.00 in cash be delivered to Monterrey. The chairman, Harding Lawrence, reportedly:

...approved the transaction and financial personnel contacted Braniff's Dallas bank. It arranged to have a Monterrey bank provide the money to the airline's local sales manager. The money arrived

¹²⁴Ibid.

at the airport within 15 min. of the airplane's landing and was handed over to Jackson.¹²⁵

From this incident one could conclude that airlines, from necessity, were rapidly preparing to confront, nationally or internationally, any skyjacking situation, to ensure the safety of the aircraft crew and passengers by use of the most effective means available. Governmental response, with few exceptions, seemed ponderous in comparison.

Counter-Violence: The First American Hijacker Dies

Although governments were slow to react to the hijacking menace, by 1971 the FBI began employing counter-violence techniques. On 23 July of that year, Richard Allen Obergfell of New York City boarded TWA Flight 335 at New York's La Guardia Airport. Just after departure, Obergfell grabbed flight attendant Idie Concepcion. Drawing a pistol, he forced her to the cockpit and ordered Captain Albert Hawes to fly to Milan, Italy. Hawes responded that the 727 jetliner did not have the range to fly to Milan. However, an arrangement was made to land in La Guardia, where Obergfell would board another aircraft which would carry him to Italy. At La Guardia, the passengers were released and Obergfell demanded a car to take his flight-attendant hostage and himself to Kennedy International Airport. He commandeered a maintenance truck and was escorted to the international airport. A fully fueled Boeing 707 was prepared, as were two FBI snipers armed with .308 Norma Magnum rifles with telescopic sights.

¹²⁵Ibid.

The marksmen were ordered: "If you get an opportunity for a clean shot, take it."¹²⁶ As Obergfell was moving towards the boarding ladder, holding his hostage so close that she accidentally stepped on his foot, he momentarily moved back from her. One of the snipers, FBI agent Kenneth Lovin, fired immediately. He had been tracking his target from behind a blast shield just 75 yards away. Obergfell dropped but was attempting to reach his pistol when a second round was fired, killing him. Some observers wondered about the acceptability of such actions, particularly as the hostage might have been killed had the agent missed his man. An FBI spokesman argued that it was "a calculated risk, but we felt it had to be taken."¹²⁷ Obergfell was the first hijacker to die attempting to seize an American aircraft.¹²⁸

Despite this success, the Americans continued to search for other technology as a means of pre-empting aerial hijacking. Reports indicated growing interest in controlling the skyjacking dilemma. Major US airports were reported to be:

...protected by electronic 'magnetometers,' and 1,200 specially trained 'sky marshals' were riding shotgun aboard the nation's airliners - with the number scheduled to rise to 1,500 by year's end.¹²⁹

The Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Safety and Consumer Affairs, Lieutenant General (retired) Benjamin O. Davis, stated:

¹²⁶"Skyjacking: Death at the Terminal," Time, 2 August 1971, p. 18.

¹²⁷"Skyjacking: 'A Calculated Risk,'" Newsweek, 2 August, 1971, p. 24.

¹²⁸"Skyjacking: Death...", Time, op. cit., p. 18.

¹²⁹"Progress In War On Skyjackers," U.S. News and World Report, 9 August, 1971, p. 25.

There has been a distinct turnabout in the hijacking situation. We have stopped being 'patsies.' The Government and the airlines have adopted an attitude of resistance -- not recklessness, but a¹³⁰ willingness to act when the opportunity arises.

Sky Marshals, during this period, were under instructions to overpower a hijacker whenever possible, and, if necessary, shoot to kill.¹³¹ In concert with the Sky Marshal programme, refined computer assisted weapons-detection devices were being tested and were reported to be addressing a major concern in America's anti-hijack effort.¹³²

This new American policy of firm resistance to hijackers was intended to reduce the number of aircraft seizures. At the same time, Israel's El Al Airlines were tightening their anti-hijack procedures, which became known as being "the most stringent security procedures in the history of commercial air transport."¹³³ Furthermore El Al was known to be providing security assistance and advice to other airlines flying into Tel Aviv.¹³⁴ It was because of two sabotage attempts, when explosives were discovered hidden in baggage, and of reports from Israeli intelligence, that El Al enhanced its security procedures. These measures included the searching of all baggage, a regulation requiring that passengers sign a statement acknowledging the contents of their baggage, and the addition of more ground agents and Sky

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³"El Al Stresses Terrorist Security, Advises Other Airlines in Tel Aviv," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 13 September, 1971, p. 26.

¹³⁴Ibid.

Marshals.¹³⁵ Such stringent measures did result in some delays in schedule.¹³⁶ Similar measures, however, are still in existence today, notwithstanding the high cost and delay.

The US, the UK and the USSR finally ratified the Tokyo Convention in the autumn of 1971,¹³⁷ indicating the growing momentum, particularly in US government circles, to find a legal means to deal effectively with sky piracy. As governments attempted to manoeuvre national and international anti-hijack policies into place, it was reported that:

Skyjacking poses a painful dilemma for lawmen: should they give in to the skyjacker's demands and allow him to escape unchallenged, or should they try to stop him,¹³⁸ thereby endangering the lives of all on board.

This dilemma was illustrated in the October, 1971 seizure of a charter flight bound for the Bahamas from Nashville, Tennessee. When the aircraft landed in Jacksonville, Florida, an FBI agent ordered the pilot, Brent Downs, to cut his engines. He was also told that he would receive no fuel. After a desperate debate, the co-pilot, Randall Crump, climbed out of the aircraft to negotiate further with the agents. Moments later, the tires and one of the engines were peppered with bullets. The hijacker, George M. Giffe, responded by shooting Downs, then his own wife, and then himself.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷The [U.S.] Department of State Bulletin, "U.S. Deposits Ratification of Hijacking Convention," The [U.S.] Department of State Bulletin, Vol. LXV, No. 1684, 4 October, 1971, p. 371.

¹³⁸"Skyjacking: The Deadly Dilemma," Newsweek, 1 November, 1971, p. 21.

One conclusion was that "it is by no means clear that the agents' actions constituted a blunder."¹³⁹ However, as one law official pointed out, "Suppose this guy had taken the plane off and crashed it, killing everybody? Then the FBI would have been roasted for doing nothing."¹⁴⁰ This moral dilemma for all security and law enforcement agencies, as well as governments, remains stubbornly with us to this day.

The effectiveness of maintaining onboard Sky Marshals was brought into question in November 1971, when an American Airlines 747 outbound from John F. Kennedy Airport for San Juan was hijacked by Angel Lugo and ordered to head for Cuba. Amongst the 221 passengers and 16 crew members there were three US Sky Marshals and an FBI agent travelling on vacation. This flight became known as "the first successful snatching of a plane protected by the flying watchdogs."¹⁴¹

One of the Sky Marshals noticed a disturbed look on a stewardess's face and contacted the aircraft captain over the intercom asking if he should intervene. After conferring with both the captain and the other Sky Marshals it was determined that no one should do anything which would endanger those on board, as there was a distinct possibility of gun play. The aircraft landed safely at José Martí Airport. This incident, not surprisingly, raised doubts as to the effectiveness of the 1,400-man Sky Marshal Programme which cost about \$37.7 million a year. On any given day,

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹"Skyjacking: Take Me Along," Newsweek, 8 November, 1971, pp. 47-48.

two-thirds of these officers were in the air, mostly on domestic flights on the East Coast and some select international routes.¹⁴² Following this incident a controversy ensued as the marshals complained:

...that the airlines are generally lax in their security measures. (According to the Federal Aviation Administration, American Airlines had not bothered to turn on a metal detector which would have shown that hijacker Lugo was unarmed.) The airlines reply that screening procedures take too much time and irritate passengers.¹⁴³

As far as the general utility of the Sky Marshal Programme was concerned, Captain O.R. Salmela said, on behalf of the aerial police force, "It didn't work this time, but I always like to have them with me."¹⁴⁴ Experience had shown that since the programme began, "there have been no guerrilla-style hijackings and no airliner piracy has ended in a disaster."¹⁴⁵

The frustrations with aerial piracy continued until the end of 1971 with probably the most notable action taken by Costa Rica's President, José Figueres Ferrer. After finishing a speech in the town of Puriscal, approximately 20 miles from San José, the President was informed that three gunmen had hijacked a Nicaraguan BAC 1-11 aircraft with 46 passengers and crew on board. This airplane had just landed at the San José airport. The President was requested to authorize either the refueling of the aircraft so that it could continue its flight to Havana, or to provide another aircraft

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

for the trip. The President immediately started for the airport and gave instructions over his car radio for "terrorizing the terrorists."¹⁴⁶ The aircraft was to be surrounded by armed guardsmen, the runway blocked and the aircraft's tires deflated. "Boys, this is war!" he reportedly shouted into his radio.¹⁴⁷

By the time the President arrived, one of the passengers had been shot and the hijackers were identified as members of the Nicaraguan National Liberation Front. The three skyjackers released the passengers, but held the crew as hostages. One stewardess reportedly pleaded, "For the love of God, let us go to Cuba! Otherwise, they'll kill us."¹⁴⁸ The President's action was immediate. He ordered tear gas forced into the aircraft's ventilating system. He then ordered an assault team to attack the aircraft. This action resulted in the death of one gunman. The other two members surrendered and the whole crew was evacuated without injury.¹⁴⁹

It was reported that the President had, during this incident, fought "with his own guards, who were trying to wrestle a submachine gun away from him in order to keep him from getting hurt in any shootout."¹⁵⁰ In the end, although "Figueres did not get to fire a single shot, he was pleased

¹⁴⁶"Costa Rica: Terrorizing Terrorists," Time, 27 December, 1971, p. 24.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

with his performance."¹⁵¹ Such examples of personal courage in the face of terrorist demands, although slightly comic-opera in style, continue to be rare.

In retrospect, the pre-1972 governmental response to terrorist hijackings, was fraught with difficulties. Authorities responsible for dealing with such situations did so "without adequate information and with uncertain aid from their governments. In spite of public indignation that terrorists could strike with such impunity, the Western response was feeble and ad hoc."¹⁵²

By the 1970s, centres of responsibility within Western governments and their national airlines were at odds. Each felt that the responsibility for dealing with this 'passing fad' belonged to the other. However, airline pilots and their associations continued to press air carriers, governments and the UN to institute appropriate regulations, procedures, fines and penalties to pre-empt the hijack problem.

The early hopes of a purely technical solution through the use of profiles, metal detectors and the posting of ground and air security personnel had, and may continue to have, some deterrent effect.¹⁵³ However, it has not, to date, provided anything like a 100 percent solution to the hijacking problem. Israel appears to have led the way, and

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²St. John, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁵³See Jon Craig and Mark Hosenball, "US agents to patrol airports in Britain," The Times, 14 May, 1989.

arguably continues to do so, by instituting probably the most stringent airline security procedures in existence. This is a direct result of the very great threat facing Israel and El Al, which makes rigorous security the most important aspect of their operations. El Al backs its security procedures with the latest information drawn from Israeli police and intelligence agencies. In this regard it is the "acquisition of timely and accurate intelligence forwarded to consumers, such as airlines, that represents the first line of defence against terrorist activities, aerial or otherwise."¹⁵⁴ For the most part this lesson appears to have been ignored in the West, where it was replaced with "a law enforcement knee-jerk reaction."¹⁵⁵

The 1970s and 80s saw governments and their bureaucracies slowly turned to confront the terrorist dilemma. This was, for the most part, done in isolation by the various departments and agencies rather than through a concerted national and international effort. As national and international concern over the hijacking issue grew, this initial lethargic, piece-meal response would change.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with a Canadian Security Intelligence Service officer, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 8 February, 1986.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Section IV

The Nature of Current Terrorist Activities and Governmental Response

Brian Jenkins, an authority on political violence, has said that terrorism has become "institutionalized."¹⁵⁶ In addition there is a "loose but global 'infrastructure'" that helps to sustain terrorism worldwide. This in turn has produced what has been described as "a semipermanent subculture of terrorism."¹⁵⁷ On that note, the purpose of this section is to explore the recent and more notable terrorist activities of the last five years and then review how governments could aim at further reducing the threat through a spectrum of initiatives.

Although there have been some victories in the war on terrorism, the "level of international terrorist activity worldwide in 1987 rose by more than 7 percent over 1986, or 832 incidents compared with 774."¹⁵⁸ The trend was toward large-scale indiscriminate violence so as to produce the

¹⁵⁶David Gelman and Rich Thomas, "Banality and Terror," Newsweek, 6 January, 1986, p. 60.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸U.S. Department of State, Patterns Of Global Terrorism: 1987, (August 1988), p. 1. The most recent edition; U.S. Department of State, Patterns Of Global Terrorism: 1990, (April, 1991), p. iii, notes that "The continuing decline in the number of international terrorist incidents during 1990 is encouraging. From a peak of 856 in 1988, the number of incidents decreased to 455 in 1990. Even more encouraging are the increasing counterterrorist cooperation among governments and our numerous successes in bringing the rule of law to bear on terrorists."

maximum effect, particularly in casualties.¹⁵⁹ In short, "the bigger the better," has been for the most part the rule as shown by the aerial destruction of the Air India flight in June, 1985, the Pan Am Flight 103 in December, 1988, the UTA Flight 772 over Niger in September, 1989 and the recent bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Argentina in March, 1992 which reportedly killed 20 and wounded 250.¹⁶⁰ Jenkins notes that terrorists "may feel compelled to escalate their violence in order to keep public attention... or to recover coercive power lost as governments have become more resistant to their demands."¹⁶¹ The nature of terrorist groups and their activities seems to be changing. They have:

...set out to distinguish themselves in the busy arena of international banditry, terrorist incidents seem to become more random, more arbitrary in their targets, less connected to any identifiable cause.¹⁶²

As we, the audience, become accustomed to the frequency of violent action, terrorists will, in all likelihood, escalate their operations in the hopes of achieving their political aims. In that case, terrorism, as Jenkins has pointed out, "will become an accepted fact of contemporary life -- commonplace, ordinary, banal, and therefore somehow 'tolerable'."¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹Gelman and Thomas, op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁶⁰"Islamic group claims bombing," The Toronto Star, 19 March, 1992.

¹⁶¹Gelman and Thomas, op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Ibid.

The late 1970s and the 1980s witnessed a series of notorious terrorist actions. The seizure of American hostages in Iran (1979), the Iranian Embassy siege in London (1980), the US Marine bombing in Beirut (1983), a series of aerial hijackings including the bombing of the Air India 747, the Achille Lauro incident, the brutal terrorist attacks in Vienna and Rome, and the bombing of the Pan Am flight over Scotland¹⁶⁴ are the most notable examples. In this regard two approaches to modern terrorism have come into play:

Some experts see terrorism as the lower end of the warfare spectrum, a form of low-intensity, unconventional aggression. Others, however, believe that referring to it as war rather than criminal activity lends dignity to terrorists and places their acts in the context of accepted international behaviour.¹⁶⁵

War or not, by the spring of 1986 the United States government was frustrated by its inability to cope with the violent actions orchestrated against its interests and those of its allies. This pent up frustration was vented at one of the perceived orchestrators -- Libya. In April, 1986, President Reagan ordered a series of aerial bombings against Libyan facilities believed to train and support terrorists. This action was, according to US reports, executed only after numerous warnings went unheeded, and attempts to counter terrorism through economic and political sanctions were found

¹⁶⁴THE LOCKERBIE CRASH: Syria Linked To Bomb", The Ottawa Sunday Sun, 19 April, 1992. This article notes "The bomb that blew up a Pan Am jet ... may have been aimed at six CIA employees and arranged by a Syrian terrorist, not the two Libyans currently accused in the blast and being protected by Libyan leader Moammar Khadafy...."

¹⁶⁵U.S. Government Printing Office, Public Report Of The Vice President's Task Force On Combatting Terrorism, (February, 1986), p. 1.

to be unsuccessful.¹⁶⁶ It was only then that the US Sixth Fleet was ordered into action with the purpose of striking a blow against Libya, which the Reagan Administration had threatened to execute many times before.¹⁶⁷

As George Church suggests, the "Libyan leader may not be the world's most effective governmental inciter of terrorist murder,"¹⁶⁸ particularly when one compares Libya to the other sponsors of terrorist violence such as Iran and Syria. It is common knowledge, however, that "Gaddafi has been the most open supplier of money, weapons, training and refuge to terrorist groups around the world."¹⁶⁹ This act was, for some, a strong signal underlining that the United States would act unilaterally and militarily under certain circumstances.

This initiative was embarked upon due to, in part, frustration. President Reagan had argued for, and had applied, economic sanctions on Libya. He attempted to persuade his European allies to do the same, with the hope of politically and economically isolating the 'mad dog of the Middle East.' Neither action brought about the desired effect on Libya.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the US gleaned from electronic eavesdropping that Gaddafi had "ordered Libyan agents and their Palestinian supporters to 'cause maximum

¹⁶⁶George J. Church, "Targeting Gaddafi," Time, 21 April, 1986, p. 22.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 22.

casualties to U.S. citizens and other Western people."¹⁷¹ A US intelligence official reported that one message "which was sent from Tripoli and uses Gaddafi's authority, outlines operational plans for more than ten terror attacks."¹⁷² In turn, the mood of the American people during this time was reflected in the words of George Schultz who reportedly said, "We have taken enough punishment and beating. We have to act."¹⁷³

The Libyan case touches on a significant lesson. In the attack on Libya, the United States demonstrated that when pushed it will employ military force in retaliation. But the retaliation must be taken in context. The reality is that Libya holds no place on the list of Middle East countries important to American political interests nor is Libya involved in the Middle East peace process. The very fact that Libya was targetted proved to other terrorist supporting countries, such as Iran and Syria, that nations important to American strategic or political interests would not likely be victims of military retaliation. In short, Libya simply did not matter as the country has no real allies in the Arab world. In contrast, the Syrians, who were accused of bombing the United States Marine Corps Headquarters in Beirut in 1983, killing 241 troops and wounding a hundred more,¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁷⁴"Arens Says Syrians Bombed Marines' Building in Lebanon," The New York Times, 31 October, 1983. It should be underlined that Arens is not an unbiased observer and it has since become apparent that Syria and Iran assisted the orchestrators of the bombing of the United States Marine Corps barracks, however, as noted above both went unpunished.

suffered no such retaliation. The contrast may well be due solely to the strategic importance which Syria has in the Middle East, and the American need to work with Syria to secure a lasting peace in this volatile region.

The use of American military forces demonstrated a national will to deal with the, at that time, growing phenomenon of international terrorism:

A decade ago, the world experienced an average of 10 incidents of terrorist violence per week -- assassinations, bombings, air hijackings, kidnappings, maimings or attacks on facilities. The average now: Nearly 10 a day.¹⁷⁵

The 1986 Public Report of the Vice President's Task Force on Combatting Terrorism noted:

During the past decade, terrorists have attacked U.S. officials or installations abroad approximately once every 17 days. In the past 17 years, terrorists have killed as many U.S. diplomats as were killed in the previous 180 years.

In 1982, a total of 57 attacks were directed against U.S. military personnel, resulting in two deaths. In 1983, even more incidents occurred (65), and 241 deaths resulted from one incident. In that bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, the United States lost nearly as many servicemen as the British lost in the entire Falklands campaign.¹⁷⁶

America was, to some, acquiring something akin to a 'siege mentality'.

In the wake of America's attack on Libya the debate continued as to how nations could, on an individual basis, as well as in concert, upgrade their defences against terrorist action. Suggestions from political, civil, military, law enforcement

¹⁷⁵"The Rise of World Terrorism," U.S. News and World Report, 8 July, 1985, p. 27.

¹⁷⁶U.S. Government Printing Office, The Public Report, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

and lay sources spanned the spectrum of passive and active measures. These included enhancing airport and airline security, expanding the intelligence role, hardening targets, improving international co-operation, employing diplomatic pressure on countries that countenance terrorism, forming and using rescue teams, eliminating safe havens, and using government sanctioned executive action and commando operations. As to the morality of the employment of 'directed violence', Livingstone, a noted authority on these issues, has argued:

...such a policy is far more justifiable than the indiscriminate retaliatory bombing of refugee camps and villages since only the guilty are punished.¹⁷⁷

There are no simple solutions to terrorism. Its manifestations pose a complicated, dynamic and multi-faceted problem to governments. Therefore, the design and implementation of national and international policies to provide an all-encompassing strategy remains a monumental and, for the most part, uncompleted endeavour. For those nations facing the challenge of terrorism, the United States has formulated a series of strategies that have been implemented or are being studied. Livingstone and Arnold have identified, in their thorough work on terrorism, the following key activities for improving national response capabilities:

Improving physical security.

Train U.S. diplomatic and military personnel in personal security habits and to appreciate the terrorist threat.

Working closely with other governments to ensure that they meet their responsibilities for the

¹⁷⁷ Livingstone, op. cit., p. 175.

where?

protection of U.S. diplomatic and military personnel and facilities abroad.

Providing security to foreign diplomats and dignitaries in the United States.

Training foreign government officials in security and antiterrorist programs.

Working closely with other governments to collect, assess, and share intelligence.

Improving the legal framework to enable better investigation and prosecution for terrorist offenses.

Improving the framework for international cooperation to deal with terrorism.

Increasing and sharing antiterrorism technology.

Exposing the involvement of states in sponsoring or carrying out acts of terrorism in every possible forum.

Cooperating with other countries to persuade or force terrorism-sponsoring states to end such activities.

Using force in a judicious manner to prevent or respond to terrorist attacks and to deter future attacks.

Searching for appropriate ways of solving legitimate grievances by non-violent means.¹⁷⁸

Livingstone and Arnold go on to emphasize that there are long-term political implications too complex and likely quite difficult to address. They argue that although:

...the component elements, or options, of the overall strategy seem simple, their application and implementation are far more difficult. Each depends on the existence or creation of certain instrumentalities, structures, and agreements or understandings, for without creating the means to realize its objectives, any strategy, however well conceived, is reduced to bluster and hot air, and any country that embraces such a strategy runs the risk of being perceived as a paper tiger in the event a situation arises where it must act.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸Neil C. Livingstone and Terrell E. Arnold, (eds) Fighting Back: Winning The War Against Terrorism, p. 230.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

These authors also incorporate some less savoury options which are highly debatable for democratic governments. They leave no doubt as to the flexibility which decision-makers must bring to the choice of responses to meet the terrorist challenge and argue that:

Everything must be considered a potential option by policymakers...even if some of the possible tools, like assassination, must necessarily be discarded as inappropriate or prohibited at the present time.¹⁸⁰

The following chapter will study several examples of terrorist activities faced by Western governments in recent history, and will further explore the range of responses to which they have so far resorted.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 231.

CHAPTER II

INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Section I

Terrorism as an International Phenomenon
in Recent History

Although it is well known that terrorist activities have been an integral part of conventional and guerrilla warfare, the type of political violence that we are experiencing today is in reality a relatively new phenomenon. It should be considered "a distinct and significant new mode of armed conflict."¹⁸¹ In fact many analysts argue that since recent terrorist activity began increasing in the late 1960s, we have entered a new age of conflict. It has been stated:

...terrorism represents a cheap and effective method of warfare against more powerful adversaries whose arsenals and weapons are of little comfort against small bands of marauding proxy forces armed with the latest technologies, imagination, and stealth. Today international terrorists and their patrons are, in effect, at war....¹⁸²

The twentieth-century theories of guerrilla warfare, including the 'people's war' concepts fathered by Mao, combined with the turbulent political environment of the era following World War II, the advent of mass communications and the explosion of technology have been key determinants in producing the new terrorism we know today.¹⁸³ For the most part, our technologically oriented age has thrust this type of violence upon us. Jenkins argues:

Developments in the technological environment have made international terrorism possible. Modern jet travel provides worldwide mobility; terrorists

¹⁸¹Brian Michael Jenkins, News Modes of Conflict, p.8.

¹⁸²Neil C. Livingstone and Terrell E. Arnold, (eds), Fighting Back: Winning The War Against Terrorism, p.1.

¹⁸³Jenkins, op. cit., p. 9.

can now strike on any continent. Radio, television, and communications satellites provide almost instantaneous access to a global audience. Weapons and explosives are widely available. Modern industrial society presents many vulnerable targets, from airliners to nuclear reactors. Once the utility of terrorist tactics was demonstrated, terrorism became an imitative mode of behavior, spreading throughout the world.¹⁸⁴

Nations have become more aware of the high costs of conventional and nuclear warfare and the resulting impact of such activities on their societies. Terrorists, however, have few such restrictions:

In contrast to the increased constraints on governments in the conduct of war, terrorists have adopted the concept of total warfare -- they recognize no civilian noncombatants. Terrorists may attack anything, anywhere, anytime. Over the past 15 years, the spectrum of terrorist targets has expanded to include diplomats, embassies, airliners, airline offices, tourist agencies, tourists, hotels, airports, trains, train stations, reactors, refineries, restaurants, pubs, churches, temples, synagogues, nuns, priests, the Pope, schools, students, and nurseries. This widening of the range of "legitimate" targets and the resultant narrowing of the category of innocent bystanders parallels and extends the twentieth century concept of total war:...¹⁸⁵

The two world wars, Korea and Vietnam reflect the industrial and later the nuclear underpinnings of our global society. World Wars I and II were the wars of mass production in which superiority in forces and equipment prevailed. Korea was the reflection of the strategy of confrontation and limited war, while Vietnam demonstrated to all concerned the frustration of a super-power, technologically superior, engaging an enemy in a low-intensity war, winning militarily perhaps, but losing politically. Today major forms of international

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

'warfare' are low-intensity conflict and terrorism. This is easy to comprehend when one considers that a large:

...portion of the economy is now devoted to the creation, collection, retrieval, transfer, and dissemination of information; and political power increasingly rests on the ability to create or control information. Terrorists are primitive psychological warriors in an information war. Terrorism reflects the current age of instant communications and rapid mobility.¹⁸⁶

Jenkins underlines that the success of terrorism has much to do with the perception of a nation's capability to deal with such crises, proposing that:

Public perceptions of government standing and competence in combatting terrorism are based not on overall performance, but rather on performance in a few dramatic hostage incidents, where the government, of course, suffers disadvantages from the outset. The public sees the government only in crisis, demonstrably unable to provide security for its citizens, sometimes yielding to terrorists to save lives, unable to bring its enemies to justice. A rescue attempt that succeeds adds immeasurably to a nation's image of military prowess.¹⁸⁷ An attempt that fails does incalculable damage.

Many statistics exist to quantify the activities, numbers, types, locations and targets of international terrorists. It was reported in 1986 that:

...incidents of terrorism -- those involving citizens or territory of more than one country -- have doubled in number since 1975, to slightly over 800 last year....¹⁸⁸

Many commentators agree that terrorist violence is, and will likely remain, an integral part of international relations.

As Scotland Yard's counter-terrorist specialist George

¹⁸⁶Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Charles Hanley, "International Terrorism: Global order shaken by wanton war," The Ottawa Citizen, 19 April, 1986.

Churchill-Coleman stated, "Terrorism is with us now, whether you like it or not. You've got to adjust your way of life to that."¹⁸⁹

The prognosis becomes even more frightening as terrorists seek out softer targets. This is because international police and security agencies will, for the most part, strengthen the defences of consulates, embassies and residences, and will provide other forms of personal security for the more likely terrorist targets. Therefore, terrorist attacks will probably become more indiscriminate. The bombing campaign in Paris during the summer of 1986, aimed at government buildings, restaurants and cafes, and the bombings in London during the spring of 1992 of commuter train stations and the financial district, are examples of what we may expect. Other examples of indiscriminate terrorism are the strikes at airports such as those in December, 1985, at Rome and Vienna.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, targets abound in highly developed industrialized societies and analysts anticipate that terrorist groups will begin targetting vital points such as "computer systems, power grids and other key links of industrial societies."¹⁹¹

Future terrorist operations will, in all probability, be conducted by the traditional groups belonging to militant

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

Palestinian,¹⁹² Islamic, anti-Turkish Armenians, Sikh, Irish, Colombian leftists, Italian right-wing, and scores of other groups. Less advertised terrorist groups such as the Tamil separatists and militant black muslim groups may attempt to launch themselves onto the world stage. Some of these groups are acquiring advanced technical skills, particularly in the employment of remote controlled explosive devices. The IRA and the anti-west Shiite Moslems are bomb experts acknowledged by some as having "bombs of power unparalleled for a non-military organization."¹⁹³

With such relative newcomers to the global scene as the Sikhs, Tamils and Black Muslim groups, the war against terrorism will likely broaden to incorporate other factions who seek what they call justice through terror tactics. In summary, the future will likely witness the continuation of terrorist violence¹⁹⁴, a new targetting methodology and the advent of new groups. The following section discusses methods that might assist countries to deal with terrorism.

¹⁹²See "Arafat warns of strife: PLO chief invokes spectre of hijacking," The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 28 May, 1991. The article states that, "Arafat has warned of an escalation of violence in the occupied territories and of renewed plane hijackings if no progress is made on the Palestinian issue."

¹⁹³Hanley, op. cit.

¹⁹⁴See Carey French, "Terrorist threat growing : Just when you thought it safe," The Globe and Mail, 11 February, 1992. The article states, "The world is becoming a more dangerous place to do business, but cutbacks in media coverage may be masking the threat to the entrepreneur, a US-based terrorism watcher warns." Of note the article complains "that the 'media threshold is now so high that most terrorist acts don't meet it,.'" Moreover, "People are being lulled into a false sense of security that terrorism has gone away.... In reality, the hard, cold evidence demonstrates it hasn't gone away."

SECTION II

The Counter-Terrorist Reaction

The Sovereignty Issue and Counter-Measures

A major concern for countries involved in counter-terrorist activities centres on the problems posed by national sovereignty and legal considerations, particularly as in the latter case any counter-terrorist activity, at least in the democracies, must be subject to the law of the land. The nature of the application of law clearly varies, along with the responsibility for its enforcement, from country to country. In Norway, for example, counter-terrorist activity is strictly and explicitly a matter for police, not the military. In contrast, Great Britain has employed not only the police and intelligence services but also military units to wage an undeclared war against terrorists. In 1988 an 11-man jury ruled that the shootings of three IRA terrorists 'on active service' in Gibraltar in March 1988 by members of the Special Air Service (SAS) were lawful. The jurists:

...decided that the soldiers had gunned them down, believing the IRA unit had planted a car bomb to blow up the Royal Anglian Regiment band during the weekly changing of the guard.¹⁹⁵

As can be fully appreciated, such international counter-terrorist actions by elite counter-terrorist units are highly controversial. Due to the prickly nature of this issue, countries prefer to stay away from it rather than seeking solutions which might appear to erode their

¹⁹⁵"SAS killings in Gibraltar ruled lawful," The Manchester Guardian, 9 October, 1988.

sovereignty. Sophisticated terrorists fully appreciate the conflicts evolving from jurisdictional and sovereignty issues and have taken operational advantage of them on the domestic and international level, particularly in the Third World, where nationalism and anti-colonialist sentiment thrives. This trend continues, and any initiative to address sovereignty concerns and enhance co-operative counter-terrorist actions, particularly in the employment of military and police, dissipates quickly once a terrorist incident is over.¹⁹⁶

Countries do not wish to be seen as having international death squads wandering the world in search of terrorists. Therefore, states such as Britain, which maintain counter-terrorist forces, must also maintain a high degree of control over their activities. Any deployment of counter-terrorist forces abroad must be perceived to be a co-ordinated effort with the host country, as in the West German rescue of hostages in Mogadishu, or to have the sanction of the government targetted by terrorists, as in the Special Air Service (SAS) attack on the Iranian Embassy in London in 1980. Otherwise it must be viewed as a humanitarian issue, as was the Israeli rescue of hostages in Entebbe and the ill-fated American mission into Iran. By casting the operation in such a light it is possible to diminish the problems which surround the issue of sovereignty.

¹⁹⁶Paul Wilkinson, "Trends in international terrorism and the American response," in Lawrence Freedman, et al., Terrorism And International Order, p. 49.

Terrorism is becoming increasingly international at least in the sense that as more countries develop their national capabilities to deal with them, the terrorists will seek out states sympathetic to their cause, such as Syria, or look for less sophisticated countries which they can use as a base. Such migration of terrorism increases the number of sovereignty hurdles which must be overcome. For the West, it remains a complicated and emotional issue. As Paul Wilkinson points out:

...even those Western states which have been major targets of terrorism and have an obvious common interest in combating it have been slow to agree [to] a collective approach. None of the international organizations, even NATO, has proved an easily acceptable framework in the sensitive areas of internal security, law and order. Traditionally governments have taken the view that here they must retain sovereign control. Western politicians and judiciaries are as chauvinistic in this respect as other states, despite the many moral and legal values they have in common with fellow Western governments.¹⁹⁷

Counter-Measures Against Terrorism

In times of crisis such as the Achille Lauro incident or the saga of TWA Flight 847 in June of 1985, the immediate attention of the governments involved is focussed solely upon freeing the hostages. Then, they tend "to fall back in exhaustion."¹⁹⁸ Concerned governments must create the ongoing capability to deal with such outrages, and the capability must be in place before the crisis emerges.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 48-49.

¹⁹⁸ Mark Whitaker, et al., "Ten Ways to Fight Terrorism," Newsweek, 1 July, 1985, p. 26. The employment of a popular weekly in this portion is done to underline the widespread understanding and concern regarding the problem of terrorism as well as to indicate the possible responses forwarded to address this issue.

Governments must realize there is no panacea; that no security agency can forestall every risk. Therefore, to combat terrorism, any concerned leadership:

...must take advantage of the breathing spells between terrorist attacks to invent stronger ways to protect itself. None of the available countermeasures is guaranteed to succeed; few of them are easy, and some involve moral and political adjustments that are sure to be controversial.¹⁹⁹

Some of the counter-measures advocated by various analysts were noted by Mark Whitaker, et al., in an article for Newsweek. They included the following:

- 1) Putting pressure on national governments to ensure that their airports are safe. For example, Athens and Beirut are two airports internationally acknowledged as having poor security; therefore international airlines associations such as the International Air Transport Association (IATA) could be made responsible for reviewing security operations and recommending changes as deemed necessary. More drastic national or international measures could be adopted, if required, such as halting all air traffic and imposing financial and legal penalties on those airlines which continue to use airports considered insecure.
- 2) Installing effective scanners, detectors and management techniques. In concert with advanced technical measures, the physical checking of

¹⁹⁹Ibid.

baggage, passengers (with no exceptions) and the use of 'sniffer' dogs, as done by El Al, will be required. In future we may see the elimination of carry-on luggage. One IATA director has already argued "that it may eventually be necessary to keep everyone except passengers with tickets out of terminal buildings."²⁰⁰ Such measures, including the employment of competent security personnel, would deter many potential aerial terrorists.

- 3) Government agencies must consider the protective hardening of targets such as embassies, residences and government offices. The destruction of the United States Marine Corps barracks in Beirut resulted in the American government order to enhance security at diplomatic posts throughout the world. Secretary of State George Schultz asked in 1985 for some \$236 million in order to improve security at the State Department and at 13 other establishments overseas.²⁰¹ This request included computerized control booths, barriers, rewards for information, bodyguards and security dogs. The use of a comprehensive identification system for employees, and bomb and weapon detection equipment must also be considered.²⁰²

²⁰⁰Ibid., p. 27.

²⁰¹Ibid.

²⁰²Ibid.

- 4) The expansion and co-ordination of a well-organized intelligence gathering apparatus "is the only way in which Western nations can confront terrorists and pre-empt their activities."²⁰³ Winning the intelligence battle is vital if countries hope to reduce terrorist activity. The thwarting of Palestinian attacks in the 1970s by Israel and the United States, through the intelligence penetration of the Palestine Liberation Organization, remains an outstanding example of international co-operation, showing all security and intelligence agencies what can be achieved.²⁰⁴

The infiltration of terrorist organizations is vitally important. A country must formulate a game plan to focus its intelligence efforts against terrorists, and to establish what government bodies are primarily responsible for counter-terrorist intelligence gathering.²⁰⁵ Livingstone and Arnold have emphasized that timely and accurate information has enabled;

...security officials to move diplomats and other targets out of range, to warn other government officials of plots against them, and to expose the intentions of various terrorist groups to friendly governments. Not only can a well-developed intelligence capability provide authorities with advance information about an upcoming terrorist operation, permitting them to take steps to avert the incident or at least minimize the damage, but it also aids them in tracking down suspected

²⁰³ Interview with a Canadian Security Intelligence Service officer, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 27 July, 1986.

²⁰⁴ Whitaker, et al., op. cit., p. 27.

²⁰⁵ Livingstone and Arnold, op. cit., p. 232.

terrorists and identifying support from patron states.²⁰⁶

- 5) Officials responsible for a nation's crisis-management function should be identified, formed into teams and given the opportunity to practice,²⁰⁷ so that in the event of a terrorist attack, command and control measures can be implemented immediately. Officials, diplomats, civil servants, police and military personnel can be fully aware, ahead of time, of their duties and responsibilities. The benefits of such an approach were demonstrated in the 1980 Iranian Embassy siege in London. The decisions were made by the Home Secretary, Mr. William Whitelaw, who acted as chairman of the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR), the government's crisis committee. The committee included representatives from the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence, Scotland Yard and the security and intelligence (MI5) branch. COBR was assisted by specialist advisors. It was noted that:

COBRA did not go into the operation 'cold'. Everybody knew what they had to do and where to assemble when the codeword was given. This expertise came from the realisation that such an incident was likely to happen and the team had

²⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 231-232.

²⁰⁷ Stephen Bindman, "Mock terrorist attack set to roll near border," The Ottawa Citizen, 7 June, 1989. This article states that "Canada and the United States will stage the largest-ever test of their ability to respond to a terrorist attack in a mock hostage-taking somewhere along the border later this month."

conducted its own 'wargames' to prepare for the event.²⁰⁸

In contrast, the United States appears to have "more of a machismo attitude."²⁰⁹ According to Robert Kupperman, the prevailing feeling is "that we don't need to prepare in that way for managing a crisis."²¹⁰ And in admiration of the British experience, Kupperman argues that "We have to get a regular program of crisis gaming going, and we have to make sure that at least cabinet-level people are involved in it."²¹¹

It has been put forward:

If U.S. officials had done more advance planning in the Iranian situation, they might have reached different conclusions about Carter's rescue raid. Soon after the seizure of the U.S. diplomats in Teheran, the Israeli army war-gamed possible rescue operations.²¹²

There is no evidence that the United States operationally consulted with the Israelis to solicit advice or assistance, or for that matter any other allied country in their ill-fated Iranian adventure. Notwithstanding, lessons from both the British and American experiences can benefit those governments willing to learn from them and may assist in the safe release of hostages in future rescue operations.

²⁰⁸ Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, Terror! The West Fights Back, p. 39.

²⁰⁹ Whitaker, et al., op. cit., p. 28.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

- 6) The improvement of international co-operation to combat international terrorist activities is known to be "crucial to any effective effort to control and suppress terrorism."²¹³ Once Fidel Castro undertook to extradite hijackers to the United States for legal proceedings, the hijack phenomenon, with Cuba as a destination, diminished. The adherence to international agreements and the suspension of air services to nations suspected of harbouring or supporting terrorism, might assist in a co-ordinated approach to countering terrorism. One critical area where greater international co-operation could assist is in the sharing of intelligence. This could also include aiding friendly nations in training their intelligence, security, police and military forces in the various aspects of counter-terrorism. Such co-operation may in the future include the possibility of creating "a multinational commando force that could be thrown into action in future terrorist emergencies."²¹⁴ Such co-operation would likely further enhance the effectiveness of those countries which now combat political violence on national and international levels.
- 7) Experience in negotiating with terrorists since the 1970s underlines:

²¹³Livingstone and Arnold, op. cit., p. 237.

²¹⁴"Global Force Proposed to Fight Terrorist Threat," The Sunday Star, Toronto, 27 April, 1986. See also Carey French, "Talking a tough line on terrorism," The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 14 May, 1988 .

...the importance of choosing the right negotiator-ideally someone who speaks the terrorists' language, understands their history and culture, is street-smart but also a good listener.²¹⁵

Other noteworthy negotiation aims focus on acquiring concessions, developing a trusting relationship with the terrorists, and attempting to deprive the terrorists of rest.²¹⁶ Sadly, the terrorists themselves have rapidly assimilated these strategies and have evolved their own counters, such as taking along an extra gunman to keep negotiators off balance, as happened in Flight 847 between Beirut and Algiers. It is, therefore, vitally important that the negotiators be flexible and have the authority to develop means to overcome these terrorist ploys. Officials should understand that they must avoid declaring:

... publicly that they will not make concessions to terrorists.... Such statements may sound principled and tough-minded, but they constrain efforts to carry out the bargaining that inevitably takes place with hostage-takers.²¹⁷

As one analyst has said "The fact is that any government will negotiate, if not directly, then indirectly."²¹⁸

²¹⁵Whitaker, et al., op. cit., p. 28.

²¹⁶Ibid. See also Rod Nordland, et al., "Were the Deals Worth It?," Newsweek, 16 December, 1991, p. 38.

²¹⁷Ibid.

²¹⁸Ibid. It should be noted that a moral case for not negotiating can be made, but the real issue is that governments must be pragmatic and, therefore, they will bargain with the aim of winning the negotiation. Moreover, although not negotiating with terrorists, for many countries is stated government policy; government officials, as well as politicians and diplomats soon discover that this 'official policy' is in fact, seldom honoured.

The release in December, 1991 of a number of American and British hostages is proof that governments will directly or indirectly negotiate with terrorists for the safe release of their citizens.

- 8) For national leaders, ensuring the safety of the hostages should be of paramount importance. However, the negotiations that occur during a hostage crisis should not rule out "the option of a rescue mission [as this] keeps terrorists guessing - and may encourage them to make concessions more quickly."²¹⁹ The employment of elite military or police formations in hostage rescue attempts must be feasible. Since deployment to the crisis area must be rapid, special operations units could be based close to areas with a high potential for terrorist activities i.e., the Middle East and Europe. These bases should have extensive training facilities, be reasonably private and maintained in secure surroundings. More information regarding the use of 'final option forces' will be discussed in later chapters.
- 9) Western nations should seek agreements on ways of identifying and penalizing states which harbour or assist international terrorists. The economic influence of the Western states for instance could be brought to bear in fighting terrorist violence,

²¹⁹Ibid.

through economic sanctions and other means such as the cessation of aerial traffic to those countries identified as sponsor nations.²²⁰

- 10) Prior to the 'successful' attack by American aircraft against selected Libyan targets in 1985, the threat of precision reprisals such as bombings and assassination²²¹ was viewed with a jaundiced eye. Threats of retaliation that aren't expeditiously carried out lead to the perception that the target nation is impotent. This apparent weakness encourages others to consider terrorism as an effective way to wage war. Although the option of retaliation creates many problems, it is one avenue that must remain open. As a deterrent measure, it may have limited effect, but it does sometimes demonstrate, as in the Libyan case, that the target sometimes fights back, thereby conveying a crucial message in the war against terrorists and the nations which support them.

The Western governments recognize that as long as terrorists operate they can not defeat them totally, particularly since the foundations of much terrorist activity are embedded in deep-seated, highly emotional political grievances. Further,

²²⁰Neil C. Livingstone, The War Against Terrorism, pp. 164-165.

²²¹"U.S. Army seeks OK to kill terrorists," The Gazette, Montreal, 11 April, 1989. According to this article "'Using military force against terrorists' to protect U.S. citizens or the national security of the United States is a legitimate exercise of the international legal right of self-defence and does not constitute assassination," the army's legal opinion concludes."

political violence will likely continue until these grievances are satisfactorily addressed. As democratic states place a premium on freedom, they will continue to remain vulnerable to such low-intensity violence.

In conclusion, the West will likely have little option but to be prepared to continue to experience terrorist violence well into the future. Therefore, the West may be required to orchestrate all possible means to defeat terrorism -- ensuring that they are employed with cautious forethought, and that there is no illusion as to their (limited) effect.

The 'Final Option' - The Justifiability of Elite Counter-Terrorist Teams

This section focusses on the experiences of the Israeli and West German governments which developed and deployed elite military counter-terrorist teams in response, partly, to the frustrations of employing a series of so-called "non-force" methods against terrorists. Livingstone writes the following:

Western governments have employed a variety of nonforce strategies in their efforts to resist terrorism, including diplomacy, negotiation, concessions, and cooptation. Occasionally such methods have worked, but more often than not they have failed or only provided a temporary prophylaxis to an endemic problem. It is widely recognized that, under most circumstances, making concessions to terrorists only invites further acts of terrorism. This fact, combined with the failure of the UN to take concerted action to develop effective remedies to the problem of international terrorism, has resulted in a growing tendency on the part of national governments to resort to unilateral military action against terrorism in the belief that, if it is not possible to make

terrorists answerable to the law, then they must be answerable to the gun.²²²

The employment of military options under certain circumstances is arguably justifiable under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This article confirms that nations have the right to self defence in the face of armed attack. Therefore, if one argues that terrorism constitutes an armed assault, every government has the inherent right to use military force as a defence against that assault.²²³

The Requirement for the Elite Counter-Terrorist Soldier

It is apparent from recent twentieth-century history in Western countries, that the responsibility for combatting terrorism has been, for the most part, that of law enforcement authorities. On occasion, army units were tasked and, for the most part, were found to be operationally wanting in strategy, methodology and structure. Conventional military forces and tactics have not met the challenge of terrorism:

Not only are contemporary weapons and tactics far too destructive to be employed in heavily populated urban regions, but also the deployment of large numbers of soldiers against terrorists simply

²²²Livingstone, op. cit., p. 176.

²²³Ibid. See Edmund Jan Osmanczyk, The Encyclopedia of The United Nations and International Agreements, p. 838. Article 51 states "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security."

increases²²⁴ the number of targets at which they can strike.

General George Grivas, the famous Cypriot terrorist leader, noted that the level of terrorist operations is much lower than that of conventional military operations.

Counter-terrorist operations demand specially adapted and trained soldiers, tactics and strategy. He noted the:

...only hope of finding us was to play cat and mouse: to use tiny, expertly trained groups, who could work with cunning and patience and strike rapidly when we least expected.²²⁵

In short, one must use those same weapons and tactics belonging to the terrorists' inventory -- psychology, stealth, speed, surprise and cunning against the terrorists themselves. This type of military operation demands a different type of soldier, namely one who can develop a broad spectrum of skills.

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Counterterrorism demands highly trained and motivated commandos, operating in small groups; skilled in electronics, communications, demolitions, marksmanship, deception, silent killing; and familiar with terrorist tactics and behavior.²²⁶

One will return to this point in later chapters.

It should be underlined that two countries in particular were noted for their skill and audacious employment of counter-terrorist forces in the mid 1970s. Israel and West Germany are interesting examples, the former has extensive experience in commando and special operations and maintains a rather large corporate memory on military operations, since

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Robert Taber, The War Of The Flea: Guerrilla Warfare Theory And Practice, p. 118.

²²⁶ Livingstone, op. cit., p. 176.

1948, across the spectrum of warfare especially in low-intensity conflict and terrorism. West Germany, on the other hand, represents the other extreme having little experience in 'real world' special or counter-terrorist operations during this period. Notwithstanding, Colonel Wegener of the West German GSG9 took the opportunity to study, observe and solicit the experiences of other countries thereby making them his own. While it is quite obvious that he drew much knowledge and skill from his own training, it is also quite apparent that his foreign training and attachments, as shall be seen, gave him the opportunity to gain operational experience and more importantly the ability to call upon the assistance of friendly or allied forces when required.

It is upon these two operations at Entebbe and Mogadishu that this paper shall embark, underlining the close international co-operation and assistance that West Germany and Israel obtained throughout the course of these actions. It is the aim of this section to not only highlight the close co-operative effort of a number of countries to assist in these governmental responses but, concomitantly, to point out the various types of assistance that was forthcoming from the international community.

Entebbe and Mogadishu: Lessons in Successful Hostage-Rescue

An examination of two successful hostage-rescue incidents of the 1970s, at Entebbe and Mogadishu, highlight some of the key factors that may determine success or failure in this type of 'surgical operation'. These include contingency planning, preparation and co-ordination of the rescue forces,

overall command, control and communication, the assembling of the intelligence picture (C3I), and, in particular, international collaboration. As this paper shall reveal, neither of these missions could have been successful without considerable international co-operation.

Although the degree of co-operation may vary due to the locations of the incident and various political considerations in the countries involved, Western countries have continued to assist each other even though they have experienced the normal ups and downs of relations between states. Many of these countries have developed elite counter-terrorist forces of some description and these units have been used to train similar organizations in other countries. The United States, Israel, West Germany, Great Britain and France²²⁷ have assisted each other in developing anti-terrorist techniques. These include cross-training in weapons and tactics, demolitions, as well as insertion and extraction methods. Such skills are, in turn, incorporated into the training of units in collaborating countries. The advantages accruing from such co-operation are heightened by personnel exchanges. As will be shown, personnel from these counter-terrorist forces have travelled to the sites of terrorist incidents to advise, assist and even participate

²²⁷ France's counter-terrorist force 'Groupement d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie nationale' (GIGN) is not covered in this text. It is, however, considered to be a highly professional unit and belongs to the Gendarmerie Nationale. Its most famous action was the February, 1976 rescue of 30 children who were being held hostage by members of the Somali Coast Liberation Front (FLCS). For further information see Leroy Thompson, The Rescuers: The World's Top Anti-Terrorist Units, pp. 70-78 and Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, Terror: The West Fights Back, pp. 138-148.

with their foreign counterparts in domestic and foreign counter-terrorist operations.

Entebbe Rescue

The Entebbe rescue, code-named 'THUNDERBOLT' and later renamed 'Operation JONATHAN', was described by the historian Richard Deacon, as:

...an astonishing epic of military adventure and enterprise carried out in a spirit of medieval buccaneering by a team trained in the arts of both the military and espionage.²²⁸

This was indeed a daring, dangerous mission. The lives of 103 hostages hung in the balance. However, this operation probably could not have succeeded had it not been for the assistance given Israel's intelligence and military agencies by several friendly governments. The co-operation given spanned the spectrum from moral support to having a foreign para-military representative actually present with the Israeli rescue force. Without this co-operation, the rescue attempt might well have failed. Worse still, Israel may have had to succumb to the terrorists' demands. Today, Operation THUNDERBOLT represents a fine example of the international efforts which can assist in a counter-terrorism mission. The following extended narrative will demonstrate how international assistance was vital, particularly at critical junctures throughout this operation.

The incident began on 27 June, 1976, when Air France Flight 139 from Tel Aviv to Paris was seized in mid-air by seven members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

²²⁸Richard Deacon, The Israeli Secret Service, p. 271.

(PFLP) just after a scheduled stopover in Athens. According to one witness, two men left their seats and, brandishing revolvers, said, "We are revolutionaries and this airplane is now our property. We are going to take you where we please."²²⁹ Other terrorists joined in to assist their comrades in seizing the aircraft. Once the task was completed, their West German leader, later identified as Wilfred Boese, made the following announcement:

This is the Che Guevara Brigade of the Popular Front of the Liberation of Palestine. I am your new commandant. This plane is renamed HAIFA. You are our prisoners.²³⁰

The plane flew on to Benghazi for a brief refuelling stop. There, one pregnant passenger, a 30-year-old British subject was allowed to deplane.

Soon after departure from Libya, Flight 139 attempted to land in Sudan but was refused permission. It continued its flight to Entebbe International Airport in Uganda. On arrival in Entebbe, the passengers and crew occupied an unused passenger terminal.²³¹ It was then that indications of collusion between Idi Amin and the PFLP became apparent to some of the hostages. One hostage, Akipa Lasker, a lawyer from Tel Aviv later stated:

"...when we reached Uganda and got off - the plane we saw more Palestinians there," he recalled.

Lasker (sic) said he saw five or six of the latter. "They were definitely not on the flight,"

²²⁹ Angus Deming, et al., "A Daring Rescue in Uganda," Newsweek, 12 July, 1976, p. 28.

²³⁰ Edward F. Mickolus, Transnational Terrorism: A Chronology Of Events, 1968-1979, p. 621.

²³¹ Deming, et al., op. cit., p. 29.

he stressed. "When we got off the plane we saw them waiting and looking at us."²³²

The purpose of the hijacking was initially obscure. However, the aim became quite apparent when the terrorists announced that they sought the release of 53 Palestinians or pro-Palestinian comrades incarcerated in Israel, Switzerland, West Germany, France and Kenya.²³³ The hostages taken from the Air France flight were a mixture of Israelis and non-Israelis including a number of French, Greek, American, Canadian and New Zealand citizens.

The terrorists selected a negotiator. He was Hashi Abdullan, Somalia's Ambassador to Uganda. He, in turn, requested that the French government name their own representative. During these first delicate negotiations, President Idi Amin Dada refused Ambassador Pierre Renard's intervention on behalf of the French government. Instead Amin would negotiate directly with the terrorists.

By 30 June, it was apparent to some diplomatic observers that the Israeli government's policy was not to yield to the demands of the terrorists. One country, Canada, supported the Israeli stance and this was greeted by one Israeli official:

...WITH SATISFACTION HAVING HEARD NEWS BROADCAST THAT CDN GOVT [CANADIAN GOVERNMENT] WOULD NOT/NOT BE REQUESTING GOVTS [GOVERNMENTS] OF ISRAEL, WEST GERMANY, SWITZERLAND, FRANCE AND KENYA TO ACCEPT TERRORISTS DEMANDS.²³⁴

²³²"When the commandos arrived...", Jerusalem Post, 5 July, 1976.

²³³"53 names on list," Jerusalem Post, 30 June, 1976.

²³⁴"UGANDA HOSTAGE SITUATION: ISRAELI REACTION."
(Footnote Continued)

This was a departure from previous Israeli policy. In 1969 for example, Egyptian and Syrian nationals were freed in return for two hijacked TWA passengers held in Damascus and for two imprisoned Israeli pilots who had been downed over Egypt.²³⁵ As for the demands for the release of the 53 jailed comrades, Kampala Radio had announced on 29 June that once these prisoners were freed, Air France was to:

...bring all these freedom fighters to Entebbe International Airport, to be exchanged with the hostages and the aircraft. Air France to transport the freedom fighters held in Israel to Entebbe International Airport and it should only carry the freedom fighters and the crew.²³⁶

The PFLP, via Kampala Radio, set an 0800 deadline for Thursday, 30 June, and stated that there would be "severe and heavy punishment,"²³⁷ if their demands were not met. The same day, the hijackers released 47 non-Israeli hostages who were taken by an Air France 707 to Nairobi.

As events unfolded, it became clear to all concerned that although this began as an international incident, it was clearly becoming an Israeli issue. Until then, it had been argued that the allegedly firm Israeli commitment not to bargain with terrorists could be ignored. According to observers in Jerusalem, there were several reasons for this:

- LIVES OF NON-ISRAELI NATIONALS ARE IN DANGER.
- NEITHER THE PLANE NOR THE HIJACKERS ARE WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE OF ISRAELI TROOPS.

(Footnote Continued)

Message Traffic. Canadian Embassy Tel Aviv to Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, Canada, 30 June, 1976.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Mickolus, op. cit., p. 622.

²³⁷ "Chronology of Hijacking," The New York Times, 5 July, 1976.

- ISRAEL HAD NOT BEEN DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS.
- OTHER GOVERNMENTS ARE DIRECTLY INVOLVED.²³⁸

The New York Times reported that:

Israel's policy in the past has been to refuse to negoti3te wi [sic - negotiate with] terrorists on the ground that that [sic] will lead only to further terrorist attempts. Senior officials conceded, however, that the Uganda situation faces Israel with an specially [sic] difficult dilemma.²³⁹

The following day, a further 100 non-Israeli passengers were freed. This action by the hijackers allowed intelligence authorities to acquire vital pieces of information regarding the terrorists, the airport, security and weapons. They learned also that the transit lounge which held the hostages was not wired with explosives. Moreover, the freeing of the non-Israeli passengers mobilized Israeli public opinion.

This action helped unite Israel in an unexpected way, because it gave the first link that Jews were the target, their lives to be the subject of bazaar-style hagglng with Israel.²⁴⁰

During the questioning of the freed passengers by French and Israeli intelligence personnel, President Amin emerged not as a mediator, but as an accomplice. This was information which strengthened Israeli feeling that Uganda was working with Dr. Waddieh Haddad, the terrorist chief.²⁴¹

The Israeli government, upon notification of the hijacking, had rapidly organized a crisis management team consisting of

²³⁸Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) 66, PARIS, AFP, "ISRAELI GOVERNMENT MEETING TO ASSESS HIJACK SITUATION," 1 July, 1976.

²³⁹Terence Smith, "'Hijackers' Orders Challenge Israel," The New York Times, 30 June, 1976.

²⁴⁰William Stevenson, 90 Minutes At Entebbe, p. 17.

²⁴¹Ibid.

the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet and the chief of staff of the Israeli Defence Force. More importantly:

Each member of this crisis task force was supported by specialists: experts on the new international network of terrorists whose attacks on Israel had the same ideological significance as bombings in Ireland; experts on antipiracy tactics; military, political, and diplomatic experts. They drew together swiftly and smoothly. This sort of emergency had happened before, though never on this scale.²⁴²

A series of suggestions were forthcoming, including the capture of Idi Amin while en route to Mauritius to attend a conference of the Organization for African Unity. Some argued that Moshe Dayan should be sent to confer with Amin. More radical ideas included holding, and possibly killing relatives of PFLP members, should any hostages be murdered.²⁴³

Two options were obvious to all concerned. The first was to negotiate; the second was to undertake a military action of some type to rescue the hostages. It was vital for the Israeli government to be seen to be seeking a peaceful resolution to the problem. On 29 June, Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin asked Lieutenant General Mordechai Gur, "Do we have a military option?" In response Gur related that "he lacked adequate intelligence about the airfield layout at Entebbe, the number of hostages, the military and human risks. 'At

²⁴²Ibid., p. 7.

²⁴³Mickolus, op. cit., p. 622.

the moment,' he replied, 'we do not have a military option.'²⁴⁴

Rabin called for a vote and received unanimous agreement from his Cabinet that the Israeli government would pursue negotiations.²⁴⁵ Notwithstanding, the Defence Minister, Shimon Peres, on his own initiative,²⁴⁶ began the search for a viable military option.²⁴⁷ The tasks of planning and commanding an operation, should it come to that, were given to Brigadier General Dan Shomron, the senior paratroop and infantry officer of the Israel Defence Forces.

In preparing options, Shimon Peres ordered Gur to determine if the French government would assist Israel by allowing the latter's aircraft to use the refuelling facilities at Djibouti. As Stevenson notes:

Nobody had to ask what he [Peres] meant. If a military operation became necessary ... planes must fly around hostile Arab territories, evade Somalia's Russian detection systems, and complete flights beyond the normal range of Israel's existing military aircraft.²⁴⁸

Of interest during this period was the fact that Kenya held five imprisoned Palestinian freedom fighters, three of whom had been apprehended as they attempted to down an El Al airliner with a Soviet-made anti-aircraft missile when

²⁴⁴"Rescue at Entebbe: How the Israelis Did It," The Reader's Digest, (October, 1976), p. 46.

²⁴⁵Ibid.

²⁴⁶Yeshayahu Ben-Porat, et al., Entebbe Rescue, pp. 222-223.

²⁴⁷See Captain E. Douglas Menarchik, "Strike Against Terror! the Entebbe raid," Air University Review, (July-August, 1980), p. 70. This initiative has been described as an 'unstructured dual-tracked approach.'

²⁴⁸Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 11-13.

approaching the Nairobi Airport on 18 January, 1975.²⁴⁹ This missile system and an array of other weapons had been seized by Kenyan security personnel. The weapons used were traced to Uganda.²⁵⁰ On 21 January, 1975 a man and a woman arrived in Nairobi hoping to discover the fate of the three terrorists. These individuals had been arrested, searched and interrogated by both Kenyan and, in February, Israeli intelligence. The woman was reportedly carrying orders written in invisible ink on her stomach. These orders had been to attack an aircraft belonging to El Al.²⁵¹ All five were then sent to Israel where they were later to be put on trial on 6 July, 1977.²⁵² At the time of the Entebbe incident, however, the PFLP hijackers openly threatened to take reprisals against the Kenyan government if it did not comply with their request to release their incarcerated members.

By Wednesday, 30 June, it became readily apparent from the information gathered through the interviews of released hostages that Amin and his army were working in concert with the PFLP. Nevertheless, Colonel Baruch Bar-Lev, who had once been on friendly terms with Amin, maintained close contact in a futile attempt to relay to the Ugandan President the gravity of the situation and to remind him of his personal responsibility for the hostages.²⁵³

²⁴⁹"Five facing secret trial over bid to down jet," The Globe and Mail", Toronto, 7 July, 1977.

²⁵⁰Stevenson, op. cit., p. 23.

²⁵¹Ibid., p. 24.

²⁵²"Five facing secret...", op. cit.

The terrorists extended their deadline to Thursday, 1 July. The Israeli government proposed a joint Israeli-French negotiation team to the French government. The proposal was accepted.

Regarding this extension Prime Minister Rabin has said that "Thursday was critical,"²⁵⁴ due to the fact that he "had to report that we [the Israelis] had no military option that could be applied before the Thursday deadline set by the terrorists."²⁵⁵ On Thursday, according to reporter Michael Elkins, the Israeli government:

...decided to open negotiations for the release of all the hostages with a readiness to release prisoners. The reference being to prisoners held for terrorist acts in Israel whose release had been demanded by the hijackers and it was generally accepted here that there was no other alternative. Official sources are saying that the government fully intended to negotiate....²⁵⁶

Moreover:

"I could not resist the demand to negotiate," said the prime minister. "Military operations depended upon accurate intelligence and proof, by way of full dress rehearsals, that a commando strike could be conducted with success."²⁵⁷

Whilst negotiations continued, planners recognized that the military option would require detailed intelligence for any chance of success. A 72-hour deadline extension, granted by the terrorists, was given at noon on 1 July. This gave the military the opportunity to²⁵⁸ amass the information needed to plan the rescue operation:

²⁵³Mark Stevens and Milan J. Kubic, "The Odd Couple," Newsweek, 26 July, 1976, p. 52.

²⁵⁴Stevenson, op. cit., p. 32.

²⁵⁵Ibid.

²⁵⁶Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "The rescue of hostages held in Uganda by Israeli commandos," Sunday Magazine, hosted by Bob Oxley and George Rich, 4 July, 1976, Transcript, p. 2.

²⁵⁷Stevenson, op. cit., p. 32.

Prior to the extension Thursday of the deadline, officials said, there had not been enough time to prepare and mount an operation that had any realistic prospect of success by midday Thursday, when the hijackers said they would kill the hostages and blow up the plane.²⁵⁹

To this day the reason that the PFLP allowed so much time is unknown. The Israelis believed that it may have been due to the departure of Amin for Mauritius.²⁶⁰ The Israeli intelligence effort continued to acquire information germane to all aspects of the planning phase, including the compiling of character profiles on President Amin and the terrorists. To acquire essential information, a bold intelligence operation was mounted involving the moving of Israeli intelligence officers from Kenya into Uganda by aircraft and motor vehicle.²⁶¹ Some of these intelligence officers in Kenya established themselves in the residence of a prominent Israeli merchant and were later discreetly met by a series of senior Kenyan representatives. They included:

²⁵⁸Terence Smith, "Israelis Say Extension of Deadline by the Hijackers Was Crucial to Raid's Success," The New York Times, 6 July, 1976.

²⁵⁹Ibid.

²⁶⁰Ibid.

²⁶¹Stevenson, op. cit., p. 33.

...the chief of Nairobi police, Lionel Bryn Davies, and...a gentleman named Bruce McKenzie²⁶² who...was now a close friend of President Kenyatta. Later, the leader of Kenyatta's élite General Service Unit, Geoffrey Karithil, put in an appearance. Between them, they were able to assure the visitors that there would be no objection to Israeli Air Force planes flying through Kenyan air space -- and that President Kenyatta would affect not to notice if any²⁶³ of them should be put down at Nairobi to refuel.

The importance of this strategically located refuelling stop cannot be overstated.²⁶⁴ Kenyan authorities offered full assistance in this regard:

The commander of Kenyatta's GSU strong-arm units, ..., was able to give assurances that his president would turn a blind eye if the GSU and Nairobi airport police isolated the rescue force during a stopover -- provided this phase of the operation was conducted²⁶⁵ as a routine matter under cover of El Al charters.

It should be underlined that Kenya's assistance to Israel had to be perceived as legal from an international viewpoint.

Therefore an opinion was sought:

Charles Njojo, Kenya's attorney general, offered a legal opinion that so long as the laws governing international civil aviation were observed (at least in the eyes of Kenya's airport authority), facilities could not be refused.²⁶⁶

It should be pointed out that Kenya had been the brunt of a series of threats from Amin, and these threats were given credence by Uganda's Soviet-made MIG fighters and well

²⁶²See "The McKenzie affair," Africa Magazine, July, 1978. Mr. McKenzie was later killed in a mysterious aerial explosion. All aboard the light aircraft were killed.

²⁶³Richard Garrett, The Raiders: The Elite Strike Forces that Altered the Course of War and History, pp. 212-214.

²⁶⁴Stevenson, op. cit., p. 77.

²⁶⁵Ibid.

²⁶⁶Ibid.

equipped army. Ironically, thanks to Israeli military assistance, Uganda had quite a formidable armed force for a Third World nation. Richard Garrett states that:

Uganda had come a long way since Israeli experts had raised its armed forces from the slough of inefficiency. According to a sufficiently accurate estimate, they now consisted of 21,000 well-armed and well-trained soldiers equipped with 267 armoured troop carriers, SAM ground-to-air missiles, howitzers and mortars. In addition to this, the Ugandan Air Force had well over fifty combat planes, including thirty MIG-9s and the more recent MIG-17s. It was thought that about half of the army was concentrated between Entebbe and Kampala (twenty-one miles away). Twenty-one²⁶⁷ of the fighter planes were at Entebbe airport....

Foreign intelligence assisted in the training of the assault force. The Israeli firm, Solel Boneh, which had built the new airport terminal²⁶⁸ as part and parcel of an Israeli aid programme, produced in preparation for this mission, an Entebbe Airport replica for rehearsals. This model was modified through intelligence derived from the released hostages, Israeli reconnaissance aircraft and information drawn from American satellites.²⁶⁹

According to one official, the Israelis, during this time, continued to negotiate in good faith "But it quickly became obvious that we weren't getting anywhere."²⁷⁰ Support for a military rescue operation became increasingly strong by Friday, 2 July. It was on this day that there was a dramatic increase in the area of international co-operation,

²⁶⁷Garrett, op. cit., pp. 211-212.

²⁶⁸"Raid Reconstructed: Israelis Knew Airport," The New York Times, 5 July, 1976.

²⁶⁹Stevenson, op. cit., p. 89.

²⁷⁰Smith, "Israelis Say Extension..." op. cit.

particularly between Israel and the Western intelligence community:

From West Germany came information on Wilfried Böse, tentatively identified as the German who declared himself captain of the hijacked airbus.

From Canada came a flood of material collected by Guy Toupin, coordinator of security for the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal. Toupin had worked for more than a year with the police of a dozen countries in preparation for the Olympics. He recalled only too vividly the massacre of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich.²⁷¹

With the assistance of the West, the vitally important intelligence picture began to take shape. This increased the chance for a successful military option. Particularly:

...as new information reached Israel through the French Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST), Scotland Yard, the CIA and FBI, the security branch of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and more was smuggled out of Uganda by released hostages and Israel's informants within "Big Daddy" Amin's government, commando groups were given photographs and identikit details to memorize. They were to proceed on the basis that action would be required.²⁷²

The Israeli government, in maintaining a negotiation posture, as well as planning a military operation, was keeping its options open. Israel, in fact, cloaked itself with the aura of a country desiring to negotiate. This evolved into a highly sophisticated strategic deception plan.²⁷³ In this regard the importance of international co-operation and support became more apparent once the Israeli leadership realized the high costs of submitting to the terrorist

²⁷¹Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

²⁷²Ibid, p. 46.

²⁷³Drew Middleton, "Key to Raid's Success: Analysts Cite Strategic and Tactical Surprise, Achieved Through Deception," The New York Times, 5 July, 1976.

demands. France soon became, although Paris did not realize it, an integral part of the total Israeli deception plan. The French government remained an equal negotiating partner up to the last minute of discussions. More importantly this Franco-Israeli negotiating team gave further evidence to the terrorists that the Israeli government was concerned only with achieving a peaceful settlement to this hostage crisis. This ruse, as shall be seen, worked.

The vital intelligence provided by the United States, France, West Germany, Canada and Israel allowed the military planners to reduce the unknowns of the mission. However, international co-operation did not cease there, and one could argue that this assistance, at a critical juncture, assured the success of the military option. Carroll writes that on 2 July there:

...came three pivotal developments: the Pentagon supplied Israel with aerial-reconnaissance and satellite photographs of Entebbe Airport; clandestine Israeli agents penetrated Entebbe and brought out vital information, and Kenya gave secret assurances that an Israeli strike force would be permitted to land at Nairobi to refuel and care for the wounded on its return trip from Uganda.²⁷⁴

Two of these three factors needed the support of foreign governments. Without reconnaissance and satellite photographs, and without the permission of the Kenyan government to land in Nairobi, the probability of success would have been greatly reduced. The satellite photographs, in particular, were essential as the rescue force planners had to know if the terrorists had obstructed the runways with vehicles to prevent any rescue aircraft from landing

²⁷⁴Raymond Carroll, "How The Israelis Pulled It Off," Newsweek, 19 July, 1976, pp. 43-44.

safely.²⁷⁵ With this information and the Kenyan agreement to assist, an Israeli government official said, "Militarily, the situation on the ground now looked easier than when the Palestinians held hostages here in Israel."²⁷⁶

The deception plan continued and was extremely effective.

Internationally:

...it still looked as though Israel would have to give in -- and the Israelis continued their attempts to keep up that impression. The morning meeting of the crisis group on July 3 was held up while Foreign Minister Allon kept a scheduled breakfast with Daniel Patrick Moynihan, former American ambassador to the United Nations. 'It was an amazing performance,' Moynihan said later. 'I thought I'd be out as soon as we finished coffee, but Allon went on and on, as if he didn't have a care in the world. He told me: 'We have great hope that the French will be able to negotiate something. We're waiting.' And he gave me a tour d'horizon that lasted an hour.²⁷⁷

At 1400, Saturday 3 July, the Israeli crisis group met and agreed to recommend the military option to the Cabinet. Here again the deception had succeeded so well, with the unwitting assistance of France, that the Cabinet members were for the most part unaware of the military preparations that had taken place.²⁷⁸ They believed that Israel was negotiating to the end. During this meeting, Cabinet members expressed concern over the possibility of casualties. The tide was turned by Rabin, who argued forcefully for a rescue, "even if we lost 10 or 20 or 25 killed."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵Smith, "Israelis Say Extension...", op. cit.

²⁷⁶Carroll, Newsweek, op. cit., p. 44.

²⁷⁷Ibid.

²⁷⁸Ibid.

²⁷⁹Ibid., See also Edward H. Kolcum, "Israeli Defense Minister Explains Tactics," Aviation Week and Space
(Footnote Continued)

The Cabinet voted. The result was unanimous. The hostages were to be rescued. General Gur gave the necessary orders to the 35th Airborne Brigade, the Golani Brigade and elements of Sayaret Matkal (better known as General Staff Intelligence Reconnaissance Unit²⁸⁰) which would comprise the strike force.

Great Britain was also a source of continued support and intelligence for Israel. The British offered "the fullest cooperation within limits set by the fact that British citizens were still living in Uganda."²⁸¹ More important, it was information originating from British sources that suggested:

...for reasons ranging from President Amin's return from the African summit to the growing unease among some of the PLO strategists in Kampala, the risk had increased considerably that execution of hostages would begin early on Sunday morning. If Thunderbolt was to be launched, the time frame was reduced drastically. The equation was now simple. Risk losing 35 Israelis [estimate of casualties] by taking action, or face the possibility of 105 dead by the sin of omission.²⁸²

(Footnote Continued)

Technology, 2 August, 1976, p. 25. Peres stated "From the very first moment it was clear that the operation would not be a calculated military risk but would be a comparative national risk. The comparative national risk [means] what happens if you surrender, what will the consequences be if you surrender."

"The cost of surrender always exceeds the cost of a military risk. The food of terrorism is success. The end of terrorism is failure."

²⁸⁰See "The Guys - Israel's anonymous heroes," The Ottawa Journal, 5 July, 1976. See also Max Walmer, An Illustrated Guide To Modern Elite Forces, pp. 24-33 and Samuel E. Katz, "THE ELITE: THE TRUE STORY OF ISRAEL'S SECRET COUNTER-TERRORIST UNIT".

²⁸¹Stevenson, op. cit., p. 88.

²⁸²Ibid.

With respect to the operation, the force commander, Brigadier-General Shomron, was fully prepared. During rehearsal, his troops had successfully completed the rescue exercise in 55 minutes from the time the aircraft landed to the time they were airborne again. The ground force contingent, tasked to enter the old terminal and retrieve the hostages, was led by the 30-year old Lieutenant Colonel Yonatan Netanyahu²⁸³, a well respected leader, who was unfortunately to become the only fatal Israeli military casualty.

The passage of intelligence and preparations for the operation continued unabated, while Major General Rehavam Zeevi in Paris, who was responsible for negotiations, reported to Rabin that they were experiencing difficulties. Rabin requested that Zeevi continue to negotiate. Zeevi himself was unaware that he too was an integral part of the Israeli ruse.²⁸⁴

Operational Planning Aspects

Entebbe is some 2500 miles from Israel. Many Israelis had intimate knowledge of the Ugandan Armed Forces, and other had acquired detailed plans of the airport and its facilities. Israeli informants and Mossad agents that were infiltrated into Uganda updated this information. The task for the military planning staffs was to sift the information, determine the facts, fit them into an operational

²⁸³ See Max Hastings, YONI: Hero of Entebbe for a biography of this officer.

²⁸⁴ Stevenson, op. cit., p. 92.

appreciation, and produce a suitable plan. The logical outcome of the 'operational appreciation,' in simple terms, was that troops would be clandestinely flown to Entebbe in order to rescue the hostages.

The Israeli planning staffs had long believed that special operations, such as hostage-rescue, require planners with experience and a flexible attitude toward unorthodox situations. Moreover, the skills and experience of the Israeli Forces gleaned over a number of years in military and special operations assisted greatly in the success of this action as shall be seen.²⁸⁵ They sought opinions and proposals from likely and unlikely sources. As Richard Deacon states:

Israel's Army and Secret Service are not hamstrung by too much bureaucracy or emphasis on that self-destructing military myth, the divine right of seniority. All ranks had the opportunity to press plans and suggestions over the heads of their immediate superiors to the C-in-C.... In turning 'Operation Jonathan' into a practical proposition this was a tremendous advantage: some excellent ideas came from minor agents in the field and non-commissioned soldiers and airmen.²⁸⁶

Israeli experience in special operations gleaned over the years underlined that the central problem in conducting the rescue was speed. How could Israeli troops execute the mission before the terrorists could kill any of the hostages? Information gleaned from the non-Israeli passengers who had

²⁸⁵For an insight into the background and experiences of an Israeli officer see Ariel Sharon with David Chanoff, Warrior: An Autobiography.

²⁸⁶Deacon, op. cit., pp. 277-278. 'Operation THUNDERBOLT' was renamed 'Operation JONATHAN' after the successful rescue in the memory of Lieutenant Colonel Netanyahu.

been returned to Paris gave the Israeli intelligence staffs the opportunity to assess the situation in the Entebbe terminal where the passengers were held.²⁸⁷ This data was further supplemented by satellite photographs supplied by the United States. Although the employment of technical means was vital, 'humint' (human intelligence sources) from agents on the ground was also critical. Slowly the intelligence picture became clearer, thanks to the co-operation and intelligence from friendly nations, and the highly versatile and productive Israeli intelligence service. Deacon states:

As a result of all this the military planners in Tel Aviv were able to report that, providing they could land at Entebbe, without arousing suspicion, the rescue of the hostages would be a relatively simple operation.²⁸⁸

The Israeli planners were well aware of how rapidly the intelligence picture could change as the situation evolved, and were most sensitive to these issues. The chief of operations understood the need for the latest intelligence.²⁸⁹ This aspect of Operation Thunderbolt ensured the success of the plan.

The need for the aircraft to refuel somewhere along the route was a major problem. The aircraft employed would be operating at their maximum ranges. The air fleet consisted of five C-130 Hercules transport aircraft and two Boeing 707 passenger planes. On this mission, one aircraft acted as the long-range eyes and ears of the aerial mission. Another, a fuel-carrying C-130 aircraft, was to fly ahead of the rescue

²⁸⁷Ibid., p. 279.

²⁸⁸Ibid., p. 281.

²⁸⁹Ibid.

force, landing at a Kenyan airbase near Mombasa, where it was kept in reserve in case of an emergency. The difficulty for Kenya was that, should any of the rescue aircraft land at a Kenyan military station, the government could arguably be held accountable for co-operating in the rescue. In contrast, if the Israelis successfully landed at the Nairobi runway, and if, as was the case, the formation was flying under the appropriate civil registration, as requested by the Kenyan government,²⁹⁰ Nairobi could plausibly deny any complicity.

The assault force was to depart Israel from Ophir airbase on 3 July in four C-130s; as would a command and control Boeing 707. The use of Boeing 707s in this raid apparently tipped off the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that there was something in the offing. According to one source:

At noon on Friday, the American CIA...discovered that two IAF Boeings were parked at Lod Airport, swarming with fitters and painters. Different insignia were being painted on the planes. [Further]... a coded cable was at that time on its way from Tel Aviv to the CIA in Washington : THERE ARE INDICATIONS OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY IN ISRAEL, THOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSUME THAT ISRAEL WILL OPERATE IN UGANDA....²⁹¹

The 707, which carried General 'Benny' Peled and a team of communications officers, served as the aerial command post (ACP).²⁹² The generals monitored the mission and maintained

²⁹⁰Stevenson, op. cit., p. 103.

²⁹¹Ben Porat, et al., op. cit., p. 272. Both 707s were being painted in El Al colours.

²⁹²"Israel Refining Hostage Rescue Tactics," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 27 September, 1976, p. 17. According to this article "The raiding force experienced a complete breakdown in special communications, and Lt. Gen. Benjamin Peled, air force commander, was forced to use open radio frequencies for command and control.

communications links with the assault force. Meanwhile, a second 'medical' 707 was destined to land in Nairobi and await the rescue force in a secure area.

A deception plan was carefully executed to assist both the rescue force and for the benefit of Kenya:

All four Hercules were camouflaged by civil registration numbers and followed the same commercial route. Pilots followed normal civil aviation procedures.²⁹³

This deception provided Nairobi with a degree of 'plausible deniability' so they could deny any co-operative effort with Israel in a military operation against a fellow African state.

To avoid detection by Arab and Soviet surveillance vessels, the rescue force flew at extremely low altitudes. This type of flying demanded much from the professional skills of the crew:

'There were times when we flew them [C-130s] like combat planes,' reported an airman. 'We did everything but dogfight. We made sudden sharp turns to dodge the Russian-built radar pickets on sea and land, then had to climb fast to get over the mountains.'²⁹⁴

The pathfinder aircraft, a C-130 fitted with the latest electronic and navigational aids, led the assault force aircraft safely to their objective. On the way in, inclement weather forced the rescue fleet to approach Sudanese

(Footnote Continued)

Each aircraft in the raid was equipped with one VHF and two UHF radios with secure frequencies. All failed to function." The possibility of an operational compromise due to the lack of appropriate and effective secure communications is obvious.

²⁹³Stevenson, op. cit., p. 103.

²⁹⁴Ibid.

airspace. As the aircraft approached Lake Victoria, it encountered a massive front of storm clouds rising to 13,000m.²⁹⁵ As time was of the essence, the force proceeded directly through the front, the lead pilot fully aware that he was solely responsible to get:

...his cargo of 86 officers and men and the forward command post of Major-General Dan Shomron with all their vehicles and equipment...²⁹⁶ the ground according to a precise timetable.

The lead aircraft landed only thirty seconds behind schedule and, opportunely, just behind a scheduled arrival of a cargo aircraft. The three main tasks²⁹⁷ as described in a briefing by Major General Gazit were:

- A) MOVE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO OLD TERMINAL BLDG [BUILDING] TO KILL OR CAPTURE THOSE GUARDING HOSTAGES. IDF KNE [KNEW] THAT GUARDS WERE MIX OF TERRORISTS (TEN OR ELEVEN) PLUS UGANDAN SOLDIERS.
- B) MOVE TO NEW TERMINAL BLDG [BUILDING] AND CONTROL TOWER AND ENSURE NO/NO COUNTER ACTION WAS IMPLEMENTED FROM THERE.
- C) SECURE APPROACHES TO AIRFIELD AND PREVENT ENTRY OF ANY OPPOSING FORCES (FROM OUTSIDE AIRPORT OR FROM MIL [MILITARY]²⁹⁸ CAMP LOCATED WITHIN AIRPORT PERIMETER).

Time and speed were crucial. The post-operation briefing noted that task (A) was "ACCOMPLISHED WITHIN 7-8 MINS

²⁹⁵Ashley Brown, (ed), Strike From The Sky: Israeli Airborne Troops, p. 73.

²⁹⁶Ibid.

²⁹⁷For an interesting tactical description of the rescue itself see the interview of Benjamin Netanyahu, "Operation Jonathan: The Rescue At Entebbe," Military Review, (July 1982), pp. 2-23.

²⁹⁸"UGANDA HOSTAGES: ISRAELI REACTION." Message traffic. Canadian Embassy Tel Aviv to Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, Canada, 5 July, 1976, p. 4.

[MINUTES] OF IDF ARRIVAL."²⁹⁹ Further, in just 25 minutes, all the Israeli hostages, with the exception of one elderly woman, who had been placed in an Entebbe hospital earlier, were freed and in an aircraft ready for departure. Twenty minutes later the first aircraft departed. The last aircraft took off 25 minutes later. All aircraft flew to Nairobi for refuelling and medical treatment, and then on to Israel.

Kenyan Assistance

Kenyan co-operation went beyond offering a refuelling stop for the supposed civilian aircraft flying from Entebbe. That country also assisted in maintaining the Israeli deception plan. Before the arrival of the C-130s, an:

...unscheduled Boeing 707, El Al charter flight LY 167, landed at 11:26 p.m. local time and taxied to Bay 4, reserved for aircraft requiring security precautions. The 707 was quarantined at once by Kenyan GSU men and El Al staffers. The civil registration number on the tail was 4XBY8, which conflicted with the air control log that recorded this as Flight 169. Almost two hours later another 707 contacted Nairobi control and announced itself as Flight 167 from Tel Aviv.³⁰⁰

The collusion continued as Nairobi air controllers did not query the captain's comment that he was late due to engine problems.³⁰¹

The second 707, containing a fully equipped hospital arrived at 0206 hours Nairobi time and took aboard the wounded

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Stevenson, op. cit., p. 134. It should be noted that in the post-operation briefing "GAZIT STATED THAT THE IDF AIRCRAFT LANDED...WITHOUT PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OR APPROVAL OF KENYAN GOVT." See Message traffic, op. cit., 5 July, 1976, p. 5.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

brought in by the Israeli rescue aircraft. Kenyan assistance to the operation became even more apparent later when people who were badly wounded were rapidly transported to the nearby hospital.³⁰² As medical assistance was being administered, the rescue aircraft refuelled in secure facilities. All the while, released hostages were allowed to deplane and go for food and refreshments. However, they were requested to keep quiet about assistance given and:

...not to "make any fuss" about this hospitality, by officials of the East African Directorate of Civil Aviation who feared retaliation against their colleagues at Entebbe.³⁰³

However, it was later reported that Ugandan soldiers questioned four radar operators accused of not reporting the rescue planes that flew the Israeli commandos into Uganda.³⁰⁴ The bodies of the four were later found in a wood.

In the post-rescue period, the mood in Nairobi was noticeably varied. Charles Harrison, a correspondent for The Guardian, noted:

There's a great deal of jubilation amongst the ordinary people at the humiliation which Uganda has suffered. At the same time there is quite a bit of apprehension because Kenya has been threatened from Uganda for quite a time and the general feeling is that the threats against Kenya will not be made any less by the humiliation which Amin has now suffered.³⁰⁵

³⁰²Peter Philipp, "Israelis in Nairobi hospital," Jerusalem Post, 5 July, 1976.

³⁰³Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

³⁰⁴"Uganda Radar Operators Executed, Sources Say," The Toronto Star, 8 July, 1976.

³⁰⁵Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Reaction to the rescue of hostages by Israeli commandos," As It Happens, hosted by Dick Beddoes and Allen Maitland, 5 July, 1976, Transcript, p.2.

Although Israeli and Kenyan authorities denied any Kenyan assistance, it seemed quite clear that Nairobi "provided at least tacit support for the rescue."³⁰⁶ This became increasingly apparent as:

News agency reports from Nairobi speak of Israeli agents slipping quietly into the Kenyan capital during the week, often staying at private homes rather than hotels to avoid notice. Israeli agents carrying walkie-talkies also patrolled [sic] Nairobi Airport before the arrival of the Israeh³⁰⁷ [sic] planes on the return flight from Entebbe.

The response to this publicity was noted in one diplomatic report from Nairobi:

KENYANS WILL OBVIOUSLY BE VERY NERVOUS SINCE WRATH OF AMIN WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE DIRECTED AT KENYA WHICH PERMITTED USE OF NROBI [NAIROBI] MILITARY AIRPORT AT EASTLEIGH AS STAGING BASE. IN WHAT FORM THIS WILL COME IS DIFFICULT TO TELL BUT ...[THE] KENYAN ARMED FORCES, PARTICULARLY AIR FORCE, IS NO/NO MATCH FOR UGANDANS EITHER IN TERMS OF NUMBERS OR SOPHISTICATION OF EQPT. [EQUIPMENT].³⁰⁸

Meanwhile Israeli leaders tried to avoid implicating Kenya.

Israeli leaders:

...stressed...that Israel had acted alone and had consulted with no outside party before deciding on the rescue mission.³⁰⁹

To support Kenya against possible Ugandan reprisals in the post-rescue period, the United States positioned "a P3 Orion long-range reconnaissance aircraft, the first U.S. Air Force [sic - U.S. Navy] plane to be based -- however temporarily -

³⁰⁶Smith, "Israelis Say Extension...", op. cit.

³⁰⁷Ibid.

³⁰⁸"ISRAELI RESCUE OPERATION: KAMPALA." Message traffic. Canadian High Commission, Nairobi, Kenya, to Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, Canada, 4 July, 1976, p. 2.

³⁰⁹"Joy at rescue of hostages," Jerusalem Post, 5 July, 1976.

in Kenya."³¹⁰ By 19 July, 1976, Newsweek reported that Washington had placed:

...a Navy P-3 patrol plane at Kenya's service to provide military reconnaissance along the Ugandan border. Washington ordered the frigate U.S.S. Beary to head for the Kenyan port of Mombasa. And a Task Group from the U.S. Seventh Fleet -- including the aircraft carrier Ranger -- was ordered to steam toward Kenya in a third pointed signal of U.S. support.³¹¹

These military moves initially were perceived to be a part of America's new policy of enhancing political relationships with moderate African states. Therefore, this large American naval presence off East Africa and the visit of the U.S.S. Beary were considered by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as 'normal.' In reality, it was post-rescue assistance to Kenya and it was intended as "a bold warning to Amin not to let his post-Entebbe lust for revenge lead him into war."³¹² Amin, apparently angered by the Israeli success, argued "that the Israelis would not have been successful at Entebbe except for the fact that their nuclear hand grenades had somehow put [his]...soldiers to sleep."³¹³

Although international co-operation had been instrumental to the success of the mission, most of it had been indirect. One nation, West Germany, was more closely involved. A senior officer of the West German Federal Border Police,

³¹⁰Stevenson, op. cit., p. 135.

³¹¹Milton R. Benjamin, "The Fallout From Entebbe," Newsweek, 19 July, 1976, p. 41.

³¹²Ibid.

³¹³Richard Steele and James Pringle, "Uganda: Amin vs. the World," Newsweek, 9 August, 1976, p. 36.

Lieutenant Colonel Ulrich Wegener³¹⁴ was a member of the rescue force. He later became head of West Germany's GSG9 counter-terrorist force. Wegener "was ordered by the federal government to observe what happened because at that time German terrorists were also involved in the actions of the Palestinians."³¹⁵ Wegener was well qualified for the task, as he had received special military training³¹⁶ from the United States and Israel. Richard Garrett writes that Wegener himself was a highly professional product of international co-operation and:

...had spent six weeks being tutored by the FBI in the United States, and he had also attended a course at the Israeli paratroop school. At the latter, he did so well that (or so it is said) he had been³¹⁷ invited to take part in an anti-hijack raid....

Although West Germany had little experience in counter-terrorist operations in the wake of World War II, Wegener sought out the pertinent information and experience, thereby making it his own. This operational experience would assist him in his success at Mogadishu.

During the rescue, the force destroyed Soviet-made MIG aircraft belonging to the Ugandan air force.³¹⁸ This was not a whimsical act. It had two purposes, one more urgent than

³¹⁴"Head of German Raid Is Linked to Entebbe," The New York Times, 22 October, 1977.

³¹⁵Rolf Tophoven, GSG9: German Response to Terrorism, p. 76.

³¹⁶Livingstone, op. cit., p. 179.

³¹⁷Garrett, op. cit., p. 204.

³¹⁸Walmer, op. cit., p. 32. See also "Israeli Commando C-130 Raid Frees 115," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 12 July, 1976, p. 15. This article states that seven MIG-21s and four MIG-17s were destroyed by the Israelis.

the other. The destruction of these aircraft ensured the Israelis of a return flight without fear of a Ugandan aerial intercept. Less urgently, but strategically as important, it lessened the Ugandan capability to punish Kenya for aiding Israel.

Israeli Post-Operations Brief

Major General Gazit, the director of military intelligence, summoned military attaches to a conference on 4 July, 1976. During the briefing, Gazit emphasized three factors which affected the rescue mission: first, until Entebbe, the Israeli authorities had dealt with terrorist hostage incidents only within Israel or inside a friendly country. In such cases Israel acknowledged that the local government authorities were responsible for handling the terrorist activities. This was not the case in Entebbe. Not only did Israel have no diplomatic relations with Uganda, but it became readily apparent, particularly after the initial release of non-Israeli hostages, that there was "NO/NO CHANCE OF COOPERATION WITH AMIN. IN FACT ALL INFO AVAILABLE INDICATED THAT AMIN WAS COOPERATING FULLY WITH [THE] TERRORISTS."³¹⁹ Second, with the release of all Gentiles, the threat was seen to be directed against Israel. Thirdly, when pressed to release jailed terrorists, Israeli authorities were not concerned so much with the legal or political issues of the hostage-taking as with a situation

³¹⁹"UGANDA HOSTAGES: ISRAELI REACTION," Message traffic, op. cit., 5 July, 1976, p. 2. See also Joshua Brilliant, "Gur says raiders used 'several tricks,'" Jerusalem Post, 5 July, 1976 and "Operation complex, not difficult," Jerusalem Post, 5 July, 1976.

where Tel Aviv "IS BEING ASKED TO RELEASE POTENTIAL MURDERERS WHO PROBABLY WILL STRIKE AGAIN."³²⁰ The military option was based on these premises. Gazit emphasized that "IF THE IDF [Israeli Defence Force] NAD [HAD] NOT/NOT HAD VERY GOOD INTELLIGENCE OF [THE SITUATION] IN UGANDA, GOVT [GOVERNMENT] WOULD NOT/NOT HAVE AUTHORIZED OPERATION."³²¹

THUNDERBOLT has been understatedly described as 'just a routine commando raid that happened to be a bit further in distance.'³²² However, had it not been for the concerted efforts of a number of countries, which forwarded vital intelligence and assisted, as Kenya did, in allowing Israeli aircraft a secure place to refuel and sort out the casualties, the historical rescue operation may not have been attempted. This would have left Israel no option but to give in to the terrorist demands.

The Mogadishu Rescue

In 1977, West Germany experienced a most difficult year in combatting terrorism. It was a year of some dramatic successes including the capture of many terrorists, some of whom were associated with the Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction). In this battle against political terrorism, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was considered by many to be the leading figure, both domestically and internationally. In particular he directed measures to improve co-operation

³²⁰Ibid., p.3.

³²¹Ibid., p.3.

³²²Stevenson, op. cit., p. 139.

between the provincial and federal agencies responsible for combatting terrorism.

The Mogadishu incident, in connection with the kidnapping of industrialist Hans-Martin Schleyer, was to become a watershed in the history of West Germany's fight against terrorism.³²³ Moreover, it underlines the co-operation given to the West German government by friendly countries at critical points during the operation. It is important to understand the context of this drama, one among many of the problems facing West Germany in 1977.

Three major terrorist incidents occurred before the Mogadishu event which persuaded government officials and the West German people that dramatic action was needed to win the battle against terrorism from abroad. These were the murder on 7 April, 1977 of Dr. Siegfried Bubeck, the chief public prosecutor and the murder on 30 July, 1977 of Herr Jurgen Ponto, the head of a prominent bank; and the abduction on 5 September, 1977 of the well-known industrialist, Dr. Hanns-Martin Schleyer.³²⁴ For many, Dr. Schleyer was not only a powerful financial figure but also a symbol of West Germany's capitalist system. Schleyer was ambushed in his car while travelling between his Cologne home

³²³For a chronology of events see Documentation: On the Events and Decisions Connected With the Kidnapping of Hans Martin Schleyer and the Hijacking of the Lufthansa Jet "Landshut." Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, (West Germany), First Edition, 2 November, 1977.

³²⁴Proceedings Of FBI International Symposium On Terrorism, July 6-8, 1978, "Remarks By Colonel Ulrich K. Wegener, Commander, 9th Border Guard Group, Special, Federal Republic of Germany," p. 10. See also Peter Koch and Kai Hermann, Assault At Mogadishu.

and office. His kidnapers demanded DM 1.1 million, and the release and safe passage of jailed members of the Red Army Faction, including Andreas Baader.

Schmidt and his government initially refused to submit to the demands, but opened a series of negotiations through Denis Payet, a Swiss lawyer. The negotiations saw the passing of a series of ultimata and deadlines. The West German government's strategy was to negotiate to gain time, hoping to locate Schleyer. To ensure that there would be no publicity, a news blackout was instituted, denying the terrorists the media access they sought. This caused the terrorists to mount a support operation ³²⁵ to put pressure on Schmidt's government to submit to their demands. The leader assigned to this mission was Zuhair Akkasha, also known as 'Martyr Mahmoud.'³²⁶ A PFLP radical, and a student of Dr. Hadad, he had, on occasion, assisted the Baader-Meinhof gang. The target for this support mission operation was a Lufthansa Boeing 737 which was travelling between Majorca and Frankfurt.³²⁷ On 13 October, 1977, four Palestinians, two men and two women, seized this flight and

³²⁵"Hijacking of Jet With 91 to Dubai Linked With German Kidnapping," The New York Times, 15 October, 1977. See also "Hijackers, Holding 92, Back Kidnappers in Schleyer Case," The International Herald Tribune, Paris, 15 October, 1977.

³²⁶Robert D. McFadden, "German Troops Free Hostages On Hijacked Plane In Somalia; 3 Terrorists Reported Killed," The New York Times, 18 October, 1977. See also Mickolus, op. cit., p. 739.

³²⁷Authorities speculated, initially, that this operation may have been linked to the Japanese Red Army (JRA) members who successfully took over a Japanese airliner late in September, 1977. In the end, the Japanese government agreed to the JRA demands. This included a six million dollar ransom and the release from prison of several of their members. See Milton R. Benjamin and Paul Martin, "A Detour to Dubai," Newsweek, 24 October, 1977, p. 62.

ordered it to fly to Rome. The hostages numbered 92 including five crew members.

Italian aviation and police authorities closed the Rome airport to all other traffic, and put military and police units on standby. When Flight 737 arrived, it was parked in a secure area. Martyr Mahmoud then issued his demand that his colleagues jailed in West Germany be released.

Anticipating that a military option, in the form of a rescue operation, might be possible, Werner Maihofer, the West German Interior Minister, asked the Italian authorities to delay the aircraft. Lt. Colonel Ulrich Wegener, commander of GSG9³²⁸ was notified. He placed his unit on alert. As was the case in the Israeli experience, a crisis management team was established and remained generally intact throughout the hijacking and eventual rescue operation. The crisis management team revolved around Chancellor Schmidt and the ministers of Foreign Affairs, of the Interior and of Justice and was empowered by Cabinet to make any required emergency decisions. Schmidt began seeking international support and assistance with a telephone call to the Prime Minister of Great Britain. According to one report:

SCHMIDT WANTED TO COMPARE IDEAS AND DETERMINE DEGREE OF SUPPORT INTENTNLY [INTERNATIONALLY] TO VARIOUS OPTIONS. CALLAGHAN LATER IN [A] RETURN

³²⁸ Bundesgrenzschutz gruppe 9 (GSG9) is a specialized counter-terrorist commando unit born out of the chaos of the 1972 MUNICH OLYMPICS. Led by Wegener this unit had intimate knowledge of Israeli and British techniques gleaned from exchanges with both countries. See Robert Harnischmacher, "The Federal Border Guard Group 9 - Special : The German Response to Terrorism," Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette, 2 November, 1987, pp. 1-5.

PHONE CALL ADVISED AGAINST GIVING IN TO HIJACKERS
DEMANDS.³²⁹

Meanwhile, airport authorities in Rome attempted to stall for time as requested, but the hijackers threatened to destroy the aircraft if the Italians refused their demands for fuel. At 1742 hours, the Lufthansa 737 departed from Rome destined for Larnaca, Cyprus. Initially, the Cypriot government refused permission to land. However, upon considering the possible implications for the safety of the passengers, the Cypriots allowed the 737 to land. Once in Cyprus, the terrorists requested more fuel and were put in touch with Saharia Abdul Rachmin, a Palestinian Liberation Organization representative.³³⁰ The hijackers then issued a demand in addition to those previously made, calling for the release of two Palestinians imprisoned in Turkey.

West Germany's reaction to this crisis was rapid. Just hours after the first report of the hijacking, an aircraft was despatched to Cyprus. In the aircraft were Minister Hans-Jurgen Wischnewski, the head of the anti-terror department in the Federal Office of Criminal Investigation, a commando element, representatives of the German Federal Criminal Police, foreign office specialists, anti-terrorist experts from the Ministry of the Interior, agents of the German internal and external intelligence services,

³²⁹"CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN SCHLEYER KIDNAPPING/LUFTHANSA HIJACKING CASE SUMMARY." Message traffic. Canadian High Commission, London, to Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, Canada, 14 November, 1977, p. 2.

³³⁰University of New Brunswick, Centre for Conflict Studies, Special Operations : Military Lessons From Six Selected Case Studies, p. 99.

representatives of Lufthansa and the GSG9 command group.³³¹
The aircraft conveying the West German officials landed at Akrotiri³³² a British airbase, fifty miles from Larnaca. For over an hour, both the hijackers and the German rescue team were on the island. The Cypriot authorities, however, refused a request to attempt a rescue.

Refuelled, the 737 left Larnaca at approximately 2250 hours and headed to Beirut where it was refused permission to land. It was later likewise refused permission to land at Damascus, Amman and Kuwait. Desperate, the hijacked 737 pilot received permission to stop temporarily in Bahrain at approximately 0152 hours on 14 October. During this stopover, the link between the Schleyer kidnapers and the hijackers became apparent when the latter forwarded their demands through the office of Denis Payot, the same intermediary employed by the Schleyer abductors. These demands were comparable to those issued for the return of Schleyer. The terrorists told authorities that if by 0800 GMT, 16 October their demands were not met, the hostages, along with Dr. Schleyer, would be killed.

The Lufthansa 737 departed from Bahrain at 0324 hours and loitered only to touch down at Dubai in the United Arab Emirates two and a half hours later. Here the hijackers

³³¹Proceedings Of FBI International Symposium, Wegener, op. cit., p. 17.

³³²Patricia Clough, "Perfect debut for Bonn's anti-terror squad," The New York Times, 19 October, 1977.

demanded a negotiator and food and drink. Here, the Defence Minister, Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktum,³³³ assumed responsibility as chief negotiator. He requested that the hostage-takers release the young and the elderly in exchange for fuel. The hijackers refused. It was at this time that some important tactical intelligence was revealed. Wegener stated that when the Lufthansa plane landed:

...we got the first information about the terrorists. We got it from the crew. Some months ago we had worked out a code with Lufthansa personnel which would provide us with some information about the hijackers. In Dubai I got a coded message from the captain of the hijacked aircraft that there were four terrorists aboard, two male and two female.³³⁴

Photographs were taken of some of the terrorists when the aircraft's doors were open. It was vital for the GSG9 to identify the leader, Captain Mahmoud.³³⁵ As luck would have it a timely breakdown of the power unit provided:

...new information on the terrorists. Because of the APU breakdown, the terrorists demanded a ground power unit to get to the aircraft; Lufthansa personnel took it to the aircraft. They tried to get into contact with the crew. When they got close to the aircraft, the terrorists found out that they were not British and not Arabs because of their strong German accent and so Mahmoud fired on them. Thank God nobody was hurt. One of the Lufthansa captains who took the ground power unit to the aircraft was a former military officer and he could tell me after he came back, "Well, they didn't shoot at me with automatic weapons. They used only handguns." That was very important;...³³⁶

³³³Mickolus, op. cit., p. 736. See also Marvine Howe, "Hijackers Leave Dubai," The New York Times, 17 October, 1977.

³³⁴Proceedings Of FBI International Symposium, Wegener, op. cit., p. 13-14.

³³⁵Ibid., p. 15.

³³⁶Ibid.

One writer, Tony Geraghty, notes that a request for British assistance to GSG9 came soon after the hijack took place. This request was initially of a diplomatic nature and sought political assistance in dealing with the local authorities in Dubai. He states that:

...after it began, a German minister travelled to London, accompanied by a member of the GSG-9 team, to seek British help and, in particular, liaison with the authorities of Dubai, where the hijacked aircraft was about to land. (A member of the United Arab Emirates, Dubai has close links with Britain.) Initially, the purpose of the Germans' visit was to ask Whitehall to use its good offices with the UAE ambassador in London to ensure diplomatic clearance for GSG-9 to go into action in Dubai.³³⁷

This Anglo-German diplomatic co-operation in the early stages of the hijacking would rapidly evolve into military assistance as the GSG9 officer accompanying the German minister also requested technical assistance. Geraghty writes that:

...the GSG-9 representative thought that his SAS opposite number might have equipment that could be useful in breaking into the aircraft. The Germans had not appreciated that the SAS knows the Persian Gulf intimately and that, for example Dubai's élite presidential guard is trained and led by former SAS soldiers. During the London conversations, therefore, it became clear to everyone that an SAS liaison team on this operation would be a decided asset, and such a plan was instantly endorsed by the respective premiers, Callaghan and Schmidt. The two men selected for the job were Major Alastair Morrison, OBE, MC, a veteran SAS squadron commander, and Sergeant Barry Davies, BEM; with a specially crated collection³³⁸ of flash-bangs they left immediately for Dubai.

³³⁷ Tony Geraghty, Inside the SAS, p. 171. According to a diplomatic report the British Government "OFFERED DIPLO [DIPLOMATIC] HELP IN DEMARCHES TO AUTHORITIES IN DUBAI, UAE AND SOMALIA IN SUPPORT OF GERMAN PLAN FOR POLICE OPERATION." See CRISIS MANAGEMENT...." Message traffic, op. cit., 14 November, 1977, p. 2.

³³⁸ Ibid. Apparently Schmidt and Callaghan "DISCUSSED POLICE OPERATION WHICH LED TO BRIT OFFER OF SAS PERS [PERSONNEL] AND TECHNICAL HELP IN FORM OF STUN GRENADES. TWO (Footnote Continued)

This SAS technical assistance quickly became a diplomatic asset when, on arrival at Dubai, it became apparent that Wegener and two of his personnel were 'under escort' by local police authorities while the Lufthansa jet containing the hostages was waiting on the runway. Thanks to Morrison and Davies, this small diplomatic incident was summarily addressed as they:

...sorted out this bureaucratic nonsense, and then set about training the Dubai Royal Guard in the basics of siege-breaking with a view to providing a back-up force for GSG-9....³³⁹

During this period the West German government was under pressure to succumb to the demands of the terrorists. Schmidt's Cabinet had to weigh the danger posed to the lives of 87 hostages and to Dr. Schleyer, against the danger in releasing the prisoners as demanded by the terrorists. This situation was the same dilemma that had earlier confronted the Israeli government: release the terrorists with the possibility that they could kill again; or keep the terrorists in captivity, which would probably result in the death of the hostages. In essence Schmidt's decision revolved around the fact that:

- 1) the terrorists held by the West German authorities had been accused of murdering 13 people and attempting to murder 43 more;
- 2) the prisoners released in 1975 in exchange for Peter Lorez were later charged with murdering four and possibly nine others as well as the attempted killing of a further six.
- 3) the possible effect upon the ability, motivation

(Footnote Continued)
SAS MEN ACTUALLY PARTICIPATED IN ASSAULT AND THREW GRENADES. (QUOTE YOU COULDN'T [SIC] KEEP THEM OUT UNQUOTE)." See "CRISIS MANAGEMENT...." Message traffic, op. cit., 14 November, 1977, p. 2.

³³⁹ Ibid.

and willingness of security authorities to risk their lives while arresting or incarcerating such personnel, and,

- 4) the possibility that the hijacked passengers might not be safely released.³⁴⁰

Only after careful assessment of the factors in concert with other members of government did Schmidt decide to undertake a rescue operation. As was the case in Israel's operation 'THUNDERBOLT,' a two-pronged operational strategy³⁴¹ was to be used. First, all avenues of negotiation were to be employed. If these failed, GSG9 would be assigned the 'final option.'

By the morning of 14 October, the Cabinet had decided not to release the prisoners as demanded by the terrorists.

However, the government hoped to mislead the hijackers by seeming to suggest that Bonn would release the imprisoned terrorists in exchange for Schleyer and the hostages.

Negotiations continued between the hijackers and the UAE Foreign Minister. All attempts at releasing the children, women and the sick failed.

The situation within the aircraft was appalling as the hostages were confined to their seats. The aircraft's sanitation facilities no longer worked and many on board had diarrhea. This, combined with the heat, a degree of psychological tension, and verbal and physical abuse from the terrorists, was almost intolerable. Moreover, the

³⁴⁰University of New Brunswick, Centre for Conflict Studies, Special Operations, op. cit., p. 102.

³⁴¹AW 163, Bonn : Associated Press (AP), "HIJACK RAID," 18 October, 1977, "WEST GERMANY'S CRISIS STAFF APPARENTLY STARTED PLANNING THE COMMANDO RAID THAT FREED ALL 86 REMAINING HOSTAGES...ALMOST INSTANTLY AFTER THE BOEING 737 WAS COMMANDEERED...."

terrorists' requests for sanctuary in South Yemen, Somalia or Vietnam had all been rejected. The situation was further complicated for the West German government when Schleyer's son made an unsuccessful attempt to pay the ransom demanded by his father's kidnappers.

The German crisis management group maintained direct communication with Wischnewski in the Dubai control tower. Although the relations between Wischnewski and the representative of the UAE were considered to be 'excellent,'³⁴² they deteriorated somewhat while initial plans for a rescue attempt were being formulated. Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktum apparently requested that Wegener instruct his military personnel in the assaulting of an aircraft, so that they could execute the rescue.³⁴³ According to one report, Wegener "observed that this squad was highly inefficient and that the aircraft they were experimenting with was an old WWII-vintage fighter bomber."³⁴⁴ During this time Wegener tried to have the UAE military cut the source of power to the hijacked aircraft so that the crew could not start the aircraft. In this initiative the UAE personnel were unwilling to co-operate.³⁴⁵

³⁴²University of New Brunswick, Centre for Conflict Studies, Special Operations, op. cit., p. 105.

³⁴³Peter Koch and Kai Hermann, Assault At Mogadishu, p. 108. Wegener apparently trained 20 UAE paratroops for five hours in aircraft seizure techniques.

³⁴⁴Canadian Government Memorandum, Canadian Embassy, Bonn, to Ottawa, "Hijacking of Lufthansa Aircraft - 13 October 1977," dated 23 November, 1977, p. 3.

³⁴⁵Ibid., p. 4.

Operational security was broken when a spokesman for the West German government revealed that GSG9 had been sent to Cyprus. When the media broadcasted this information (by which time the GSG9 teams were in Ankara, Turkey), the hijackers ordered that they be returned to West Germany. Bonn immediately acquiesced. However, with the assistance of the West German news media, the terrorists were deceived into believing that the GSG9 had returned to Cologne. Instead, the GSG9 had been forward-based to Crete ³⁴⁶ with the permission of the Greek government. Apparently the 'passengers' on this aircraft bearing the GSG9, were described as 'technical and health personnel.' The German "OVERFLTS [OVERFLIGHTS] AND STAGINGS WERE FINESSED BY PASSING OFF AIRCRAFT AS CIVILIAN WITHOUT BEING TOO PRECISE ON CONTENTS AND MISSION."³⁴⁷ This allowed the Greek government to deny any complicity in the events.

Tensions rose when the power generator on the hijacked plane broke down during the night of 15-16 October, blacking out the aircraft and causing the hijackers, who feared a rescue attempt, to fire upon the ground crew who were approaching the aircraft to make repairs. At 0530 hours, 16 October, the terrorists demanded that the aircraft be refuelled or else the pilot, Captain Juergen Schumann, would be killed. The negotiators complied. Meanwhile the leader of the hijackers,

³⁴⁶"Greek praise for firm Bonn stand," The New York Times, 19 October, 1977. This article stated that, "Earlier Herr Schmidt had sent a message of thanks to Mr. Karamanlis for his contribution to the success of the rescue operation. The Greek Prime Minister had given consent for the German aircraft carrying the anti-terrorist unit to stand by in Crete." This assistance in allowing the forward-basing of the GSG9 assisted in the overall success of this daring rescue.

³⁴⁷"CRISIS MANAGEMENT...." Message traffic, op. cit., 14 November, 1977, p. 5.

Martyr Mahmoud, had become noticeably jumpy and ordered the pilot to take off an hour before the deadline. Allowance of the sudden departure of the Lufthansa flight from Dubai was a political decision made by the government of the UAE.

By this time the SAS were more than just advisors. According to Geraghty:

...Morrison and Davies had become de facto members of Wegener's team, and they stayed with him when the hunt moved from Aden to Mogadishu, in Somalia, where the German commander was joined by the main body of his force after a flight from Turkey.³⁴⁸

After a short flight the 737 approached Aden and was refused permission to land. The runway was blocked. Short of fuel, Captain Schumann in desperation made a forced landing on a rough strip that paralleled the main runway. The aircraft was immediately surrounded by South Yemeni soldiers, and Schumann was informed that the aircraft was to refuel, then depart. Captain Schumann was allowed to deplane to check for possible damage to the landing gear and while doing so was detained by Yemeni soldiers. Accused of attempting to escape while he was outside the aircraft, Schumann was fatally shot upon his return.³⁴⁹ This summary execution prepared the fate of the terrorists.³⁵⁰

The co-pilot flew the aircraft to Mogadishu airport in Somalia. Although the Somalis denied permission to land, they

³⁴⁸Geraghty, op. cit., p. 172.

³⁴⁹Koch and Hermann, op. cit., pp. 121-122.

³⁵⁰McFadden, "German Troops Free Hostages On...", op. cit.

did not obstruct the runway. Upon landing, Flight 737 was directed to move, for security reasons, to an area approximately 300 metres from the terminal itself. This site was selected to place the aircraft in full view of the control tower. In case of a rescue attempt, it would be easily reached as it was close to sand dunes that would cover an approach. The Somali government was told that if all previous demands were not met, the terrorists would blow up the aircraft. Food and drugs were supplied. In turn, the Somali government asked that women and children be released. This request and a further offer of safe passage out of Somalia were both rejected.

Diplomatic initiatives continued in the hope that a settlement (peaceable or otherwise) could be achieved. Moreover, diplomats from Britain, the United States, France as well as others solicited Middle Eastern and African capitals to back up West German efforts to resolve the hijacking.³⁵¹ President Barre of Somalia and Wischnewski met around noon on 17 October to discuss their options, but no decision was made. A major point of contention regarding a rescue operation was the extent of Somali assistance. Wischnewski, Wegener, Bueden and senior Somali security representatives conferred at length. It was partly due to the understanding between German and Somali police forces that had developed during a history of bilateral police exchange programmes that both parties overcame the

³⁵¹University of New Brunswick, Centre for Conflict Studies, Special Operations, op. cit., p. 108.

operational and political difficulties of this situation.³⁵²
The solution came about after a meeting was arranged with Barre following a call from Schmidt. Barre agreed that GSG9 could attempt a rescue. This action would be fully supported by members of the Somali security forces. The aircraft carrying the 60 members of GSG9 received the permission to fly to Mogadishu.

Wischnewski maintained close contact with the terrorists throughout the day. This was critical, as it was later discovered that the hijack leader was demonstrating signs of breaking under the prolonged strain. At 1430, Martyr Mahmoud contacted Minister Wischnewski and stated that he intended to blow up the aircraft at 1500 hours. In preparation, the terrorists kept their hostages in their seats, and began pouring flammable liquids and liquor down the centre aisle.³⁵³

Wegener believed that, to ensure the greatest probability of success, the approach, assault and rescue had to be conducted under the cover of darkness. Thus it was critical that the rescue forces gain more time. At approximately 1500 hours, a half-hour delay was given to move the hijacked aircraft away from the area. At 1530 Wischnewski gambled and radioed the aircraft. He told the terrorist leader that the West German

³⁵²Ibid., p. 109. It should be noted that in the wake of Mogadishu, "...the GSG9 has been providing training assistance for foreign units subject to approval by [the] Ministry of the Interior. The first training assistance...was provided to Somalia, as thanks for the cooperation in 1977." Tophoven, op. cit., p. 81.

³⁵³Robert R. Ropelewski, "Commandos Thwart Hijackers," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 24 October, 1977, p. 15.

government had acceded to all their demands. The bait was taken; Martyr Mahmoud, believing Wischnewski, gave a seven-hour extension to 0130 hours. This desperate deception had worked.³⁵⁴

The rescue force landed in darkness at 1930 hours (local) in Mogadishu. To assist in the secure landing, Somali aid was requested:

I [Wegener] talked with the Commander of the Somali Air Force about some supporting measures. I asked him to employ some of their fighters to let them take off and land for the next hours so that we could cover the landing of our own ...airplane.³⁵⁵ That worked out very fine. They did very well.

The Lufthansa 727 landed without incident with only two tail lights glowing. After it was in position, the landing lights were flashed on and off to signal the control tower of their arrival. Before the main force arrived, Wegener, accompanied by officers of the Somali Armed Forces, conducted a reconnaissance of the area of operation. From this Wegener made his appreciation, formulated a plan, and briefed his unit upon arrival. In anticipation of any possible crisis before the assault, Wegener deployed some of his personnel so that an immediate rescue could be executed if required. By 2350, all preparations were complete. Wischnewski informed Schmidt of the arrival of Wegener's men

³⁵⁴Henry Tanner, "U.S. Woman Says Ruse Saved the Hostages," The New York Times, 20 October, 1977. According to this report when "the message arrived that the West German terrorists had been freed from jail..... The leader of the hijackers ordered the passengers untied and told them: "It is seven hours flying time from Germany, I give them seven hours."

³⁵⁵Proceedings Of FBI International Symposium, Wegener, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

and the go-ahead was given. This was the last communication with Schmidt until the operation was finished.

The operation was nearly scuttled just after GSG9 arrived in Mogadishu. Radio transmissions from the GSG9 aircraft were apparently overheard by an Israeli journalist,³⁵⁶ who immediately sent out a report that anti-terrorist police were ready for use in a rescue attempt. The report was transmitted to the Agence France-Presse (AFP) and Reuters.³⁵⁷

The Rescue Plan

The responsibility for the operational command of the rescue fell solely upon Wegener. His organization consisted of a main headquarters, a communications centre and a first aid post situated in the airport control tower. A forward, or tactical, communications post would later be positioned near the target aircraft. There were about 60 members of the GSG9

³⁵⁶"Antiguerrilla Squad Reported at Airfield," The New York Times, 18 October, 1977. See also FBIS 09, "JERUSALEM REPORTS FRG ANTITERROR UNIT IN PERSIAN GULF," 17 October, 1977.

³⁵⁷Ibid. This article incorporated the following statement, " (Moments after transmission of this dispatch, Reuters sent a note to editors stating: 'We have just been asked by the West German Government spokesman not to report anything concerning the movements of antiguerrilla squads for use in a possible attempt to storm the hijacked plane.' It added that 'the Government spokesman says that such reports could prejudice the safety of the hostages.' Reuters said later that it had not retracted its earlier report because the news had been released earlier by Agence France-Presse and that it would leave up to its clients the question of how to deal with the report.)" See also Michael Knipe, "Broadcast 'put lives in danger,'" The New York Times, 19 October, 1977.

assault unit,³⁵⁸ of which 28 were to assault the aircraft while another group was to remain as a ready reserve. Somali police and military personnel provided airport security and sealed off the area of operations.³⁵⁹ Later, Somali forces provided a diversion at a critical moment. Surprise was vital.

The target intelligence available for the operation lacked critical detail. Before he was murdered, Captain Schumann had made various attempts to pass information, but the intelligence planning staff still needed details, particularly regarding the level of experience and sophistication of the terrorists. It was also critically important for the rescue squad to know if the entrance doors to the aircraft were secured with explosives.

Orders were issued to the GSG9 troops at about 2245 hours. Due to the lack of intelligence regarding the situation within the hijacked aircraft, Wegener wanted to begin an early deployment: "I wanted to put up in a very early stage reconnaissance and sniper teams in the hills around the aircraft. We would know at every minute what is going on in the aircraft."³⁶⁰

At approximately 0100 hours the plan was to have the assault team members place themselves in their attack positions beneath the aircraft. The attack was to begin at 0205

³⁵⁸Proceedings Of FBI International Symposium, Wegener, op. cit., p. 20.

³⁵⁹Ibid.

³⁶⁰Ibid., p. 22.

hours.³⁶¹ Just after midnight, all sniper and reconnaissance teams were positioned and the first reports were being received as to the whereabouts of the terrorists. Two were sighted in the cockpit and one was walking up and down the aisle.³⁶² At 0100, the assault group, consisting of the operations team, two detachments of three assault teams, a reserve team and a combat engineer team began to move into their assault areas as planned. These groups got to within 100 metres of the aircraft by 0130 hours. Then, Wegener went to the aircraft with all the detachment leaders, to brief them on their assault positions and their areas of responsibility within the aircraft itself. Tony Geraghty has written that the British participation at this juncture was far more than just assisting GSG9 with the stun grenades. Major Alastair Morrison and Sergeant Barry Davies, "were more than advisers: they led the assault team, to blind and deafen the terrorists with a 'percussion' grenade devised by the SAS."³⁶³ The plan, according to Wegener, was that the first detachment would attack:

...the tail [entrance] and doors, the right wing exit and the other three exits. The cockpit doors and the left wing exit were the responsibility of the second unit. Their mission, starting now with the second unit was to penetrate the cockpit, to eliminate the terrorists there, to carry the assault into the first class compartment and to eliminate the terrorists there. The teams at the tail end of the aircraft had to cover and occupy the positions from where we could evacuate the³⁶⁴ hostages right after we got into the aircraft.

³⁶¹Ibid.

³⁶²Ibid.

³⁶³Geraghty, op. cit., p. 16. This author also states that the SAS assisted in composing the plan of attack. See p. 172.

³⁶⁴Proceedings Of FBI International Symposium, Wegener, op. cit., p. 23.

To assist the assault team, deception measures were included. Somali soldiers started a fire,³⁶⁵ and at the same time, the negotiating teams began a new stage of negotiations. The reconnaissance party forwarded a second message at 0159 hours reporting that two terrorists, one female, were in the pilot's compartment. With this information Wegener "got the impression that the two others were in the back of the aircraft, but here was a situation that was not clear."³⁶⁶

During this same period, the GSG9 members checked the cabin pressure conditions within the fuselage and discovered that there was no pressure build-up to assist in opening the doors. As well, the uneven ground made it difficult for the assault members to position the ladders against the aircraft, a small yet crucial problem at this point. On the code words, "Fuererzauber Go," the assault was launched. The six teams went through all entrances including the emergency exits. At the same time three stun grenades were detonated. According to Wegener, "we planted three flash bombs, which were given to us by our British friends. But we didn't ignite them inside the aircraft; we just threw them outside the aircraft."³⁶⁷ Once the aircraft was entered, team leaders ordered the hostages in both English and German, "Down on the ground; heads down." The GSG9 assault teams responsible for the front of the aircraft opened the nose

³⁶⁵"Airport fire started to aid rescue troops," The Ottawa Citizen, 24 October, 1977. This article is quoted as saying that the "blaze was set some 300 yards in front of the plane in order to entice the hijackers into the cockpit."

³⁶⁶Proceedings Of FBI International Symposium, Wegener, op. cit., p. 23.

³⁶⁷Ibid., p. 24.

doors and the action was fast and furious, as Wegener recounted:

...we drew fire from the terrorist leader and the female terrorist. We drew fire and returned fire, and one of my men was hit through the neck. (But the GSG9 men can take this, of course. So he is back to duty; he was very fortunate, I have to say that.) The terrorist leader was hit by five .38 bullets, but he could still manage to just jump back into the cockpit and grab a hand grenade.

We got him there by a burst of submachine gun fire.³⁶⁸

The third hijacker fired upon the teams from the first class compartment as they were assaulting through the rear section and in the nose area. The terrorist was killed by a shot in the head. A fourth terrorist, another female, was found in one of the front toilets. A team leader shot through the wall of the door, mortally wounding her. By now, all assault teams were occupying their pre-planned responsibility areas. It was at this point that the team leader of the first assault group noticed grenades in the vicinity of the cockpit and requested support from the combat engineers.³⁶⁹ The evacuation was started four minutes after the assault began, using three major exit points: the left and right tail and the emergency exits. Some of the passengers were suffering from mild shock. Once out of the aircraft, the hostages were immediately escorted by the reserve assault team which was under cover about 40 metres from the aircraft site. Here they were searched to assure the assault force that they had not missed any of the hijackers.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

At 0212 hours Wegener acknowledged that all terrorists were disabled. At 0217 the code word 'springtime' (end of mission) was sent to State Minister Wischnewski. At 0218 the GSG9 members were assembled and the hostages were dispatched to the terminal where a medical station was set up. The hijacked Lufthansa aircraft was turned over to German Federal Criminal Police officers and their Somali counterparts. At 0500, GSG9 left Somalia. Wegener points out:

...the successful operation against the terrorists in Mogadishu demonstrated that the training and operational concepts of GSG9 were on the right line. But I would like to state that there were some prerequisites required for the success of this operation and similar ones in the future: the chain of command and control from the decision makers direct to the technical commander on scene; the noninterference of the representative of the Crisis Management Staff on the scene, Mr. Wischnewski, concerning tactical matters; and the agreement of the Somali Government with the tactical planning³⁷⁰ and proposals of the commanding officer of GSG9.

As far as the British co-operation was concerned:

Confirmation of the SAS involvement in the Mogadishu operation came immediately after the rescue from Prime Minister Callaghan, then in Bonn with Chancellor Schmidt. In front of television cameras, Callaghan told Schmidt: 'It should have been Dubai.' But even if the venue was changed, the event added new lustre to the SAS reputation, and it was good for Britain's relations with Europe.³⁷¹

³⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 27-28.

³⁷¹Geraghty, op. cit., p. 173, and "Bonn shows gratitude to Prime Minister," The New York Times, 19 October, 1977. Herr Schmidt reportedly thanked Mr. Callaghan "for supporting the West Germans' policy of toughness towards the hijackers and terrorists and for his 'active help' in sending two British anti-terrorist specialists to Mogadishu. His support had been 'of enormous value.'" See also, "Terror and Triumph at Mogadishu," Time, 31 October, 1977, p. 28. According to this article, "the British provided the West Germans with 1) special, highly sensitive listening devices for locating the terrorists within the plane and 2) a supply of British 'stun grenades.'" No further information regarding the listening devices has been found in the open sources covered in this study.

In reflection, Mogadishu refined some of the lessons learnt for rescue operations. Nations not already experienced in this type of warfare were served notice to take such eventualities seriously, and prepare for them, as the Germans did, by establishing a counter-terrorist option similar to GSG9. Professionally, it is very much to the credit of the West German government and the leadership of GSG9 that they sought and welcomed foreign assistance, in this case acquiring an SAS liaison team and incorporating their knowledge into their operation.' As one study noted:

In the war against terrorism, there is no room for false pride and misplaced machismo: those in charge should make use of the best manpower, expertise, equipment and techniques, regardless of origin.³⁷²

As was the case with Kenya's intimate assistance to the Israelis at Entebbe, Somalia should be commended for allowing the GSG9 to operate unimpeded under German command and control. Furthermore, the Greek government must be praised for allowing the GSG9 to be forward-based in Crete during a critical phase of the pursuit operation.

In contrast, Dubai's unwillingness to co-operate with the GSG9 posed considerable danger to the passengers. In particular, Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid al-Muktum's desire to have his poorly trained personnel undertake the rescue operation, if one was required, would have risked the lives of all the hostages. This situation demonstrates how the issue of national sovereignty could have jeopardized the lives of innocent people. As one study underlined:

³⁷²University of New Brunswick, Centre for Conflict Studies, Special Operations, op. cit., p. 119.

Where an appropriate anti-terrorist unit is available in the country concerned, the government there will almost most certainly insist, reasonably, that it be used. But when no specialist unit exists, and a foreign one is to [sic] at hand (particularly if the victims are from that foreign country), it is sensible for the host nation to consider setting aside sovereignty issues and permit the best unit to deal with the crisis.³⁷³

The Mogadishu operation was conducted after years of intensive training by highly professional personnel. It drew upon extensive knowledge gleaned from the careful study of previous rescue operations, including Entebbe. Beyond the fundamental requirements of a specially selected and trained hostage-rescue force, it is apparent that a robust and effective governmental crisis decision-making body was readily available in both Entebbe and Mogadishu. Moreover, the value of accurate up-to-the-second intelligence as well as the importance of acquiring a forward-base to either pursue terrorists or project an attack must be emphasized. Further, in both rescues the actual operational leadership rested with the commander on the ground. One of the most salient lessons to be drawn from Mogadishu and Entebbe, is the ability of both the West German and Israeli governments to, concurrently, negotiate while preparing to fight.

Rescue missions are daring and sensitive operations which can be easily compromised, as shown by the incident of the reporter monitoring GSG9 air-to-ground transmissions. Any

³⁷³Ibid., p. 119.

future operations demand fully secure and functional means of communications with the appropriate back-up links.³⁷⁴

The employment of secure means would help ensure the mission's communication and operational security.

Beyond the 'intimate relationship' which developed before and during the Mogadishu rescue between GSG9 and the SAS, rescue forces must be sensitive to the politics of such operations. The initial reluctance, demonstrated by the authorities in Dubai and in Somalia, to allow GSG9 to operate independently on their soil is most significant. In that regard it was apparently an international effort to convince the Somali government to allow the GSG9 the opportunity to free the hostages:

AFTER UNCERTAINTIES IN OR OVER DUBAI, OMAN AND PDRY, TURNING POINT OCCURRED IN MOGADISHU. AIRCRAFT WITH GSG-9 WAS BROUGHT [SIC] FORWARD AFTER SCHMIDT AND OTHER HEADS OF GOVT/STATE [SIC-GOVT/STATE] CONCERNED CONVINCED SIAD BARRE NOT/NOT TO ALLOW HIJACKED AIRCRAFT TO LEAVE AND TO GO ALONG WITH ASSAULT OPERATION. SOMALIS DID NOT/NOT TAKE A DIRECT PART BUT PLAYED A ROLE IN COORDINATED DIVERSIONARY ACTIONS ON RUNWAY AND AIRFIELD. BRITS UNDERSTAND THAT GERMANS WERE PREPARED TO LET SOMALIS TAKE DIRECT PART IF THIS BECAME STICKING POINT IN SOMALI AGREEMENT FOR GSG-9 OPERATION.³⁷⁵

National prestige and political correctness often prevail over common sense. As noted above, the Germans were prepared to allow the Somalis to take part in the rescue. In that regard, special forces must be able to accommodate, within this operational planning, suitable roles for foreign police

³⁷⁴"CRISIS MANAGEMENT...." Message traffic, op. cit., 14 November, 1977, p. 5.

³⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 6-7.

and security forces, if they intend to operate abroad. In short:

Specialist units...should build into their procedures and their plans appropriate roles which can be filled at short notice by indigenous personnel, and they must be prepared to give an over-generous share of credit to such participation afterwards.³⁷⁶

In the end, the international co-operative assistance was underlined when West German government spokesman Klaus Boelling gave the following statement at the successful conclusion of the Mogadishu rescue:

WE WEIGHED THE RISK [OF RESCUE] AS CONSCIENTIOUSLY AS WE COULD. NEVERTHELESS, A HIGH RISK REMAINED. WITHOUT THE CONSENT AND AID OF THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT, WE COULD NOT HAVE UNDERTAKEN THE RESCUE OPERATION.

THE GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA DESERVES GRATITUDE, NOT ONLY FROM US GERMANS. ITS DECISION TO PERMIT THE OPERATION WAS ESSENTIAL TO AVERTING A CATASTROPHE. THE MORAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT OF MANY OTHER STATES FOR OUR EFFORTS TO LIBERATE THE HOSTAGES AND CREW MEMBERS FROM THE POWER OF DANGEROUS COMMON CRIMINALS HAS MATERIALLY HELPED THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY.³⁷⁷

Another indicator of assistance was noted in a report advising that Helmut Schmidt:

...ALSO SENT TELEGRAMS OF THANKS TO PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER, PREMIER [SIC] JAMES CALLAGHAN, PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING, GREEK PREMIER KONSTANDINOS [SIC] KARAMANLIS AND KING KAHLID OF SAUDI ARABIA. THE CHANCELLOR ALSO SENT A TELEGRAM OF THANKS TO POPE PAUL, WHO HAD DECLARED HIS READINESS TO BE EXCHANGED FOR THE HOSTAGES IF NEED BE.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁶University of New Brunswick, Centre for Conflict Studies Special Operations, op. cit., p. 121.

³⁷⁷FBIS 09, "FRG SPOKESMAN READS JOINT STATEMENT ON HOSTAGES RESCUE OPERATION," 18 October, 1977.

³⁷⁸FBIS 10, "FRG CHANCELLOR CABLES THANKS TO SOMALIA'S BARRE, OTHERS," 18 October, 1977.

Both Entebbe and Mogadishu were historically important as they illustrate the determined initiatives of governments to move towards more closer co-operative efforts, and prove that such international assistance and co-operation do have a decisive role to play in combatting terrorism.

CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF ELITE FORCES IN COUNTER-TERRORISM

AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE

IN LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

Section I

An Historical Perspective

Since 1945 Great Britain has been continuously involved in what the British Brigadier-General and counter-insurgency authority, Frank Kitson, calls 'low intensity operations.'³⁷⁹ The term, 'low-intensity operations' is used to describe campaigns short of full-scale conventional war. These include aid to the civil power, internal security operations, peace-keeping, counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency operations. Such operations are characterized by the great role played, therein, by political considerations, a role whose importance it would be hard to exaggerate.

The political nature of these operations demand that every officer and soldier involved is well aware that even the most minor action by the military may carry with it major political consequences. What these operations have in common is close political scrutiny and control and therefore, requires intimate civil, military and police co-operation at all times. The use of military means -- firepower, mass, mobility, speed and initiative -- are subject to the political limitations imposed on the conduct of the campaign. Due to this, the weapons and tactics employed are proportional to the military response and appropriate to the

³⁷⁹ See Frank Kitson, Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peacekeeping.

political reality. It is because of this, for example, that tanks and artillery are not employed in Northern Ireland.

In tandem with the political character of these low-intensity operations, military activities have taken on a 'policing aspect.' As in Northern Ireland, the aim is not so much to kill terrorists, Protestant or Catholic, as to capture them so that they may undergo appropriate judicial proceedings. In such operations the soldier, depending on the military task to be performed, may act as a 'peace officer' at a roadblock searching cars for objects such as contraband or weapons, and later that same day be ordered to set up an ambush.

Obviously, implicit in the term is the fact that, these operations are low in the level of intensity. The tone of these activities is political; therefore, the level of military activity is predicated on the threat. The amount of military force used at any one time is carefully measured and will vary with the local conditions. Low-intensity conflict differs from conventional operations because the enemy operates clandestinely amongst the indigenous population for the most part, and is organized in secure cells, often in geographically inaccessible regions. This, in turn, demands efficient intelligence which is vital for success against such an enemy.

Psychological operations play an important part in low-intensity conflict since the enemy, be they revolutionary terrorists or other elements, will attempt to portray a strength beyond their real numbers and capabilities. At the same time, they may try to provoke the patience of the security forces and, in turn, the government, in order to

tempt them to react harshly. In that regard the military must be kept under political control and win the 'hearts and minds' campaign, the aim of which is to bring about popular support and loyalty of the people for the government in power, while at the same time defeating the 'enemy.'

Finally, low-intensity operations involve methods of unconventional warfare (UW). Ambush, bombings, kidnapping, hostage-taking and hijacking are activities typical of this type of warfare and are usually conducted by highly motivated and dedicated individuals. The nature of these operations as well as their generally protracted nature, elicits a different response from the military than its conventional approach to warfare. This is illustrated by the British Army's experience in Malaya and present security operations in Northern Ireland which began in 1969.

This section evaluates the lessons learned from the British post-war experience in low-intensity operations, outlines how British forces adapted to the requirements imposed by these operations and describes the evolution of a British strategy for low-intensity operations.

The Iranian Embassy siege in May of 1980 demonstrated very clearly many of the lessons learned over the 35 years of British military experience in conducting low-intensity operations. Although Great Britain has remained at peace since the cessation of large-scale wartime hostilities in 1945, her forces, particularly her army, have been constantly committed throughout the world. Henry Stanhope lists some 92

operational commitments over this period³⁸⁰ and David Charters has added two more to bring the total to 94.³⁸¹

Many of the concepts involved in low-intensity operations, particularly the political-military aspects, have only recently been developed. However, much of the military and technical expertise used in dealing with insurgents, saboteurs and terrorists in recent years had already been part and parcel of the tactics applied in imperial policing. John Pimlott suggests:

The concept of politico-military insurgency may be relatively new, but many of the techniques involved, particularly of guerrilla warfare, are merely adaptations of traditional rebel tactics against which the British had often fought, and it is surprising how many of the methods used in what is now known as counter-insurgency³⁸² have their origins in such an imperial past.

The nine major British operations in Palestine, Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, Borneo, Aden, the Radfan, Northern Ireland and Oman are particularly significant. The importance of these actions is not so much tied to the success or failure of the operations themselves but lies in the lessons learned from them and the resulting development of a British strategy for low-intensity operations. This, it should be emphasized, was not an easy, logical transition and, therefore, as the

³⁸⁰Henry Stanhope, The Soldiers: An Anatomy of the British Army, pp. 343-347.

³⁸¹David A. Charters, "From Palestine To Northern Ireland: British Army Adaptation To Low-Intensity Conflict, 1945-1980," in David Charters and Maurice Tugwell, Armies in Low-Intensity Conflict: A Comparative Study of Institutional Adaptation to New Forms of Warfare, Department of National Defence, Operational Analysis Establishment, Extra-Mural Paper No. 38, (cited as Charters and Tugwell), p. 206.

³⁸²John Pimlott, "The British Army: The Dhofar Campaign, 1970-1975," in Ian F.W. Beckett and John Pimlott, (eds), Armed Forces and Modern Counter-Insurgency, p. 16, (cited as Beckett and Pimlott).

British Army had been essentially an imperial police force it had to incorporate the training, structure, skills and techniques for low-intensity operations. The difficulties were compounded by the fact that after World War II it was a continental force established within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Moreover, in the wake of the war much of the army's time and resources were consumed, not in conventional, but rather in counter-terrorist operations in Palestine, which was soon followed by the Malayan Emergency and other similar low-intensity operations. Experience from these small conflicts were recycled and although the circumstances varied a body of corporate experience developed producing an adaptable framework from which to work. The framework notwithstanding, each new situation demanded that the army re-tool so as to appropriately adapt to the operational scenario.

David Charters argues that the very nature of low-intensity warfare had an effect not only on the evolution of a British army doctrine to counter it but also, in a sense, on the operational structure of the army as a whole. In the following list of characteristics and implications of low-intensity warfare, he outlines the salient points to note on this matter:

- 1) Characteristic - the 'political' nature of the conflicts and operations.
Implications - political control of operations and limits on the use of force, which turned military operations into 'policing' tasks and ensured that the final outcome would be determined by political, not military, considerations.
- 2) Characteristic - the 'low intensity' level of combat.

- Implications - small-unit operations with relatively low casualties which required large numbers of infantry to keep the violence from escalating beyond politically acceptable limits.
- 3) Characteristic - clandestine nature of the enemy.
Implications - considerable emphasis on intelligence collection.
- 4) Characteristic - important role of psychological warfare.
Implications - scrutiny of the Army's methods by domestic and foreign critics, and Army involvement in psychological warfare.
- 5) Characteristic - unconventional methods of warfare.
Implications - need for the Army to acquire the patience demanded by protracted operations, and to develop unconventional, innovative methods for bringing the enemy to battle on equal terms in extremes of terrain and climate.³⁸³

The apparent characteristics of low-intensity warfare were not well known in the same form to the British immediately after the war in 1945,³⁸⁴ but have been, through experience and study, slowly identified and included into the army's institutional memory.³⁸⁵

The British Army of today is a direct descendant of the army of the empire whose primary task was to ensure the security of British interests throughout a large part of the world. Its function was to conduct a seemingly endless series of

³⁸³Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., pp. 211-212.

³⁸⁴Ibid.

³⁸⁵The institutional memory as embodied in the manual produced in Great Britain by the Camberley Staff College, entitled Counter-Revolutionary Warfare And Out of Area Operations, "Camberley, 1988.

operations in far-away places against less technically sophisticated enemies. It could be said that any form of warfare, other than colonial campaigning, was viewed by the army, as an institution, as outside the norm:

Continental conventional wars, including the two world wars of this century, were aberrations -- the exception, rather than the rule. From the end of the Napoleonic period low-intensity warfare was the predominant experience of the British Army. Nor, ... did this pattern change significantly after 1945.³⁸⁶

Such perceptions had much to do with the development of Britain's extraordinary regimental system. It is these regiments which make up the fighting elements of Britain's army. Due, in part, to the historical experiences of these units, they have developed a strong sense of their own uniqueness. These experiences "have fostered, even encouraged, the individualism that runs through the regiments, and through their officers in particular."³⁸⁷

The imperial past also strengthened this individualist spirit particularly as officers and commanders were, due to a lack of communications and as a result of the distances separating them from their superiors, given a general mandate to exercise their authority as they saw fit.

A certain independent habit of mind was both required and permitted. This lent itself neatly to the individualistic nature of overseas regimental life, but also meshed with operational necessity; the army was frequently "outnumbered by its enemies and... more impoverished than its friends." The need to concentrate on the immediate requirements of practical, 'down-to-earth' soldiering in such circumstances made the Army a master of improvisation, flexibility, 'on-the-job' learning

³⁸⁶Charters and Tugwell, pp. 213-214.

³⁸⁷Ibid., p. 215.

and training³⁸⁸ making do with what was available on the spot.

Much of this British experience was distilled in the text entitled Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice, written by Colonel C.E. Callwell. In this book, Callwell discusses the meaning of the term "small wars," their causes, objectives, intelligence requirements, logistics, the desirability of maintaining the initiative, tactics, lines of communications, as well as guerrilla warfare in general, raiding and the importance of surprise, hill and bush warfare, security and the necessity for night operations.³⁸⁹ In fact, this book continues to be read by present-day special forces personnel interested in understanding the evolution and nature of contemporary low-intensity warfare.

British experience in low-intensity operations, specifically guerrilla warfare, can be traced at least as far back as Wellington. The Great Duke himself depended on guerrilla assistance in his Spanish campaigns. Jac Weller suggests that in Spain:

After the dismal defeats of the Spanish regular armies, guerrilla bands grew amazingly, but under a variety of leaders and in different ways. Wellington was able to supply clear, simple advice which proved effective. He also provided money, weapons, ammunition, and critical supplies. He soon received better co-operation from guerrilla leaders than³⁹⁰ he did from the Spanish regular commanders.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 215-216.

³⁸⁹ Colonel C.E. Callwell, Small Wars: Their Principles And Practice. For a more focussed view on the duties of an officer see General Sir Andrew Skeen, Passing It On: Short Talks On Tribal Fighting On The North-West Frontier of India.

³⁹⁰ Jac Weller, "Wellington's Use Of Guerrillas," Journal of the Royal United Services Institution, (May, 1963), p. 154.

Wellington, mindful of his army's own shortcomings during this campaign, employed guerrillas "to gain positive intelligence for him."³⁹¹ Particularly valuable was the capture of enemy despatches frequently accomplished by the guerrillas.³⁹² In fact, during the Peninsula campaign, Wellington's plans for conventional operations were complemented by his appreciation and partial orchestration of a concurrent guerrilla effort:

As the war progressed, Wellington was able to channel most guerrilla activities away from petty local concerns into a co-ordinated plan. This was absolutely necessary, for the French had a four-to-one superiority in regular soldiers. Wellington prevented a French concentration largely by keeping the guerrillas in being and active. If the French came together, the Spanish irregulars took over all territory vacated. Even more important, the guerrillas prevented a really large French army from taking sufficient supplies from a limited area to feed itself.³⁹³

Michael Glover's assessment is that Wellington was assisted by the Spanish guerrillas as they:

...tied down thousands of French troops, made permanently insecure the French lines of communication and regularly supplied Wellington with information about French movements and intentions which went far to compensate for Wellington's lack of numbers.³⁹⁴

Furthermore, Glover notes that Wellington appreciated the debt he owed to the Spanish guerrillas.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹Ibid.

³⁹²Ibid.

³⁹³Ibid., p. 155.

³⁹⁴Michael Glover, Wellington As Military Commander, p. 235.

³⁹⁵Ibid., p. 236.

Age of Empire

Small wars for the most part were part and parcel of the 64-year reign of Queen Victoria. During all these years the British Army was quite busy operationally:

From 1837 until 1901, in Asia, Africa, Arabia, and elsewhere, British troops were engaged in almost constant combat. It was the price of empire, of world leadership, and of national pride -- and it was paid, usually without qualms or regrets or very much thought.³⁹⁶

Victoria's reign was also a time of a "superabundance of leaders."³⁹⁷ From these there came the commanders of armies and navies belonging not only to Britain and its possessions but also to other nations such as Egypt, Greece, China and Turkey. These were men who were willing to adapt and "did not hesitate to exchange their bowlers for turbans, turbushes or mandarin caps if only they were given men whom they could lead into battle."³⁹⁸

One of the more prominent figures of this century, Colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence, was a proponent and philosopher of guerrilla warfare. It was Lawrence who recognized and broke down into its varying elements this type of warfare. John Baylis writes that:

...Lawrence was the first man to reduce guerrilla warfare to a set of principles and to articulate clearly the nature of the tactics he used in his campaigns. In The Seven Pillars of Wisdom he prosaically describes guerrilla warfare in terms of "an influence, an idea, a thing intangible, invulnerable, without front or back, drifting about like a gas." Lawrence saw the problem of his war in terms of three categories of related variables, "the algebraical element of things, a biological

³⁹⁶Byron Farwell, Queen Victoria's Little Wars, p. 1.

³⁹⁷Ibid., p. 2.

³⁹⁸Ibid., p. 3.

element of lives, and psychological element of ideas." In so doing he was moving away from the traditional notion of guerrilla warfare as a purely military phenomenon and, like Clausewitz before him, laying more stress on the political dimensions of such conflict. To Lawrence only a third of war was a military problem and the nature even of this "technical" aspect depended fundamentally on the political two-thirds.

As with other leaders who could appreciate the capabilities of the Arabs as guerrilla fighters, Lawrence employed both their natural fighting skills and their local knowledge in the war with the Turks. Most important, Lawrence ensured that the Arabs would fight only when they would be successful, and on their own terms.

The Irish Rebellion (1919-1921)

The Irish Rebellion witnessed the alienation of the people from the government. At the same time the ability of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to persist in its operations sapped the will of the British government to continue to combat it. The Rebellion could have been a major learning campaign for the British Army but this was not the case as the campaign was viewed, during the period, and for some time after, as an aberration.

Official military thinking even after World War I tended to follow traditional lines and, as Charters has stated, "the atmosphere prevailing in the inter-war Army mitigated against thoughtful inquiry into the crucial political/military/psychological dimensions of insurgency and

³⁹⁹ John Baylis, "Revolutionary Warfare," in John Baylis, Ken Booth, et al., Contemporary Strategy: Theories And Policies, p. 133.

counter-insurgency."⁴⁰⁰ The first real study of low-intensity operations was written by a former British officer in 1937, entitled British Rule, and Rebellion. The author, H.J. Simson, was one of the first to recognize through an analysis of the Irish Rebellion, that the British Army and government were unable to deal with the Rebellion largely because of their failure to win the war in political and psychological terms. This certainly fits into Charles Townshend's analysis where he argues:

Despite the successes of spring 1921, the counter-insurgency failed. Ireland was not pacified. The government succeeded neither in restoring order nor in implementing the constitutional policy enshrined in the Government of Ireland Act. Failure can be accurately monitored in the field of publicity and propaganda. The government was slower than the insurgents to create a publicity organization, and the one they created was weaker in performance.⁴⁰¹

What was probably even more frustrating for the British Army was that militarily, the situation was promising.⁴⁰²

Townshend states:

In point of fact the overall situation in 1921 was not altogether unfavourable to the government: the IRA's military position was increasingly insecure. Its arms holdings were being eroded, as was its ascendancy in the intelligence sphere. Its capacity to mount difficult operations had been reduced -- attacks on police barracks had for instance largely given way to the 'offensive against communications,'.... Large parts of the nation had ceased to play any visible part in the national struggle. Yet the IRA sustained its credibility, while that of the government was in continuous decline.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 231.

⁴⁰¹ Charles Townshend, Britain's Civil Wars: Counterinsurgency in the twentieth century, p. 66.

⁴⁰² See Brevet Major T.A. Lowe, "Some Reflections Of A Junior Commander Upon 'The Campaign' in Ireland 1920 and 1921," The Army Quarterly, Vol. V, (October 1922 and January 1923), pp. 50-58.

⁴⁰³ Townshend, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

More will be said on the Irish experience later on. Over a decade further into the inter-war period another British officer, Orde Wingate, partly in the tradition of T.E. Lawrence, successfully led the nascent Jewish special night squads against the Arabs in Palestine.⁴⁰⁴ According to an Israeli analyst it was Wingate who, in part, was responsible for the development of some of Israel's most famous commanders. Apparently Wingate:

...gave Yigal Allon, Moshe Dayan and other future Israeli army commanders their first formal instruction in warfare,⁴⁰⁵ particularly counter-guerrilla tactics.

Concerned over the possibility that the Arabs might destroy portions of a major pipeline running through the northern part of Palestine, the British Army, albeit reluctantly, permitted Wingate to train the Jewish night squads to fight Arab terrorists. His tactics were to become a part of counter-insurgency thinking of leaders into the 1980s. Accordingly he dominated the night, preached the importance of night fighting, close combat and ambush tactics, and ensured the selection and training of the right sort of men for these missions.⁴⁰⁶ Wingate was later to help lead a revolt against the Italians in Abyssinia and was a proponent of deep penetration operations, an approach he perfected in raising and leading the Chindits who were famed for their

⁴⁰⁴Beckett and Pimlott, op. cit., p. 17.

⁴⁰⁵Zeev Schiff, A History Of The Israeli Army (1870-1974), p. 20.

⁴⁰⁶Ibid.

daring strikes against Japanese lines of communication in Burma.⁴⁰⁷

World War II and the Evolution of British Special Forces

During World War II a number of special units came into existence such as the Special Air Service (SAS), the Special Boat Section (SBS), the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) and those under the direction of the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Such units were used extensively during the war for both conventional and unconventional operations.⁴⁰⁸ By the end of the war the British Army could draw upon a wide body of historical and operationally current information, from both officers and men who had gained first-hand experience in the training, organization and capabilities of special forces and special operations. This could lead to ironic situations such as that in Malaya in the latter part of the war. At that time British troops from Force 136, better known as a branch of the SOE, assisted in the training of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). Later, under Chin Peng⁴⁰⁹ in 1948, the MPAJA became the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) and conducted a lengthy insurgency

⁴⁰⁷Michael Calvert, Chindits: Long Range Penetration, pp. 10-11; see also Shelford Bidwell, The Chindit War: Stilwell, Wingate, and the Campaign in Burma: 1944.

⁴⁰⁸See Philip Warner, The Secret Forces Of World War II, William Seymour, British Special Forces, and Julian Thompson, Ready for Anything: The Parachute Regiment At War: 1940-1992.

⁴⁰⁹See "Malayan guerrilla lays down his arms after 41-year fight," The Toronto Sunday Star, 3 December, 1989. Chin Peng signed an agreement on 2 December, 1989, ending the armed struggle. According to this article, "The Communists agreed to lay down their arms and pledged loyalty to king and country. Thailand and Malaysia promised to ensure their fair treatment."

against the British which lasted from 1948 to 1960, no doubt profiting much from their British wartime instructors.⁴¹⁰

Men who had served in such special forces added "their knowledge of deep-penetration raiding and unconventional fighting to produce [within the British Army] a body of skills of inestimable value against insurgency groups."⁴¹¹

A detailed historical overview will be incorporated in Section II.

The British Army - Soldiering Afar

The British Army, both in the period between the world wars and in the post-1945 era, gave much opportunity for officers to broaden their military experience beyond just regimental soldiering. Secondments were numerous, and indeed were considered an avenue to gain active service experience. Officers on such postings were often attracted by a sense of romanticism akin to that of Lawrence of Arabia. They longed, for example, for:

...the long star-lit nights beneath Bedouin tents, in which the Englishman pleasantly deluded himself that his friendship with the Arab was something special, mutual and indestructible, and that there existed some affinity of spirit between the desert and the shires. The tough cheerful officers of the Sultan's private armies... still purveying the Small Arms Manual to illiterate peasants and tribesmen, and still managing to mould the most

⁴¹⁰Warner, op. cit., pp. 202-203, and John Ellis, A Short History of Guerrilla Warfare, p. 178.

⁴¹¹Beckett and Pimlott, op. cit., p. 17. The body of skills would include ambush techniques, long-range penetration operations, escape and evasion, language skills, intelligence gathering techniques, jungle operations and the ability to perform high-risk operations as required.

unlikely material into fine and faithful fighting forces.⁴¹²

Another contemporary romantic soldier Colin Mitchell notes:

Ever since I was a boy I had been fascinated by stories of soldiering on the frontiers of the Empire, of the men who carved out careers with their own swords, leading Indian soldiers, Sudanese levies, Chinese mercenaries or African askari. At Foyle's in the Charing Cross Road, before the Second World War, you could buy for 1s. second-hand editions of the biographies of these Victorian soldiers -- not so much the great national figures such as Gordon, Kitchener and Roberts, but lesser, equally exciting men. I was as familiar with Kabul and the Khyber Pass as I was with Clapham and Kensington.⁴¹³

Furthermore, secondments brought a promotion in rank with commensurate responsibility. This aspect in itself was most attractive:

A subaltern who in the Manchesters might expect to command no more than a platoon for years on end would, as a captain in the Gold Coast Regiment, command a company from the moment he reported for duty in Accra.⁴¹⁴

Finally, the most attractive aspect of military life to professional soldiers is the acquisition of real soldiering experiences, that is, active service.⁴¹⁵ The secondments brought not only the experience itself but also excitement, rewards and the possibility of 'making a name.' In many parts of the Empire there were almost scheduled campaigns against dissident tribes and peoples. For those attracted by

⁴¹²James Morris, Sultan in Oman, p. 135. Taken from James Lunt, Imperial Sunset: Frontier Soldiering in the 20th Century, p. xiv.

⁴¹³Colin Mitchell, Having Been A Soldier, p. 110.

⁴¹⁴Lunt, op. cit., p. xvi.

⁴¹⁵See Brigadier C.W.B. Purdon, "The Sultan's Armed Forces," The British Army Review, August, 1969, pp. 78-79. This article advertised that "the fun and excitement has not yet gone from soldiering," in an attempt to attract contract officers for the Sultan's Forces.

such an opportunity, "The deadly monotony of peacetime soldiering with obsolete equipment and hardly any soldiers in, say, Dover, was transformed as soon as an officer arrived in Kirkuk."⁴¹⁶

This experience must not be underrated. A great number of officers who achieved senior rank had acquired, at some time, experience in such secondments. Many of Britain's most distinguished generals of the last century had served in or with colonial forces. For example, Generals Garnet Wolseley and Herbert Kitchener served with the Egyptians at the end of the last century, and more recently Major-General John Akehurst⁴¹⁷ served as the commander of the multi-national Dhofar Brigade, and General Sir John Hackett with the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force. Such experiences gave those who took the challenge an opportunity to discover and appreciate new cultures and languages. It gave them a feel for differing peoples, their sensitivities and aspirations, an understanding of the Empire in all its ethnic variety. It is important to underline here that the Palestine experience indicated that the British (Army) were apparently less sensitive to the plight of the Jewish refugees fleeing from Europe in the wake of World War II. As well, experience in Cyprus also denoted a degree of British insensitivity to the political aspirations of the Greek Cypriots. Nonetheless, experience gleaned from Malaya, Borneo and the Oman suggests that to be successful in low-intensity operations the British Army must also take into account the aspirations and

? Turkish Cypriots

⁴¹⁶Lunt, op. cit., p. xvi.

⁴¹⁷See Farwell, op. cit., and John Akehurst, We Won A War: The Campaign in Oman 1965-1975.

interests of the people they were supposedly defending. This appreciation would pay dividends in the future as did the British ability to adapt to a changing imperial context.

What when
there are 2 sides
- Palestine
- Cyprus
etc

The Post-War British Army

As Lieutenant General Sir Kenneth Darling stated in an article based on a presentation given on 4 May, 1964 to the students of the United States Army Command and General Staff College, and referring to low-intensity operations:

There is nothing new in these tactics, and we do not want to allow ourselves to be persuaded by upstarts such as Mao Tse-tung that he has produced some original thought in this field. In fact, we British in some degree or another have been promoting insurgency all around the world for centuries.⁴¹⁸

The end of 1945 saw the British forces, particularly the army, as organizations with long experience in low-intensity operations. World War II, however, had changed the army from its traditional role of an imperial policing body to one highly experienced, trained and organized for large-scale conventional operations in Europe and other theatres. The maintenance of a large conventional occupation army in Europe placed a drain on the troops available for low-intensity operations elsewhere.⁴¹⁹ Furthermore, there were major constraints, particularly financial,⁴²⁰ on the ability to maintain the required strategic reserve and some degree of

⁴¹⁸Lieutenant General Sir Kenneth Darling, "British Counterinsurgency Experience," Military Review, (January, 1965), p. 9.

⁴¹⁹Field Marshal Lord Carver, The Seven Ages of the British Army, pp. 290-292.

⁴²⁰Ibid., p. 301.

mobility. This meant a down-scaling in forces available for low-intensity operations.

Despite the continuation of conscription after the war, the regimental system and a strong leadership cadre enabled the army to maintain a high professional standard. Operations in the post-war era demanded much from junior commanders. This went a long way in developing grass-root skills in low-intensity warfare, and assisted in the development of the soldier, NCO and officer in the years that followed. In Borneo:

...it was, for us, very much a platoon commander's war. A subaltern and some thirty Jocks would occupy positions around a threatened longhouse -- slit trenches, weapon pits and dug-outs, surrounded by barbed wire, sharpened stakes, mines and trip-flares -- and patrol the jungle from there. The nearest friendly troops would probably be twenty-odd miles away and the only communications with the outside world by wireless and helicopter. So, if there was an action, a very young officer had to accept that it was probably going to be his battle. He would have to fight it and win it himself.⁴²¹

For some regiments, experience derived from numerous operational tours assisted in producing highly efficient soldiers well trained in counter-insurgency. In the Borneo campaign, for example, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders:

...were called upon to serve three full tours, each of six months, in the Borneo jungles. This experience made them into a skilled and seasoned fighting battalion in which the acceptance of responsibility became second nature. Junior NCOs did the work of officers and platoon commanders were given wide geographical areas which in any other campaign would have fallen to the lot of a battalion commander. It bred self-sufficiency and

⁴²¹Mitchell, op. cit., p. 127. This type of independent experience was noted years previously in an article by Major P.E. Crook, "A Subaltern's War In Malaya," British Army Journal, (January, 1953), pp. 21-24.

confidence to an astonishing degree and it soon sorted out the men from the boys.⁴²²

As a future commanding officer, Colin Mitchell appreciated this extensive experience:

...I was later to have good reason to be grateful for the Argylls' long service in the campaign and the hard work put into it by my predecessors in command.... It was only a few months after the end of the Borneo war that I was to lead the Battalion to Aden, knowing that nearly all of my men were already tough, battle-tested soldiers.⁴²³

The experience of imperial and post-imperial soldiering sprinkled throughout the regiments produced, amongst the officers and other ranks, a rugged practical level of individualism which sought "flexible solutions to military problems at the local level."⁴²⁴ Therefore, the demands placed upon the army forced all ranks to be more adaptable and sensitive to the situations with which they were confronted. Moreover, due to high costs and government fiscal restraint this necessitated a different approach. Pimlott argues that this 'tradition of flexibility' had much to do with the British Army's ability to cope with low-intensity warfare. British troops employed for imperial policing were spread thinly throughout the Empire. Since the army was almost always without sufficient financial backing, it was obliged to be careful in expending its limited resources. This demanded a different approach to low-intensity operations:

Once presented with a revolt, therefore, the British were more likely to take a 'low profile' response, using their forces sparingly and searching for solutions which did not necessitate large expenditure of men or material; an approach

⁴²²Ibid., p. 121.

⁴²³Ibid., p. 122.

⁴²⁴Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 229.

which often made full use of local resources and involved close co-operation with existing civil authorities. At the same time, the wide range of threats to imperial rule -- from the sophisticated armies of India to the stone-age tribesmen of parts of West Africa -- and the different geographical conditions encountered, produced a constant need to adapt responses to fit local circumstances and avoided the development of a stereotyped 'theory' of policing.⁴²⁵

Therefore, the British Army by 1945 had "the three important characteristics of experience, appropriate military skill and flexibility."⁴²⁶ This experience did not produce a formulated, strict doctrine or theory but merely a number of possible solutions to very different situations:

What emerged was never a theory, elaborately compiled and rigidly adhered to in the manner of, say, the French *guerre revolutionnaire*, but a series of responses which, when adapted to fit specific conditions, proved successful in maintaining at least a measure of political stability, even under the pressure of ⁴²⁷strident nationalism or communist revolutionary warfare.

As noted, the writings of Colonel C.E. Callwell and Colonel T.E. Lawrence did much to synthesize the army's experiences in suppressing rebellion and fighting 'small wars.'

Interestingly enough, some authors have argued that the British Army did not fully understand the complexity of the conflicts in which they initially became involved during the post-war years. For example, Charters writes that "the record suggests that the British Army had some difficulty in comprehending the nature of the conflicts in which it became involved after 1945."⁴²⁸ Charters may be mixing the problems of imperial policing with the difficulties of maintaining

⁴²⁵Beckett and Pimlott, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴²⁶Ibid.

⁴²⁷Ibid.

⁴²⁸Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 230.

peace during de-colonization. Imperial policing was essentially the forceful extension of central government authority, if and when needed. In the wake of World War II, Great Britain withdrew from the Empire, and this de-colonization was for the most part less controlled both in political and military terms since the initiative was rarely in London's hands.

According to Charters, the post-war British Army thought that low-intensity operations had to be dealt with on a purely military basis without reference to the political and cultural aspects of the situation. Maximum use of military and police force combined with a quick 'victory' were considered to be the most effective means of countering any colonial opposition, essentially the wedding of "'tried and true' imperial policing methods enhanced by modern technology."⁴²⁹ This would bring about "successful military operations [which] were considered to be the Army's best propaganda weapon."⁴³⁰

If one accepts Charter's argument, this British dependence in the post-war era on modern technology parallels American fascination with high technology during the Vietnam War. What is important to realize is that the instruments of conventional war -- airpower, armour and manoeuver forces -- are not appropriate, for the most part, in low-intensity operations, as they raise the threshold of violence to be used by the government forces. Low-intensity operations are

⁴²⁹ Ibid., p. 232.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

manpower intensive. It is far more acceptable to the population to see patrols of four soldiers, as we see in Northern Ireland, moving down the street than to face the posting of armoured units equipped with tanks throughout a city. The use of well-disciplined soldiers imparts a sense of security and places a human face on this aspect of low-intensity operations.⁴³¹ By providing a human face, rather than an inhuman armoured mask, one underscores the difference between a state of emergency and a state of siege. This does not discount the value of modern weapons, aircraft, artillery and armour in such situations, all of which were successfully used to some degree in Malaya and the Omani campaigns. The employment of such measures, however, was restricted and appropriately applied as the situations dictated.⁴³² Therefore, the use of such weapons was the exception rather than the rule, predicated upon the isolation of the area of operations combined with the positive identification of the enemy. In such instances it was thus possible to apply all firepower without the risk of excessively alienating the populace.

If one accepts Mao Tse Tung's maxim that the people are the ocean in which the guerrilla swims, it is essential that the security forces be able to separate the guerrilla from the population. This is a most frustrating process, as guerrillas and terrorists alike, work largely in a cellular structure with few contacts. This maintains the security of

⁴³¹Interview with a senior British Army officer, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 12 December, 1988.

⁴³²Akehurst, op. cit., p. 106. The author gives a good example in his discussion of Operation Himaar where enemy fire "was silenced by artillery and the jets."

the group and, in turn, the cause. It is this particular aspect of low-intensity operations that precludes the use of unrestricted brute force as both politically and psychologically unacceptable to the government and the people.

Palestine

The British Army's concepts on the handling of low-intensity operations through traditional imperial policing methods and modern technology were finally challenged in Palestine. In 1945, Britain's Middle East Forces were issued a War Office document produced in preparation for the, by then, inevitable defeat and occupation of Germany. This study's focus was on guerrilla warfare and its inherent strengths and weaknesses.⁴³³ The army perceived guerrilla warfare in purely military terms and the study stated:

...that offensive action by security forces -- drives against centres of resistance, pursuit of sabotage bands, and searches -- was the most effective weapon against guerrillas. Counter-guerrilla operations were seen as purely military.⁴³⁴

The political context of the Palestine situation was largely ignored; nor did the army attempt to define the threat which faced war-weary forces who were more comfortable and professionally adept at conducting conventional campaigns

⁴³³ Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 233. Taken from War Office pamphlet entitled, "Guerrilla Warfare", dated December, 1944, issued to Middle East Forces, 14 March, 1945, WO/169/19521.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

than in searching for Jewish terrorists.⁴³⁵ According to Charters:

There is nothing in the written record to suggest that the Army -- not to mention their political masters -- ever grasped the nature⁴³⁶ of the war being waged by the Jewish underground.

This lack of an identifiable political aim in Palestine appears to have been later exacerbated by the conflict between two major figures of the time. On one hand was Sir Alan Cunningham, who as last High Commissioner of Palestine, was cognizant both of his responsibility to "uphold 'law and order' by methods compatible with British political tradition"⁴³⁷ and of the political context of the Palestinian situation. On the other hand was Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, who felt that the British Army was being tied down with "defensive tasks rather than being freed for the offensive actions which were the only way of gaining the initiative."⁴³⁸

For the most part, the British appeared to have lost their sensitivity about the human issues in the Palestinian dilemma. Bowyer Bell has argued that in regard to:

...Palestine the British simply did not understand the impact of the holocaust, the depth of Jewish agony; nor could they⁴³⁹ credit the charge of genocide made against them.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Townshend, op. cit., p. 115.

⁴³⁸ Ibid. See also Nigel Hamilton, Monty: The Field Marshal, 1944-1976, pp. 665 - 667.

⁴³⁹ J. Bowyer Bell, "Revolts Against The Crown: The British Response to Imperial Insurgency," Parameters, Vol. 4, No. 1, (1974), p. 35.

It was, however, Montgomery's view that prevailed -- offensive action alone would smash Jewish terrorism. Operation Agatha, a massive cordon, search and seizure operation took place in June of 1946. This operation was precipitated, in part, by the destruction of nine bridges across the Jordan river and the kidnapping of five British officers.⁴⁴⁰ Adamant that his policy was correct, Montgomery, in January of 1947:

...called for intensive searches throughout the length and breadth of Palestine, 'turning the place upside down', setting aside the cumbersome need for direct evidence of local complicity in terrorist outrages. He was confident that 'no real harm would be done to the population and in time they would tire of being upset and would cooperate in putting an end to terrorism.'⁴⁴¹

Nevertheless, the Jewish terrorists continued to operate successfully in both the psychological and in the operational context. For the most part:

Jewish attacks were imaginative and bold, and quite unrestrained by conscience or public opinion. The IZL [Irgun] and the Stern Gang dealt entirely with murder. Shots in the back; electrically detonated mines on road-sides; explosive charges in various guises, left to explode inside or against buildings; raids on isolated posts; the hanging of hostages -- these were their methods. Palmach's [Haganah] acts of sabotage were designed more to impress public opinion -- such as the destruction of a number of Halifax aircraft at Qastina airfield -- or in support of immigration.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰Mitchell, op. cit., p. 62.

⁴⁴¹Townshend, op. cit., p. 116. Extracted from Cabinet Defence Committee, 19 December, 1946. "Palestine: Use of the Armed Forces." DO(46)145. FO371 52567. Brief for Secretary of State, Colonies, on new Directive for HC Palestine on Use of Armed Forces. (Cabinet, 15 January, 1947) CO 537 3870.

⁴⁴²G.G. Norton, The Red Devils: The Story of the British Airborne Forces, p. 139. There were operational and philosophical differences between the Jewish groups. The HAGANAH was the title for the self-defence units belonging to the Jewish community residing in Palestine during the British
(Footnote Continued)

According to Townshend, Cunningham attempted to forestall aggressive military action as he:

...repeatedly vetoed 'vigorous' offensive, retaliatory or punitive actions requested by the army, on the grounds of the 'major political factors involved and the extreme difficulty of hitting the section⁴⁴³ of the community responsible'....

The temporary use of martial law during 1947 suggested that the rule of civil government was ineffective; in short, bankrupt. It appeared that "The paralysis of the civil government was obviously so severe as to make it dependent on military support."⁴⁴⁴ It soon became apparent to Cunningham that to succeed in low-intensity operations, conventional offensive operations and martial law were useless. He fully understood:

...that military action by itself could not 'get at' terrorists. Only the cooperation of the ordinary people would permit this, and martial law

(Footnote Continued)

mandate and was a defensive military force created to protect Jews from Arab insurgents. From the HAGANAH would later spring the PALMACH, an independent underground military unit. The PALMACH was formed to act either as an independent unit or in co-operation with the British forces and did so particularly during the August 1941 invasion of Syria and Lebanon. The skills learned during the war would prove vital in the Jewish fight for a homeland.

Another organization called itself the IRGUN ZVAI LEUMI (IZL) better known as the IRGUN. This group had been founded in the 1930s by the right-wing Revisionist party and rejected the defensive strategy against the Arabs held by the HAGANAH. It was the IRGUN's political policy to expel the British from Palestine and to create a Jewish state. It was their intention to avoid the loss of life if at all possible. The third resistance movement was the LOHAMEI HERUT YISRAEL (LEHI), better known as the STERN GANG. This formation was an off-shoot of the IZL. Their programme was a mixture of extreme right-wing and revolutionary elements. In their view, the real enemy was British imperialism, and the terrorist activities demonstrated that they had no qualms about employing political murder.

⁴⁴³Townshend, op. cit., p. 116.

⁴⁴⁴Ibid., p. 117.

could only work if it imposed the sort of pressure that would elicit such help.⁴⁴⁵

The British were, for the most part, mentally still in the imperial policing era and were not prepared to cope with fighting organized terrorists. Mitchell argues that:

The laws which the British judiciary enforced in Palestine had been designed to hold down primitive colonies and not sophisticated Europeans, and amongst the penalties imposed upon those convicted of helping the terrorists was flogging. This the terrorists effectively stopped by kidnapping and flogging a British Brigade Major of the Airborne Division.⁴⁴⁶

The post-war anti-terrorist fighting in Palestine appears to have been, for the most part, deleted from the army's memory. Although the campaign may have been a negative and frustrating experience, Charters suggests that it was not totally ignored. He points to the fact that post-war Staff College courses included study of internal security operations, especially Palestine.⁴⁴⁷ Notwithstanding, this short-term interest, it appears that this painful experience was not noteworthy as no official history was written on the campaign.⁴⁴⁸ This may be due to the fact that the British Army felt uncomfortable in dealing with the highly charged political and religious aspects of the campaign itself. No

*Yes, but
impossibility
of pol. side
made it not
intendable*

*Missing here is Br Gort's
pol. pres. with pressure.*

⁴⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

⁴⁴⁷Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 234. For example, the 1947 course employed seven days in studying internal security operations and included lectures on Palestine. It should be underlined that some aspects of this campaign were subjects written for publication by some officers. For example see Brigadier R.N. Anderson, "Search Operations In Palestine: The Problem Of The Soldier," The Army Quarterly, Vol. LV, (October, 1947 and January, 1948), pp. 201-208.

⁴⁴⁸Ibid.

other satisfactory answer has been found for the lack of the army's appreciation for this experience.

Inadequate, this.

Malaya - The British Success Story

It is not until Malaya, when communist-inspired violence broke out in June of 1948, that we finally see military interest in guerrilla warfare become apparent. This professional interest slowly developed particularly after the success of Mao Tse Tung's 1949 Victory campaign in China. In turn, the Maoist theories of protracted war figured quite prominently in the internal security manual entitled, Imperial Policing and Duties in Aid of the Civil Power 1949, published by the War Office. This document acknowledged that there was a spectrum of reasons, i.e., religious and racial, which could spur political unrest and violence. The fact remained that such dissatisfaction could be provoked and motivated by "outside influences."⁴⁴⁹ The fact continued to elude the British Army that "popular support was essential to the survival and success of the insurgents."⁴⁵⁰ Despite the extensive experience of inspiring, nurturing and fighting alongside, not to mention against, numerous guerrilla movements during the 1939-45 war in Europe and the Far East, it was only in the initial stages of the campaign in Malaya that this need for popular support was finally recognized. Captain B.H. Liddell Hart argues that during World War II:

...guerrilla warfare became so widespread as to be an almost universal feature. It developed in all the European countries that were occupied by the Germans and most of the Far Eastern countries occupied by the Japanese....it became part of

⁴⁴⁹Ibid., p. 235.

⁴⁵⁰Ibid.

Churchill's war policy to utilize guerrilla warfare as a counter-weapon. Special branches of Britain's planning organization were devoted to the purpose of instigating⁴⁵¹ and fostering 'Resistance' movements....

The seemingly logical appreciation of developing and monitoring a popular support base from which one could instigate counter-guerrilla warfare appears to have been ignored. It has been stated that "Once recognized, however, it became virtually an article of faith within the body of knowledge which passes for British 'doctrine' of insurgency and counter-insurgency."⁴⁵² It was the identification of this element, the winning of hearts and minds,⁴⁵³ that became the starting point for successful British low-intensity operations.

Harold Briggs Sets the British Strategy

The most significant appointment during the initial part of the Malayan Campaign, was that of Director of Operations given to Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs. Just two

⁴⁵¹Mao Tse-Tung and Che Guevara, Guerrilla Warfare, p. x. For the purpose of this paper guerrilla warfare consists of "Military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held or hostile territory by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces." Resistance is defined as "An organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country or region to resist the legally established government or an occupying power, and, at a minimum, to disrupt civil order and stability or, as a maximum, overthrow or displace the legal authority." See Trevor N. Depuy, Curt Johnson and Grace P. Hayes, Dictionary Of Military Terms: A Guide To The Language Of Warfare And Military Institutions, p. 107 and p. 187 respectively.

⁴⁵²Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 235.

⁴⁵³In the article by Keith Jeffery, "The British Army And Internal Security 1919-1939," The Historical Journal, Vol. 24, No. 2, (1981), p. 387, he writes that the British Army recognized earlier on that they had to engender a degree of popularity and support amongst the citizenry and to avoid unwarranted force.

weeks after his arrival in Malaya he produced the Briggs plan which outlined four objectives:

- a) To dominate the populated areas and to build up a feeling of complete security, which would in time result in a steady and increasing flow of information coming from all sources.
- b) To break up the Communist organizations within the populated areas.
- c) To isolate the bandits from their food and supply organizations in the populated areas.
- d) To destroy the bandits by forcing them to⁴⁵⁴ attack the Security Forces on their own ground.

It was this plan that General Sir Gerald Templer nurtured and brought to fruition when he subsequently was appointed High Commissioner and Director of Operations early in 1952.

It was this change in British civil, political and military methodology that unlocked the secret of guerrilla warfare and in the end produced a well-planned and well-executed strategy. From the British experience in Malaya and elsewhere Sir Robert Thompson, an observer on low-intensity warfare, codified five principles of counter-insurgency:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| First Principle. | The government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable. |
| Second Principle. | The government must function in accordance with law. |
| Third Principle. | The government must have an overall plan. |
| Fourth Principle. | The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerillas. |
| Fifth Principle. | In the guerilla phase of an insurgency, a government must ⁴⁵⁵ secure its base areas first. |

⁴⁵⁴ Julian Paget, Counter-Insurgency Campaigning, pp. 56-57.

⁴⁵⁵ Sir Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam, pp. 50-57.

It is important to note that of the five principles four are political in character. It is to these principles that the British Army adapted itself during the Malayan campaign. The common thread that unites most insurgencies is the desire to achieve political power; a goal not to be reached through direct military force but through a less violent form of seduction:

...a process of gradual subversion, persuading (or forcing) the people of a state to support the aims of the insurgency or, at least, to stop supporting the government. Either way, the centre of state power will be progressively isolated, and although the Security Forces protecting that centre will have to be worn down using guerrilla techniques, military actions by the insurgents will always remain subordinate to the overriding aim of political usurpation.⁴⁵⁶

To counter this strategy all government resources -- civil, military and police -- must respond to the strategic designs of the insurgents. They must be denied access to the population thus depriving them of their support base. This must take precedence over any purely military actions aimed at a mere armed confrontation with the guerrillas. Pimlott argues:

After all, if the threat is political, then the long-term solution has also to be political: the role of the Security Forces should be to create an atmosphere in which guerrilla attacks do not disrupt⁴⁵⁷ the process of legitimate political rule.

In meeting this task the British Army, in concert with the police, security and intelligence forces, began to realize the importance of the intelligence function in low-intensity operations. In addition, it incorporated the requirement for

⁴⁵⁶Beckett and Pimlott, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

⁴⁵⁷Ibid., p. 20.

a decision-making body and advisory group to prepare and direct a national plan. In Malaya, Templer combined the positions of Commissioner and Director of Operations to facilitate the co-ordination of political and military operations during the critical period from February, 1952 to June, 1954.⁴⁵⁸ He emphasized the primacy of civilian control at all levels, a characteristic soon to dominate British counter-insurgency campaigning. This would be assisted, as required, through any number of legal powers including a declaration of a state of emergency. The British Army view was that:

The responsibility for conducting the campaign in Malaya rests with the Civil Government. The Police Force is the Government's normal instrument for the maintenance of Civil Authority but, in the current Emergency, the Armed Forces have been called in to support the Civil Power in its task of seeking out⁴⁵⁹ and destroying armed Communist terrorism.

Special committees consisting of civil, military and police representatives, but under civilian chairmanship extended from the pinnacle of the government downwards. These committees ensured political primacy throughout the war effort and also provided or conducted the appropriate civil, military or combined responses at every stage.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁸ See John Cloake, Templer: The Tiger of Malaya, p. 204. According to John Cloake, Winston Churchill said to Templer "You must have power -- absolute power -- civil power and military power. I will see that you get it." See also Noel Barber, The War Of The Running Dogs, pp. 147-160, for an insight on Templer.

⁴⁵⁹ Special Forces School, United States Army Institute for Military Assistance, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, The Conduct Of Anti-Terrorist Operations In Malaya, Third Edition, 1958, Chapter III, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., Chapter III, pp. 1-4.

Importance of Intelligence

The Malayan experience once again indicated that accurate and timely intelligence is a prerequisite in conducting successful low-intensity operations, particularly as all co-ordinating bodies constantly need information regarding the nature of the threat which they face. This aspect was emphasized and appreciated in Malaya:

Successful operations against the CT [communist terrorist] organization depend upon accurate and timely intelligence; without it the CTO can never be defeated. A first class intelligence organization, in which everyone plays their part is thus essential. All troops must realise the importance of reporting as accurately as possible every piece of information which they obtain, both about the CT and the topography of the country over which they are operating.⁴⁶¹

Acquiring the intelligence for the authorities to act upon was no simple matter in this 12-year campaign. There was also the matter of gaining the confidence of the local population which was vital to acquiring this information.

Jock Haswell underlines:

At the beginning the intelligence problems were mainly organizational and, perhaps even more important, the acquisition of information from intimidated villagers who, whether they liked it or not, were in constant contact with the terrorist gangs in the jungle. Many lessons were learned in Malaya and by far the most valuable was the need for an intelligence organization to embrace all agencies under centralized control.⁴⁶²

It was Templer, upon taking command in Malaya, who completely re-organized the intelligence system. All intelligence was to be directed and channelled:

...through the filtering system of intelligence committees to and from a single head, the Director of Intelligence. Thus intelligence in Malaya became a closely integrated and co-ordinated

⁴⁶¹Ibid., Chapter XIV, p. 1.

⁴⁶²Jock Haswell, British Military Intelligence, p. 216.

organization; a major⁴⁶³ factor in the solution of the Malayan problem,...

In the end, British victory over the terrorists depended much upon accurate and timely intelligence, as well as the failure of the insurgents to gain the loyalty of the people:

The terrorists were finally defeated because they lost the support of the villagers: the troops who tracked them down knew where their camps were, how many men were in the camps, what weapons they had and the state of their supplies, health and morale. Each success by the security forces led to more information and more 'contacts' with the terrorists until the 'enemy'⁴⁶⁴ came out of the jungle to give themselves up.

Templer's experience as the Director of Military Intelligence had a direct influence on him during the Malayan campaign, as he fully appreciated the importance of intelligence and the police's special branch. He foresaw the requirement to re-build the police force and did so by restructuring its command authorities while at the same time bringing in experienced personnel. For example:

...in Malaya 500 former members of the Palestine Police, already well-versed in counter-insurgency techniques, were recruited and placed under the command⁴⁶⁵ of Sir Arthur Young from the City of London force.

The Army's Task in Malaya

The army had a responsibility in Malaya to destroy the enemy, acquire intelligence, assist in cordon and search operations, psychological warfare campaigning and the like.

Nevertheless, the primary objective was to ensure the restoration of police control as soon as the law enforcement authorities were capable of doing their job. In this British

⁴⁶³Ibid., p. 217.

⁴⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 218-219.

⁴⁶⁵Beckett and Pimlott, op. cit., p. 21.

Army had to realize that its task was political in nature, essentially, to gain time so the government could:

...restore civilian policing as soon as possible, both to improve the flow of intelligence and to recreate an air of normality in the threatened state.⁴⁶⁶

Once this situation was achieved, the priority initially was to counter subversive elements and secondly to isolate the terrorists from the local population. The government then had to identify and address the core grievances expressed by the insurgent forces. In this regard the British government formally promised that independence would take place once the communists were defeated.

In concert with these goals a programme of civil aid projects was instituted bringing roads, education, medical and health facilities to the areas that needed them. The aim was "to give the people a vested interest in the existing administration of the state: in Templer's words, to influence their 'hearts and minds.'"⁴⁶⁷ This key factor was most difficult as the enemy made maximum use of the tools of terrorism, coercion, intimidation and inducements.

The Malayan experience provided the British Army with a framework for the analysis of insurgency and an opportunity to develop a doctrine of counter-insurgency both well illustrated in a pyramid diagram entitled 'The Pattern of Revolutionary Warfare Sequence of Insurgent Action.'⁴⁶⁸ The

⁴⁶⁶Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁶⁸Ministry of Defence, Land Operations, Volume III, - Counter Revolutionary Operations, Part 1, - Principles And General Aspects, 29 August, 1969, p. 118A.

diagram itself describes the communist revolutionary strategy and the counter-moves required by the security forces confronted with the situation.⁴⁶⁹

The British Army's Experience Level

Due to the frequency of British forces involvement in low-intensity operations, they were able to acquire and maintain an extraordinarily high level of skill amongst all ranks.

Pimlott writes that:

...by the time of the initial deployment to Northern Ireland in 1969, for example, it was not unknown for an infantry battalion to contain men (particularly senior NCOs) who had already fought in three or four different campaigns. This was a priceless advantage, for despite occasional evidence that each campaign began with a painful process of relearning the lessons of its predecessors, it created a repository from which to draw the strength to carry on.⁴⁷⁰

Moreover, the British Army knew the type of enemy that they would confront in Northern Ireland. Its accumulation of operational experience had given it an appreciation of the type of conflict it was about to enter and the threat posed by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). This was to be a terrorist war based on a clandestine political-military group with all actions wedded to propaganda and political activity. The experiences of the British Army facilitated

⁴⁶⁹ Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 236. This communist strategy was of course not the only model the British were to face in the post-war world but it was nonetheless used extensively by British analysts. Charters notes that at this time "the Army did seize upon the communist revolutionary technique -- exemplified mainly by Malaya, but latterly by Vietnam -- almost exclusively as the 'model' for the organizational, political/military, and tactical aspects of the insurgent."

⁴⁷⁰ Beckett and Pimlott, op. cit., p. 24.

the development of principles for low-intensity operations as we shall subsequently explore.

Principles for Low-Intensity Operations

The British Army's experience in low-intensity operations in the post-war period helped formulate a number of general principles. Charters states:

...the experience from Palestine forward pointed to the need for the Army to develop a body of operational principles and tactical skills appropriate for the particular political circumstances of one conflict, but readily transferable and adaptable to another.⁴⁷¹

Such a body of operational principles and tactical skills had evolved by the time of the multi-faceted terrorist threats of the 1970s and 1980s.

Charters notes that the most obvious principle is to have the government issue a clear political aim from which the military can, in concert with the civil authority, define its role.⁴⁷² This was difficult to do in Palestine and Kenya but later on in the campaigns in Malaya and in Borneo, an aim was identified and thereby effective military operations could be set in motion. The military frustration experienced in Palestine was that no clear political aim was issued to the military. It has been stated:

...the political aim was less certain, absent, or completely at odds with local aspirations, the Army was left 'holding the ring' and the military dimension was affected accordingly...the directive to 'keep the peace' was enunciated and pursued in a

⁴⁷¹Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 237.

⁴⁷²Ibid., p. 238.

policy vacuum, and in the face of violent opposition from the Jewish community.⁴⁷³

In the Kenyan case, Britain's inability to provide a political response to the 1952-1956 Mau Mau uprising was also a source of frustration,⁴⁷⁴ making it difficult for the military commander to formulate a plan of action.⁴⁷⁵ Moreover, the British Army was initially unprepared for this type of warfare.⁴⁷⁶

In Cyprus, through the absence of a political stance, the British government was obliged to reverse an initial position which opposed Cypriot independence. Even today in Ireland there seems to be no clear political aim behind British military operations other than keeping the peace.⁴⁷⁷ After years of low-intensity operational experience British governments still lose sight of the foremost principle, the need for a clearly defined political aim, without which only hampers the army's ability to match a military strategy to the announced political objectives. In the case of Northern Ireland it is probably impossible to ascertain political objectives in the conditions which exist at present there.

aim is to have Irish produce their own - not to improve one

The second principle is the complete co-operation between the triumvirate of police, military and civil authorities.

General Darling argues:

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Michael Carver, War Since 1945, pp. 32-36 and Ian Henderson and Philip Goodhart, Man Hunt In Kenya.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with a senior British Army officer, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 12 December, 1988, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

...the problem of command is one of welding together, from the highest to the lowest level in the territory concerned, the civil administration, the civil police, and the military forces involved.... Whatever organization is required, it must ensure intimate cooperation between the various⁴⁷⁸ government departments and the armed forces.

When comparing the British colonial experience in low-intensity operations with other major examples in the world, outside the British Empire, it is evident that Great Britain faced a special situation where this principle is concerned. After all, the British government was the governing authority in all the areas where British forces were involved. This principle is thus part and parcel of the British colonial experience itself which gave the British authorities ascendancy in a number of ways. In particular, they enjoyed a relatively free hand in dealing with any situation. The British controlled the police, communications, social services and the rest of the infrastructure needed to deal effectively with any developing situation in a colony. This in turn led to the next step of instituting close co-operation between military, civil and police with the appointment of a 'supremo,' such as Templar, who acted as High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief in Malaya for two critically important years of the emergency.

The last principle is the absolutely vital objective of obtaining the support of the population. The army knows this as psychological operations or 'psy ops.'⁴⁷⁹ Kitson points out its value and constraints:

⁴⁷⁸ Darling, op. cit., p. 5.

⁴⁷⁹ For an insight into 'psy ops' see Noel Barber, The War Of The Running Dogs, pp. 115-121 .

...the army can make a contribution before the outbreak of violence...in the field of psychological operations and propaganda, where the government not only has to counter the steps which the enemy are taking to get their cause across to the population, but also has to put across its own programme in an attractive way.⁴⁸⁰

The army in Malaya, as well as in subsequent campaigns, felt that psychological operations must also be directed at the enemy. This would assist in the breaking of the enemy's spirit in pursuit of his political aims:

Psychological warfare (PW) is directed at the Communist Terrorist Organisation with the object of bringing home to the terrorists the sense of military and political defeat and isolation from the people; undermining their confidence in the leadership and policy of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP); creating dissension and distrust within the CT organisation; turning individual terrorists into easier military targets; and securing surrenders. It should be noted that the object is to cause general demoralisation and is much broader than just increasing the rate of surrender and⁴⁸¹ disintegration of the CT organisation.

These psychological warfare considerations were further honed and developed under the auspices of the SAS in post-war campaigns. Special forces have, in particular, pursued this last aspect of low-intensity operations; Oman being a case in point. As will be seen, however, the other two principles (a clear political aim and co-operation amongst all involved agencies) are also part of the foundation of special forces activities.

⁴⁸⁰Kitson, op. cit., p. 77.

⁴⁸¹Special Forces School, United States Army Institute for Military Assistance, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, The Conduct of....., op. cit., Chapter III, p. 16.

Section II

Historical Overview of British Special Forces

To appreciate fully the role of Special Forces within low-intensity operations it is appropriate to reflect upon the history of the British Army and in turn, the evolution of Special Forces within that context. Throughout the history of the British Army there has been a need for specifically tasked and trained soldiers of many kinds. In 1756, for example, during the colonial period in America, Roger's Rangers were raised to undertake raiding and reconnaissance duties during the French and Indian wars.⁴⁸² These troops drew much of their tactical success from the fast and violent unconventional tactics of the indigenous Indian tribes. Although the Rangers were, for the most part, viewed by orthodox soldiers with scepticism, they did have some considerable impact, particularly in the creation of regular light infantry units whose equipment and tactics were specifically adapted to skirmishing and forest warfare. Such light troops were to form a part of the British forces from then on in one form or another.⁴⁸³

It is interesting that Colonel Lawrence, the proponent of guerrilla warfare, who assisted in fomenting and leading the Arab Revolt in World War I, found that his contribution in the desert war did not have much influence in the post-war

⁴⁸²U.S. Army, Ranger Handbook, ST 21-75-2, Ranger Department, United States Army Infantry School (October, 1980), p. i.

⁴⁸³For a discussion on their evolution and role, see Hew Strachan, European Armies and the Conduct of War, pp. 28-32.

era of imperial soldiering. For the most part, little military attention was paid to the documentation or study of Lawrence's successes in guerrilla operations:

After World War I British military thought (and not only British) was largely conditioned by the memory of trench warfare in France, or mountain warfare on the North West Frontier of INDIA and the unorthodox⁴⁸⁴ operations carried out by LAWRENCE were forgotten.

This was based on the fact that the British Army was principally commanded by officers whose experience was on the Western Front. The Palestine campaign, as well as the Arab Revolt, were considered by many as a mere sideshow. Then, after the disaster of 1940, when Winston Churchill wished to "set Europe ablaze," staff officers had to begin from scratch to create special units for the various tasks at hand. A number were formed and were very controversial. They continued, however, to serve in a wide variety of roles for the remainder of the war and were, for the most part, not fully appreciated by either the senior commanders or the Army as a whole. Arguments persist, however, as to their real value. Charters writes that two units, the Commandos⁴⁸⁵ and the Special Air Service:⁴⁸⁶

...like the other special forces, had a mixed record of success and were the subjects of considerable controversy and criticism relating to their operational effectiveness, command and

⁴⁸⁴"Special Forces In The British Army," Lecture script in the McLeod Collection, University of London, King's College, Centre for Military Archives. Undated, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁵See James Ladd, Commandos and Rangers Of World War II.

⁴⁸⁶See "Memorandum By Col. David Stirling, DSO, OBE. On The Origins Of The Special Air Service," McLeod Collection, University of London, King's College, Centre for Military Archives. Undated.

control, and their relationship to traditional army structures.⁴⁸⁷

Moreover, they appear to have rankled senior British bureaucrats with their sense of operational independence. In one instance:

A sub-committee of the War Office Directorate of Tactical Investigation was critical of the tendency of special forces to 'drift away' from the normal channels of command, to become private armies and a law unto themselves.⁴⁸⁸

The result of this conservatism in the army hierarchy led to the disbandment of almost all special forces upon the cessation of hostilities. Nevertheless, a glimmer of hope did exist, as some in the post-war army appreciated that a special forces unit could be useful in retaining and developing the capacity for special operations. In 1947, the Artists Rifles, a London-based territorial regiment was made into a Special Air Service (SAS) unit.⁴⁸⁹ Initially, this unit's role had been a conventional one, and it was not until the Malayan emergency that the SAS began to develop their special skills and capabilities for low-intensity operations.

Palestine had, however, witnessed special operations of a type, but these actions only served to give credence to the fears of the more orthodox soldiers as to what special forces and special operations were all about. One secret organization, led by Bernard Ferguson, an ex-serving British officer seconded to the Palestine Police, was formed from former special operations soldiers. This unit, made up of

⁴⁸⁷Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 255.

⁴⁸⁸Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹Philip Warner, The Special Air Service, p. 184.

counter-terrorist troops, had some initial successes against the Jewish terrorists, but was later implicated in a charge of carrying out alleged atrocities. Roy Farran, a highly dedicated and decorated SAS officer, was placed on trial but later acquitted of a murder charge.⁴⁹⁰ It was clear to most concerned that some type of special force was necessary, but to be useful it had also to be 'expendable' and at the beck and call of those in government and the army. This would enable the government and the commander to plead what can be called 'plausible deniability', which essentially means having sufficient grounds to deny knowledge of covert military operations. Charters points out:

...one aspect is clear; the special squads operated in a 'gray' legal, moral and political environment without clear guidelines as to their mission, powers and constraints.⁴⁹¹

A major landmark in the post-war development of British special operations forces came about when Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Calvert, a tough and highly experienced officer, was tasked by the Commander-in-Chief Far East Land Forces, General Sir John Harding, to do a study on the Malayan problem. Calvert submitted his report in the spring of 1950 and one of his recommendations was to develop a special force unit skilled in deep-penetration operations in the jungle. It was to be a reconnaissance force, but Calvert believed that such an organization should ideally have a wider mission. Basically he wanted this unit to be offensively oriented, capable of harassing the enemy constantly, giving

⁴⁹⁰See David A. Charters, "Special Operations in Counter-Insurgency: The Farran Case, Palestine 1947," RUSI Journal, (June, 1979), pp. 56-61.

⁴⁹¹Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 256

him no respite or safe haven. Calvert's views, in the end, brought about the creation of special forces in Malaya.⁴⁹²

With the formation of the special force some of the traditional arguments against such units surfaced again. To arrest such fears, the army staff wanted to keep the force small and not to have it draw the best and the brightest from other regiments and corps. More importantly, the army did not want the unit viewed as someone's private army, as were similar predecessor units of World War II. The new unit was named the Malayan Scouts (SAS) and consisted of 16 officers and 126 other ranks. It was to be commanded by Calvert. This unit, thanks to an extensive recruiting programme which took in experienced ex-special forces men, had by late 1951 not only a regimental headquarters and headquarters squadron, but had expanded into four sabre (operational) squadrons consisting of over 900 officers and men.⁴⁹³ Operationally, the aim was to seek, find, fix and destroy the Malayan terrorists and to prevent any infiltration of these into the cleared areas.

The tactics of long-range, extended stay-behind patrols, ambush techniques and tracking were honed while the Malayan Scouts became accustomed to jungle operations. These skills were combined with a food-denial and a civil aid programme more widely known as Field Marshal Templer's 'hearts and minds' mission in 1952-53. The food-denial programme

⁴⁹²Tony Geraghty, Inside the SAS, pp. 25-29.

⁴⁹³Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 257.

attempted to deny guerrillas any access to food and to prevent them from cultivating crops of their own⁴⁹⁴ The 'hearts and minds' programme was to assist indigenous tribes in protecting themselves and to provide medical, health and engineer assistance to establish a bond between them and the central government.

The Regiment adapted quickly and brought with it some notable skills and innovations. These included such diverse skills as tree-jumping (parachuting into heavy jungle), the use of inflatable boats for river operations, a variety of jungle-fighting techniques, psychological warfare in the booby-trapping of terrorist supplies, and most important, an appreciation for winning the support of the indigneous peoples.

The tactical employment of the Special Air Service did, however, experience some growing pains and inappropriate operational assignments.⁴⁹⁵ In March to June of 1951 the force was used as infantry and then again from October, 1951 to April, 1952 they were asked to work in concert with Royal Marines and police authorities in conventional operations.

⁴⁹⁴ See R.W. Komer, The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of A Successful Counterinsurgency Effort, pp. 58-61. According to Komer, "Over time, this complex of food and resource controls together with the food denial operations seem to have done a great deal to sap insurgent strength.", p. 61.

⁴⁹⁵ Captain J.M. Woodhouse, "Some Personal Observations On The Employment Of Special Forces In Malaya," The Army Quarterly, Vol. LXVI, (April and July, 1953), p. 72. The author states that "The S.A.S. were soon used entirely as infantry, This led to some easy successes in killing terrorists, but the change in tactics necessitated by different conditions in the jungle fringes meant that the S.A.S. were losing or never learning the art of small force operations."

The Regiment evolved, and the Malayan Scouts (SAS) became the 22 Special Air Service Regiment. A tour of duty with the Regiment was two years for regulars and one for national servicemen. To ensure the quality of the soldier, a selection course was put in place to weed out unsatisfactory candidates and to give the eventual SAS soldier the required skills in parachuting, navigation, tactics and jungle warfare techniques necessary for SAS operations in Malaya.⁴⁹⁶ The SAS capabilities were described by the Commander-in-Chief Far East who sent the following message:

Since your formation in 1951 you have had the task of deep jungle reconnaissance and of fighting Communist Terrorists in areas inaccessible to other forces. You have accounted for 124 Communist Terrorists, which is indeed a fine performance, but as important as these victories have been your achievements in winning over aboriginal tribes to our cause has been vital and this will have a lasting effect long after the jungle war has been forgotten. You have shown by your operations in the deep and unknown jungle over periods of three months and more at a stretch that the British soldier can adapt himself to the most difficult conditions and can defeat the most cunning enemy on his own ground.⁴⁹⁷

Although the regiment was not on the army's Order of Battle at this time, the SAS joined the establishment in 1957 when a committee charged with studying the requirement for special forces concluded that there was a role for them in a conventional war scenario. This mission was essentially an extension of their wartime and Malayan operational tasks of long-range and long-term deep-penetration patrols.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶Major C.L.D. Newell, "The Special Air Service," The British Army Review, (September, 1955), pp. 41-42.

⁴⁹⁷David Barzilay, The British Army In Ulster, Vol. 3, p. 198.

⁴⁹⁸Geraghty, op. cit., p. 40.

Victories in Borneo and Elsewhere

The campaigns which were to follow Malaya would afford the SAS, as well as other regiments in the British Army, an opportunity to acquire valuable experience and skills in low-intensity operations. In late 1958, two squadrons of the SAS were sent from Malaya to Oman. In January, 1959, members of A Squadron successfully defeated a large guerrilla force situated on a seemingly impregnable position on a plateau named Sabrina.⁴⁹⁹ The action, according to James D. Ladd, was vitally important for the regiment's future:

The victory was complete, achieved with such an economy in the use of forces as to make 22 SAS's reputation inviolate in Whitehall's corridors of power.⁵⁰⁰

However, due to political and military sensitivity regarding this operation, the British public would know little or nothing about this feat of arms.

After the Oman campaign, the SAS served with distinction in Borneo, Aden and later in the Radfan. These campaigns built up a large reservoir of experience in low-intensity operations and developed strong tactical and operational skills. In Borneo, the SAS were confronted with tough Indonesian regulars and became accustomed to employing covert cross-border raids penetrating from five to 20 kilometres into Indonesian territory. The SAS started a jungle frontier intelligence network employing tribesmen who lived near the

⁴⁹⁹ Lieutenant Colonel A.J. Deane-Drummond, "Operations In The Oman," British Army Review, (September, 1959), pp. 7-14. An article from The Times, dated 9 April, 1959, quoted in this piece, states that this action was "a brilliant example of economy in the use of force.", p. 14.

⁵⁰⁰ James D. Ladd, SAS Operations, p. 152.

1000-mile long border.⁵⁰¹ The information that flowed from these areas enabled the British Army to concentrate its efforts and forces, where and when needed, to counter Indonesian incursions into the area. As Geraghty notes, Borneo was:

...an environment in which as little as five miles a day might be an ambitious tactical movement.... Basically, therefore, it was the mixture as before, in Malaya: the hearts-and-minds business to yield information; airborne assault plus⁵⁰² familiarity with the jungle to follow it up.

British adaptability, consideration and understanding of local customs were vital in gaining tribal loyalties. For example in Borneo:

Styles varied. One of the Gurkha regiments, with more men than the SAS, concluded that "the old system of giving salt, tobacco, sugar and beads was wrong for Borneo. Tact, courtesy and, above all, infinite patience and human understanding were needed.... Bartering of a minor nature continued non-stop It was also important to uphold at all times the dignity and prestige of the local headman. One way of accomplishing this was by allowing him to take the salute at 'Retreat.'" At ceremonial dances, some British officers⁵⁰³ achieved a succès d'estime by performing the Twist.

This development of a trusting relationship with the tribes depended upon patience and cultural understanding as "the SAS approach was to move into the village, cautiously and sensitively, and to live there for five months or more."⁵⁰⁴ Initially the SAS was concerned as to how to approach the indigenous tribesmen and their villages. This in itself was a major project requiring much patience.

⁵⁰¹For an insight into this campaign see Harold James and Denis Sheil-Small, The Undeclared War: The Story Of The Indonesian Confrontation 1962-1966.

⁵⁰²Geraghty, op. cit., p. 47.

⁵⁰³Ibid., p. 48.

⁵⁰⁴Ibid.

The first step towards penetration was to build a secret hide in the jungle within walking distance of the selected village. Having kept the place under observation long enough to ensure that neither guerrillas nor Indonesian regulars were already established, the soldiers would walk in, smile, and make contact. Sometimes conversation was possible through the medium of Malay; sometimes a basic sign-language evolved. When this failed, as one veteran wearily recalls, 'they would sit and look at us, and we would sit and look at them.' This entertainment was somewhat one-sided, since the soldiers were probably the first Europeans most of the villagers had seen. On a good day, the SAS patrol would be invited into the animal closeness of the collective longhouse and offered rice-wine and food, before⁵⁰⁵ taking their leave to sleep in their hide....

Once introduced to the tribesmen the 'hearts and minds' campaign began. Certain items, used as gifts, such as knives and radios along with basic medical assistance helped to ensure that the SAS team would become members of the village.⁵⁰⁶ In fact, the SAS patrols became an integral part of the everyday life of the village, assisting those who required help, preparing the defences of the village and training the indigeneous tribesmen in the military arts. The SAS Regimental magazine Mars and Minerva described the daily existence:

Four men, living as members of the longhouse itself for months at a time, watch, listen, patrol and report... Day by day, the sick come for treatment, the women bring presents of fruit and vegetables, the men to gossip and bring news, the children to watch, silent-eyed and the leaders of the community to discuss their problems and to ask, and offer advice. The patrol slips as easily into the primitive rhythm of the day and season as the people themselves. Soon the cycle of burning, planting, weeding and harvesting becomes part of (the soldier's) life itself, and customs, rites and celebrations as familiar as the Cup Final or Bank Holidays at home....⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 48-49.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 49.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 53.

Borneo did not stay a quiet counter-insurgency campaign. In December of 1963, a force of 128 guerrillas attacked Tawau and annihilated a detachment of the Royal Malay Regiment. It was later learned that 21 of these 'guerrillas' were Indonesian marines. Soon after this incident, the SAS began to operate cross-border reconnaissance patrols to locate the Indonesian camps and their routes. Such crossings of frontiers were dangerous and "ultra-sensitive politically as well as militarily, normally requiring approval from the Prime Minister in London. In this case, such operations marked the decisive turning-point of the war in Britain's favor."⁵⁰⁸

A 'shoot-'n-scoot' operational policy, although unpopular, was in effect. Lieutenant-Colonel John Woodhouse, the commanding officer, "was not going to allow heavy casualties to destroy the morale or the credibility of the Regiment in London at such a time."⁵⁰⁹ This was important as the prevailing impression was that the SAS was still a private army. It was essential that Woodhouse and all ranks follow their orders to the letter for the sake of the SAS and its future. Woodhouse argued:

There was a tendency in military circles to fear that the SAS would suddenly take matters into their own hands and that the first news of this to reach the top would be that 200 Indonesians had been shot up in bed. I used to emphasize that it

⁵⁰⁸Ibid., p. 54. For further information on these little known operations see Raffi Gregorian, "CLARET Operations and Confrontation, 1964-1966", Conflict Quarterly, Winter, 1991, pp. 46-72.

⁵⁰⁹Ibid.

was more important, for that sort of reason, that we should be seen to obey orders than anyone.⁵¹⁰

In mid-1964, General Sir Walter Walker initiated 'Claret' operations using 'killer' groups formed by soldiers taken from the best infantry battalions and commanded by SAS personnel.⁵¹¹ These units were to penetrate initially up to 5,000 yards and later 20,000 yards into Indonesia with the objective of disrupting any build-up for an attack and to harass the Indonesians forcing them to re-deploy their camps from the border.

By 1965 the Indonesian forces had abandoned their border area bases and the 'Claret' operations had not been mentioned by either the British or the Indonesians. Such operations pre-empted any Indonesian attempts at securing a foothold in Borneo and at the same time allaying any fears of an impending invasion. Concomitantly, these operations enabled the British to gather information on Indonesian intentions and activities in that region.

The SAS had once again used its special skills in a low-intensity operation adding new experience and ideas to its knowledge of these types of campaigns. In short, the "Confrontation in Borneo had shown the value of SAS in those difficult half-wars, when diplomatic constraints preclude

⁵¹⁰Ibid.

⁵¹¹Ibid., p. 56; see also E.D. Smith, Counter-Insurgency Operations: 1 Malaya and Borneo, pp. 77-80 and John Strawson, A History Of The S.A.S. Regiment, p. 186.

British forces carrying the fight into the enemy's homeland."⁵¹²

The victory in Borneo cost Britain a total of 59 killed and 123 wounded of whom Gurkha casualties accounted for 40 dead and 83 wounded. Indonesian losses, however, numbered 2,000 dead.⁵¹³

Oman

Oman became, once again, the area for SAS deployment in 1970. The Marxist regime in South Yemen had been supporting a tribal insurgency in the Omani province of Dhofar. The SAS was assigned to Oman as a BATT (British Army Training Team) and was responsible for the recruiting, training and command of 'firgats'. These irregular units were composed of loyal tribesmen and recently surrendered enemy personnel (SEP)⁵¹⁴ who had pledged allegiance to Sultan Qaboos. These irregulars established the foundation from which a counter-revolutionary movement gained impetus. The firgats provided vital intelligence and were considered to be the most important 'war-winning' governmental initiative

⁵¹²Ladd, op. cit., p. 142.

⁵¹³Geraghty, op. cit., p. 62.

⁵¹⁴Although written in the Malayan context, see Colonel Richard L. Clutterbuck, "The SEP-Guerrilla Intelligence Source," Military Review, (October, 1962), pp. 13-21. The article discusses SEP motivations and their employment in the campaign in Malaya. See also Penelope Tremayne, "Guevara Through the Looking Glass: a View of the Dhofar War," RUSI, (September, 1974), pp. 39-43. The author underlines why the SEPS changed sides in this conflict: "Needless to say, political theory has little or nothing to do with the question; tribal loyalties, and intimidation, have nearly everything." P. 42.

created.⁵¹⁵ They assisted in the defence of local areas whilst at the same time helping with civil aid projects. Their most important contribution, however, appears to be in the provision of information. Tony Jeapes writes:

The firqats provided information on the ground, the people and the enemy which could not have been obtained in any other way. Mistakes were made of course. They could be very good guides and their eyesight was sometimes almost incredible -- they could often tell whether a man was adoo, [enemy] firqat or⁵¹⁶ civilian from thousands of yards away....

In tactical and strategic planning, the staff employed a series of assigned lines upon which the Omani government and its military could project their forces and in turn develop and establish government control and influence. There was also a unified system of command, loyal and responsive to the political decision makers. Similarly, having an overall military commander of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) was most useful in pre-empting any inter-service difficulties.

As in other counter-revolutionary operations, the campaign was again about hearts and minds. This was emphasized in Malaya and again during the Borneo confrontation only to be re-emphasized in the Oman. Jeapes writes that:

⁵¹⁵ Colonel Tony Jeapes, SAS: Operation Oman, p. 231. See also D.L. Price, "Oman": Insurgency and Development," Conflict Studies, No. 53, (January, 1975), p. 9. This article states "Now that PFLO units in east and central Dhofar are cut off, the SAF role has shifted from search-and-destroy to one of attrition and civil development."

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

Counter-revolutionary wars are first and last about people and throughout the campaign the need to gain the support of the people was continually stressed to the soldiers. The seizure of ground was important only if it allowed Government forces to make contact with the people. Without their support guerrillas cannot exist, and it was their belief that they had lost this support and the consequent fear of betrayal, rather than the pressure of Government military operations, that caused the adoo to move....⁵¹⁷

Dealing with natives, and for that matter irregulars, has been an integral part of SAS operational experience throughout its history. It takes, however, a flexible soldier to deal with irregulars, as T.E. Lawrence seems to have innately understood. This is particularly true as:

The average regular officer or soldier finds dealing with irregulars a frustrating experience because they are anathema to all his military upbringing. He is taught to honour the military virtues of discipline, smartness and self-sacrifice. Irregulars are, for the most part, undisciplined, untidy and selfish.⁵¹⁸

It is, moreover, noteworthy that such operational missions are suited only to highly adaptable troops, even those within the SAS.

The second most important Omani government initiative was the creation of a Civil Aid Department totally involved in long-term planning, but at the same time ready to respond swiftly to requirements as they occurred.

Roads cannot be built nor wells drilled overnight. It takes time. But time was something the Government did not have. If the people were to come across to the Government and give information about the adoo, that information was needed immediately, not six months later. The Government had to be able to demonstrate immediate bounty.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁷Ibid., p. 230.

⁵¹⁸Ibid.

⁵¹⁹Ibid., p. 232.

As for psychological operations, an important step was the development of an information service initially set up by the BATT. To ensure the correct cultural appeal and understanding of the message to be offered to the Dhofari people, Arab advisors were employed from the beginning. As Jeapes notes, "Only the Arab mind could interpret for the Western how Dhofaris might think."⁵²⁰ This was a most important aspect of psychological operations and in winning the hearts and minds of the indigenous tribes. In that light the level of violence to be employed in this conflict had to be measured according to the threat. The concern was the possibility of alienating the population through the indiscriminate employment of booby traps, massive conventional firepower, air power and the like that could produce non-combatant casualties. Furthermore, government forces wanted to induce the enemy to defect. More simply put:

Booby-trapping is a recognized form of warfare but it should have no place in a counter-revolutionary campaign like the Dhofar War. First, there was always the danger that a civilian may suffer instead; blowing up Grandma is not a very good way of gaining the support of most families. Second, the aim was to persuade the adoo to come across to the Government.⁵²¹

Defections to the government forces were indicative of winning the hearts and minds war. When enemy soldiers defected:

...they first came warily into firqat encampments ...[and] were left by the SAS, unpressured and still armed, to talk to erstwhile comrades who had changed sides already. The existing firqat included brothers, cousins, uncles. Usually, within a few days, the converts -- officially,

⁵²⁰Ibid.

⁵²¹Ibid., p. 233.

Surrendered Enemy Personnel, or 'SEP' -- were ready to tell all they knew to SAS teams attached to the firgat or ... a British⁵²² member of the Sultan's Intelligence Service.

Defections continued, brought about by word of mouth and the visual proof of the Omani government's intention of making their subjects' lot better. Jeapes recounts a story of one political commissar of the insurgents who, when asked why he defected, responded:

"Because you [the SAS] are here -- and you could not be here in the West unless the loyal firgats were with you. You would not have any firgats unless the people supported them and you would only have that support if the rumours of progress and development I have heard are true. If they are true, then the Front has told me lies. If they lied on that, they have probably lied on other things. Therefore I have surrendered to you." ...He had fought for progress and since progress seemed to have arrived,⁵²³ he could see no point in continuing to fight.

The war was not won by high technology, or a 'quick-fix' strategy. Rather, it was a controlled, time-consuming government response emphasizing the calculated means and ways to achieve the sole political aim. In the Oman:

...the most important weapons were those of economics and psychology. The government's provision of water wells, with drilling equipment ordered by the SAS and brought specially from Britain, was a seductive currency in the parched mountains. The cultivation of religion -- denied by the Communists⁵²⁴ -- was just as important to many devout Muslims.

This strategy was based on obtaining the support of the population and was part of the overall military aim of

⁵²²Tony Geraghty, This is the SAS: A pictorial history of the Special Air Service Regiment, p. 68.

⁵²³Jeapes, op. cit., pp. 234 - 235.

⁵²⁴Geraghty, This is the SAS: A pictorial....., op. cit., p. 80.

providing a secure Dhofar which could then be the beneficiary of a major civil development programme.⁵²⁵ In that regard:

...the SAS acted as the vanguard of civil development, bringing government administration to the wilderness and earning a great deal of goodwill in the process.⁵²⁶

The SAS to this day has remained the vanguard of the British forces, in this type of low-intensity conflict.

Ireland

The year 1969 saw SAS activities expand closer to home. While the second campaign in Oman was underway, D Squadron of the SAS was deployed for a few weeks to Northern Ireland. From 1972 on, some of their officers and men were employed for various intelligence missions against Irish terrorists. However, an SAS Squadron was not fully committed there until 1976.⁵²⁷ This was an important time for both the British Army and the SAS as they had to adapt their experiences in low-intensity operations from colonial situations to one much closer to home, where every action against IRA activists would be closely scrutinized by the government, the legal system, and the international media. SAS activities in Northern Ireland have been identified as similar to previous SAS operations in low-intensity conflicts "mainly in border observation, interception and ambushing of Provisional IRA

⁵²⁵Major General K. Perkins, "Counter Insurgency and Internal Security, "British Army Review", (December, 1981), p. 30.

⁵²⁶Ibid.

⁵²⁷Geraghty, Inside the SAS, p. 141.

units."⁵²⁸ According to the Ministry of Defence, the description of likely SAS tasks were and are as follows:

SAS squadrons are particularly suited, trained and equipped for counter revolutionary operations. Small parties may be infiltrated or dropped by parachute, including free fall, to avoid a long approach through enemy dominated areas, in order to carry out any of the following tasks:

- a. The collection of information on the location and movement of insurgent forces.
- b. The ambush and harassment of insurgents.
- c. Infiltration of sabotage, assassination and demolition parties into insurgent held areas.
- d. Border surveillance.
- e. Limited community relations.
- f. Liaison with, and organization, training and control of, friendly guerilla forces operating against the common enemy.⁵²⁹

By 1977, two squadrons totalling about 160 men were operating in the province of Northern Ireland.⁵³⁰ Furthermore, it has been reported that at this time "a senior SAS officer was attending all major army and security force briefings."⁵³¹

The official deployment of SAS troops to Northern Ireland by Prime Minister Harold Wilson's government was a signal to Irish terrorists that London would deploy its best and brightest into Armagh county where 49 British soldiers had been lost to attacks by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). Some of the patrol tactics were covert and involved

...unmarked cars by teams well armed to meet terrorist threats and intended to rout out local IRA leaders: within a year, four were killed or captured and six had moved south across the

⁵²⁸Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, British Intelligence and Covert Action, p. 44.

⁵²⁹Ministry of Defence, Land Operations, Volume III, -Counter Revolutionary Operations, Part I - Principles And General Aspects, 29 August, 1969, p. 60.

⁵³⁰Bloch and Fitzgerald, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

⁵³¹Ibid., p. 45.

border.⁵³²

As in previous campaigns, such successes depended upon intelligence gathering and the co-ordination of operations, two areas which the SAS had consistently emphasized and deeply appreciated. Therefore, in Northern Ireland it was important that the SAS were "in constant touch with all battalion Commanding Officers and intelligence sections collating clues and information that might lead to a successful ambush."⁵³³

As with any campaign, mishaps were inevitable and it was reported in May of 1976 by Newsweek that two SAS men had "blundered into the arms of an Irish Army patrol."⁵³⁴ A further six SAS men were arrested. Although the incident was blamed on a navigational error, it was later ascertained "that the eight SAS men had been in hot pursuit of an Irish Republican Army terrorist band when they were nabbed south of the border."⁵³⁵ This incident and the ensuing media coverage brought the Regiment unwelcome publicity and only furthered the popular image of "highly professional men pursuing enemies of the state by highly uncivilised

⁵³²Ladd, op. cit., p. 166.

⁵³³Barzilay, op. cit., p. 197. See "Commandos kill IRA trio", The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 4 June, 1991. The article states "The highly trained SAS troops, acting on intelligence, had staked out the street" The SAS shot approximately 200 bullets into the vehicle, which crashed bursting into flames killing 3 IRA terrorists. See also Liam Clarke and Michael Prescott, "Inside the killing zone," The Sunday Times, London, 23 February, 1992. This article describes the 16 February, 1992 SAS ambush that took the lives of four IRA terrorists including the assassin Kevin O'Donnell.

⁵³⁴Kim Willenson with Nicholas Proffitt, "The Tan Berets," Newsweek, 24 May, 1976, p. 47.

⁵³⁵Ibid.

means."⁵³⁶ Compounding the problem, the Regiment's role in low-intensity operations was not fully appreciated by the army itself. This was due:

...to a misunderstanding of its role, the SAS was misused at first, its special skills wasted because ordinary infantry commanders did not know how to make best use of them.⁵³⁷

For the SAS themselves and for the British Army as a whole, Northern Ireland was a campaign extensively monitored by the national and international news media. For the Regiment:

...this conflict was not so much one of learning new tactics as adjusting those tactics to the peculiarities of the situation. For the first time the SAS had to operate in a campaign covered extensively by the news media. So when mistakes were made, they appeared to gain a significance out of all proportion⁵³⁸ to the circumstances of the incident itself.

Moreover, the SAS and the British Army were held legally accountable for any employment of lethal force. This was diametrically opposed to any previous SAS covert experiences in low-intensity warfare. This situation was:

...anathema to a force accustomed to carrying out its missions largely without accountability and to treating the opposition -- whether in Malaya, Oman, Aden or Borneo -- as military co-belligerents subject to normal wartime rules of engagement rather than to the legal niceties of civilian police-type arrest.⁵³⁹

Field Marshal Lord Carver, as the Chief of the General Staff and later as the Chief of the Defence Staff had some

⁵³⁶David A. Charters, "Intelligence and Psychological Warfare Operations in Northern Ireland," RUSI Journal, (September, 1977), p. 24.

⁵³⁷Ibid.

⁵³⁸Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 263.

⁵³⁹Ibid.

interesting concerns regarding the deployment and clandestine operations of the SAS in Northern Ireland:

I had reservations about their employment within the United Kingdom, and did not believe that any operational advantage that their employment might produce would outweigh the possible political and public relations difficulties it might cause. My experience of clandestine operations is that they seldom remain clandestine for long.⁵⁴⁰

As with commanders of forces of other countries experienced in low-intensity operations, Field Marshal Lord Carver likewise did not want British troops and particularly the SAS involved in any type of operation which could be viewed as unlawful. Particularly as the IRA were considered to be, and for that matter still are viewed as, criminals. Therefore, the emphasis should be, as far as Lord Carver was concerned, on assisting the police authorities through all lawful avenues. Illegal acts committed by the armed forces could jeopardize their credibility in the eyes of the public. Therefore, the SAS could be seen as conducting their traditional roles under new constraints. Carver argues:

In the British armed forces, a superior can only give a 'lawful' order, that is one that does not tell the subordinate to commit an illegal act, to obey which would make him liable in law. A British serviceman is not obliged to obey an unlawful order. Once you take a step down that slippery slope, there is a danger that Special Forces may begin to take the law into their own hands, as the French did in Algeria, and may have done recently in the Greenpeace affair in New Zealand.⁵⁴¹

Although the British have, as previously cited, employed counter-terror (Farran in Palestine, Kitson in Kenya) Lord Carver was concerned that use of such methods:

⁵⁴⁰Field Marshal Lord Carver; letter to author, dated 24 December, 1985. See also Mark Urban, "Silent but deadly", GQ (Gentleman's Quarterly), April, 1992. This article underlines some of the concerns regarding the control, training and socialization of the SAS of today.

⁵⁴¹Ibid.

...not only undermines the legal and moral basis of the action of the security forces, but may appear to legitimize the claims of the terrorists to be fighting a war and therefore to enjoy the status of belligerents.⁵⁴²

The Age of Terrorism - The SAS Challenge

As SAS operations continued in the Oman and Northern Ireland, Great Britain was experiencing the effects of 'spill-over' Middle East terrorism. The massacre of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympics brought home the requirement for Great Britain to have a counter-terrorist (CT) capability if there should be an aircraft seizure, hostage-taking or siege either on British territory or involving British citizens.

In this new situation the government decision-makers would have to allocate the duties for the employment of legal force between executive arms, be they military, para-military or police. The British, as well as other Western governments, were confronted with the onslaught of a cadre of highly determined and skilled terrorists who were more than capable of posing a military problem to police and governmental authorities. In order to counter this development effectively, the army, and in turn the SAS, were the logical military organizations to be given this mission known to some as 'surgical small war operations'. As noted, the SAS already had extensive experience in low-intensity operations,

⁵⁴²Ibid.

particularly in Palestine, the 'keeni-meeni'⁵⁴³ (undercover) missions in Aden⁵⁴⁴ and from time to time, in bodyguard operations at home and abroad.⁵⁴⁵

The SAS Are Given the CT Task

In July 1975 it was reported that plans had been formulated to enable Whitehall to "react quickly to terrorist threats, civil emergencies and the effects of industrial disputes."⁵⁴⁶ Military Aid to the Civil Power (MACP) procedures were established which would come into effect if the police authorities required assistance in a terrorist situation where they could call upon the SAS or any other speciality units as required.⁵⁴⁷

The Special Air Services [sic] and other units have been specially trained along Israeli lines for their new role. They have certainly been used on one occasion and that was in January when a British Airways jet⁵⁴⁸ was hijacked en route from Manchester to London.

This initiative was orchestrated by the personal interest of Prime Minister Edward Heath who asked the Ministry of Defence if they had prepared contingency plans for a terrorist threat

⁵⁴³The term comes from Swahili describing the unseen movement of a snake in the grass and used to describe undercover work in Kenya and Aden.

⁵⁴⁴For a view of this campaign and some SAS tasks during this period see Julian Paget, Last Post: Aden 1964-1967.

⁵⁴⁵"SAS troops guard Queen, paper say," The Ottawa Citizen, 10 November, 1984.

⁵⁴⁶"Aid to the Civil Power," The Army Quarterly and Defence Journal, (July, 1975), p. 259.

⁵⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 259-260.

⁵⁴⁸Ibid., p. 260.

similar to that witnessed during the Olympic games in Munich in 1972. In response to Heath's question, Geraghty writes:

After a hasty search through the files, the SAS document was produced with the explanation that it had not yet been processed. Heath studied the documents and within hours ordered that the SAS CRW [Counter-Revolutionary Warfare] wing be developed with all speed and whatever budget was required. From then on it received sophisticated equipment, including electronic devices; greater mobility; new weapons more suited⁵⁴⁹ for use in a confined space; and more manpower.

The British government support for the creation of a counter-revolutionary warfare wing soon resulted in SAS squadrons being assigned to undertake counter-terrorist training on a rotational basis. The training was exceedingly demanding and included realistic live-fire exercises in hostage rescue, and siege-breaking techniques. Casualties would inevitably occur as in January, 1985 when Sergeant Raymond Abbots was reportedly shot during training on a range at Hereford.⁵⁵⁰ One senior SAS officer pointed out that during this highly realistic CRW training a soldier will "expend 100,000 9 mm rounds with his pistol...every sixteen months these troops are returned to CRW...this type of training keeps people interested, motivated and highly trained."⁵⁵¹

The SAS counter-terrorist team was present during the Balcombe Street siege in December, 1975 where the Metropolitan Police trapped a four-man active service unit of

⁵⁴⁹Geraghty, This is the SAS: A pictorial....., op. cit., p. 86.

⁵⁵⁰"SAS man shot dead on range," The Times, London, 17 January, 1985.

⁵⁵¹Interview with a senior SAS officer, London, England, 2 June, 1986.

the IRA who were holding, as hostages, a middle-aged couple. It was here that the 'psychological warfare' aspect of employing a highly skilled unit known to be experienced in precision small unit actions paid off. When the IRA members heard during a BBC broadcast that the SAS was preparing to storm the flat, they promptly opened negotiations which led to their surrender.⁵⁵²

The first documented action of members of the CRW team was during the Mogadishu crisis when the GSG9 were assisted by two SAS men. By 1977, as the terrorist situation became more serious in Europe, it was decided that each SAS squadron would undergo CRW wing training between operational assignments. Thanks to the accumulated experience applicable to their new role the regiment was well prepared for the Iranian embassy siege in London in 1980.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵²See Ronald Payne and Mervyn Edgecombe, "No mission impossible for the SAS," *Now*, 9 May, 1980, p. 43. "Sir Robert Mark, then Metropolitan Police Commissioner, said later that he had allowed the IRA men at Balcombe Street to know that the SAS were ready for action. He believed that this had alarmed them and had helped to ensure their surrender."

⁵⁵³Charters and Tugwell, op. cit., p. 264.

Section III

'Operation NIMROD' The Iranian Embassy Siege - London

30 April - 5 May, 1980.

To comprehend the operational aspect of this siege one must understand the British legal structure which places the responsibility for the maintenance of law and order on the police. It is the Home Secretary who is responsible for police operations and he answers to Parliament on their behalf. If the need arises, the Home Secretary may call upon other Ministers for any support assistance he may require. In the case of countering terrorism, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) can be of direct assistance. Although the police authorities can appeal directly to local military units for co-operation, authority must come from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) before for troops can be brought into action.

In British operations concerning Military Aid to the Civil Power, the law gives no extra protection or powers to servicemen in any confrontations with the public. All citizens in Great Britain have a responsibility to uphold the law, but at the same time they are responsible to the courts for any force they may deem necessary. Any force employed, therefore, must be acknowledged as being 'reasonable in the circumstances.' Militarily, if an officer is ordered to restore law and order, he must hand back the law enforcement responsibility to the police as soon as that aim is achieved. During the period of the military restoring law and order, the officer or soldier is fully responsible for all actions as he is no longer under police command. This format was carefully followed in Operation NIMROD.

To facilitate decision-making during periods of crisis, a Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR)⁵⁵⁴ is put into action. A crisis which would activate COBR would be one having an international aspect or connotation, would occur within Great Britain, and would normally involve some sort of politically motivated violence.

In Great Britain, the primary responsibility in a terrorist situation belongs to the Chief Constable of the area concerned. He must ensure that the police authority can respond to 'criminal' incidents. It is at this level of responsibility that it must first be ascertained whether an incident is criminal or politically motivated, and if it has an international dimension. If, for instance, an incident were to involve an embassy but was assessed as criminally inspired, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) would be merely apprised of the situation. However, if the situation involved terrorism and had an international dimension, the FCO would become directly involved in the COBR decision-making process. In the case of the Iranian incident in London, it became clear to the police after about two and a half hours that there was indeed an international dimension. The FCO was notified,⁵⁵⁵ and COBR came into action. As the site of the crisis was in Great Britain, the Home Office became the lead government agency responsible for

⁵⁵⁴See George Brock, et al., Siege: Six Days at the Iranian Embassy, p. 23.

⁵⁵⁵Robert D. Hershey Jr., "Gunmen Holding Iranian Embassy Free 2 Hostages," The New York Times, 4 May, 1980. In this article it is noted that the British Ambassador to Iran, Sir John Graham, returned to London to advise the FCO.

dealing with the incident. According to one British government official involved in this incident in:

...daily practice COBR would be convened and chaired by a senior Home Office official, as the siege itself was extended, other senior officials of the Home Office would sit as a substitute for the Home Secretary. You must remember COBR was in session around the clock. As for the Home Secretary, Mr. Whitelaw he attended COBR for about one hour periods during the first two days of the siege. To monitor events the Minister would appear at COBR at agreed times but could be called any time when government decisions were required.⁵⁵⁶

The Home Office was assisted by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the British Security Service (BSS). Later the Department of Trade was also involved through its responsibility for civil aviation for reasons which will be seen later.

The grass-roots handling of the incident rested with the London Metropolitan Police. However, COBR provided the overall guidelines under which the police operated. In this case the police authorities employed the negotiators, psychiatrists, trained police marksmen (D11), Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Squad (C13), Explosive Ordnance Disposal Teams (EOD), and the mobile police tactical group called the Special Patrol Group (SPG). Depending on the language situation, the appropriate translators could be drawn from an updated police list. The police authorities were responsible only as long as they could cope with the situation.

⁵⁵⁶ Discussion with a British Government official, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 31 March, 1982. See also, Robert McGowan, et. al., "The Day Of The SAS," The Daily Express Special Edition, [magazine], London, May, 1980, p. 16.

The operations and tactics to be employed during such situations remain a police responsibility. Notwithstanding, it is the government who decides if and when to use the SAS. In this case, Mr. William Whitelaw, the British Home Secretary, submitted the request to employ SAS troops to the Prime Minister Mrs. Margaret Thatcher.⁵⁵⁷

All communications during the operation were recorded in a log and on audiotapes.⁵⁵⁸ One of the most important tapes dealt with the request for military assistance to rescue the hostages which came from Scotland Yard's Commissioner McNee and the military response agreeing to the request. These tapes were used as evidence during post-incident investigation.

During the crisis, Mr. Whitelaw kept Prime Minister Thatcher advised, although continuous ministerial involvement remained limited to three principals, the Home Secretary, and representatives from the FCO and MOD.⁵⁵⁹ COBR efficiency and effectiveness has been predicated upon a number of realistic exercises that were created to mirror such eventualities as the Iranian siege. In fact the siege "for many participants was hard to distinguish from an exercise."⁵⁶⁰ Exercises are held twice a year within COBR while the police authorities

⁵⁵⁷George Brock, et al., op. cit., p. 114.

⁵⁵⁸Discussion with a British Government official, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 31 March, 1982.

⁵⁵⁹Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰Ibid.

are known to exercise more often and they in turn ensure the participation of the military.⁵⁶¹

Well-planned and frequent exercises in crisis management, police and military preparedness and co-operation are critical for the success of counter-terrorist operations. It is an interesting point that just two months before the Iranian embassy take over, a command post exercise was conducted by the Home Office which activated COBR and employed all facets of government crisis management, negotiation and response and employed government officials, the police authorities and the military.⁵⁶² In particular, "attention was directed towards the elements of decision-making involving the resolution of any crisis by force."⁵⁶³

The Perpetrators: The Political Organization for the Arab Peoples in Arabistan (POAPA)

The political reasons behind POAPA's seizure of London's Iranian embassy are worthwhile exploring. The province of Khuzestan (Arabistan) contains the majority of Iran's economically vital oil fields and a major refinery. The Arab majority in the province have historically believed that they were victims of cultural and economic discrimination. The POAPA political objectives were to gain guarantees for Arab

⁵⁶¹Ibid.

⁵⁶²Joint Special Operations Command, Special Operations Dominican Republic - Mayaguez - Mogadishu - Kolwezi - Kabul - Iranian Embassy, London, The Centre for Conflict Studies, University of New Brunswick, 1982, pp. 232.

⁵⁶³Ibid.

cultural, political and language rights. In return, the province would remain under Iranian government control. POAPA demands were ignored by the Khomeini government. A few months later, POAPA headquarters was raided by members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards. Frustrated by the failure of negotiations with the Ayatollah Khomeini regime, POAPA, with Iraqi assistance, planned to take over the Iranian embassy in London. In doing so, POAPA would be able to publicize the Arabistani cause to the global community. The terrorists called themselves the Martyr Muhieideen Al-Nassir Group.

The terrorists were originally from the Khuzestan region of Iran and had subsequently fled to Iraq and were recruited and trained for the operation, and issued with Iraqi passports. A few weeks before the attack, they travelled to Great Britain in two groups. They were accompanied by an Iraqi known as 'SAMI'⁵⁶⁴ and upon arrival in London took up residence. The night before the attack Sami brought weapons and ammunition, grenades and a plan of the inside of the embassy ^{to} where the Iranian Arabs were staying. Three hours before they assaulted the embassy Sami gave a final briefing and emphasized that the attack was not to begin before 1130 hours. Unbeknownst to his comrades 'Sami' then went to Heathrow and left the country on a Paris-bound aircraft about the time the terrorists attacked the embassy.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁴"Iraqi is hunted in London siege," The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 15 May, 1980. Subject was identified as Sami Mohammed Ali by Scotland Yard.

⁵⁶⁵A detailed examination of the events of the siege is included in Appendix 1.

At The Embassy - 30 April, 1980

Around 1130 in the morning, six terrorists entered the Iranian embassy and overpowered Constable Trevor Lock, an armed British police officer, a member of the A-11 Diplomatic Protection Group, just inside the embassy's doorway. Moments later, after firing a few intimidating shots, the terrorists had taken complete control of the embassy and those inside. Twenty-six hostages were taken, but, due to a variety of reasons, five of the hostages would be released during the period of the siege. Fortunately one of the embassy staff managed to telephone the police. The London Metropolitan Police units responded, police snipers (D11)⁵⁶⁶ took up position around the embassy site as did the anti-terrorist squad (C13)⁵⁶⁷ and the technical support branch (C7).

The SAS was initially alerted to this situation by an ex-SAS NCO who was serving as a dog handler with the London Metropolitan Police. On his own initiative he telephoned Hereford (22 SAS Regimental Headquarters) and advised them of the event. Following the standard operational procedure, the stand-by SAS Counter Revolutionary Wing Team, known as the 'Pagoda Troop', was forward-based in secure accommodations in Regent's Park. Initially, the team spent their time carrying out reconnaissance of the embassy and constructing a scale model of the embassy building itself. In turn, members were briefed of the situation and began carrying out practice assaults and house-clearing drills on similar facilities.

⁵⁶⁶Brock, et al., op. cit., p. 21.

⁵⁶⁷Ibid.

As in any surgical operation, intelligence was vital particularly as the embassy had some 50 rooms. Technical assistance, in the shape of microphones and surveillance devices, was important as this gave the police and the SAS valuable information in preparing a 'final option.'

The initial demands of the terrorists were the release of 91 prisoners held in Iran, the latter's recognition of the national rights of Arabistan and the provision of an aircraft to fly them and some of their hostages to an undisclosed location. Later, their demands included a dialogue with a number of Arab ambassadors and they threatened to kill the hostages and blow up the embassy if their demands were not met by noon on 1 May.

Negotiations began and by the sixth day the situation had deteriorated to the point that the terrorists renewed their threat to execute their hostages. At 1331 hours on 5 May a hostage was shot. At 1850 hours that same day three more shots were heard and a dead hostage was pushed out the embassy door. At this time, Mr. Whitelaw contacted Prime Minister Thatcher and obtained her approval to use the SAS.

At 1923 hours the SAS men got to the first floor balcony from the embassy's roof. Another team moved to the ground floor terrace at the rear of the embassy. After gaining entry the SAS swept through the embassy killing five of the six terrorists. One hostage was killed by one of the terrorists. One terrorist survived by slipping into a group of hostages being moved out of the embassy. The quick evacuation of the embassy was managed by the SAS by literally throwing the hostages from one SAS member to another. Once all the

hostages were cleared from the building they could then be properly accounted for. The operation took a total of 11 minutes to complete and by 1940 hours 19 hostages were reported safe. The Iranian hostage siege had ended. (For a detailed report see Appendix I.)

Iranian Embassy Siege - Summary of Events

By the end of the first day, it was assessed by the police that the hostage-taking could last a few days particularly as the terrorists were behaving very calmly. Police authorities were, as yet, not certain that the terrorists had any type of explosives or grenades in their possession. In early discussions between the police and the SAS, the latter did not favour an early hostage rescue operation⁵⁶⁸ because the SAS wished to acquire as much information and intelligence on the Iranian embassy as possible, including the location of terrorists and hostages. As for the hostages, police authorities were attempting, with the assistance of two Iranians, who fortuitously escaped as the gunmen moved in, to learn the identities of the terrorists.

⁵⁶⁸Proceedings of the 10th Annual Symposium on the Role of Behavioural Science in Physical Security, Outthinking the Terrorist: An International Challenge, 23-24 April, 1985, Springfield, Virginia, article by John A. Dellow, "The London Perspective on International Terrorism," p. 46. According to Dellow "the military commander will, with urgency, prepare an immediate action plan for use should a sudden demand be made. The SAS planning group then, in the light of intelligence and the overall police strategy, commences preparing plans that will allow them to respond to a whole range of options should they be required to do so by the police commander."

On-Site Command, Control and Communications

It is obvious that the handling of the Iranian embassy required intimate co-operation and consultation on site between the police, the military and the British Security Service and, in turn, with the Home Secretary. This co-operation quickly evolved into a morning meeting which was chaired by the Metropolitan Police-Incident Commander John A. Dellow, with representatives of the various departments and police branches involved. Dellow has commented:

On the first evening of the siege I obtained a blanket authority from Government to commit the SAS on my own initiative in the event of a sudden deterioration of the situation, when there would be no time to request formal second authority. During the siege I advised Government on several occasions of the criterion that I would apply in requesting the commitment of the military, and on each occasion Government accepted this.⁵⁶⁹

The on site control apparatus consisted of a senior representative of the Home Office, the SAS commander, a senior British Security Service (BSS) representative and the Incident Commander. A field telephone was installed in a first-floor room of the embassy to allow the police to talk to the terrorists.

Summary - Day Two

By the second day of the embassy take over, the first operational intelligence requirement was to gather as much information as possible on what was going on inside the embassy. This was vital, as the BSS were attempting to

⁵⁶⁹Ibid.

produce an intelligence picture so that the SAS could prepare an assault plan. It appears, however, that the police authorities (and in turn the Incident Commander) were concerned at this time not to risk disturbing the captors. To monitor all activities around the embassy premises, a closed circuit television (CCTV) was installed in such a manner to cover all the exits and entrances to the building.

International Co-operation

Police authorities gained access into No. 15 Princes Gate. However, the other building adjacent to the Iranian embassy, No. 17 Princes Gate, belonged to the Ethiopian embassy. After a senior-level government official pleaded for access, a clearance to use the Ethiopian embassy was granted at approximately noon on the second day of the hostage taking.⁵⁷⁰ The Ethiopian ambassador reflected upon his decision and argued that his staff occupy the building in spite of the ongoing sensitive and potentially dangerous situation. This request by the ambassador was rescinded when during the second day the terrorists threatened to blow up the Iranian embassy if their demands were not met by the British authorities. On that notice, the Ethiopian ambassador was persuaded to evacuate his embassy's premises and grant access to the British police just before midnight. While this international negotiation was continuing, plans were made for the technical penetrations -- the placing of listening and visual devices in the building where the hostages were being held. It should be underlined that the

⁵⁷⁰ Discussion with a British Government official, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 31 March, 1982.

skills of observation and technical penetration developed by the police and the BSS were of great intelligence value.⁵⁷¹ By this time, through the analysis of the sounds and lights from within the embassy, it was believed that the hostages were concentrated on the second floor. Moreover, movement was detected between and on the third and fourth floors and from there downstairs to the field telephone on the first floor.

An intelligence break came just after noon on the second day with the release of Christopher Cramer who was suffering from a stomach ailment. He gave the police detailed information⁵⁷² about the activities within the embassy and said that there were five terrorists, although he was not positive that he had seen them all as other hostages had mentioned a sixth one. His information corroborated the police analysis that the hostages and their captors were concentrated on the second floor. The male hostages were held in an office on the second floor while the women were kept in a small office at the top of the stairs. Furthermore, Cramer was able to describe some of the weapons carried by the terrorists. These were two Browning pistols, a revolver and a number of grenades.

No. 15 Princes Gate became the base for technical penetrations into the Iranian embassy. Listening devices were put into place in the early evening of the second day,

⁵⁷¹Robert McGowan, et al., "The Day Of The S.A.S.", Daily Express Special Edition, p. 8.

⁵⁷²Chris Cramer and Sim Harris, Hostage, pp. 57 - 62. Cramer notes his concerns over his debriefings.

this was painstaking work because of the interruptions caused by the noise level produced by the penetrations themselves.

As noted in the chronology (Appendix I) for the second day the deadline passed. However, shortly before midnight a terrorist threatened to throw out the field telephone. At the same time, two new demands were forwarded to police authorities:

- 1) that a representative of the BBC should be brought to the embassy to collect the demands of the terrorists.
- 2) that the demands of the terrorists be published.

The negotiators maintained that in return for any concessions from the British police the British and female captives must be released.

From the counter-terrorist point of view, the SAS were prepared to launch an assault on the embassy, if necessary by 2000 hours. If the assault option was to be taken on Day Three, it would have to be after dark, preferably late at night in order to catch the captors off guard.

Summary - Day Three

The complex and time-consuming technical and intelligence effort continued from the early morning on. At approximately 0130 hours Constable Lock was taken to a window at the front of the building by one of his captors and told the police negotiators that the drilling (technical penetration of the

walls) must stop or action would be taken against the hostages. Some of the female hostages had, apparently, heard the noises as they were sitting against a wall and drew it to the attention of the terrorists.

The drilling had probably been noticed by the terrorists because the police had so effectively sealed off the embassy that there was very little street noise. In order to provide noise cover, the police arranged for aircraft to fly over the embassy and left a compressor operating in the street behind the embassy. These adjustments to the noise level were probably noticeable to the terrorists as well.⁵⁷³ At approximately 0800 negotiations were reported to be slow to start again. OAN, the terrorist leader was reluctant to resume talking at first as he was angry over the lack of progress by the police in meeting the terrorists' demands. When police negotiators began talking of providing a BBC man to hear his demands he apparently calmed down somewhat. BBC executive Tony Crabb arrived and had a conversation with OAN and took down some complaints and made observations, some of which were:

- 1) The terrorists complained that the police had used psychological aggression. This referred to the lack of telephone contact with the outside

⁵⁷³ Christopher Dobson, et al., "London Becomes The Arab Battlefield," Now, 9 May, 1980, p. 41. It has been reported that "For four days before the attack, air traffic control officers had, at the request of the police, brought in airliners on a flight path directly over the Albert Hall to keep up a barrage of noise to disguise the sound of drilling and other preparations being made by the SAS teams." See also, "SAS really did roar to the rescue," Soldier, 12 January, 1987, p. 13.

world. OAN also told of the drilling that they had heard during the night hours.

- 2) Dr. Gholan Ali Alfronz the Iranian Chargé d'Affaires appeared at the window and through talking with Crabb, the latter deduced that a fairly comfortable relationship existed between the captors and captives.⁵⁷⁴
- 3) Drawing from the media reports it would appear there were no indications of rescue preparations.⁵⁷⁵

SUMMARY - DAY FOUR

The first successful listening device began picking up conversations in both English and Farsi at about 0900 hours. Within three more hours a second technical monitoring device was in operation. As the information began to flow, the Farsi interpreters became inundated and transcribers from other government departments were pressed into service. The SAS, police and intelligence authorities quickly agreed upon the kind of information needed:

- 1) the aims, intentions and psychological state of the terrorists;
- 2) the level of dissension or cohesion amongst the

⁵⁷⁴"As violence erupts near the Embassy...USE FORCE SAYS IRAN," The Daily Mail, London, 2 May, 1980. According to this report the Iranian Government had told the Foreign Office "to use force if necessary to end the London Embassy seige."

⁵⁷⁵Norman Webster, "Gunmen let 2 deadlines pass in London siege," The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 2 May, 1980. This report states "No rescue attempt seems to be contemplated as yet. London's police are well-schooled in the waiting-game approach -- based on two famous six-day sieges here in 1975 -- and seem to be waiting for time and exhaustion to do the job."

terrorists.⁵⁷⁶

The information draw from the technical penetrations enabled the police negotiators to discover that the terrorists had psychological and physical dominance over their captives and that there were no indications, as yet, of any disunity amongst the captors.

By late afternoon it was established that the terrorists and hostages were within a well-defined area on the second floor of the embassy. An analysis from sound monitoring and other means suggested that the hostages were in a general office with others in a small adjacent room. The command centre for the terrorists appeared to be situated in a small room to the front of the embassy.

In return for the release of one of the hostages, Mrs. Kanji, the police authorities had the original terrorist statement transmitted by the BBC World Service at 2100 hours. In response, the terrorists released another hostage just after that hour. The two released hostages, Hiyech Sanei Kanji and Ali Guil Ghanzafar, were able to provide more information for the intelligence picture. Mrs. Kanji gave the police detailed descriptions of the six terrorists and emphasized that a bond of empathy was developing between the captors and captives. Further, she confirmed that the terrorists were not professional killers but appeared to be well educated and only hoped to put pressure on the Iranian government to accept their demands.

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with a senior SAS officer, London, England, 2 June, 1986.

Indications were that the terrorists took turns on guard duty but no specific time pattern was set. According to the released hostages, the terrorist guarding the hostages carried a pistol, the others patrolled the embassy with machine guns and each carried a grenade. There did not appear to be any demolitions or gas masks.

At the time of Mrs. Kanji's release, the male hostages were located on the second floor of the general office and the women in a small adjacent office. They were not being restrained. Mrs. Kanji further described how P.C. Lock had developed a good rapport with the terrorists and had achieved their respect and confidence. It also appeared that the terrorists had changes of clothes and occasionally took the opportunity to shower. They took turns praying once at night in contrast to their captives who prayed all the time and as a group.

Summary - Day Five

In response to the request by the British government for Middle-East mediators, the representatives of Kuwait were prepared to assist, if Iran was agreeable. The Jordanians would lend assistance under certain conditions and the Syrian and Algerian ambassadors agreed to help but were disappointed that there was no escape route for the terrorists. Although the chances of securing an acceptable mediator were not great, the British government continued the search for suitable alternatives among the Arab community in London.

The next hostage to be released, a journalist, Mustapha Karkouti (Day 5 at 2020 hours) told the police that the

relationship between the captors and captives was becoming volatile and that the terrorists were fed up with the slowness of negotiations. He said that the terrorists would probably surrender if they were guaranteed their safety.

Summary - Day Six

Technical monitoring had reported that the hostages were still situated on the second floor in the same room and that the tensions of the previous day appeared to have subsided for the moment.

Negotiations went through a particularly tense phase when the terrorist leader appeared to lose control for a few moments. At approximately 1331 hours, three shots were heard and it was believed that a hostage had been killed. After the shooting, the terrorists spoke to a senior policeman. A deadline of 1700 hours was issued for the Arab ambassadors to be brought in, otherwise a hostage would be shot. At approximately 1730 hours a technical source reported a conversation among the terrorists which underlined the possibility of violent action and recorded that the terrorists must "do something before sunset," and "Kill two or three or four," and "kill all by 10 p.m."⁵⁷⁷

At approximately 1800 hours the police negotiator was told by the terrorist leader that two hostages would be killed every 45 minutes and their bodies thrown out of the embassy, if

⁵⁷⁷"British commandos testify at inquest: Fight for Iran embassy described," Reuters, London, 4 February, 1981.

their demands were not met. At 1800 hours, a listening device picked up the sound of a shot as well as a terrorist harassing the captives. A half hour later, at 1830 hours, the deadline was extended, however, approximately 15 minutes later, shots were heard and one body was dragged to the front door and left on the doorstep.

After the murder of the one captive, (although the authorities appear to have believed two were killed), the Home Secretary gave permission for the SAS to rescue the remaining hostages. At approximately 1909 hours the Incident Commander Dellow handed over the task to the Military Commander and the assault was mounted. The time between the permission to assault the embassy and the attack itself was spent on obtaining last-minute tactical intelligence pertaining to the locations of the terrorists and their hostages.⁵⁷⁸

Just before the assault began, the terrorist leader was kept talking with police negotiators on the telephone. The rescue was launched and the remaining hostages were saved in one of the most dramatic rescue operations in recent history. Five terrorists, including their leader, were killed. Fowzi Nejad,⁵⁷⁹ the only surviving terrorist, was later convicted for the manslaughter of two hostages and sentenced to life imprisonment. Nine months later the verdict of justifiable

⁵⁷⁸ Stephen Handelman "How the SAS fights terror for Britain," The Toronto Star, 13 March, 1986. This article underlines that the SAS "are careful to emphasize the value of careful planning and good intelligence before anti-terrorist operations."

⁵⁷⁹ "Killer jailed for life," The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 23 January, 1981.

homicide was returned on the five terrorists killed in the rescue.⁵⁸⁰

Postscript 'Operation NIMROD' - International Co-operation

As this was a 'home' operation, the requirements for international co-operation to assist the Special Air Service in its action appear to have been minimal. Notwithstanding, Colonel Ulrich Wegener of West Germany's GSG9 was a 'visitor' at the scene, and as one senior SAS officer commented he "observed only, as we have a mutual co-operation agreement to have exchanges with GIGNE, GSG9."⁵⁸¹ These agreements to have international observers at such terrorist incidents were initially unofficial but now have been "officially ratified."⁵⁸² The only other indication of international tactical co-operation was the access to the Ethiopian embassy. The use of this building was vital to the development of the intelligence picture inside the Iranian embassy. By using the technical means at their disposal, the police and later, the SAS, could determine the mental state of the terrorists and their positioning while developing information for analysis. Moreover, on the intelligence side once the "terrorist group had been identified through one,

⁵⁸⁰ Stewart Tandler "Verdicts of justifiable homicide on terrorists," The Times, London, 5 February, 1981. The report stated "The jury took almost an hour to reach its verdicts after Dr. Paul Knapman, the coroner, told them they had the choice of justifiable homicide, unlawful killing, an open verdict or death by misadventure." However, "Verdicts of justifiable homicide were returned on the five terrorists killed by men of the Special Air Service Regiment at the Iranian Embassy siege in London last year."

⁵⁸¹ Interview with a senior SAS officer, London, England, 2 June, 1986.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

communiqués and two, deductions of possible terrorist groups, the BSS forwarded requests to allied agencies requesting further data about this group."⁵⁸³ As to the responses to this British request this study could not ascertain the assistance given, if any, by allied intelligence services.

Factors for Success

The success of this operation depended upon the fact that the police, the BSS and the SAS "had five days to receive and gain intelligence."⁵⁸⁴ As the intelligence was gathered, a model of the embassy was made and exercises were conducted. In the end, the assault has been described by a senior SAS officer simply as "a platoon attack in the vertical mode."⁵⁸⁵ Notwithstanding the above, the same officer remarked that "we felt we had a 55 per cent chance of success at the end."⁵⁸⁶

Major General Sir Jeremy Moore suggested that the success of Princes' Gate was based upon a series of factors:

...intelligence was right, secondly they, the military, the police and Home Office, had thought a lot about such incidents. To win in war, you must think, thinking takes time and in war there is no time, therefore you must think before the war.... Thirdly, clear direction and statement of the aim from above. Fourth, co-operation between police and the military.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸³ Interview with a senior Canadian Security Intelligence Service officer, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 13 December, 1984.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Interview with a senior SAS officer, London, England, 2 June, 1986.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Interview with Major General Sir Jeremy Moore, Bratton, Wiltshire, 6 June, 1986.

Another senior retired SAS officer echoed the same feelings, acknowledging that the police, military and ministers responsible for such incidents are well acquainted with not only their own areas of purview but with those of everyone else. In particular, the government Ministers are acutely aware of their responsibility. This officer stated:

The police are very good at talking the terrorists out. Once a shot is heard, however, some grisly decisions have to be made. The policeman turns to the Minister and says that they cannot control it [the situation]. The Minister orders the attack and, in turn, accepts full responsibility. Then the SAS does their stuff.⁵⁸⁸

The only formal aspects of international co-operation noted were the permission given to British authorities by the Iranian government "to take all necessary measures"⁵⁸⁹ and the assistance given by Ethiopian representatives in granting access to their premises. Moral support, however, did emanate from various countries and in particular "Britain's allies, including the Americans, West Germany and France, all gave their support to COBR's hard-line stance."⁵⁹⁰

The SAS was fortunate that the execution of this operation was on British soil. This allowed the assembling of intelligence and the CRW Team without interference, and all command, control, communications and intelligence (C3I) requirements were easily concentrated and in close proximity to the objective. Unlike the American rescue described in the next chapter, the SAS "did not have to assume that the

⁵⁸⁸ Interview with Colonel the Viscount Slim, London, England, 29 May, 1986.

⁵⁸⁹ See "Official Says Iran May Take Action," The New York Times, 4 May, 1980.

⁵⁹⁰ McGowan, et al., op. cit., p. 17.

terrorists could count on the sympathy of the local population."⁵⁹¹ Furthermore, Operation NIMROD did not appear to lack any required operational resources and, according to one analyst, the authorities were prepared to reinforce the initial attack if need be.⁵⁹²

The outcome of such operations depends upon the ability to acquire accurate and timely intelligence. One intelligence officer commented on the success of the Iranian embassy rescue:

If it wasn't for the BSS (British Security Service) technical penetration capability, coupled with their translation and analytical skills the police and more importantly the SAS would not have been able to carry out their functions in such a highly professional manner.⁵⁹³

Much can be written about the effective co-operation between the police, military and political leadership. Other countries may possibly extract useful lessons to be integrated into their national crisis decision-making bodies and executive arms:

In Great Britain, Chief Officers of Police are required to exercise themselves and their forces in responding to various forms of terrorist incident. This ranges from paper exercises without use of personnel, through computer-based exercises for command ranks and localized negotiator exercises, to full-scale enacted incidents involving all appropriate agencies (including senior civil servants and members of Government with a responsibility in the field, up to and including the Secretary of State for Home Affairs).

The army is included in all the large-scale exercises and becomes used to deploying with the civil police. This practice not only serves to acquaint them with their likely role and objectives

⁵⁹¹Drew Middleton, "British Raid: The Lessons," The New York Times, 7 May, 1980.

⁵⁹²Ibid.

⁵⁹³Interview with a Canadian Security Intelligence Service officer, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 8 February, 1986.

at times of real commitment, but also allows them to become acquainted with the personalities with whom they will work and the likely operating conditions.⁵⁹⁴

Furthermore, at lower levels directly responsible for operations:

...frequent seminars are held at the Headquarters of the 22nd Special Air Services Regiment (SAS - the British Army unit designated as aid to police at terrorist incidents) for Chief Officers and Assistant Chief Officers of Police and other officers with responsibility in this field. The opportunity is taken not only to discuss policy but to update police knowledge of SAS capability and weaponry and of associated technology used by the army, police, and other agencies involved.⁵⁹⁵

The appreciation of the police and military responsibilities in such situations underscores Britain's success in special operations and particularly in counter-terrorism. After the Iranian embassy siege, interest in British organizational and operational techniques increased dramatically, and British SAS personnel were sought after for specialist briefings and formalized training. The increased publicity occasioned by the rescue did more than perhaps any other single event to highlight the advantages which might accrue to other countries from co-operation with the British in counter-terrorism. On the other side of the Atlantic, America's experience before, during and after their rescue attempt in Iran was rather less positive.

⁵⁹⁴Dellow, op. cit., p. 45.

⁵⁹⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF ELITE FORCES IN COUNTER-TERRORISM

AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

IN LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

Section I

An Historical Perspective

During a conversation between two American officers, one said, "The reason we lost in Vietnam was because it was not the American way of warfare."⁵⁹⁶ Although this opinion is most controversial, the American predilection for conventional warfare, employing massed fire-power and manoeuvre elements, remains today. Despite their long involvement and experience in 'small wars' and counter-guerrilla operations they still use their conventional military doctrine in low-intensity conflict, as this chapter will show. The United States Army (USA) and the United States Marine Corps (USMC) have seen extensive service in operations that incorporated all or some of the aspects of low-intensity conflict (LIC) so familiar to this generation from the Vietnam War. As a military term, LIC has been defined as:

The limited use of power for political purposes by nations or organizations...to coerce control or defend a population, to control or defend a territory or establish or defend rights. It includes military operations by or against irregular forces, peacekeeping operations, terrorism, counter-terrorism, rescue operations and military assistance under conditions of armed conflict. This form of conflict does not include protracted engagements of opposing regular forces.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁶ Interview with two US Army Special Forces officers, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 13 August, 1986.

⁵⁹⁷ Colonel John D. Waghelstein, "Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency Doctrine," Military Review, (May, 1985), p. 42.

If one accepts this definition, American experience in LIC could be said to date back to the French and Indian Wars and would also include notable examples such as the American Revolution, the Seminole War, the Frontier Wars, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine campaign, the Punitive Expedition into Mexico, the 'Banana Wars' in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, selected campaigns and operations of World War II, Greece, Korea, Vietnam and El Salvador. As a result of this extensive LIC experience the US Army and the USMC have adapted, in varying degrees, to meet the tactical, strategic and political requirements demanded by these situations. A brief tour d'horizon of their historical experience will illustrate this.

The American Revolutionary Experience

Colonial experience in fighting North American Indians assisted American revolutionaries in their War of Independence (1775-83). One American Major General, Nathanael Greene, developed a strategy of employing both regular and irregular forces, and refused to engage British troops in open battle unless it was on his own conditions.⁵⁹⁸ He also used guerrilla fighters (including the famous guerrilla leader Francis Marion, better known as the 'Swamp Fox') who specialized in operations during the night and early hours of the morning. When these mounted guerrilla forces were concentrated, their tactics included silently approaching their enemies before conducting a lightning frontal assault co-ordinated with violent flanking attacks.

⁵⁹⁸Major Ray L. Bowers, "The American Revolution," Military Review, (July, 1966), p. 71.

As a guerrilla tactician, Marion depended on mobility for survival, keeping his troops constantly on the move in small sections of five to eight men. These same groups would seek out intelligence, contact sympathizers to the cause, and constantly harass the British and their Loyalist supporters at every opportunity. Marion used principles later employed by guerrilla leaders such as Mao Tse Tung. Whenever, for example, Marion's 'safe' area was threatened he would rapidly retreat to another secure base. One writer has said that Marion was:

...the scourge of the British. He seemed ubiquitous, lurking everywhere: hiding in an unknown rendezvous, creeping stealthily along on a raid, or leading a midnight attack. To add to the enemy's alarm, he kept his patrols constantly moving....⁵⁹⁹

The British response to these American guerrillas came in the form of brutal repression based on terror, the burning of homes and the destruction of livestock. Such drastic measures seem only to have spurred recruits to join Marion's guerrillas.

It appears to have escaped the early practitioners of counter-guerrilla warfare that the threat of terror, violence and reprisals ceases to be effective when the citizens have lost their homes and belongings, their means of livelihood, and their workplaces. The result is that the supporter 'alleged or otherwise,' has nothing left to lose. Consequently, in an act of vengeance against his oppressor, with or without the ideological motivations of the conflict itself, he may well join the side of the 'oppressed' as a guerrilla.

⁵⁹⁹ Robert D. Bass, Swamp Fox: The Life And Campaigns Of General Francis Marion, p. 79.

The political, tactical and strategic similarities of the War of Independence to future guerrilla conflicts are striking. In particular, the avoidance of open and pitched battles has been an important element of many subsequent guerrilla conflicts. In addition, the strategy of wearing down the enemy politically, spiritually and physically is comparable to the experience of later American generations in Vietnam and elsewhere. Greene was not the only American who felt that this strategy for the weak to employ against the strong was correct. The young Alexander Hamilton was also an adherent of the strategy. He argued that the Americans must try to "waste and defeat the enemy by piecemeal."⁶⁰⁰ Furthermore, George Washington acknowledged the fact that guerrilla war is waged by the weak against the strong. Whilst addressing Congress in 1776, he argued that American forces "should on all occasions avoid a general action, and never be drawn into a necessity to put anything to the risk."⁶⁰¹

Guerrilla warfare demands that both the guerrillas and their leadership retain the initiative and their operational and logistical independence to be effective. Such troops must be imbued, due to the natural hardships of guerrilla campaigning, with a determined commitment to their cause, whatever it may be.

Although the war was for 'national liberation' from Britain's 'shackles,' it has been argued that the American Revolution

⁶⁰⁰Eric Robson, The American Revolution: In its Political and Military Aspects, 1763-1783, p. 161.

⁶⁰¹Ibid., p. 97.

was a political and not a social revolution. John Ellis writes:

...Washington and the American leaders were exceptionally wary of letting the war become in any sense a social revolution. For them the ideal peace treaty would guarantee a status quo ante bellum, except without the British. Therefore all manifestations of grass-roots independence⁶⁰² by the troops were to be vigorously suppressed.

The leaders of the young Continental Army wished to turn such guerrilla formations into a contemporary, disciplined army of regulars which could fight and win in decisive pitched battles with British regulars. In the end:

...the Americans found themselves in the unique position of fighting a war according to a guerrilla strategy, but with regular troops who were almost indistinguishable⁶⁰³ from the British and Hessian opponents.

Thus the United States' own guerrilla traditions, deeply reflective of its particular vision of war in a highly individualized society where personal initiative was much valued, were quickly abandoned and replaced by more standard European views on armies and conflict.

The Civil War

Nearly a century later, the American Civil War, although a conventional conflict, witnessed guerrilla activities that were, for the most part, off-shoots of the campaigns of the main forces. One of the most notable guerrilla operations was led by the Confederate John Singleton Mosby and sprang from a successful cavalry raid in North Virginia led by Major General Jeb Stuart. Mosby, who accompanied Stuart, requested

⁶⁰²John Ellis, A Short History Of Guerrilla Warfare, p. 53.

⁶⁰³Ibid.

that he and a handful of troops remain behind to operate against federal lines using hit-and-run raiding tactics against Union outposts. He stated "In general my purpose was to threaten and harass the enemy...and in this way compel him to withdraw troops from his front to guard the line of the Potomac and Washington."⁶⁰⁴

By the end of the war, Mosby's guerrillas, better known as the Partisan Rangers, numbered 200 cavalry, and throughout their campaign from January, 1863 to April, 1865 they lived, for the most part, off the land and what they could salvage from their enemies. Mosby trained and equipped his troops in accordance with the tactics he employed. Ridding his forces of their cumbersome and noisy sabres, he armed them with revolvers for close-in fighting and carbines for ambushes. He split his forces into small fighting units and concentrated them for a concerted assault on supply trains and federal troop formations. Speed and surprise were vital elements in Mosby's successes against the northern troops.

In Missouri, guerrilla bands similar to Mosby's were formed. The troops led by one leader, William Clarke Quantrill, never numbered more than twenty but their lack of numbers was offset by their high mobility. They used only the best horses available and relied upon short-range fire-power in the form of the Colt revolver. Some of Quantrill's men carried as many as eight revolvers to provide the close-range fire-power demanded by their audacious tactics. Quantrill's men focussed their tactical endeavours upon ambushes and the

⁶⁰⁴Charles Wells Russell, (ed), The Memoirs Of Colonel John S. Mosby, pp. 149-150.

destruction of Federal communications lines and, on occasion, raided Missouri and Kansas towns.

These mobile guerrilla operations had a telling effect, particularly in the western theatre of the Civil War. By 1862, the two to three thousand guerrillas operating in this region were holding down 60,000 Union troops who could have been better employed elsewhere. Despite the guerrilla successes, the regulars of both the Confederate and Federal armies felt little sympathy for these guerrillas. They were considered not real soldiers but highwaymen.⁶⁰⁵

Military measures, such as posting patrols to each town, could not subdue these raiders. The situation foreshadowed what American forces would experience a century later in Vietnam, and what the Russians would experience in Afghanistan. The following excerpt is from a Kansas newspaper written in 1864, and could describe the Vietnam or Afghanistan conflicts:

Outside of the military posts and their immediate vicinity, no man of known and open loyalty can safely live for a moment. The loyal people are collected in the scattered towns and military posts, while to all practical intents and purposes the rebels hold possession of the country.⁶⁰⁶

The counter-guerrilla forces under command of the Union General, John M. Schofield, adopted certain drastic measures, some of which were doomed to backfire. In the summer of 1862, Schofield ordered that:

⁶⁰⁵See Richard S. Brownlee, Grey Ghosts Of The Confederacy: Guerrilla Warfare in the West, 1861-1865, p. 112.

⁶⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 191-192.

...during active operations in the field in pursuit of guerrillas, the troops of this command will not be encumbered with transportation of supplies, but will, as far as possible, obtain subsistence from the enemy and those who aid and encourage the rebellion.⁶⁰⁷

Such an order, that of forcible requisition of supplies, could only further alienate the local inhabitants from the Federal cause. Mass arrests, loyalty oaths, bonds and the deportation of people to Arkansas followed as the Union Army desperately sought a solution to its guerrilla problem. What initially had begun as a nuisance and the pursuit of a few isolated guerrilla bands had escalated into a war against large elements of the local population. In the American experience this would not be the last time that regulars were confronted with the delicate problem of fighting guerrilla forces without overly disrupting the indigenous population.

Between the War of Independence and the Civil War, the American army had adapted to the European style of warfare. Moreover, by the time of the Civil War, the army was not tactically or psychologically equipped to wage the counter-guerrilla style of warfare during the Seminole Wars of the early 19th century. It was only after years of campaigning that military operations began to destroy Seminole food supplies through the employment of search and destroy tactics. Contemporary tactics of the European-style of warfare failed in the swamps of Florida. Although the Americans had employed guerrilla warfare techniques with success during their own revolution, Sam Sarkesian argues that the army quickly forgot the lessons of guerrilla and counter-guerrilla warfare and presumed that military

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

effectiveness rested with European-type formations and a professional officer corps.⁶⁰⁸ This 'Europeanizing' continued with the result that after the Second Seminole War, the United States Army

...was being organized around European-style warfare with professional officers, and the U.S. Military Academy [were], following the French system of military instruction.⁶⁰⁹

The rise of the military professional became readily apparent during the American Civil War. The battles of this war emphasized the increasing difficulties and complexities of waging conflict in an industrialized age. Moreover, the counter-guerrilla bias may have become rooted in the US Army as a result of these experiences.

The Civil War had a major effect on American military strategy and the American way of waging war. This had long-range political, strategic and tactical consequences when America began pursuing a counter-guerrilla strategy.

Sarkesian argues that:

The professional perspective became well established on grand battles of the Civil War. These developments were to set the pattern for the next involvement in counterrevolutionary war.⁶¹⁰

The post-Civil War period saw the US Army involved in making the American frontier safe. From 1866 to 1890, the army fought a series of small battles. As Robert M. Utley wrote, "the frontier army was a conventional military force trying to control by conventional military methods, a people that

⁶⁰⁸ Sam C. Sarkesian, America's Forgotten Wars: The Counterrevolutionary Past and Lessons for the Future, p. 118.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 118.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

did not behave like a conventional enemy, and indeed, quite often was not an enemy at all."⁶¹¹

The effect of Civil War service was readily apparent in the type of warfare later waged by the army. This was particularly evident as:

Many veteran officers of the Civil War faced these unorthodox operations with the mind set of Civil War conventional battles: 'In truth, the Civil War had made at least one important difference in the Army's handling of the Indian Wars; it had accustomed leaders and soldiers to conventional war fought according to white men's rules,⁶¹² and readjustment to guerrilla-style war was not easy.'

It has been argued that the age of the Frontier War ended in 1890. By then the western expansion had been completed and the embattled Indians placed on reservations.

For the most part the conventional US Army had been fighting, for over 20 years, an unconventional war. It is, however, arguable that the Indian was crushed not so much by the ability of the US Army and its use of enhanced technology in mobility and fire-power, but rather the overwhelming westward expansion of American society with all its manifestations:

In the year of Wounded Knee four transcontinental railroads spanned the West, where in 1866 there had been one. In 1890, 8.5 million settlers occupied the Indian's former hunting grounds, where in 1866 there had been less than 2 million. The buffalo herds that blackened the Great Plains with perhaps 13 million animals in 1866 had vanished by 1880 before the rifles of professional hide hunters. These figures tell more

⁶¹¹Ibid., p. 119. Quoted from Robert M. Utley, Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891, p. 411.

⁶¹²Ibid. Quoted from Russel F. Weigley, History of the United States Army, p. 268.

about the means by which the Indian was subjugated than do battle statistics.⁶¹³

The Impact of the Frontier Wars

The American military did not dwell on their frontier experiences but remained as if in a Civil War 'time warp,' drawing their corporate knowledge mostly from that nation-forming era. The Civil War experience shaped the American way in warfare. Despite the local importance of guerrillas, here was a war dominated, overwhelmingly, by great battles and massed armies. Thus:

... total victory and the need to commit overwhelming force to win became an entrenched view in American military thought.

The American military professional's view of war was shaped by the great battle concept and the view that victory was based on bringing maximum firepower to bear at the point of decision. Thus, regardless of the experiences in the American Revolution and the frontier environment, the pre-Civil War European tradition continued in the postwar period with a distinct American flavour. This tradition, now well established, stressed the need for a disciplined Regular Army as the basis for America's defense. This tradition, institutionalized in the training and education at West Point, stressed the maneuvering of disciplined troops, the use of cavalry and artillery, and outmaneuvering and overwhelming the enemy with men and firepower.⁶¹⁴

It appears that the US Army had lost its 'corporate memory' or at least experienced a selective memory loss. The army had become 'conventionalized.' The lessons of the Revolution and the Seminole Wars were forgotten. Before entering the Spanish-American War of 1898:

Aside from intellectual and strategic weaknesses, the Army also suffered from an absence of an historical "sense." With all of its experiences in nonmilitary and unconventional operations, the American Army failed to

⁶¹³Ibid., p. 121. Quoted from Robert Utley, op. cit., p. 410.

⁶¹⁴Ibid., p. 123.

incorporate these lessons into its professional and institutional structure. The traditional mind set with its focus on the conventional and grand battles of the Civil War remained the distinguishing military characteristic. One hundred years later, with a wealth of experience in unconventional operations and nontraditional military operations, the U.S. military (particularly the Army) retained its traditional and conventional characteristics.⁶¹⁵

In the end, the American army continued to pursue the path of professionalism as exemplified by the European armies, particularly in France and Germany, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The lessons of the Civil War combined with the organizational structure of European armies were the mainstays of American professional military thought. With few exceptions the American way of warfare evolving from their victorious civil war experience carried on into their conflicts of the twentieth century.

Central America and the Caribbean

America became an imperial power at the end of the 19th century, a status which soon saw it involved in a host of low-intensity conflicts in Central America and the Caribbean. The tactical character of this fighting was similar to that of several past and future conflicts. One observer wrote of the Nicaraguan interventions during the inter-war years:

Every tree, every thicket, every rock was a possible hiding place for a rifleman or a patriot spy. The invaders knew it and traveled only on known roads or in open fields, pistols or rifles ready to fire... Even so they were uneasy, for at any moment, without warning a fusilade came from different points...and when the North Americans reacted and counter-attacked, the tracks disappeared into the jungle where it was even more dangerous. After firing and killing their usual

⁶¹⁵Ibid., p. 124.

'tenths' of the gringos, they [the Sandinistas] retired in good order as silently as they had come.⁶¹⁶

During these so-called Banana Wars, the Marines acquired a reputation as tough counter-guerrilla fighters.⁶¹⁷ Despite the disadvantage of being usually viewed as policemen and agents of American imperial policy,⁶¹⁸ the troops adapted to their surroundings and, in particular, to the vicious rules of jungle warfare, becoming particularly skilled at patrolling.

Eventually, under such influential officers as 'Chesty' Puller, William A. Lee, Evans Carlson and others, the tactics, psychology and logistics of this demanding type of warfare became understood. The rigours of campaigning taught the Marines that the ideal patrol numbered about 20 men, and forced them to travel light with only enough rations for subsistence. The Nicaraguan campaign, unlike the previous bandit operations in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, had especially interesting foretastes of conflicts to come. One Marine, Robert Hogaboom, argued that Nicaragua was not winnable because the Sandinista insurgents merely had to retreat into one of the surrounding countries or into the hills. Hogaboom also touched upon the fundamental 'hearts and minds' aspect of counter-guerrilla operations:

You had to occupy the centers, you had to identify with the people, you had to make it to their advantage

⁶¹⁶Carleton Beals, Great Guerrilla Warriors, p. 95.

⁶¹⁷See biography by Burke Davis, Marine: The Life of Lt. Gen. Lewis B. (Chesty) Puller, USMC (ret).

⁶¹⁸Lester D. Langley, The Banana Wars: United States Intervention in the Caribbean 1898-1934, p. 212. See also Colonel Robert D. Heinl Jr., Soldiers of the Sea: The U.S. Marine Corps, 1775-1962, in which he discusses the role of the Marines during this period.

to work with you in that if they worked with you they could operate their coffee places, etc.⁶¹⁹

The Guardia Nacional

The Banana Wars, particularly the Nicaraguan campaign, offered the USMC and any others who would study the operational history, a number of lessons. It was apparent to the USMC that in counter-insurgency campaigning they could be usefully employed as the main force to engage guerrillas. Secondly, the Marines could form a training and leadership cadre which would help develop indigenous military or police forces. This, however, should not be perceived as employing Marines in a merely advisory capacity. Marines took on line, command and administrative responsibilities until nationals could replace them.⁶²⁰

The Marines appreciated the advantages of having combined units comprising Marines and for example, Nicaraguans. These units could combine the intimate knowledge of terrain that Nicaraguans had with the rigorous discipline and fire-power of the USMC. In this way Marine commanders were given an opportunity to break down cultural and language barriers while developing Marine leaders capable of commanding a bi-national force during complex military and civil operations. Furthermore, commanders discovered that such mixed patrols reinforced the morale of the local citizenry while underlining American commitment to the Nicaraguan

⁶¹⁹Ibid., p. 211.

⁶²⁰Larry E. Cable, Conflict Of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War, p. 107.

government.⁶²¹ Interestingly, the Marines, as the British later did in Malaya, argued for the employment of smaller tactical units with the emphasis on intelligence gathering and the avoidance of large ground-force operations. Larry E. Cable writes:

The marines favored small, mobile, independent patrols aggressively led and free of logistics constraints which could effectively hunt down and fix guerrilla units. In Nicaragua, the lack of a sufficient number of such patrols was specifically identified as a major reason for the failure to suppress Sandino. Even where small patrols did not fix and kill large numbers of guerrillas, they developed valuable intelligence which the marines properly assessed⁶²² as the centrality of successful counterinsurgency.

These tactics were at variance with army directives which were derived, for the most part, from its Philippine turn of the century experiences. Moreover, the Marines appear to have been psychologically prepared to undertake operations in the 'long term':

The marines eschewed large search and clear operations, noting that large operations invariably failed. The marines were psychologically prepared for protracted conflict, as such had been the nature of the Banana Wars.⁶²³

Langley notes that although the American forces could adapt to the demands of terrain and the type of warfare being waged, they failed politically because they lacked 'cultural sensibilities'.

They failed not as conquerors...but as rulers of conquered places. Striving to teach by example, they found it necessary to denigrate the cultural values of those whom they had come to save. Determined to implant a sense of community in the tropics, they mistakenly assumed that community values could be inculcated with sanitary measures or vocational education or a reformed military where soldiers from humble social origins

⁶²¹Ibid.

⁶²²Ibid., p. 108.

⁶²³Ibid.

learned to identify with "nation" instead of prominent politicians or families. Their presence, even when it meant a peaceful society and material advancement, stripped Caribbean peoples of their dignity and constituted an unspoken American judgement of Caribbean inferiority. Little wonder, then, that the occupied were so "ungrateful" for what Americans considered years of benign tutelage. But, then, Americans do not have in their epigrammatic repertory that old Spanish proverb that Mexicans long ago adopted: "The wine is bitter, but it's our wine."⁶²⁴

The tactical successes by the Marines were over-shadowed by subsequent low-intensity conflicts where the army's conventional orientation came to the fore and eventually dominated the fighting.

Greece 1945 - 1949

The first American involvement in post-World War II insurgencies occurred in Greece. This insurgency evolved from the guerrilla war waged by the Greek communist controlled People's Liberation Army (ELAS)⁶²⁵ which was reputed to be the most effective guerrilla force; formerly involved in resisting the German occupation. At war's end, the British had failed in their attempt to negotiate and enforce a cease-fire between the ELAS and the more right-wing guerrilla formations. The communists, upon the withdrawal of German forces in 1945, had attempted to grab power and in doing so precipitated a civil war. Eventually Britain, financially drained and militarily over-stretched, abandoned her intervention. The United States, motivated by the Truman Doctrine of containment of communism, moved in.

⁶²⁴Langley, op. cit., p. 223.

⁶²⁵ELAS was re-designated DAS as the new title for the communist guerrilla army led by Markos Vafiades. See the obituary of "Markos Vafiades", The Times, London, 25 February, 1992.

Guerrilla operations consisted of small, hard-hitting attacks on undefended villages and isolated police stations to gather supplies and weapons. The Greek government appeared to be helpless and in disarray. In early 1947, President Truman provided 300 million dollars in aid. In anticipation of this assistance, the Greek government attempted to secure its border by initiating a large sweep operation from central Greece to the Yugoslavian and Albanian border areas. Insurgent units, however, warned by their intelligence networks, prevented the Greeks from achieving their tactical aims of eliminating guerrilla strongholds and destroying units.

After the government offensive, its units withdrew into static locations and awaited American assistance. To facilitate the US assistance programme the Joint US Military and Planning Group (JUSMAPG) was formed. The responsibility of JUSMAPG included the planning and co-ordination of Greek operations, training and logistics. The inevitable occurred. The conduct of Greek military operations became the responsibility of JUSMAPG, and the American James Van Fleet assumed command of JUSMAPG in early 1948. He also became the defacto commander of the Greek National Army.⁶²⁶ These American military and political activities were said to have:

...introduced a sense of urgency quite foreign to the Greek government, general staff and army. JUSMAPG saw the Greek Civil War to be simply a war and, like any war, amenable to simple direct military resolution.⁶²⁷

⁶²⁶Cable, op. cit. p. 15.

⁶²⁷Ibid.

The importance of American material assistance soon became apparent during the battle of Konzita on 25 December, 1947. After a ground assault and an extended artillery attack by the guerrillas on government positions, it became apparent that no quick relief was to be expected. Five days later, relief columns, supported by tactical air and artillery, began clearing the surrounding areas of Konzita. The employment of tactical air support (tac air) and artillery, matched with US-supplied rapid-fire and automatic small arms, saved the day. From that point on, the Greeks adopted the American tactic of massed fire-power in their counter-guerrilla war.

The American planning group also used elite Greek commando groups known by their Greek initials LOK. Although the employment of such forces ran against the American anti-elitist sentiment the LOK were expanded to four commando groups totalling 2,000 men. In time, JUSMAPG came to realize that this small force was its most effective combat unit against the DAS guerrillas. Cable writes that "The LOK troops engaged in such intense and successful activity that they rapidly developed a high esprit de corps and offensive spirit."⁶²⁸ As with most elite units elsewhere, their effectiveness in combat became well known and in turn, the force began to be misused and, therefore, had to be preserved from squandering by conventional commanders. The units were:

Subject to abusive misuse by local commanders who wished to employ a certain winner rather than the less effective, nonelite GNA units, the LOK commandos suffered rapid attrition and JUSMAPG became their protector, carefully conserving this effective combat force by defining its missions in a limited fashion to

⁶²⁸Ibid., pp. 18-19.

raiding, deep penetration, patrolling and as an air mobile strategic reserve.⁶²⁹

The spring 1948 government offensive was fairly successful through the use of air-power and artillery, but it still did not destroy the guerrilla units in the Grammos mountains. It became clear that the Greek army did not have the aggressive professional leadership required to meet the DAS guerrilla challenge. JUSMAPG was forced to reassess the military situation. These same problems would come back to haunt the Americans two decades later in Vietnam: how to rebuild a field army while at the same time maintaining an offensive capability against an effective guerrilla force:

The overarching reason for the lack of Greek success was simply that it was nearly impossible to equip and train in American methods and doctrine an army which was simultaneously expected to perform effectively in sustained offensive combat against an able and motivated adversary. Whether the American error is seen as initiating premature offensives or, more charitably, as responding in the only way possible to the exigencies of the situation, the problem remains at heart the attempt to address two incompatible missions with the same small force.⁶³⁰

It also appears that the officers of JUSMAPG failed to realize that the American way of warfare was, technically and fundamentally, foreign to the Greek army, as it was to prove elsewhere in the years to come:

The American combined arms approach to combat, with its mixture of infantry, artillery and mechanized or armored formations, constitutes a challenge almost beyond belief to an army lacking completely the fundamentals for understanding this sophisticated array of communications, transportation and weapons technology.⁶³¹

⁶²⁹Ibid., p. 19.

⁶³⁰Ibid., p. 22.

⁶³¹Ibid., p. 23.

It is worth mentioning that the insurgents were viewed as Soviet Army auxiliaries by the Americans in Greece, as they firmly believed that Soviet military intervention was possible.⁶³² Furthermore, any nation-building programmes of civic aid and economic assistance were viewed, by the Americans, only as minor adjuncts to the overall military strategy. This was a partisan war, the solution, as the Americans saw it, would have to be found through the force of arms.⁶³³

The lesson drawn was that the regular Greek Army, trained as a conventional force, could effectively pursue a partisan war when given mobility and good tactical air support. In contrast to the British experience in Malaya, the Americans believed there was no need for elite units. Despite the LOK success, it was felt that they were not considered to be vital in the campaign:

There was no apparent requirement for specific, elite antipartisan units. Without high cross-country mobility capabilities, LOK and similar commando units had no unusual utility in reaction or pursuit roles. Their only definite mission, other than morale building, was in the long-range, deep penetration role. In this, they were seen as important but not vital.⁶³⁴

Therefore, the tactical doctrine of the US Army was deemed successful and "final victory could still be gained only by rather traditional ground operations, and the World War II

⁶³²Ibid., p. 26.

⁶³³Ibid.

⁶³⁴Ibid., p. 28.

experience in the European theater, remained a valid basis for postwar doctrinal development."⁶³⁵

The erroneous conclusion drawn by the US Army was that its doctrine and equipment, applied to a foreign army (a virtual 'mirror imaging'), produced a general purpose conventional formation which could successfully defeat a partisan or guerrilla force. It was the 'war winning' combination of mobility and massive tactical air and artillery fire-power which proved to be, in the minds of US Army officers, the panacea to fighting similar conflicts. In short, there was no need for changes to doctrine or organization. The American way of warfare was understood to be sound and, therefore, appropriate for fighting any new variation of conflict.⁶³⁶ It would appear that the utility and success in employing special forces, such as the LOK, was soon forgotten.

Korea 1948 - 1954

The Korean War's seemingly conventional nature was to reinforce, for military planners, the lessons drawn from the Greek Civil War. However, guerrilla activities orchestrated by the North Korean People's Army (NKPA), had been occurring since at least 1948. The objective of these actions was to topple the government of South Korea.⁶³⁷ In fact by 1950,

⁶³⁵ Major Robert A. Doughty, The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76, Combat Studies Institute, p. 2.

⁶³⁶ Cable, op. cit., p. 29.

⁶³⁷ David Rees (ed), The Korean War: History and Tactics, p. 11.

some 7,000 partisans were available to support NKPA forces when they invaded South Korea. Their activities forced the employment of nearly three Republic of Korea (ROK) divisions in counter-guerrilla operations. This left only five ROK divisions to meet the NKPA invasion.

The North Korean attack caught the ROK and their American advisors off guard. Faced with a conventional invasion, the allies had also to contend with an enemy in their rear. The guerrillas ambushed supply routes, attacked rear echelons and collected intelligence. Their importance increased as the battle lines stabilized. The United Nations Command was forced to allocate resources, including a number of US Army military police battalions, to combat the guerrillas.⁶³⁸

Later on, upon the entrance into the war of Communist Chinese Forces (CCF),⁶³⁹ the South Korean Labour Party (SKLP), a communist party organization supported by Kim Il Sung, soon evolved into a guerrilla force and was reorganized as the NKPA's 526th Army Unit (also known as the Partisan Guidance Bureau). This was a potent force, for their task was:

...to facilitate the southward movement of the NKPA/CCF units by agitprop, reconnaissance, sabotage and ambush. According to captured documents, the mission priorities were to drain ROK military and civilian manpower from the front areas concentrating on potential porters, great numbers of whom were necessary for operations in the rugged Korean interior, to destroy arms and equipment, to provide military intelligence related information, to cut arteries of communication and transportation, to attack rear echelon installations and to eliminate ROK local government leaders or opinion molders.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁸Cable, op. cit., p. 36.

⁶³⁹See Gerald H. Corr, The Chinese Red Army, p. 68.

⁶⁴⁰Cable, op cit., p. 37.

To deter these activities, American and ROK troops conducted ad hoc operations consisting mostly of conventional patrols. These patrolling activities did not have the intelligence required or the proper command, control and co-ordination necessary to make the operations effective. Consequently in January, 1951, the 1st Marine Division was assigned the counter-guerrilla role. A combination of normal search-and-clear operations enjoyed limited success. Escape-and-evasion techniques allowed the local partisan commander to withdraw most of his men. Methodical patrolling by the Marines cleared the remnants of guerrilla groups.

American experiences in anti-partisan operations in the Korean War confirmed the lessons of Greece and ensured the "utility of conventional infantry and combined arms techniques in suppressing the guerrilla threat."⁶⁴¹

Moreover, the Americans involved in counter-guerrilla operations at this time believed that the lack of well-trained conventional units and tactical and reconnaissance aircraft definitely hampered the operations of anti-partisan forces. The result of NKPA employment of guerrillas brought about the American consensus which:

...served to establish the true nature of the guerrilla threat: not simply adjuncts to a conventional force but the first sign of attack by a conventional force. Thus, the defeat of guerrillas took on a new saliency in the minds of American planners but there was no perceived need to change the basic operational priorities from those of the conventional employment of general purpose, high mobility forces in order to meet and defeat the hostile guerrillas in the field in set-piece battles to those of a more exotic format of combat.⁶⁴²

⁶⁴¹Ibid., p. 40.

⁶⁴²Ibid., p. 41.

Robert A. Doughty believes that the American army did not see any necessity for change despite the setbacks of the Korean War. He writes:

When the Korean War ended in July 1953, the official position was that no real changes in doctrine had occurred or had been necessary during the war.... One of the training bulletins of the Army Field Forces concluded, "The mass of material from Korea...reaffirms the soundness of US doctrine, tactics, techniques, organization, and equipment."⁶⁴³

This official position is misleading, however, as there were, in fact, a number of important changes in tactical doctrine dealing with the emphasis on fire-power and the strategy of attrition. These were maintained and developed up to and during Vietnam.

The Army had become accustomed to massive amounts of firepower which came at the expense of mobility... [furthermore the strategy] focused upon attrition at the expense of maneuver and its offensive spirit.⁶⁴⁴

In short, by the wake of the Korean War the Americans appeared to have substituted fire-power for strategy.

Post-Korea - Adapting to Nuclear War

Although there was some build up of NATO conventional forces after the Korean War, the serious expansion of American ground forces was not started until the 1960s. In the interim, nuclear weapons conveyed by naval or land based aircraft were deemed to be key to deterrence. John Foster Dulles wrote shortly after the Korean War:

The free world must devise a better strategy for its defense, based on its own special assets. Its assets include, especially, air and naval power and atomic

⁶⁴³ Doughty, op. cit., p. 12. Taken from Training Bulletin Number 8, Combat Information, Office, Chief of Army Field Forces, Fort Monroe, Va., 16 November, 1951, p. 1.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

weapons which are now available in a wide range, suitable not only for strategic bombing but also for extensive tactical use. The free world must make imaginative use of the deterrent capabilities of these new weapons and mobilities and exploit the full potential of collective security. Properly used, they can produce defensive power able to retaliate at once and effectively against any aggression.⁶⁴⁵

Field artillery with atomic capability and new army formations designed to operate on nuclear battlefields came into being during the decade of the 1950s. The advent of nuclear artillery and the portable 'Davy Crocket' tactical nuclear missile made the battlefield much more complicated, particularly in the area of command and control. The army, therefore, began preparing to fight in both conventional and nuclear environments. Although it supported the employment of nuclear weapons during the 1950s, the doctrinal innovations demanded by this type of war proved most unwieldy. New tactics required new equipment and more manpower. A series of army studies during the latter part of the decade provided a conceptual basis for the re-introduction of high-performance conventional forces. As the strategic direction shifted from nuclear to conventional war, the army was tasked to develop responses to a broad spectrum of conflicts.

It was this 'flexible response strategy,' the military "ability to respond to aggression at the appropriate level through the possession of a wide spectrum of conventional and nuclear forces,"⁶⁴⁶ that was carried into the Vietnam War.

⁶⁴⁵John Foster Dulles, "Policy For Security And Peace," Foreign Affairs, (April, 1954), p. 358.

⁶⁴⁶John Baylis, et al., Contemporary Strategy: Theories And Policies, p. 311.

The American military, and in particular the army, had to be prepared to engage in the whole spectrum of nuclear, conventional and unconventional conflicts.

Just as the Kennedy Administration was taking office, Nikita Khrushchev gave a major speech, focussing on the legitimacy of 'wars of national liberation.' This openly expressed support of what were often anti-American liberation movements, was perceived as an overt challenge to President Kennedy and his administration. This incident galvanized the Americans into a closer study of guerrilla and counter-guerrilla warfare and indeed popularized this type of conflict. The study of:

...guerrilla warfare became a great fad. High officials were inveighed to study Mao and Lin Piao. The President's personal interest in fighting guerrillas was well publicized, and the reading and writing of books on antiguerrilla warfare was encouraged....⁶⁴⁷

Halberstam writes that this challenge propelled the US Army Special Forces into the limelight. The communist instigators of revolution would be met by the new warriors of the Kennedy era. They were described as:

...a romantic group indeed, the U.S. Army Special Forces. They were all uncommon men, extraordinary physical specimens and intellectual Ph.D.s swinging from trees, speaking Russian and Chinese, eating snake meat and other fauna at night, springing counterambushes on unwary Asian ambushers who had read Mao and Giap....⁶⁴⁸

The weakness of America's flexible response strategy, however, was that it was not in keeping with the traditional American way of warfare. Critics have said that this American:

...strategy was based on incrementalism rather than on the proven military axiom of overwhelming firepower and

⁶⁴⁷ David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest. p. 152.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 154.

force at the point of decision. In Vietnam, it was argued, American military forces were increased and committed only gradually, allowing the enemy to readjust and respond at each phase of increased American involvement.⁶⁴⁹

Others criticized what was seen to be a faulty understanding of counter-insurgency operations. In fact, such a role was not reflected in either the structure or the posture of the US Army. It has been argued that the military failed to comprehend the character of guerrilla warfare. Some authors, such as Cable, felt that the seeds of defeat were sowed long before the Americans went into Vietnam:

The American Army was the incorrect instrument for fighting the conflict which had developed in South Vietnam. It was a force configured, equipped and trained according to a doctrine suitable for conventional warfare, or for warfare in the nuclear battlefield of Europe. The mechanical techniques of mobility, heavy firepower and sophisticated communications did not automatically endow the army with the necessary capabilities to successfully counter insurgent forces.... The American idea that guerrilla wars could be fought successfully by using what were essentially conventional forces, tactics and doctrine was plainly wrong and was not supportable from the historical record....⁶⁵⁰

The American military entered Vietnam armed with the highest order of military technology, backed by massive 'all source' fire-power and mobility. These advantages combined with total air and sea control would in the end 'defeat the enemy,' be he Vietcong or North Vietnamese Regular. For the most part, professional military men, both officers and enlisted, believed they would be victorious in their counter-insurgency mission. However, the understanding of guerrilla warfare appears still to have been sadly lacking even though, like President Kennedy, many had read the major

⁶⁴⁹Sarkesian, op. cit., p. 142.

⁶⁵⁰Cable, op. cit., pp. 282-283.

works on the subject and even completed courses on counter-insurgency.⁶⁵¹ The essential lesson still evaded them, that such warfare is a political, and not a military struggle. This vital aspect was not grasped. Two of the foremost critics of the US Army in Vietnam have cited the essentially political nature of this type of war and recognized, in turn, the total political innocence of those who fought it:

Unconventional warfare demanding exquisite control of political warfare, tailored professionally to its objects, was clearly beyond the capacity of young American unit commanders and their troops rapidly rotated in and out of the command structure. Little in their military training prepared Americans for this challenge. We remained essentially an army of amateurs. All levels of the Army in Vietnam were totally inexperienced in 'people's war,' if for no other reason than the rotation system which limited the vast bulk of the forces to thirteen months in-country with the same being true of officers at most levels. Clearly, in so short a period no great expertise could be developed in guerrilla warfare by either officers or enlisted men, however bravely they might fight. Bravery, at best could only play a minor role in success; political sophistication should have been a major part.⁶⁵²

Vietnam

The long involvement of the United States in Vietnam has been viewed by many as a political and military disaster. One critic wrote:

Vietnam was the first war America lost. After 200 years of priding itself as the champion of individualism and freedom, this great nation found its match in an unexpected adversary: a country of peasants and rice paddies. A country ravaged by years of continuous warfare, the direct result of colonialism. A creation of the Cold War divided into a communist North and a

⁶⁵¹Sarkesian, op. cit., p. 143.

⁶⁵²Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, Crisis In Command: Mismanagement in the Army, p. 80.

"democratic" South, struggling for national unification.⁶⁵³

Today, although much has been written regarding the war since the fall of Saigon in 1975, the debate remains clouded: was it a conventional war or an insurgency? The issue continues to be heatedly argued a quarter-century after United States Marines first landed in force at Danang. One writer, Peter M. Dunn, stated that:

In the United States, the Vietnam conflict has been variously described as a revolutionary/protracted war, a counter-insurgency, a conventional war or a limited war: all contain an element of truth, but none on its own provides a complete picture. What is apparent is that it was never a straightforward process of insurgents versus security forces, and this makes any study of American counter-insurgency techniques extremely difficult.⁶⁵⁴

The war still remains perplexing to the politician, student, soldier, policy-maker and citizen. Vietnam could not be explained, nor understood, nor fought in a simple 'conventional' way and, moreover, the enemy could not be defeated with only conventional forces.

The war conducted under the South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem remained an essentially Vietnamese conflict. However, after his death and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, the war became Americanized under Lyndon B. Johnson's administration. American forces were poured into South Vietnam. US ground forces took the offensive, and as the months and years passed, the casualties mounted. So did American disillusionment and frustration.

⁶⁵³ Martin Siberok, "Screening the Past," Montreal Mirror, 22 May - 11 June, 1987.

⁶⁵⁴ Peter M. Dunn, "The American Army: The Vietnam War, 1965-1973, in Ian F.W. Becket and John Pimlott (eds), Armed Forces and Modern Counter-Insurgency, p. 77.

The Tet offensive in 1968 and the rise of Richard Nixon to the Presidency brought the conflict full circle. Nixon came to power with the promise to reduce the American commitment. This promise was predicated on the capacity of the South Vietnamese to take over the war. One now spoke of 'Vietnamizing' the war.

As has been stated, the character of the war in Vietnam was complex, being an unconventional conflict utilizing unconventional tactics which was transformed into conventional war. Observers "were most confused by the political context of the conflict which included a mix of communism, nationalism, democracy, religion, personalism, colonialism, imperialism, and external forces."⁶⁵⁵ This situation was even more complex as the Americans were often seen as "intruders who simply replaced the French colonial troops."⁶⁵⁶ Therefore, although the Americans could operate militarily, they had insufficient control in the political arena where the key to victory lay.

America Enters The Fray

Although involved previously with small advisor groups, by 1963, 23,000 US personnel were employed as advisors. Then, on 2 August, 1964, the destroyer U.S.S. Maddox, on an intelligence-gathering patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin, reported that she was exchanging fire with three North Vietnamese

⁶⁵⁵Sarkesian, op. cit., p. 195.

⁶⁵⁶Ibid.

torpedo boats. Later the Maddox reported that she had repelled this attack and by 4 August, now joined by the U.S.S. Turner Joy, she resumed her intelligence-gathering patrol. A further attack was reported two nights later. In response, the United States Senate passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution on 7 August, 1964⁶⁵⁷ empowering President Johnson to use American military power against communist aggression as he deemed necessary. Attacks on US military personnel and installations and later, in 1965, the assault on the American base at Pleiku caused a shift in the US role from that of an advisor to that of an active participant. Bombing attacks on the North and the arrival of 'expeditionary' forces in that year, demonstrated American military and political resolve. America's role expanded to encompass 'active ground combat.' The inability of the South Vietnamese government to cope with the war, as well as its historic political instability, brought the US to act decisively. Formally, the Johnson administration justified its actions as honouring commitments to an ally. It was asserted that the communists must be halted; the independence of South Vietnam was at stake.⁶⁵⁸

On 9 February, 1965, President Johnson committed a two battalion strong Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) to Da

⁶⁵⁷ Gabriel Kolko, Anatomy Of a War: Vietnam, The United States, And The Modern Historical Experience, pp. 122-125. This incident has been 'suspected' of being orchestrated by the American authorities who, at this time, were seeking a plausible excuse to become more fully involved in this conflict.

⁶⁵⁸ Herbert Y. Schandler, "America and Vietnam: The Failure Of Strategy," in Ronald Haycock, (ed), Regular Armies And Insurgency, pp. 84-85.

Nang. The communists by this time had entered Phase II and were moving towards Phase III of Mao Tse Tung's three phase strategy on revolution (the destruction of the enemy).⁶⁵⁹

Both the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC) had expanded from employing sabotage and terrorism to executing successful attacks on South Vietnamese forces in conventional battles. Deployment of American ground forces came at a critical point in the military situation in South Vietnam.

It has been argued:

...that by early 1965 the enemy had reinforced his units in Vietnam to the point of being able to move almost at will against major population areas. In fact, it looked as if the North Vietnamese Army were about to cut the country in two, right across the middle. It is also well known that the commitment of U.S. Forces stemmed the tide....⁶⁶⁰

As the ground-force build up carried into 1966, American forces began extensive conventional combat operations, employing brigade or divisional-sized units against the NVA and VC. Tactically these operations were aimed at discovering where the communists were and inflicting as many casualties as possible. In military parlance this was to 'find, fix and destroy.' This tactic of 'search and destroy,' later known more innocuously as 'search and clear,' became the principle counter-insurgency tactic. This came from the realization that:

With Allied ground forces restricted to the borders of South Vietnam, the only feasible strategy was to try

⁶⁵⁹ See Mao Tse-Tung, On Guerrilla Warfare, translated by Samuel B. Griffith, p. 19. "Phase I (organization, consolidation, and preservation) and Phase II (progressive expansion) comes Phase III: decision, or destruction of the enemy. During this period a significant percentage of the active guerrilla force completes its gradual transformation into an orthodox establishment capable of engaging the enemy in decisive battles."

⁶⁶⁰ Lieutenant General John J. Tolson, Airmobility In Vietnam: Helicopter Warfare in Southeast Asia, p. 83.

to kill North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers faster than they could be replaced. In Westmoreland's own words, written in August 1966, the conflict in South Vietnam had evolved into "a protracted war of attrition."⁶⁶¹

William C. Westmoreland predicated this strategy on the politics of the war. "The U.S. military strategy employed in Vietnam, dictated by political decisions, was essentially that of a war of attrition."⁶⁶² He continues:

In any case, what alternative was there to a war of attrition? A ground invasion of North Vietnam was out, for the U.S. national policy was not to conquer North Vietnam but to eliminate the insurgency inside South Vietnam, and President Johnson had stated publicly that he would not "broaden" the war.⁶⁶³

President Johnson's objective then was not to 'win' a war in the traditional sense, but rather a defensive strategy, leaving the initiative to the North Vietnamese. Schandler argues that the objective was:

...to convince the North Vietnamese (and their Soviet and Chinese sponsors) that the cost of continuing the war in South Vietnam would be, over time, prohibitive to them and that they could not succeed. In actuality, however, there was no clear conception as to when this elusive psychological goal would be achieved. The President's strategy, then, was defensive in nature and, in effect, left the decision as to when to end the war in the hands of North Vietnam.⁶⁶⁴

This strategy obviously underestimated the will of North Vietnam's political leaders to pursue their political and military aims in the long term.

⁶⁶¹Dave Richard Palmer, Summons Of The Trumpet: A History Of The Vietnam War From A Military Man's Viewpoint, p. 147.

⁶⁶²General William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, p. 198.

⁶⁶³Ibid. See also Chaplain (Col) Cecil B. Currey, "Preparing For The Past," Military Review, (January, 1989), pp. 2-13.

⁶⁶⁴Schandler, op. cit., p. 85.

Notwithstanding the tactics employed, the functional purpose of the American forces continued to be the destruction of the enemy. The conducting of pacification operations, developing the loyalty of the South Vietnamese citizenry towards their government, and performing civil operations did not receive the same emphasis as 'making contact with the enemy.' The one exception was that of the United States Marine Corps (USMC) which, on arrival, embarked upon a series of successful pacification measures. Fighting guerrillas was not new to the corps. They had, much earlier, produced a Small Wars Manual⁶⁶⁵ which stated:

In small wars, tolerance, sympathy, and kindness should be the keynote of our relationship with the mass of population.... The purpose should always be to restore normal government....and to establish peace, order, and security....⁶⁶⁶

In Vietnam, the USMC began the integration of a squad of Marines into a South Vietnamese Popular Forces (PF) platoon which was then called a 'joint-action company.' These were "patterned along the lines of the British companies used in Malaya during the 1950s."⁶⁶⁷ Westmoreland noted:

In what may be called a pacification approach to anti-insurgency warfare, the marines achieved some noteworthy results, particularly with one of the more ingenious innovations developed in South Vietnam, the Combined Action Platoon. Composed of marine volunteers and Vietnamese militia, the platoon would move into a village and stay, getting to know the people, winning their trust,⁶⁶⁸ and working closely on civic action projects.

⁶⁶⁵See U.S. Marine Corps, Small Wars Manual.

⁶⁶⁶Ibid., p. I-32.

⁶⁶⁷U.S. Government Printing Office, Jack Shulimson and Major Charles M. Johnson, U.S. Marines In Vietnam: The Landing And The Buildup, pp. 134.

⁶⁶⁸Westmoreland, op. cit., p. 216. See also Tim Page
(Footnote Continued)

Not only were the Marines aware of the importance of winning hearts and minds but they viewed the war differently from the army. In September, 1965, Marine General Victor H. Krulak stated, "'the Marines have never felt that the war stands to be won by the grand maneuvers of large forces, by brilliant marshalship in the Tannenberg or Chancellorsville image,' but rather in the villages."⁶⁶⁹

As in other counter-insurgency situations, the effectiveness of joint-action forces depended upon the tact and resourcefulness of the Marines themselves. In particular, it depended upon the young squad leaders who, as the platoon commanders, had to develop and maintain good personal and professional relations with the local populace, subordinates and village chiefs. The tasks of the combined forces lay in the traditional counter-guerrilla techniques of maintaining security, developing a counter-intelligence capability while at all times developing the good will and loyalty of the people.⁶⁷⁰ In turn, the Vietnamese taught the young Marines about their language and local customs. The trust that developed was soon rewarded by information regarding the VC who were operating in the area.⁶⁷¹

The Marine Corps' experiences and views clashed with those of the US Army's, even though the latter also used the buzz word counter-insurgency. The US Army continued to be:

(Footnote Continued)
and John Pimlott (eds), Nam: The Vietnam Experience 1965-75, p. 12.

⁶⁶⁹Shulimson and Johnson, op. cit., p. 146.

⁶⁷⁰Ibid., p. 135.

⁶⁷¹Ibid.

...conventionally postured and based on a military professionalism resting on a conventional mind set. Moreover, the enemy evolved into a highly mobile, well-armed, battle-wise opponent.⁶⁷²

In contrast to the Marines, the army felt that large-scale conventional operations were the key to successful counter-insurgency. One critic of the US tactical application of conventional means in this type of conflict has commented:

Mass application of firepower, as in Korea and World War II, was felt to be the most efficient method of generating an enemy body count while minimizing U.S. casualties. Large search-and-destroy sweeps were carried out in an attempt to find the enemy. When guerrillas were located, the infantry took cover while massive firepower support attempted to destroy the insurgents. As General Depuy noted, if 'you just wanted to analyze what happened in Vietnam you'd say the infantry found the enemy and the artillery and the air killed the enemy.' When General Westmoreland was asked at a press conference what the answer to insurgency was, his reply was one word: 'Firepower.'⁶⁷³

The character of the war was different in each of the geographical (corps) responsibility areas. In the I Corps area south of the de-militarized zone (DMZ) the conflict consisted primarily of conventional actions between US forces and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units. Here the NVA operated with all supporting arms except air and naval gunfire support. This was where the North Vietnamese Regulars fought in battalion formations and could quickly withdraw across the DMZ. In the II Corps area of Central Vietnam the struggle consisted of fighting between NVA and US forces -- but oscillated between conventional and unconventional war. In

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⁶⁷²Sarkesian, op. cit., p. 209. See also Charles B. MacDonald, "A US strategy to stem the Communist tide," pp. 96-105, in Ray Bonds, (ed), The Vietnam War: The illustrated history of the conflict in Southeast Asia, and Andrew F. Krepinevich, The Army and Vietnam, pp. 172-177.

⁶⁷³Krepinevich, op. cit., p. 197.

the III Corps area, around the capital of Saigon, the war focussed on the VC and US ground forces and consisted of small unit actions; tunnel warfare and ambush tactics.⁶⁷⁴ In the Delta area (IV Corps) the conflict remained unconventional in nature. Therefore, in general, conventional operations more or less dominated the northern areas while traditional insurgency operations were the rule in the southern portions of South Vietnam.⁶⁷⁵

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The variety of combat situations, as well as the enemy forces, encountered from one corps area to another caused confusion for those trying to produce a coherent plan to achieve victory. There was no panacea. Moreover, the experiences of officers fighting the war differed in accordance with their personal experiences in their areas of operation, which resulted in conflicting views on how to fight the war.

⁶⁷⁴Tom Mangold and John Penycate, The Tunnels of Cu Chi, p. 64. According to the authors, "Without air power or artillery, upon which the Americans relied, the Viet Cong resorted to ambush, hit-and-run attacks, and close-in fighting - 'grabbing the enemy by the belt'; fighting close to the Americans protected them from air strikes or shelling."

⁶⁷⁵Lieutenant Colonel James R. Ward, "Vietnam: Insurgency or War," Military Review, (January, 1989), p. 17. Ward argues that, "Americans who served in Vietnam with US forces that were largely targeted against NVA units never had the opportunity to see how powerful and pervasive the influence of the Vietcong was in most of the rural areas of South Vietnam, particularly prior to Tet of 1968. It was easy for them to misinterpret the nature of the war...and to underestimate the importance of the Vietcong insurgency in Hanoi's strategy. Americans involved in pacification or serving in the Delta, on the other hand, saw the widespread impact of the Vietcong and little of the threat posed by the NVA."

Tet - The Turning Point

American troop commitments increased during 1967-1968 and peace initiatives began. The US government and the military were generally optimistic. The South Vietnamese political scene seemed to be stabilizing. Military operations conducted by US and South Vietnamese forces were believed to be eroding the ability of the VC and NVA to operate effectively in South Vietnam. The 1968 Tet offensive changed those perceptions forever. Tet was viewed as the third phase of Mao Tse Tung's strategy, its objective to destroy the enemy by all-out attack. Although a military failure, the communist offensive had a devastating psychological effect on the Americans. It was a major political and propaganda victory for the communists. Gabriel Kolko argues:

By 1968 the Vietnam War had become much more difficult to analyze, for the very process of protracted conflict had made it not only a military struggle but one in which the political, economic, and ideological and human domains became increasingly crucial. Of all the factors, none alone was decisive, but their growing interactions were the raw materials that would shape the final outcome of the war.

For the United States, Tet was a long-postponed confrontation with reality; it had been hypnotized until then by its own illusions, desires, and needs. The belated realization that it had military tactics and technology but no viable military strategy consistent with its domestic and international priorities made Tet the turning point in the administration's calculations.⁶⁷⁶

America Frustrated

For all their strength, mobility and fire-power, it was not the US forces, but the NVA and VC, who controlled the

⁶⁷⁶Kolko, op. cit., p. 334. See also Mark Perry, "The Impact of Tet," in Page and Pimlott, op. cit., pp. 376-379.

countryside. The assault on the US Embassy in Saigon during Tet brought home to the American people that they had been misled. They were shattered and disillusioned to find that the extensive American efforts had been for naught.

Tactically, in straight conventional 'stand-up' operations, America would ultimately emerge as the victor of the engagement. However, unknown to the field soldier or to his commander was the fact that the endless number of battles would be only incidental to the outcome. The frustrations were very real to the combat soldier as Frederick Downs who, as a platoon commander, commented:

We would fight and bleed to take ground that the dinks [VC] would pull away from after they had exacted their toll. We always left afterward so they could always come back if they liked that particular place.

The American strategy was to draw them into a fight so we could use our superior firepower to destroy them. To win a battle, we had to kill them. For them to win, all they had to do was survive.⁶⁷⁷

The post-Tet period witnessed the emergence of the American policy of Vietnamization⁶⁷⁸ which was aimed at increasing the combat-effectiveness of the South Vietnamese forces. More important, it marked the beginning of America's withdrawal from ground combat.

⁶⁷⁷ Frederick Downs, The Killing Zone, p. 113. See also Robert J. Graham, "Vietnam: An Infantryman's View Of Our Failure," Military Affairs, (July, 1984), pp. 133-139 and James Martin Davis, "Vietnam: What It Was Really Like," Military Review, (January, 1989), pp. 34-44.

⁶⁷⁸ See Dr. Jeffrey J. Clarke, "Vietnamization: the south must save itself," in Bonds, op. cit., pp. 172-181.

Lessons Learned

Although there were several types of wars being fought in the various areas of South Vietnam, the thrust of the war followed the pattern of classical revolutionary warfare. The VC continued to function as peasants during the day and guerrillas at night. The character of the war remained that of raids, selective assassination and, under certain conditions, conventionally executed operations by the NVA and VC against American and South Vietnamese forces. The tactics of hit-and-run were immensely costly and frustrating for the Americans, as the enemy would always fade away. In addition the Viet Cong completely dominated the countryside at night.

To counter the communists, the Americans had basically fought a conventional war for which it was best trained and equipped. In the end, as noted by General George Keegan, "We trained an army and we trained an air force. Wrong equipment, wrong tactics, maybe, wrong doctrines but we produced an army."⁶⁷⁹ American failure was inevitable. The American victories over VC and NVA units could not be translated into political gains as the political and military objectives were pursued on two different planes. As American forces left a 'cleared' area, the NVA and VC continued to sustain themselves from rural populations. The objectives of winning hearts and minds, pacification and internal development did not receive the needed attention and were not integrated. American civic aid programmes were fragmented,

⁶⁷⁹ W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzell (eds), The Lessons of Vietnam, p. 243.

lacked effective planning and were, for the most part, poorly carried out.⁶⁸⁰ As Henry Kissinger wrote:

We have learned important lessons from the tragedy of Indochina -- most importantly that outside effort can only supplement, but not create, local efforts and local will to resist... And there is no question that popular will and social justice are, in the last analysis, the essential underpinning of resistance to subversion and external challenge.⁶⁸¹

For those believers in American military superiority, the end of the war came as a shock. The realization set in that military power at the exclusion of social and political considerations lead to tactics that invite eventual defeat. The conversation between Harry G. Summers and Colonel Tu in Hanoi on 25 April, 1975, aptly illustrates this fact:

"You know you never defeated us on the battlefield," said the American colonel.

The North Vietnamese colonel pondered this remark a moment. "That may be so," he replied, "but it is also irrelevant."⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰Schandler, op. cit., p. 94.

⁶⁸¹U.S. Department of State, "Department of State Bulletin," Vol. 73, pp. 3-4. Taken from Schandler, op. cit., p. 95.

⁶⁸²Harry G. Summers, On Strategy: A Critical Analysis Of The Vietnam War, p. 21.

Section II

Historical Overview of US Special Forces

Francis J. Kelly has argued the following:

An elite group has always appeared within the Army during every war in which the United States has been engaged. The Minutemen in the Revolution, the Cavalry in the Civil War, the Rough Riders in Cuba, the Lafayette Escadrille in World War I, the Rangers in World War II, and the Helicopter Pioneers in Korea -- always some group has captured the imagination of the American public and has embodied the national ideals of the American fighting man.⁶⁸³

In Vietnam it was the Special Forces soldier. The official birth of the US Special Forces, or the 'Green Berets', occurred in 1952. However, their lineage goes back to World War II, where military units functioned with guerrilla organizations under the auspices of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).⁶⁸⁴ The OSS, which lasted from 1942 to 1945, was headed by General William J. (Wild Bill) Donovan. As often happens with specialist organizations, the OSS drew strong opposition from the other military services. Had it not been for a close friendship between Donovan and President Roosevelt, the OSS would probably not have survived. As with other intelligence and special operations organizations, the OSS attracted a number of eccentrics and adventurers which included a spectrum of highly talented individuals. During the short life span of the OSS it depended heavily on the knowledge of its British counterparts, the Special Operations

⁶⁸³ Colonel Francis J. Kelly, U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971, Department of the Army, p. 160.

⁶⁸⁴ see Edward Hymoff, The OSS In World War II and Bradley F. Smith, The Shadow Warriors: O.S.S. and the Origins of the C.I.A.

Executive (SOE).⁶⁸⁵ It is from these first intimate days that the tasks of the future special forces would evolve.

There were two noteworthy operations which were run jointly by the SOE and the OSS in Europe. These were known as the 'Jedburghs' and the Operational Groups (OGs). A Jedburgh team was quintessentially, international, and consisted of three personnel; an American or British officer, a Dutch, French or Belgian officer and a radio operator. These teams were sent to join the underground and provide it with a vital link to the Allies. A total of some 87 teams were parachuted behind the German lines to co-ordinate airdrops of weapons and supplies and provide assistance in the targetting of operations while the Allies advanced through Europe.

The Operational Groups (OGs) consisted of approximately 15 members each and were employed for specific direct-action operations such as reconnaissance, intelligence gathering, ambushing convoys, destroying bridges and the like. The effectiveness of the OGs was underlined in a report by Donovan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff which claimed that only seven OG members were killed in action and six wounded in action, while 19 OG teams had killed or wounded a total of 928 Germans.⁶⁸⁶

The OSS operations in Europe and in the Far East were partly eclipsed by the proportions of a large conventional war. Nevertheless, the OSS gained valuable experience in special

⁶⁸⁵Smith, op. cit., pp. 170-173.

⁶⁸⁶Charles M. Simpson III, Inside The Green Berets: The First Thirty Years, p. 12.

operations, psychological warfare, intelligence gathering, and the requirements for dealing with indigenous guerrilla and partisan forces. This experience, despite the efforts of Donovan to keep the OSS intact in the post-war period, was largely lost. For the most part the veterans of the OSS returned to civilian life, although over the next few years many joined the new Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). With the demise of the OSS, a highly talented, somewhat eccentric organization left the American forces, taking with them extensive experience in guerrilla operations. However, it did not take long before this gap would be addressed.

After World War II, there was a massive reduction in army strength. As usual in a peacetime force, an anti-elitist sentiment sprung up against special forces of any type. The small elite units of the OSS had performed remarkably well, but within the American army, elite units from out of the mainstream (cavalry, infantry, artillery), were viewed with suspicion. The combat arms saw themselves as elites and were not prepared to compete for scarce resources and promotions with any new classification, branch or corps, particularly when the army was being reduced in strength. Studies of unconventional operations "were considered peripheral to the major thrust of military professionalism. Moreover, career success was (and is) primarily through the standard command and staff ladder."⁶⁸⁷ This remains so today. The strategy developed after the Korean War relied on nuclear weapons and

⁶⁸⁷Sam C. Sarkesian, "The American Response To Low-Intensity Conflict: The Formative Period," in David Charters and Maurice Tugwell, Armies in Low-Intensity Conflict: A Comparative Study of Institutional Adaptation to New Forms of Warfare, p. 37.

their delivery systems. These weapons, particularly the strategic bomber, were viewed as reducing the importance of ground forces. The air force bombers and the navy's carrier-based aircraft were now the pre-eminent elements in the national defence posture.

Due to the persistence of a few unconventional thinkers, some of the skills and attributes of the OSS were maintained, albeit at a low level within the very conventionally-minded halls of the Pentagon establishment. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, two alarming developments had to be faced by defence planners. First, was the growing pressure felt by the newly-formed NATO alliance due to the massive Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe, which remained intact after the end of the war. Secondly, the Eisenhower administration would not accept the apparent lesson of the Korean War; which underlined that the threat to employ the atomic bomb appeared to be neither politically or militarily feasible and that the United States should prepare for limited conflicts. Instead, the administration maintained its nuclear deterrence strategy. Korea was, therefore, generally perceived by American strategists as an anomaly, due, in part, to the United States' failure to state, clearly, its intention to defend South Korea with military force.⁶⁸⁸ American strategists believed that the US must make clear, to all concerned, its intention to honour its commitments, if necessary, with nuclear force.

⁶⁸⁸This issue is discussed at several points in Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution Of Nuclear Strategy.

To compound the situation, America's nuclear monopoly had been broken in 1949 by the Soviet Union, and US conventional strength seemed also to lag behind that of the Soviet Union, most particularly in the crucial area of Central Europe. Furthermore, the strategic and tactical situation became more acute as intelligence indicators pointed to an imminent Soviet attack no later than 1954.⁶⁸⁹ US Army planners were most anxious to find any and all avenues which would give the US forces, present in Europe, greater 'combat value.' Some planners believed that concepts and methods of guerrilla warfare concepts could be a possible 'force equalizer' in the conventional equation. As with guerrilla and partisan operations executed by the OSS and SOE organizations in World War II, "The captive peoples of Eastern Europe were the target of American hopes to neutralize at least some of Stalin's divisions."⁶⁹⁰

Korea - A Requirement for an Unconventional Warfare Capability

As already mentioned, communist guerrillas harassed American and UN forces in Korea. The UN forces wanted to do the same against the North Korean invaders, unfortunately the Americans had no organized unit available to fulfil the guerrilla mission. The OSS had been gone for some years, the CIA had no integral capability to perform unconventional warfare (UW), and the Special Forces had not yet been

⁶⁸⁹Simpson, op. cit., p. 15.

⁶⁹⁰Ibid.

created. To bridge this 'guerrilla gap' it was necessary to form ad hoc units to meet UW requirements.

To plan for the behind-the-lines guerrilla missions in North Korea, a staff officer was required. Russell Volckmann was selected. Volckmann, as a Lieutenant-Colonel in northern Luzon during the 1941-1945 war, had equipped, trained and commanded a force of five regiments of Filipinos against the Japanese and was well aware of the capability and potential of guerrilla operations. When Volckmann reached General MacArthur's Tokyo headquarters he discovered that there were no plans, no logistical support and no training syllabus. In short, his task of planning and conducting behind-the-lines operations in North Korea had to start from nothing. To complicate matters, the job had only reached the planning stage when Volckmann was returned to the United States to recover from an illness. His successors did form a guerrilla organization, but to this day the designations, number and combat effectiveness of these units and their operations remain vague. Some of the better-known designations were the 8240th Army Unit, the 8,157th Special Operations Detachment, and UNPIK (United Nations Partisan Infantry Korea). The combat effectiveness of these units were considered 'ineffectual' to 'amateurish' and were noted for their inadequate planning. The consensus was that the failure to employ American guerrilla units was "due to [the] lack of professional expertise"⁶⁹¹ up and down the troop, command and staff chain.

⁶⁹¹Ibid.

To compound this problem in Korea, the recently formed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) rapidly organized its own unconventional warfare capability commanded by a military officer seconded to the agency. The Joint Advisory Commission Korea (JACK) was to undertake a spectrum of unconventional warfare activities. Paddock writes that the CIA activities:

...ran the gamut from covert intelligence to unconventional warfare. The CIA placed agents to collect intelligence and assist downed pilots in escape and evasion. It conducted sabotage and small boat patrols for tactical information on both the east and west coasts. It organized indigenous forces to remain behind for shallow penetration patrolling to augment combat patrolling and gain information for large tactical operations. It conducted some guerrilla warfare. As one might expect, the variety of unconventional warfare activities engaged in by both the CIA and the services resulted in some conflicting and overlapping interests.⁶⁹²

To address this operational conflict, and to deal with the evident lack of co-ordination between the military and the CIA, a new organization entitled Covert, Clandestine and Related Activities Korea (CCRAK) was formed in 1951. As CCRAK's organization consisted of personnel from the CIA and the military, their loyalties remained with their career service. Organizationally CCRAK lacked adequate staff planning and was deficient in the skills of unconventional warfare. Moreover, the CIA elements involved emphasized intelligence operations instead of guerrilla action. Consequently, the constant bureaucratic infighting appears to have destroyed any potential for successful operations behind

⁶⁹² Alfred H. Paddock, U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins: Psychological and Unconventional Warfare, 1941-1952, p. 103.

enemy lines.⁶⁹³ There continued to be no effective organization to correct the duplication of unconventional warfare initiatives during the Korean War. Even though later in the conflict, trained special forces personnel arrived, they were too few to make any operational impact upon the amateurish level of UW activities. This created little enthusiasm for having a UW capability and reinforced the perception that unconventional warfare was just an adjunct of conventional operations. These early 'experiments' did demonstrate to all those involved in UW and special operations, except for the conservative and rigidly conventional military minds, that if a nation wants to execute successful special operations, the organization, people and equipment must be in place prior to war.⁶⁹⁴

It was apparent that unconventional warfare forces needed a home, a focus and selected individuals to foster attention to this type of warfare. Fortunately, there was such a place and it was in the Pentagon. Within the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare (OCPW), there was a small special operations branch commanded by General Robert McClure, an expert in psychological operations. In this section, McClure brought together a cadre of selected officers who had wide-ranging wartime experience in the various aspects of guerrilla warfare and special operations.

The group included Volckmann, Wendell Fertig, who had been a guerrilla leader in the Philippines; Aaron Bank, who had been

⁶⁹³Ibid., pp. 103-107.

⁶⁹⁴Simpson, op. cit., p. 16.

with the OSS in France and Indochina; Joe Waters, who had served with the OSS and in the famous Merrill's Marauders;⁶⁹⁵ and Robert McDowell, who had OSS experience in Yugoslavia.⁶⁹⁶

The initial bureaucratic successes of the OCPW and its integral branches were predicated solely upon the experiences and professionalism of the cadre of officers selected:

Bank also makes clear that he and Volckmann based their plans for the Army's unconventional warfare capability on their World War II experiences with the Philippine guerrillas and OSS, and that Special Forces units were developed "in the OSS pattern of tiny units with the prime mission of developing, training, and equipping the guerrilla potential deep in enemy territory."⁶⁹⁷

The staff studies and organizational and operational character that evolved were a function of historical research into resistance movements, as well as the extensive operational experience of those on staff.⁶⁹⁸

The Misperception of the SF Role

The Special Forces did not evolve from the Rangers (American equivalent of the British Commandos) nor did they stem from the combined Canadian-American 1st Special Service Force (1SSF). The confusion over the origin of the Special Forces has caused continuing problems in the overall formulation of

⁶⁹⁵Merrill's Marauders -- formally known as the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional). This was a 3,000-man force under the command of Colonel, later Major-General Frank Merrill. This force was assigned to Orde Wingate's command for behind-the-lines operations in Burma. See Charlton Ogburn, Jr., The Marauders and Shelford Bidwell, The Chindit War: Stilwell, Wingate, and the Campaign in Burma: 1944, pp. 82-86.

⁶⁹⁶Simpson, op. cit., p. 16.

⁶⁹⁷Paddock, op. cit., p. 119.

⁶⁹⁸Ibid.

policy for, and organization of, these troops. This evolution deserves further discussion.

During the post-war era, the US Army undertook a number of analytical studies regarding the establishment of a UW capability and various aspects of unconventional operations. These studies covered a broad spectrum of staff options ranging from that of creating airborne reconnaissance units (ARU) to incorporating courses on special operations, espionage and guerrilla warfare into the US Army syllabus. These initiatives strongly indicated that the army itself was unsure of differences between the Rangers and the Special Forces. For the most part the army wanted simply to:

...integrate OSS experience in World War II and Ranger/Commando missions. "From an 'OSS point of view,' this organizational concept should have been unacceptable. It attempted to lump together missions and capabilities of Rangers and Commandos with those of Special Operations and Operational Group elements of the OSS. It combined the tactical with the strategic." Upon close examination, these studies revealed a misunderstanding of unconventional warfare and conceptual confusion over the distinction between Ranger and Commando type operations, which were tactical in nature -- the quick strike variant, and long-term OSS-type activities which had been carried over to the post-war era, albeit in a different guise.⁶⁹⁹

Although Volckmann, Banks and other drafters of the UW tasks were clear on the delineation of roles between the Rangers (tactical missions) and those of Special Forces (strategic missions) there is sufficient evidence to show that the extremely controversial⁷⁰⁰ concepts for the organization and role of Special Forces were difficult to formulate and make concrete. This experience is not unlike the developmental

⁶⁹⁹Sarkesian, "The American Response to...., op. cit., p. 36.

⁷⁰⁰Paddock, op. cit., p. 119.

pains of the British Special Air Service in the immediate post-war years and like the SAS a task was quickly found. The strategic mission for those involved in the staff planning of special operations soon became clear:

...to develop a concept and guerrilla warfare plans for the expected World War III, which in the immediate postwar years seemed all but inevitable. Thus was born, among other plans, one dubbed 'Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer,' a concept for guerrilla interdiction of Russian reinforcements moving to the front in central Europe.⁷⁰¹

Although Special Operations had a number of critics, it did have a few select and influential supporters including the then Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins. At the same time, General McClure had access to the White House through a wartime friend, C.D. Johnson, who was a special advisor to President Eisenhower. Due to these influential supporters, 2,500 personnel were made available for a UW programme.⁷⁰² Although the Special Forces had initially survived the bureaucratic infighting within the US Army they would still confront serious opposition from the other American services and the successor of the OSS, the CIA.

A Home for the Special Forces

The Special Forces had been born and now had a home at Fort Bragg, where, in 1952, General McClure established a Psychological Warfare Centre (PWC). It was here, under the PWC, that the Special Forces were first placed, despite the objections of such officers as Volckmann who felt:

⁷⁰¹Simpson, op. cit., p. 16.

⁷⁰²Ibid.

...there was a stigma connected with Psychological Warfare that we didn't care to rub off on Special Forces. Behind-the-lines operations and the 'dirty tricks' game had enough opposition amongst conventional military minds without adding additional problems.⁷⁰³

The pervasive view in the army was that Psychological Warfare had a legitimate role; the Special Forces, for the most part, did not.

The Beginning - 10th Special Forces Group - Fort Bragg

In the summer of 1952, the 10th Special Forces Group was activated at Fort Bragg under Colonel Aaron Bank. Its operational mission was to exploit the resistance potential behind the Iron Curtain. Should war start, the Group was expected to make clandestine contact with resistance forces. Following such contact, Special Forces units would be infiltrated to aid the resistance forces, helping organize, train, advise and assist the guerrillas. They would also attempt to co-ordinate guerrilla activity within the overall allied war effort.

The 10th Special Forces Group was organized according to the OSS experiences in World War II, from where the operational team concept was drawn. The operational A Team (better known as FA Team) consisted of two officers and 13 enlisted men and reported to an FB Team. The FB Team was 'task organized' to control two 'plus' teams in a particular area of operation. The next command layer consisted of an FC Team assigned to control two or more teams in a single country. This command organization would later be replaced by a Special Forces (SF)

⁷⁰³Ibid., p. 20.

Company headquarters. Superimposed upon the FC Team, the FD Team was responsible for controlling the operations of Special Forces teams in two or more countries.

The Special Forces Soldier

From the beginning of the modern Special Forces, each FA Team member was a highly trained volunteer cross-trained in a range of military skills. As Bank emphasizes, the training:

...program covered all aspects of unconventional warfare. In this spectrum were all the subjects in the Jedburgh curriculum: organization of resistance movements and the operation of their component networks; agent training, to include espionage, sabotage (railroad, highway, marine, telecommunication) and power (electric); security; escape and evasion; guerrilla warfare, which in itself is a comprehensive area, including not only organization, tactics, and logistics, but specialized demolitions; codes and radio communication; survival, the Fairbairn method⁷⁰⁴ of hand-to-hand combat; and instinctive firing.

The recruiting pamphlet of this period which describes the numerous qualities sought in a Special Forces volunteer:

...stipulated the qualifications and standards for volunteering. Basically, these were: a minimum age of twenty-one; rank of sergeant or above; airborne trained or volunteer for jump training; language capability (European) and/or travel experience in Europe; an excellent personnel record; et cetera. All personnel had to volunteer to parachute and operate behind the lines in uniform and/or in civilian attire.⁷⁰⁵

The intensity and variety of training were clearly designed to qualify the Special Forces soldier to operate successfully in small isolated teams, in a foreign country, for extended periods.

⁷⁰⁴ Colonel Aaron Bank, From OSS To Green Berets: The Birth of Special Forces, pp. 175-176.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 168-169.

By April, 1953 the 'new concept' of operations was developed and enunciated in the operational training aim for 10th Special Forces Group:

To infiltrate its component operational detachments to designated areas within the enemy's sphere of influence and organize the indigenous guerrilla potential on a quasimilitary or a military basis for tactical and strategic exploitation in conjunction with our land, sea and air forces.⁷⁰⁶

The initial operational focus was on conducting guerrilla warfare. This changed in the late 1950s and early 1960s to focus on conducting counter-guerrilla warfare and counter-insurgency operations. This reversal of operational direction would create a serious doctrinal problem as to the employment of Special Forces.

Despite this change in direction, confusion over the roles of the Special Forces continued. Lieutenant General William P. Yarborough states that it is:

...indicative of the U.S. Army's basic misunderstanding of what Special Forces really are, that official lineage of Special Forces is traced back to the First Special Service Force. The OSS was a much more legitimate ancestor of today's Green Berets, but the problem with U.S. Army recognition of that fact is a syndrome that has wider implications.⁷⁰⁷

Moreover, when the 10th Special Forces Group was deployed to West Germany in November, 1953 it was immediately apparent

⁷⁰⁶Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare, Washington, D.C., Training Circular, Special Forces Group (Airborne), 13 May, 1952. Taken from Paddock, op. cit., p. 149.

⁷⁰⁷Simpson, op. cit., Forward by Lieutenant General William P. Yarborough, p. xvi. The First Special Service Force was a joint US and Canadian unit formed for winter warfare. The unit, however, was used as elite infantry in both the Northern Pacific and Mediterranean areas of operation. See Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Burhans, The First Special Service Force: A War History of The North Americans, 1942-1944.

that the operational staff misunderstood the Group's mission, and attempted to include the Group in the staff's plan for conventional operations. Simpson states:

...staff officers looked at their plans for World War III and asked how many men the 10th Special Forces Group would put on the line on D day, the day all those⁷⁰⁸ Russian mechanized divisions came rumbling west.

The conventional view persisted, but the response to 'how many men would be placed on the line' was none. The 10th SFG was to be based in France. It was to land teams by parachute in Eastern Europe to undertake guerrilla operations against Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces. However, the conventional military view, that the war would end before guerrilla operations could begin, prevailed.

With the Korean conflict over and the 'New Look' strategy dominant, ground forces in Europe were drastically cut. Elite forces, being outside the mainstream of conventional military thought, were an easy target. By the mid-1950s, the 10th SFG was reduced from more than 800 soldiers to fewer than 400.⁷⁰⁹

The possibility of employing SF units within the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc declined, particularly after the lack of Western response to the Hungarian revolution. With the US emphasis on maintaining and enhancing a dual strategic and conventional war-fighting capability, special operations continued to be perceived by the US Army as playing a minor and peripheral role. In line with other democratic nations such as Great Britain, America found it hard to accept the

⁷⁰⁸Ibid., p. 48.

⁷⁰⁹Ibid.

notion that its troops would be employed in military and political operations aimed at conducting guerrilla warfare against, and inciting revolution in, another country.⁷¹⁰

Although the conventional soldiers tried to comprehend the mission and capabilities of the Special Forces, the anti-elitist sentiment of the US Army remained. This was most noticeable when the Special Forces attempted to acquire the army's approval for the distinctive Green Beret as an official headdress. This 'foreign' order of headdress caused many of the US Army's senior officers much concern. Although the beret had been worn, unofficially, since 1953, it only received the 'presidential' stamp of approval from John F. Kennedy when he visited Fort Bragg on 12 October, 1961.⁷¹¹ Kennedy's support of Special Forces parallels that provided by President Roosevelt for the OSS. After their deaths, the Special Forces which they had backed went into decline.

The advent of the Kennedy administration created a period of growth for the Special Forces and resulted in their deployment to South Vietnam. However, US Special Forces had operated in Vietnam since 1957, when a 58-man South Vietnamese contingent was trained by the 1st Special Forces Group at the Commando Training Center at Nha Trang. These Vietnamese trainees were to be the initial cadre of the South

⁷¹⁰Sarkesian, "The American Response..." op. cit., p. 42.

⁷¹¹According to an article entitled "'A Badge of Courage, But Not In Regulations," in The Journal of the Armed Forces, 16 January, 1965, the beret had yet to be included in official Army Regulations.

Vietnamese Special Forces - Lac Luong Dac Biet (LLDB).⁷¹² By

May of 1960 there were 30 Special Forces instructors developing a training programme to enhance the capacity of the South Vietnamese Army to combat the increasing Viet Cong activity. On 11 May, 1961 Kennedy took two important initiatives that would assist the progress of Special Forces. Kennedy wished:

...to add four hundred Green Berets to the Special Forces President Eisenhower had sent in 1957 and to send one hundred additional military advisers to Vietnam; and, to begin an undercover program of espionage and sabotage, by the South Vietnamese against North Vietnam.⁷¹³

On 21 September, 1961 President Kennedy announced a programme to provide additional military and economic aid to the South Vietnamese government. The President and his administration were alarmed by the developing insurgency in South East Asia, as well as the perceived threat from Castro's Cuba. To meet the increased emphasis on Special Forces in Vietnam, the 5th Special Forces Group (5 SFG) was activated at Fort Bragg.

Kelly writes:

It was at this point, in the fall of 1961, that President Kennedy began to display particular interest in the Special Forces. His enthusiasm, based on his conviction that the Special Forces had great potential as a counterinsurgency force, led him to become a very powerful advocate for the development of the Special Forces program within the Army.⁷¹⁴

⁷¹²Kelly, op. cit., p. 4 For a view of the US military advisor's war see Lieutenant Colonel John L. Cook, The Advisor: Counter-Terrorism: The War Within The War.

⁷¹³Loren Baritz, Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did, p. 91.

⁷¹⁴Kelly, op. cit., p. 5.

Counter-insurgency became the buzz word in the Kennedy administration. Furthermore, as nothing starts the Pentagon moving more quickly than does a demonstrated interest from the Commander-in-Chief, the armed forces took the cue from the President. All the American services were suddenly aware of special operations:

Everyone rushed to get into the act. The Navy created SEAL (sea, air, land) teams and trained them to parachute into the sea wearing scuba gear, at least theoretically ready to emerge from the water ready to fight. They also converted old Regulus missile-carrying submarines to carry troops and miniature four-man submarines for sea infiltration of special warfare forces. The Air Force came up with Air Commandos, decked out in jaunty Australian-style bush hats, and, to the utter consternation of the Army staff, ordered thousands of rapid-fire ArmaLite rifles. However, their primary weapons were dozens of old T-6s, T-28s, C-47s, and old naval Corsairs. They also selected some of the hottest pilots in the Air Force and put them behind the sticks of these old prop antiques.⁷¹⁵

In concert with the Kennedy emphasis on counter-insurgency, the military colleges, as well as military and strategic study centres, began addressing the shortage of American research in this area of military activity:

The Services rushed new field manuals into print, and the commercial publishing market brought out new books on resistance, insurgency, and guerrillas. The writings of Mao, Ché, and Giap neared best-seller status, although it remains doubtful that many of those who acquired the books actually read them, or that of those who did, many grasped their lessons... If there was a surfeit of information about the subject, there was also a genuine enthusiasm, one reason for which was that, on paper, counterinsurgency seems both logical and practical. Practice, of course, was and is something else.⁷¹⁶

In the midst of the frantic military re-direction from conventional warfare to counter-insurgency, the Special

⁷¹⁵Simpson, op. cit., p. 66. For a brief overview of these special units see Ian Padden, U.S. Navy Seals: From Bootcamp To The Battle Zones, Ian Padden, U.S. Air Commando: The Men, The Machines, The Battles, Ian Padden, U.S. Army Special Forces: From Bootcamp To The Battle Zones.

⁷¹⁶Simpson, p. 67.

Forces found themselves to be the conveyors and practitioners of the new type of warfare. Doughty points out that this was no simple task, and that redirecting military thought from conventional to counter-insurgency issues was anything but easy.⁷¹⁷ Further, Doughty argues that the 'quick fix' programmes, aimed to achieve this objective, had an effect on the political and military objectives:

Unfortunately, the crash nature of the new entry into counterinsurgency caused the Army to focus much of its initial efforts on tactical methods. The elusive ideal of identifying the goals of military action within counterinsurgency was thus overwhelmed by the more immediate task of developing tactical organizations, equipment and doctrine. Where there should have been clarity, confusion reigned.⁷¹⁸

Therefore, the Special Forces were expected to lead the rest of the army down the rightful path to successful counter-insurgency operations. To do so, the Special Forces had to change their operational task from one of abetting insurgents to that of combatting them:

Ironically, the sudden interest in counterinsurgency completely reversed the main function of the Special Forces. They reverted from fomenters of rebellion to combatants against rebellion. Yet their techniques did not drastically change, for they continued to concentrate on the organization and employment of indigenous forces.⁷¹⁹

It was vital for President Kennedy to assist in forcing this doctrinal change in the US Army, for "otherwise the struggle in Vietnam would almost automatically fall into the hands of bureaucrats who would convert it into a conventional war of

⁷¹⁷Doughty, op. cit., p. 26.

⁷¹⁸Ibid.

⁷¹⁹Ibid.

bombing, artillery fire, and massed troop engagements."⁷²⁰
More importantly, Kennedy was aware that the Pentagon was dominated by "Conventional military strategists [who] would make matters worse by their conventional choice of weapons, tactics, and strategy."⁷²¹ Kennedy believed that the Special Forces were going to be the key players as they "could be decisive in analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of enemy guerrillas."⁷²²

Special Forces From Guerrilla To Counter-Guerrilla Role

In preparation for their new counter-insurgency (coin) duties, the Special Forces acted as advisors to army commanders during counter-insurgency exercises in Germany. The organization of Special Forces units allowed them to function in extended operations in remote regions. This made them more rapidly adaptable than regular conventional units. More important, the Special Forces personnel were trained to conduct operations in foreign languages and to operate in different cultures. As noted previously, the army believed that the skills that produced guerrilla battalions could now be employed in producing counter-guerrilla battalions. The Special Forces were, therefore, perceived as an elite group of highly motivated professionals who "were not only good, but they were ready and available."⁷²³

⁷²⁰Baritz, op. cit., p. 97.

⁷²¹Ibid., p. 98.

⁷²²Simpson, op. cit., p. 67.

⁷²³Ibid.

The major problem evolved from the excessive emphasis on the military aspects of counter-insurgency operations. The root political causes of the insurgency were largely ignored. Hence the Americans attempted to solve a political problem using purely military means, thereby ignoring, among other elements of Clausewitzian theory, the 'centre of gravity' concept. Sarkesian writes that:

...the centre of gravity of revolution and counter-revolution -- the most difficult of low-intensity conflicts -- was (and is) the political-social milieu of the indigenous political system.⁷²⁴

This centre of gravity was attacked, to some degree, by the Special Forces. Their personnel, as well as a few other military men, fully appreciated the political and psychological climate required for successful counter-insurgency operations. This came to public attention in the January, 1965 edition of the National Geographic magazine in a pictorial article entitled, "American Special Forces in Action in Vietnam."⁷²⁵ This report described some of the means by which Special Forces personnel acted to defuse a revolt of mountain tribes while attempting to acquire "the allegiance of 700,000 tribesmen living athwart the Red [communist] infiltration and supply lines."⁷²⁶ It was here among the strategically important Central Highlands of South Vietnam that the Special Forces were earning their keep, according to Howard Sochurek:

⁷²⁴Sarkesian, "The American Response...", op. cit., p. 45.

⁷²⁵Howard Sochurek, "American Special Forces in Action in Vietnam," National Geographic, (January, 1965), pp. 38-64. For a view of the Special Forces working with the Montagnards see Jim Morris, War Story, also Robin Moore, The Green Berets.

⁷²⁶Ibid., p. 39.

The Special Forces have trained and armed almost 10,000 montagnards. Hardy and independent, these troupes harry Communist infiltrators traveling [sic] the Ho Chi Minh Trail and form the backbone of Vietnamese resistance to a Communist take-over of the strategic highlands.⁷²⁷

As the war in Vietnam changed, so did the role and missions of the Special Forces. The most important role, however, remained the civilian irregular Defence Group (CIDG), a project that had the seeds of a counter-insurgency success. This was where the SF soldier demonstrated remarkable skill, patience and courage. It was in CIDG that one found the Special Forces involved in:

...every conceivable aspect of counterinsurgency: military, economic, psychological, and political. The saga of the CIDG program involved thousands of US Special Forces soldiers and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese civilians, millions of dollars, and approximately 100 camps spread from the Demilitarized Zone to the Gulf of Siam....It is a story of teaching Vietnamese how to shoot, or build, or farm, or care for the sick, or run agent operations, and of dealing with the religious and ethnic minorities of Vietnam....⁷²⁸

Conceived by the CIA, the CIDG was intended to unite the diverse political, religious and ethnic strands that make up South Vietnam, particularly in the mountain areas. These people, who inhabited the highlands, could provide base camps and infiltration trails for use by the communists. They could be a source of recruits, scouts, informers and they could provide a support infrastructure. If all this could be denied to the VC, Communist activity in a strategically important region would cease. In that light, CIDG was defensive, even preemptive, in nature, assisting the mountain people in defending themselves but, concomitantly, employing their knowledge of the area as a source of intelligence on VC

⁷²⁷Ibid., p.42.

⁷²⁸Simpson, op. cit., p. 97.

activities. This mirrored the Malayan experience of separating the guerrilla from the people but without resettlement. A local security force was trained and paid for by Special Forces, and civic action programmes instituted. Later, the SF created its own mobile strike forces, better known as Mike Forces. These units performed patrols, ran special missions and reinforced CIDG camps in trouble. Simpson argues that if the SF had constituted effective Mike Forces in 1964, just as the VC had begun to take on isolated CIDG camps, the need for intervention by US ground forces might have been unnecessary.⁷²⁹

Other countries' elite units were also represented. A small number of the Australian and New Zealand Special Air Service Regiment personnel fought alongside their SF counterparts, from 1963, some serving in Mike Forces. According to one former officer, the British SAS were also involved in the training of jungle trackers for the US Army.⁷³⁰ Some writers have stated that:

They [British SAS] also fought in Vietnam where they were attached to Australia and New Zealand SAS squads despite declared British government policy that no British troops would be involved in the Vietnam War. Some were seconded to Fort Bragg, home of the United States special forces, and then inducted into the US Army.⁷³¹

⁷²⁹Ibid., p. 135.

⁷³⁰Interview with Colonel the Viscount Slim, London, England, 29 May, 1986.

⁷³¹Bloch and Fitzgerald, op. cit., p. 44. These personnel had to resign from the British SAS and then join the Australian and New Zealand forces. Historically this co-operative effort is roughly similar to the Canloan plan where, due to a lack of British officers, Canadian Army officers volunteered to serve in various British regiments and corps in the Second World War. See also Colonel Brian W. Cloughley "The Australian Special Air Service," TVI Report, Vol. 8, No. 2, (1988), pp. 24-27.

If such allegations are correct, this co-operation, as we shall see, continues in various areas to this day.

MACV-SOG

Unconventional operations were also performed by SF personnel under the auspices of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam-Studies and Observation Group (MACV-SOG). Under a MACV staff cover, SF personnel supposedly were to prepare a number of studies on the Vietnamese situation. This group was, in fact, undertaking extremely sensitive missions in the whole of the South-East Asia region and was doing so on a joint service and high command basis.

MACV-SOG was activated on 24 January, 1964. It consisted of members from the four services; USMC reconnaissance, Seal, Special Forces and Special Operations pilots of the 90th Special Operations Wing. The operational area for MACV-SOG was all of former French Indochina, Burma and the three South-Eastern Chinese provinces as well as Hainan Island.⁷³²

During the MACV-SOG's heyday approximately 2,000 American personnel were assigned to it, as were 8,000 indigenous personnel.⁷³³ The duties assigned the SOF reflect earlier OSS operations in that they supported the war effort by unconventional means:

MACV-SOG's missions included: cross border operations into Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam to carry out intelligence gathering or raiding missions on the enemy's 'home ground'; gathering intelligence about POWs and carrying out rescue missions when possible; rescuing downed aircrews in enemy territory ('Bright Light'

⁷³²Shelby L. Stanton, Green Berets at War: U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia 1956-1975, p. 205.

⁷³³Leroy Thompson, U.S. Elite Forces -- Vietnam, p. 27.

missions); training, inserting, and controlling agents in North Vietnam to gather intelligence or form resistance groups; carrying out 'black' Psy Ops such as operating fake broadcasting stations inside North Vietnam; kidnapping or assassinating key enemy personnel; retrieving sensitive documents or equipment lost in enemy territory or in enemy hands; and inserting rigged mortar rounds or other booby-trapped ordnance in enemy arms caches (Operation Eldest Son).⁷³⁴

Although MACV-SOG worked intimately with the Central Intelligence Agency, command and control was exercised by MACV which was responsible for supervising all clandestine activity orchestrated by SOG throughout Southeast Asia. The controlling agency was the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities who in turn answered to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁷³⁵

SOG conducted many UW missions under a series of code-names. Some of the more noteworthy were the Shining Brass missions. These consisted of 12-man teams (three American and nine montagnards) which would cross into Laos to locate infiltration routes and to identify targets for bombing, or for aircraft gunship missions. Simpson states that if an SF-led Shining Brass mission found suitable targets "there were three battalions of American-led Vietnamese used as a reaction force, or to carry out larger combat missions in Laos."⁷³⁶

However, command and control problems during covert operations were soon apparent. In Laos, for instance, if an

⁷³⁴Ibid.

⁷³⁵Ibid.

⁷³⁶Simpson, op. cit., pp. 148-149. For a personal insight into SOG operations see Kent White Jr., Prairie Fire and Rod Macron, "Special Operations Group," in Page and Pimlott, op. cit., pp. 454-457.

inserted team found a target or required tactical air-power they could request it "through a rather elaborate procedure which included getting the permission on a target-by-target basis from the U.S. Ambassador to Laos."⁷³⁷ In fact, Simpson points out that such political considerations "plagued the successful conduct of the Vietnam War." Moreover, the US ambassador to Laos in effect "had complete control over US military operations in Laos. He exercised it as if he were a commander running his own war under CIA jurisdiction."⁷³⁸

This poorly unified operational structure with no central responsibility, not surprisingly resulted in less than perfect operations. Moreover, SOG was unable to acquire operational intelligence from the CIA. Simpson writes, "When asked for intelligence from the CIA teams in periodic SOG/CIA meetings, SOG was given nothing."⁷³⁹ In that regard the problems flowing from a lack of central authority were not to be resolved, nor would a central authority for military and CIA operations in Southeast Asia be established.⁷⁴⁰ Despite this lack of co-ordinated command and control, the missions were relatively successful and, in terms of casualties, remarkably cheap. During the 2,675 cross-border operations between 1965 and 1972, there were only 103 Special Forces casualties.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁷Ibid., p. 149.

⁷³⁸Ibid.

⁷³⁹Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰Ibid., p. 149-150.

⁷⁴¹Thompson, op. cit., p. 27.

Rescue Missions and Son Tay 1970

It would appear that experience acquired through MACV-SOG's missions, particularly the rescuing of downed aircrews (Bright Light Missions), would fit the SF to undertake rescue missions such as the raid launched on 21 November, 1970 to free 70 American POWs apparently held captive at Son Tay. This raid was only one of a large number of attempts made by US forces to rescue prisoners in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia,⁷⁴² between 1966 and 1970 and, according to Richard Gabriel:

Of the ninety-one rescue attempts, twenty-six succeeded in rescuing either South Vietnamese soldiers or civilians. But of the raids to rescue American POWs, only one succeeded. On July 10, 1969, one Army enlisted man was rescued from a Vietcong prison compound in South Vietnam; he later died of wounds received at the hands of his captors. With that exception, not a single American was rescued from enemy hands throughout the Vietnam war.⁷⁴³

The reasons given for such failures have included the belief that some of these missions were "compromised in advance to the Vietcong who had successfully penetrated almost all elements of American military intelligence and operations."⁷⁴⁴ Another reason given was that the prisoners were relocated. Whatever the reasons, the results were that "After the Son Tay raid, other rescue efforts were launched, and they all failed. From 1970 to 1973, at least

⁷⁴²Richard A. Gabriel, Military Incompetence: Why the American Military Doesn't Win, p. 57.

⁷⁴³Ibid. It should be noted that there were 45-50 raids aimed at rescuing American POWs. Of the 91 total, between 1966-1970, 20 succeeded in freeing 318 South Vietnamese soldiers and a total of 60 civilians. See Benjamin F. Schemmer, The Raid, p. 237.

⁷⁴⁴Ibid.

twenty-eight rescue missions were undertaken -- all to no avail."⁷⁴⁵

Son Tay, however, is an important milestone in hostage-rescue operations and, therefore, this operation must be placed in context with other similar rescue missions, e.g., Entebbe (1976) and Iran in 1980. The Son Tay raid began when the United States Air Force 1127th Field Activities Group (1127th FAG), responsible for acquiring and analysing data regarding American POWs in North Vietnam, discovered from high-altitude reconnaissance photographs what was thought to be a prison holding American POWs. The prison, Son Tay, lay approximately 23 miles west of Hanoi. This information was forwarded to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff who decided that a rescue would be most desirable, not only for the prisoners but for the morale of the American home front as well. The task was assigned to the Special Assistant for Counter-Insurgency and Special Activities (SACSA), Brigadier-General Donald Blackburn. To aid in the planning, satellites, SR-71s reconnaissance aircraft and Buffalo Hunter reconnaissance drones provided additional intelligence and site photographs. In early June 1970, the JCS were briefed and promptly ordered Blackburn to continue planning the raid. On 10 July, the JCS authorized Blackburn to begin the implementation of the plan.

The rescue force worked under the cover of the Joint Contingency Task Group (JCTG), under the overall direction of Major General Leroy J. Manor, commander of the USAF Special

⁷⁴⁵Ibid.

Operations at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Florida. Colonel Arthur D. Simons, an experienced MACV-SOG officer, was appointed as his deputy and the rescue force commander. The rescue itself, code-named 'Ivory Coast,' was set for sometime between 20 and 25 October. Weather and moon conditions were crucial in the choice of the most suitable night for the assault.

Selection of both the ground rescue force and air crews began in earnest, the former under the supervision of Simons, the latter under Manor. The ground force personnel consisted of 15 officers and 82 NCOs⁷⁴⁶ drawn from the 6th and 7th Special Forces Groups. They were selected on their merit, which was established on the basis of motivation, technical competence and combat experience.

At the Eglin military base, a mock-up of the Son Tay camp was created but designed to be quickly dismantled⁷⁴⁷ so that Soviet spy satellites would not notice any new 'construction' and thus jeopardize the operation. Attention to security and technical detail was absolutely necessary. Extensive rehearsals of all phases of the operation were undertaken. In equipment and in training no expense was spared to ensure success, including the preparation of a table-top model of the Son Tay camp at a cost of \$60,000.

⁷⁴⁶ Ashley Brown (ed), The Green Beret: U.S. Special Forces From Vietnam To Delta Force, p. 61.

⁷⁴⁷ Bombing Operations And The Prisoner-Of-War Rescue Mission In North Vietnam, Hearing Before The Committee On Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Ninety-First Congress, Second Session With Hon. Melvin R. Laird, Secretary of Defense, 24 November, 1970, p. 10.

The rescue force was divided into three parts. A 14-man assault group would be dropped inside the prison by the 'controlled crashing' of an HH-3 helicopter. It would be assisted by a 20-man command and security group and a further support unit of 22-men commanded by the rescue force commander. The rescue force began its joint training in late September, employing the air force personnel assigned to fly the helicopters (five HH-53s and one HH-3) and three C-130s; two of the latter aircraft were Combat Talons modified for command and control.

Although the initial target dates had passed, President Nixon gave his permission for the rescue attempt to proceed. The night of 20-21 November was selected, as weather and moon conditions would favour the rescue force. On the evening of 20 November the raiders were moved from the Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB) at Takhli to the RTAFB at Udorn. From there, the raiders proceeded to Son Tay. To assist in infiltrating the rescue force, carrier-based aircraft were launched in the early morning of the 21st as a 'deception raid' on Hanoi.⁷⁴⁸

An Operational Success; an Intelligence Failure

The rescuers arrived at approximately 0218 on 21 November. The target was illuminated by flares from a C-130. At the same time, an HH-53 helicopter destroyed the Son Tay guard towers with its mini-guns. Moments later, the assault force commanded by Major Dick Meadows (who later achieved notoriety

⁷⁴⁸Schemmer, op. cit., p. 199.

in Operation Eagle-Claw) had a successful, controlled crash landing in an HH-3. Upon landing the assault group laid suppressing fire and headed towards the prison blocks. The support unit, commanded by Simons, landed in the wrong area 400 yards off course in what was identified on their maps as a 'secondary school.' There, the 22-man force found themselves outside a building housing Chinese or Soviet advisors to the North Vietnamese Army. Using surprise and massive small-arms fire this force spread havoc, killing between 100 and 200 enemy personnel.⁷⁴⁹ This fortunate mislanding precluded any enemy forces from intervening in the rescue. Within minutes the area was cleared. The force reboarded the helicopter and flew into the Son Tay prison to help the other assault and security members.

Within 30 minutes after the rescue mission began, the Son Tay rescue forces had searched the prison and were returning to their base in Thailand. From an operational context the execution of the raid itself was almost flawless. The landing of Simon's element at the wrong complex enabled the rescue force to take out an undetected enemy who could have posed a serious problem. However, there were no POWs to be found. The North Vietnamese, realizing after Son Tay that they were vulnerable to such raids, deployed thousands of troops within North Vietnam to prevent future rescue initiatives. More important though was the raid, apparently, led to improved treatment of American POWs.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁹Ibid., p. 207.

⁷⁵⁰See Major John C. Sawyer, "Son Tay: Success Or Failure?," The American Legion, (December, 1982), p. 45. According to Sawyer the raid had a "major positive effect" on
(Footnote Continued)

The raid, however, was an intelligence failure -- a failure that underscores the fact that although accurate information is critical to all special operations, it is particularly important to rescue operations in hostile territory. As the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations said to the Secretary of Defense, "The point is there were no prisoners there."⁷⁵¹ They had been moved weeks before the rescue attempt, but this had not been detected by US intelligence because no one wanted to risk putting any human sources on site. There was too much reliance on photographic intelligence. As Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird replied to questions about why the Pentagon did not know the dates when the prisoners were relocated:

...with respect to the dates and the movements of POWs, we do not have that kind of intelligence from the ground. That capability would be a tremendous asset, just as the capability of having a camera that could see through the roofs and into the cells would be a terrific asset. But we do not have that in the intelligence community at the present time.⁷⁵²

The photographic and satellite intelligence initially indicated that Son Tay was an active POW camp. Intelligence personnel, using reconnaissance photos, had unravelled a code used by Son Tay POWs. The POWs had formed a letter "K" on the ground. The letter stood for "Come [and] get us."⁷⁵³ With this dubious piece of information, plus corroborating data from a captured North Vietnamese soldier, the

(Footnote Continued)
the POWs based on the reaction of the North Vietnamese. Firstly they consolidated all POWs which was a radical change from the isolation experienced by the Americans. Secondly it proved to the POWs and the North Vietnamese that they, as prisoners, were not forgotten.

⁷⁵¹Bombing Operations..., op. cit., p. 7.

⁷⁵²Ibid., p. 22.

⁷⁵³Schemmer, op. cit., p. 34.

intelligence analysts believed that Son Tay was an operational POW camp.⁷⁵⁴

In the end Son Tay stands as an historical anomaly. In the operational context the mission was successful, specifically in the almost flawless execution of the plan; the objective, however, rescuing of the prisoners of war, was not achieved. The operation demonstrated America's will, and its operational capability, to initiate successful rescue operations. At the same time, it underlines an intelligence failure, as later on it was discovered:

...that Son Tay had been empty of prisoners for four and a half months, and that they [American military intelligence] had corroboration of that information 24 hours before the raid was launched.⁷⁵⁵

In early November, a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) source forwarded the information that the POWs at Son Tay had been moved to a new camp,⁷⁵⁶ confirming earlier intelligence reports.

Richard Gabriel believes that, rather than an intelligence failure, Son Tay was a command failure. He argues that senior commanders ignored the intelligence forwarded to them and proceeded on a doomed mission. He lays the blame on "the refusal of commanders to acknowledge new or existing information that runs contrary to a course of action to which they are already committed."⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵⁵Ibid., p. 297.

⁷⁵⁶Gabriel, op. cit., p. 59.

⁷⁵⁷Ibid., p. 59.

With the rise of low-intensity conflict and, in particular, state-sponsored terrorist activities in the 1970s and the early 1980s, there was a renewed American effort to organize special units capable of performing hostage-rescue and counter-terrorist operations. Numerous low-intensity conflicts, including terrorist activity in Third World nations, pressured the United States government, and in turn the American military, to give some thought to their low-intensity warfare capability.⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁸For an overview of US Army LIC capabilities see David C. Isby, "Special Operations Forces Response," Military Intelligence, (January-March, 1985), pp. 24-27 and Captain William H. Burgess, "Special Operations Forces and the Challenge of Transnational Terrorism," Military Intelligence, (April-June, 1986), pp. 8-15.

Section III

'Operation EAGLE CLAW' - Delta's Raid Into Iran

In preparation for the execution of operations similar to the Son Tay raid, the Americans developed 'Delta,' a force trained to conduct hostage rescue, counter-terrorist, and other highly specialized military operations of national importance. Delta had its chance to go into action in 1980, in an operation called 'Eagle Claw.' The following narrative will illustrate that during critical phases of this initiative, international co-operation was offered and accepted by the United States. This co-operation and assistance was present during the preparation and execution phases, as well as in the wake of this ill-fated operation.

On 4 November, 1979, a crowd of Iranian militants stormed the US embassy in Tehran and seized the employees as hostages. The militants demanded that the Shah of Iran be returned for trial. Three other American diplomats, who were visiting the offices of the Iranian Foreign Ministry during the seizure of the embassy were given asylum.

The American government reaction focussed on three levels of effort: first, economic sanctions on Iran, second, the employment of world public opinion, and, third, international law, to pressure the Iranian government to release the American hostages. The Americans made numerous attempts at acquiring allied support for economic sanctions. These attempts to garner support for economic sanctions finally succeeded just two days before an ill-fated rescue mission. The allies had been given the impression that a concerted

effort at economic sanctions could delay any precipitous American military initiatives⁷⁵⁹ particularly as President Carter had publicly announced peaceful intentions. On 7 December, 1979 he reiterated that "I am not going to take any military action that would cause bloodshed or arouse the unstable captors of our hostages to attack or punish them."⁷⁶⁰ Despite the President's pronouncements, there was speculation of possible military action. In fact Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski had initiated the planning for a rescue mission on 4 November, 1979 when he contacted Harold Brown, the Secretary of Defense, and ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff to prepare a rescue plan.⁷⁶¹ Suggesting tacit approval of Brzezinski's action, Carter himself began preparing, on 6 November:

...for possible military action, I had satellite photographs taken to determine where Iran's airplanes and other armed forces were located. I wanted to prevent the spilling of blood on both sides, but, it would be inevitable if the hostages were harmed.⁷⁶²

On 8 November, Brzezinski, Brown and the Chairman of the JCS, General David Jones discussed a plan. The planning and preparation would continue until 7 April, 1980 when President Carter finally gave his approval. According to Brzezinski,

⁷⁵⁹Bernard Gwertzman, "Allies Are Left Smarting By Another Carter Surprise," The New York Times, 27 April, 1980.

⁷⁶⁰Robert D. McFadden, Joseph B. Treaster and Maurice Carroll, et al., No Hiding Place, p. 197.

⁷⁶¹Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Failed Mission: The Inside Account of the Attempt to Free the Hostages in Iran," The New York Times Magazine, 18 April, 1982, p. 28.

⁷⁶²Jimmy Carter, "444 Days Of Agony," Time, 18 October, 1982, p. 46.

the President said, "We ought to go ahead without delay."⁷⁶³

The date for the operation was 24 April.

The Plan: 'OPERATION EAGLE CLAW'

Major General James B. Vaught, a highly decorated US Army officer newly assigned to the Pentagon, was selected to be the Task Force Commander. His command post was to be at the Egyptian airfield at Qena. With the assistance of satellite communications Vaught would be able to maintain contact with his subordinate commanders as well as the Pentagon and the aircraft carrier the USS Nimitz which was assigned to this operation.⁷⁶⁴

From Qena the rescue force would be moved by two C-141 transport aircraft to the island of Masirah off the east coast of Oman in preparation for entering Iran. From Masirah a force of six C-130 Hercules, two of which were gunships, would fly the rescue force and its equipment, including 18,000 gallons of aviation fuel, to the landing site called 'Desert One' situated in the Dasht-e-Kavir desert approximately 265 nautical miles southeast of Tehran.

Once on the ground, a Ranger team would secure the landing strip. Two of the C-130s would depart from Desert One leaving four on site. It was here at 'Desert One' where the rescue force would be joined by eight RH-53D Sea

⁷⁶³Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power And Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981, p. 493.

⁷⁶⁴Paul B. Ryan, The Iranian Rescue Mission: Why It Failed, p. 19.

Stallions,⁷⁶⁵ helicopters designed and equipped for detonating acoustic and magnetic mines.⁷⁶⁶ These helicopters, flown mostly by Marine Corps officers, with the exception of two naval aviators and one air force officer, would leave the USS Nimitz and rendezvous at Desert One. After refuelling, the helicopters would then fly the 118-man rescue force from Desert One to Desert Two, a second hidden site, approximately 50 miles from Tehran. Here the rescue force would be met by their contact, code-named 'Esquire.' Esquire was Dick Meadows⁷⁶⁷ a former Special Forces officer who, with a few other military and civilian personnel, had been infiltrated into Tehran to gather intelligence, prepare a safe-house and acquire transport to carry the rescue force, clandestinely, into Tehran from Desert Two.

The helicopters were to leave Desert Two for another selected site some 15 miles away⁷⁶⁸ and await the order to fly to Tehran to extricate the rescue force and hostages. Meanwhile the rescue force would enter Tehran in vehicles driven by Meadow's team and begin the assault on the embassy compound about 2300 hours. This mission was essentially to neutralize any resistance to free the American hostages.

⁷⁶⁵Ibid., p. 37.

⁷⁶⁶Ibid., p. 41.

⁷⁶⁷David C. Martin, "The Point Man in Teheran," Newsweek 12 July, 1982, p. 21. Meadows, using the cover of an Irish businessman in this operation, had extensive experience in covert military operations in Vietnam. He had participated in forays behind enemy lines as a member of the MACV-SOG and had been on the Son Tay raid in 1970.

⁷⁶⁸Ryan, op. cit., p. 2.

Ground Force Tactical Plan

The ground force commander, Colonel Charlie Beckwith, divided his rescue force into three units -- each with a specific tactical aim. Two of these forty-strong units, designated Red and Blue elements, were the assault forces. Red element was responsible for occupying the western portion of the embassy's compound, seizing the commissary and staff residences, neutralizing Iranian resistance and releasing any hostages. Blue element was assigned the task of securing the southern sector of the compound and releasing the hostages incarcerated in the Chancellery, the Ambassador's residence, and the Deputy Chief of Mission's residence.⁷⁶⁹ The third unit, consisting of 13 men, known as White element, was to secure the main road outside the embassy and ensure that no one interfered with the rescue. It was then to secure a soccer stadium near the compound where it would cover the withdrawal and the extraction of the hostages and rescue force.⁷⁷⁰ During the main assault on the embassy compound, a separate 13-man Special Forces team would assault the Iranian Foreign Ministry and release the three Americans that were known to be held there.⁷⁷¹

Extraction

To ensure the safe release of the rescuers and the hostages, two AC-130 Spectre gunships were assigned to fly over Tehran

⁷⁶⁹ Colonel Charlie A. Beckwith and Donald Knox, Delta Force, p. 6.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., p. 254.

to "prevent Iranian reinforcements from reaching the embassy compound."⁷⁷² The helicopters from Desert Two, would extricate the rescue force and hostages from the stadium. Once the rescue was completed, the ground force and hostages would be flown to the isolated airfield at Manzariyeh, some 35 miles south of Tehran. The airfield was to have been secured by a separate company-size force of about 80 Rangers airlifted from Qena to await the arrival of three C-141 Starlifter transport jets. Upon the arrival of the helicopters, the rescue force and hostages would transfer to the C-141s and take off under the cover of a gunship. The helicopters were to be destroyed on the departure of the rescue force. The rescue force would then return to its staging base at Oman's Masirah Island.

The Operation

Colonel Beckwith's Delta Force was airlifted from Fort Bragg, North Carolina via Frankfurt, West Germany. In Frankfurt, Delta was joined by a 13-man group "carefully selected and trained to take down the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs building."⁷⁷³ According to one source, this team came from Berlin and had been trained at Bad Tolz, West Germany. This group had previously trained with the GSG9, but it is not known if they had trained with them, specifically, for this mission.⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷²Ibid., p. 255.

⁷⁷³Ibid., p. 261.

⁷⁷⁴Interview with a US Army Special Forces officer, Washington, D.C., 22 January, 1989.

The Delta Force continued their journey to Qena, Egypt. Meanwhile a group of 83 US Army Rangers, tasked to supply security first at Desert One and later at the final extraction site at Manzariyeh, was also flown to Qena. Here Delta Force and the Rangers were billeted in a shelter called Bunker 13. David C. Martin reported that at Qena where:

...400 soldiers and airmen along with their weapons and aircraft were based, all activities had to be carefully timed around the passage overhead of a Soviet reconnaissance satellite. Each time the satellite passed over, the soldiers would take cover in an aircraft hangar.⁷⁷⁵

On 24 April, the rescue force boarded two C-141 transports and flew to the island of Masirah, arriving about 1400 hours.⁷⁷⁶ At 1630 hours, the rescue force then boarded three troop-carrying C-130 Hercules aircraft and flew to Desert One.

The C-130 carrying the ground force commander, Colonel Beckwith, the on-site commander at Desert One, Colonel Kyle, some Delta personnel and a USAF Combat Control Team, arrived at 2200 hours.⁷⁷⁷ Upon landing, an accompanying Ranger team secured the landing zone and maintained observation on a country road that ran nearby.

Helicopter Phase

Eight RH-53 Sea Stallion helicopters lifted off from the deck of the USS Nimitz in the Arabian Sea at 1930 hours. The

⁷⁷⁵David C. Martin, "Inside the Rescue Mission," Newsweek, 12 July, 1982, p. 19.

⁷⁷⁶Beckwith and Knox, op. cit., p. 265.

⁷⁷⁷Ryan, op. cit., p. 79.

helicopter flight assumed a loose cruising formation, and began the long flight to Desert One. The helicopters flew low, using the mountainous terrain to mask their flight from Iranian radar.

Two hours into the journey, one of the helicopters (number 6) experienced a warning of a possible rotor blade failure.⁷⁷⁸ The pilot landed. Upon confirming the situation, the crew abandoned the aircraft. Another helicopter (number 8) recovered the crew and continued on to Desert One. The flight was conducted in total radio silence.

The flight then encountered a huge dust storm, known as a 'haboob' in Arabic. Maintaining formation was impossible. Two helicopters (numbers 1 and 2) landed in hopes that the storm would pass. An hour later, the helicopters, now well separated, emerged from the storm. Still later, the helicopters encountered another dust 'haboob.' As they fought the storm, another helicopter (number 5) had an alarm flash. The motor which cooled the aircraft power supply had failed, causing the "navigation and flight control systems [to become] inoperative or erratic."⁷⁷⁹ The helicopter aborted the mission and headed back to the USS Nimitz. The loss of two helicopters reduced the flight to the minimal requirements to continue with the hostage rescue. The remaining six helicopters, navigating by instruments, finally cleared the second storm and pushed on to Desert One. The

⁷⁷⁸ Beckwith and Knox, op. cit., p. 283. See also Donald E. Fink, "Rescue Helicopters Drawn From Fleet," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 5 May, 1980, p. 25.

⁷⁷⁹ Ryan, op. cit., p. 73.

helicopters straggled into Desert One anywhere from 55 to 85 minutes late.⁷⁸⁰

Desert One

The landing site at Desert One had been secured by the Rangers,⁷⁸¹ and the USAF Combat Control Team responsible for controlling air traffic at this site undertook their assigned responsibilities for the helicopters and aircraft. Just after the American force arrived at Desert One, a bus containing 44 Iranians was stopped by a Ranger security team and the passengers taken into custody.⁷⁸² Moments later, a fuel truck came down the road. The Rangers ordered the truck to stop but the driver ignored the soldiers. One Ranger fired an anti-tank rocket, destroying the truck and creating a very noticeable fire. The driver jumped from the truck and was picked up by an Iranian vehicle that followed him, which made a U-turn and escaped.

The original two C-130s had, by then, left Desert One. Four more C-130s had landed and taxied to a parking area. Three of these aircraft contained aviation fuel and were awaiting to refuel. The main force was then to board the helicopters for Desert Two.

⁷⁸⁰Ibid., p. 80 and p. 83, also Beckwith and Knox, op. cit., pp. 272-273.

⁷⁸¹Beckwith and Knox, op. cit., pp. 268-269.

⁷⁸²U.S. Defense Department, Rescue Mission Report [Holloway Report], August, 1980, p. 50.

Refuelling the helicopters was not an easy task as each C-130 and each helicopter kept all engines running, to avoid the possibility of engines not restarting.⁷⁸³ The incredible noise and turbulence reduced the margin of safety in an operation where success depended on everything going perfectly. These difficulties were compounded by the lack of any easily visible, allocated areas for the ground and Desert One commanders.⁷⁸⁴ No one knew where the commanders were, and the commanders could not determine what was happening.

A third helicopter was lost at Desert One. One of the last two helicopters to arrive (number 2) reported hydraulic problems.⁷⁸⁵ Beckwith was advised that the helicopter complement was down to five. On this basis, Beckwith decided to abort the mission.⁷⁸⁶ The Desert One commander Kyle, passed this decision to General Vaught who used secure means to advise the Pentagon. The Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, advised President Carter of, and approved the decision made by Colonel Beckwith.⁷⁸⁷

⁷⁸³Ryan, op. cit., p. 81.

⁷⁸⁴Rescue Mission Report, op. cit., p. 50.

⁷⁸⁵Ryan, op. cit., pp. 83-84 and David R. Griffiths, "Readiness Rate of RH-53 Key Issue," Aviation Week and Space Technology, 5 May, 1980, pp. 25-26.

⁷⁸⁶Beckwith and Knox, op. cit., pp. 276-277.

⁷⁸⁷Brzezinski, Power And Principle, op. cit., p. 498.

The Departure

Colonel Kyle ordered preparations to begin for the departure of the helicopters and the C-130 transports. On the recommendation of Lieutenant Colonel Edward R. Seiffert, USMC, the helicopter flight leader, the helicopters were to be refuelled and dispatched to the USS Nimitz which was waiting on station in the Arabian Sea.⁷⁸⁸

At approximately 0240 hours, during the re-positioning of the helicopters for fueling, a helicopter (number 3) lifted off the ground and collided with a C-130 transport.⁷⁸⁹ The result was a massive fireball. The 39 soldiers on board the transport escaped through a side door. The five-man C-130 aircrew and the 3-man helicopter crew were killed in the blast and fire. Four army personnel were badly burned.⁷⁹⁰

In the end, the order was given to evacuate the Desert One site by Colonel Kyle. All helicopters were abandoned. The crews and the rescue force boarded the three remaining C-130s and returned to the island of Masirah. Those wounded in the explosion were transferred to a C-141 transport and flown to a medical station in Qena. The remainder of the force flew to Egypt, then on to North Carolina. The command post at Qena advised the American agents in Tehran, led by Dick Meadows, that the mission had been aborted.

⁷⁸⁸Beckwith and Knox, op. cit., p. 278.

⁷⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 278-279.

⁷⁹⁰Ryan, op. cit., p. 89.

Aspects of International Co-operation Related to 'Operation EAGLE CLAW' - Possible, Probable and Real

Operation Eagle Claw used two key Middle East bases to launch the rescue attempt -- Qena, Egypt, and Masirah Island, Oman. But even before the operation began, Delta Force had received formal and informal international co-operation.

Colonel Charlie Beckwith, the commander of Delta Force, spent a year with the British Special Air Service in the early 1960s.⁷⁹¹ This early experience, and follow-on visits, with the SAS prepared him for developing a similar SAS capability in the Delta Force. Upon completion of Delta's training, a number of senior foreign observers participated in an evaluation of Delta's counter-terrorist capabilities early in 1979. Beckwith writes:

The SAS sent an observer. The West German GSG-9 chief, Ulrich Wegener, came himself,⁷⁹² and so did the French GIGN's, Christian Prouteau.

These observers offered advice and assistance, regarding all aspects of counter-terrorist training and operations. This also opened the door for future consultations and observer status. For example, Colonel Wegener was a visitor to the SAS during the Iranian siege and, as has been previously noted, such consultations and co-operation also occurred in Mogadishu where two SAS men participated in that rescue.

⁷⁹¹Beckwith and Knox, op. cit., pp. 11-37.

⁷⁹²Ibid., p. 182.

Intelligence

Beckwith's task was to rescue the American hostages from the embassy compound in Tehran. His first priority was to develop an intelligence picture on which he could base the plan for rescue. Beckwith has underlined the importance of intelligence in such a rescue mission:

What was needed most was intelligence. Where in the embassy compound were the hostages being held? How many hostages were being held? At this time, many figures were being used and issued to the press - all in an attempt to keep the Iranians from deducing that in fact six Americans were hiding in the Canadian Embassy. Delta needed to know the true figure. What did the Embassy look like? Were the hostages being held in a group or had they been separated? Who was holding them? Were they students, militia, or regular army? Were there any Palestinians involved in seizing the embassy? In guarding the hostages? Precisely how many guards were there and how were they armed? What were their routines, especially during night hours? Where were they posted? Where were the walking guards and where were the stationary ones? What kind of reinforcements could they summon? To whom could we go for information about Iran and its geography?⁷⁹³

Getting this information was difficult, as there were no US agents, better known in intelligence parlance as 'stay-behind assets,' in Iran following the takeover of the US embassy.

Some aspects of American intelligence collection, during this time, remain sensitive today. However, we have learned that Canada played an important role. The then Canadian Ambassador to Iran, Kenneth Taylor, stated:

My main effort, and as was the case of a few other of my colleagues, was to try to, if not answer the situation of the 52, try to at least enhance their position.⁷⁹⁴

The last sentence suggests that Taylor and his staff were collecting information to abet any rescue attempt. One of Taylor's military staff, Sergeant Jimmy Edwards, was tasked

⁷⁹³ Ibid., p. 192.

⁷⁹⁴ Canamedia Productions, "444 Days to Freedom: What Really Happened in Iran," Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Transcript, pp. 59-60.

to collect information for both the US intelligence and the military. At one point, Edwards was apprehended by Iranian militants in the US compound while he was attempting to discover exactly where the American hostages were being held. Taken to the embassy guard house, he was questioned and released. Edwards had told the students that he was only collecting posters and the ones he wanted were on the inside of the compound walls.⁷⁹⁵

The information that Taylor and his staff collected was then sent to the CIA and the State Department. It was also used by the Pentagon to help plan the rescue attempt.⁷⁹⁶ Taylor states that this intelligence collection was in preparation for such an event. "We attempted to gauge whether or not a so called commando raid would be plausible. This was a collective effort."⁷⁹⁷

Considering that there were no Americans on site to gather intelligence in the wake of the embassy seizure, Canada appears to have played a key role in providing such information. Canadian embassy staff kept American government departments and agencies aware of activities occurring around the embassy compound.

⁷⁹⁵Ibid., p. 59.

⁷⁹⁶Ibid., p. 60.

⁷⁹⁷Ibid.

West Germany's GSG9 Offers Assistance

Colonel Wegener, the commander of GSG9, who probably anticipated an American rescue attempt, offered some West German assistance to help infiltrate American personnel into Tehran. Beckwith quotes the message and underlines the American response:

"Charlie, am prepared to put in Teheran German TV crew. STOP. Would you like your people on it? STOP." I [Beckwith] informed General Vaught of Ulrich's message and recommended we pursue the offer. Somewhere in the Pentagon the idea died."⁷⁹⁸

Although this proposal offered an ideal opportunity to infiltrate American intelligence or military personnel into Tehran, it was rejected out of hand. According to Beckwith, "'This [the rescue mission] is too sensitive,' General Vaught was told to tell me. 'We can't work with a foreign government on this,'"⁷⁹⁹ This rejection of proffered international co-operation ignored the many previously successful international co-operative efforts noted earlier in this study. Despite General Vaught's views, there were to be many more international co-operative aspects during this mission.

America's Closest Ally Is Advised

It has been established that the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher and the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, were fully briefed on the plan to rescue the hostages. A former British officer, employed in Oman, observed the arrival of a number of American aircraft carrying supplies

⁷⁹⁸ Beckwith and Knox, op. cit., p. 223.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid.

and ammunition and reported the movements to the British Government, concerned that the contents were destined for the Afghan freedom fighters.⁸⁰⁰ Obviously the British government was concerned and queried Washington about this activity. In response President Carter sent Warren Christopher, the Deputy Secretary of State, prior to the rescue attempt, to brief Thatcher and Carrington about the American rescue plan.⁸⁰¹

British Territory Is Used For Modifications

In November, 1979 General Vaught's planning staff moved the Sea Stallion helicopters and their ground maintenance crews by C-5 transport to the British island of Diego Garcia,⁸⁰² where both a British facility and an American military base are located. The helicopters were later transferred to the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk and then in January, 1980 to the USS Nimitz.⁸⁰³ At Diego Garcia, it is believed that the mine-sweeping equipment was removed and long-range fuel tanks were installed in preparation for the long flight to Desert One. The need for a secure base to hide the preparations for such a rescue attempt has been previously documented, particularly in the Mogadishu and Entebbe operations. The isolation of the island of Diego Garcia provided an ideal and secure location for this activity.

⁸⁰⁰ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs Of A President, p. 512.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid.

⁸⁰² Ryan, op. cit., p. 51.

⁸⁰³ Ibid., p. 54.

Egypt Allows American Access to Oena

The planning staff needed to find a secure base which the rescue force could use as a staging area⁸⁰⁴ for the operation, and a command centre to maintain contact with all elements of the task force, and the Pentagon. President Anwar Sadat confirmed Egypt's assistance in providing a staging base and a site for a forward command centre. Sadat said "I promised the American people I would provide facilities for the rescue of the hostages."⁸⁰⁵ Although Sadat 'apparently' agreed to American access to the Egyptian airbase, he was probably not told of American intentions, although he may have surmised what they were. Furthermore, in the wake of the ill-fated attempt, Sadat declared that "Egyptian facilities were available if the U.S. wanted to come to the aid of any Arab state in the Gulf or to rescue the hostages in Iran."⁸⁰⁶ Considering the failure of American attempts to secure the peaceful release of the hostages and the growing frustration of President Carter and the American public, Sadat probably expected a rescue attempt. He may also have appreciated the need of the Americans for a staging area close enough to project a rescue force into Iran.

⁸⁰⁴George C. Wilson, "For Rangers in Egypt, Bunker 13 Proved a Harbinger of Future," The Washington Post, 25 April, 1982.

⁸⁰⁵Irene Beeson, "Egypt's role a mystery," The Guardian, London, 28 April, 1980.

⁸⁰⁶Roger Matthews, "Disasterous raid could rebound on Sadat," Financial Times, London, 26 April, 1980.

Two Iranian Generals Join The Rescue Force

Before the rescue force left the United States, Beckwith met with two former Iranian generals who were to accompany the rescue force. Both had sought refuge in the United States when Khomeini assumed political power in Iran. Had the Americans got to Tehran their language capability and local knowledge could have been very helpful. Needless to say, their language skills and military knowledge were never required. Still their purpose and motivation remains obscure.⁸⁰⁷

Iranian 'Informers'

Although it is unlikely that the full story of the on-site intelligence gathering operation will ever be revealed, there are indications that Iranians assisted in providing information from within the American compound. Apparently some of the Iranian exiles⁸⁰⁸ on Dick Meadows' team may have been successful in acquiring information.

Iranian infiltrators made contact with the militants guarding the hostages through the university and obtained detailed information about their relations with the police, communications with them and the guards' organisations.⁸⁰⁹

It also appears that the Meadows' team may have 'turned' a few guards to provide the detailed inside information as to

⁸⁰⁷ FBIS 138, KUSAIT [SIC] PAPER: "EGYPTIANS, IRANIANS TOOK PART IN U.S. OPERATION," 29 April, 1980. This article noted that "THE IRANIAN OFFICERS WHO TOOK PART IN THE MILITARY MISSION WERE THOSE 'WHO WERE COMMITTED' TO THE DEPOSED SHAH, WHO IS CURRENTLY LIVING IN EGYPT, AND THEY TOOK PART IN THE OPERATION TO 'PLAY THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARY (?IRANIAN) OFFICERS'". See also Beckwith and Knox, op. cit., p. 260 and p. 271.

⁸⁰⁸ Martin, "Inside the...", op. cit., p. 18.

⁸⁰⁹ Clare Hollingworth, "Rescue teams recruited 'moles' at embassy," The Daily Telegraph, London, 30 April, 1980.

the whereabouts and conditions of the hostages. The Iranian-speaking members of the on-site team supposedly "persuaded several of the guards to become 'moles' inside the embassy ready to assist in the escape of the hostages."⁸¹⁰ Although there is no concrete evidence of this, nor will there be, it is possible that such an intelligence coup could have been prepared.⁸¹¹

Turkey -- Rescue Force Escape and Evasion Plans and the Use of Turkish Airspace

The forward base at Qena gave Beckwith a final opportunity to brief his team on the mission plan and provide the latest intelligence regarding the location of the hostages. At the base, the officers reviewed the plans for escape and evasion (E and E) in case the assault failed. According to Ryan:

If the assault failed, the men were to head overland to Turkey. To draw the attention of U.S. intelligence officers who would be monitoring satellite cameras, the escaping soldiers reportedly were to form huge alphabet letters with stones or vegetation that would show up on the film.⁸¹²

It appears that the American government had some type of contingency plan, possibly with the connivance of Turkey, to assist stranded task force survivors to cross Iran and enter Turkey, should it be necessary. Although it is unlikely that Turkey was advised of this E and E contingency plan, it was, as an old American ally close to the scene, a logical

⁸¹⁰Ibid.

⁸¹¹See Amit Roy, "Iranians Launch Search for 'U.S. Helpers,'" The Daily Telegraph, London, 1 May, 1980.

⁸¹²Ryan, op. cit., p. 67. See also article by Wilson, op. cit.

political, military and geographical choice for E and E purposes. Moreover, Turkey was cited as allowing an American AWACS command and control aircraft to operate in Turkish air space during the rescue attempt. An article by a diplomatic correspondent states that Turkish:

...air space was used by the operations' command aircraft. The border of Turkey, a Nato member, is between 400 and 500 miles from Teheran.

Its air space was the nearest and safest area from which to maintain contact with the airstrip at Posht-e Badam near Tabas, and groups in or near Tehran.⁸¹³

The use of Turkish air space would have provided the American AWACS a degree of security from interception, while taking advantage of Turkey's proximity to Iran, so as to maintain communications with the rescue force.

Israeli Reporter Monitors The American Operation

Michael Gurdus, a 35-year-old reporter working for the official Israeli radio agency, was listening to the American communications during the rescue attempt. Although he intercepted the American communications, during the latter stages of the operation, he did not report it immediately. According to one article:

Gurdus knew hours before anyone else that the aircraft had been destroyed but decided to withhold the information from the Israeli radio until the American public had been informed of the failure.⁸¹⁴

One can only suspect that this information was not reported as the Israeli radio service believed it would jeopardize the

⁸¹³ David Adamson, "Four Middle East Nations Had Role In Rescue Mission," The Daily Telegraph, London, 2 May, 1980.

⁸¹⁴ Maier Asher, "U.S. complains about Israeli Radio 'bug,'" The Daily Telegraph, London, 30 April, 1980. According to this report the AWACS took off from Turkey.

lives of Americans still in Iran. This detection by monitoring airwaves was not new, Gurdus had also discovered the German intentions during the Mogadishu rescue.⁸¹⁵

Masirah

On 24 April the Delta team boarded two C-141 Starlifter transports and flew to the island of Masirah just off the east coast of Oman, where the C-130 aircraft were being refuelled. The airbase at Masirah closed the geographical gap for the flight to Desert One. It has been reported, however, that the government of Oman "was not told the true nature of the mission, simply because permission to refuel probably would not have been granted."⁸¹⁶ It would be hard, however, not to notice two large jet transports and the visits of other American aircraft. As previously mentioned, a former British officer informed London of this American air activity before 24 April. British enquiries brought about the briefings of Mrs. Thatcher and Lord Carrington.

One would think that the increased American air traffic at Masirah may have raised Omani suspicions that an operation of some kind was to occur. In Colonel Beckwith's book he described the arrival of Delta:

Delta landed at Masirah about 1400 hours. General Gast was there to meet us. Some tents had been put up. There were soft drinks and water and lots of ice. Somebody had gone to a lot of trouble to make Delta comfortable.... Most everyone went into the 16-man

⁸¹⁵Ibid.

⁸¹⁶Ryan, op. cit., p. 63. According to an article by George C. Wilson, op. cit., "The Sultan of Oman would insist he knew nothing about use of his territory by the Americans."

tents, the canvas walls were rolled up, and got off⁸¹⁷ their feet. The night was going to be a long one.

Moreover, it would appear somewhat unlikely that a large body of foreign soldiers would go unnoticed particularly as they were:

...dressed in nondescript clothes, a ruse that would help in their escape from Iran if the operation went awry. Untypically, they wore blue jeans, flak vests, black army jackets, combat boots, and navy watchcaps (a blue-wool toque). Sewn on each jacket sleeve was a small U.S. flag covered with tape.⁸¹⁸

Would not such a group landing from American aircraft with weapons and packs evoke a degree of 'official interest?' In any case, Omani officials may or may not have been apprised of the rescue mission. Nevertheless, the availability of the airbase as a staging area for the American rescue forces, was a co-operative measure in itself.

Possible Israeli Assistance

Israel may have been advised of the rescue, although the government denied any knowledge. According to David Adamson, some Israeli forces seem to have been employed for diversionary purposes. He writes that Israel "staged a diversion off Lebanon which effectively masked Soviet spyships from monitoring the Cairo end of the operations."⁸¹⁹

⁸¹⁷ Beckwith, op. cit., p. 265.

⁸¹⁸ Ryan, op. cit., p. 65.

⁸¹⁹ David Adamson, op. cit. This story appears to be corroborated in the book by Mario de Arcangelis, Electronic Warfare: From the Battle of Tsushima to the Falklands and Lebanon Conflicts, p. 235. According to this author, "confusion was created on the Soviet radar screens by the presence of numerous Israeli warships which (perhaps by sheer coincidence) had decided to carry out air and naval exercises that very night!" Another article offers further information, William C. Heine, "Did raid into Iran achieve
(Footnote Continued)

Although there has been no official statement corroborating this report, it is possible that such deceptive measures could have taken place at the behest of American government officials. However, it is unlikely that such deceptive military-intelligence preparations will ever be officially revealed to the public. At this point one can only surmise that Israeli co-operation may have taken place.

Israeli Reaction to the American Failure

Israel reacted to the rescue failure "with shock and disbelief."⁸²⁰ Moral support came in the form of a message of condolence from Foreign Minister Shamir to the United States government and to the families of the eight casualties.

More important, however, the Israelis were puzzled by the lack of an American desire for a co-operative effort between themselves and Tel Aviv. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) had extensive experience in hostage-rescue operations and were particularly familiar with the geographical region in question. This, in turn, raised questions regarding the traditional security arrangements between the two countries.

(Footnote Continued)
its purpose?", London Free Press, London, Ontario, 20 May, 1980. According to this article "It has been reported in Britain and the U.S. that the Israelis attempted to jam the electronic systems of Russian spy vessels in the Mediterranean, that Egypt did the same to Russian surveillance units in Libya, and that the Americans sent at least one major decoy fighter mission to confuse Russian electronic surveillance."

⁸²⁰"ISRAELI REACTION TO AMERICAN BID TO RESCUE HOSTAGES." Message traffic. Canadian Embassy Tel Aviv to Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, Canada, 28 April, 1980, p. 1.

One diplomatic report noted that:

ISRAELI ANTI-TERRORIST EXPERTS ARE DEEPLY DISTURBED BY IMPLICATIONS OF TECHNICAL FAILURE IN OPERATION OF THIS KIND AND BY FAILURE OF AMERICANS⁸²¹ TO SOLICIT THEIR ADVICE OR ASSISTANCE IN MOUNTING RAID.

Further the report underlines the fact that:

ISRAELI AUTHORITIES ARE QUESTIONING WHY, AS RECOGNIZED EXPERTS ON COMMANDO OPERATIONS OF THIS KIND, THEY WERE NOT/NOT ASKED FOR ADVICE OR ASSISTANCE IN MOUNTING RAID. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD ISRAELIS HAVE TESTED 14 SEPARATE EXERCISES FOR RESCUING HOSTAGES, 3 OF WHICH RESULTED IN SUCCESSFUL⁸²² RESCUES WITH LESS THAN TEN PERCENT CASUALTY RATE.

According to Israeli military analysts there were:

...THREE MAJOR CAUSE [SIC] OF MISSIONS FAILURE : POOR PLANNING, IN NOT/NOT USING MORE HELICOPTERS AND FAILING TO INCLUDE CREW OF HELICOPTER MECHANICS; POOR MAINTENANCE - ISRAELIS ARE SHOCKED THAT 500-MILE TRIP SHOULD RESULT IN BREAKDOWN OF THREE HELICOPTERS; AND POOR COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY: ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE REPORTEDLY WAS ABLE TO TRACK SIGNALS FROM MOMENT TRANSPORT PLANES LEFT EGYPT AND THEY ASSUME SO COULD RUSSIANS. ONLY AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT WAS IN EVADING IRANIAN ELECTRONIC⁸²³ DEVICES WHICH AMERICANS THEMSELVES HAD CONSTRUCTED.

As previously mentioned, the detection of the American rescue attempt, due to poor communication security, was revealed when the American government apparently sent a complaint to Israel regarding the radio monitoring activities of Michael Gurdus. According to one report, Gurdus:

...plugged into the American operational communications network during the latter stages of the operation....He immediately knew what bases and in what countries the United States forces had left and was able to hear a

⁸²¹Ibid.

⁸²²Ibid., pp. 2-3.

⁸²³Ibid., p. 2. See also Dr. Stefan T. Possony "Lessons in Strategic Planning," Defence and Foreign Affairs, 6/1980, (June), pp. 46-47. This article argues for a helicopter force of 18 so as to ensure proper lift capability in anticipation of mechanical breakdown. The "Rescue Mission Report", p. 33, argues 11-12 helicopters should have been employed.

search in progress for a missing Hercules C-130 aircraft which had exploded during a refuelling operation.⁸²⁴

Gurdus was also aware of a degree of Turkish involvement in the operation. He knew that the AWACS command and control aircraft had lifted off from a Turkish airbase and kept its monitoring pattern within secure Turkish air space.

Of all the American allies, the Israelis were apparently the most shocked by the failure of the rescue attempt. As one Israeli analyst argued, "The same people who managed to put a man on the moon failed in simple technical matters," Ze'ev Schiff, the dean of Israeli military correspondents, lamented.... "Clearly this was more than just bad luck."⁸²⁵

The same article further suggested that, from a technical aspect, the rescue attempt lacked the resources needed for success:

Israeli experts are astonished that an operation needing six helicopters was furnished with only two reserves. Helicopters are notoriously vulnerable to accidents and technical faults. The Americans, they maintain, should have had at least 50 percent⁸²⁶ in hand, a minimum of nine or ten helicopters all told.

Israeli experience in heliborne operations could have assisted American planners in the technical aspects of the mission, particularly as Israeli experts would have been most willing to help. For that matter, the British with their extensive military experience in the Middle East could have also assisted in the aspect of technical, as well as operational planning.

⁸²⁴ Asher, op. cit.

⁸²⁵ Eric Silver, "Israelis stunned by US mistakes," The Guardian, London, 28 April, 1980.

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

British Support

The British government, as requested, kept silent about the operation, and in America's time of need Mrs. Thatcher offered the "'greatest admiration' for President Jimmy Carter's courage in attempting to rescue the hostages and sympathised with him over its failure."⁸²⁷ Furthermore, Mrs. Thatcher, like Sadat, condoned the operation. These sentiments brought down the wrath of the opposition Labour Party. It was the Thatcher government's "public display of loyal support, [that] convinced Labour leaders that she had been fully informed of the move in advance."⁸²⁸ To lessen the degree of public hostility, the British government insisted on the operation being seen in 'humanitarian terms.' It was the "Government's view, [that] a clear distinction has to be drawn between the limited force engaged in the rescue attempt and any military action against Iran."⁸²⁹

It was such support for the US action which would assist President Carter, and the American government, to begin the mending of relations with the European allies and "preserve the credibility of the Western alliance."⁸³⁰ Such support for President Carter was vital to maintain the Western

⁸²⁷ Philip Rawstone, "Thatcher praises Carter's courage," Financial Times, London, 26 April, 1980.

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

⁸³⁰ See "Iran Task Force, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Congressional Research Service, "Iran: Consequences of the Abortive Attempt to Rescue the American Hostages," Conflict, Vol. 3, Number 1, (1981), p. 68.

Alliance and would later assist in acquiring the release of hostages.

America Reflects

In the end, Americans were left with doubts that reflected badly on the competence of their own military forces. They asked if the Israelis and the West Germans could carry off rescue operations like Entebbe and Mogadishu, how was it that the United States could not? Defense Secretary Harold Brown rather weakly explained "that flying 500 miles straight in helicopters was extraordinarily difficult, and 'no other country could have attempted anything like this.'"⁸³¹

This, however, did not stop the public's questioning of American military competence. If the rescue had been successful, concerns would have been minimal and the Americans would have been the envy of the world; as were the Israelis, Germans and British following their respective rescue operations. As the mission failed, the Carter administration was perceived poorly by many of its allies:

"It's a ghastly business," said a West German official. "It's unbelievable that things could go wrong in this fashion, and to force abandonment of the mission. With these things, you have to be properly prepared to go through with it. Otherwise don't start it."⁸³²

It has been argued that had the United States military requested or accepted assistance from their close allies, particularly the British, Israelis or the West Germans during

⁸³¹David Buchan, "Criticism mounts in Washington over rescue plan," Financial Times, London, 28 April, 1980.

⁸³²Gwertzman, op. cit.

the planning, preparation, execution and extraction stages of this operation, success might have been achieved.⁸³³

Moreover, had the American plans been rigourously reviewed by an independent, national⁸³⁴ or possibly an international body of rescue 'experts' the probability for success may have been increased. Whether these arguments are valid or not, it appears that from this time onwards the United States accepted the importance of greater international co-operation in the areas of low intensity operations, counter-terrorist actions and intelligence gathering, than ever before.

⁸³³ see James R. Schlesinger, "Some Lessons Of Iran," The New York Times, 6 May, 1980.

⁸³⁴ The Rescue Mission Report, op. cit., p. 22.

CHAPTER V

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Hostage Rescue Actions

This paper has reviewed a number of hostage rescue actions, one of the main missions performed by elite military counter-terrorist forces. Within each there was, to one degree or another, international co-operation which assisted in the rescue operation. As we have seen, hostage rescue operations are unique in, when compared with other conventional or unconventional operations, they alone are embarked upon because of a political decision for purely political motives.⁸³⁵ Unlike wartime conditions, the initiation of this type of action is the sole responsibility of the political leadership. Because of the essentially political nature of hostage rescue operations, and the high military and political stakes involved, they are even further separated from the mainstream of conventional or unconventional operations.

It has been argued that this uniqueness also resides in the exceedingly demanding nature of rescue missions; their success is gauged by a number of stringent criteria:

- 1) that the hostages are rescued without harm and that there are minimal or no casualties among the rescue force;
- 2) that the hostage-takers are the only casualties;

⁸³⁵Shlomo Gazit, "Risk, Glory, and the Rescue Operation," International Security, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Summer, 1981), p. 112.

- 3) that the rescue operation itself does not create any further military or political problems in the wake.⁸³⁶

Shlomo Gazit has further offered that rescue operations must be considered:

...the climax of a war which must be resolved in a single military act. The diplomatic, psychological, and military struggles to free the victims -- all bear a remarkable microcosmic resemblance to war. And the success or failure of such an operation means the victory or defeat in that war.⁸³⁷

This view is most poignant when one remembers the perceptions and recriminations that followed on the heels of the United State's 1980 highly sensitive but ill-fated rescue attempt in Iran.

The perception of many observers is that counter-terrorist operations and, in particular, hostage-rescue actions are conducted for the most part on a unilateral basis. The fact is that many of these operations are conducted utilizing various degrees of international co-operation and assistance. This has provided a growing sociology of counter-terrorism activity based upon international co-operation.

*are
united /
in decision
conception*

By taking into account the extremely sensitive nature of hostage rescue operations for example, this study illustrates a number of areas where international co-operation has assisted in the past, and will probably aid in the future. These focus on four separate but inter-related areas. They include:

⁸³⁶Ibid., p. 112.

⁸³⁷Ibid., p. 113.

- 1) the acquisition and passage of timely, accurate, strategic and tactical intelligence germane to the operation in question;
- 2) the access to forward bases in allied or friendly countries in anticipation of or during a rescue mission;
- 3) secure and rapid communications, and,
- 4) co-operation between counter-terrorist forces particularly in exchanges, attachments and training, and also during CT operations themselves.

The following paragraphs examine these four areas of international co-operation with a view to discovering what might be done to enhance or expand them.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Intelligence

Timely, accurate intelligence is essential for success in any military operation, including low-intensity warfare and modern counter-terrorism missions.⁸³⁸ Even beyond the Anglo-Saxon experience, intelligence is the sine qua non of

⁸³⁸This truism was recently re-affirmed by the very successful 16 February, 1992 ambush sprung upon the IRA which killed four terrorists after they attacked a local police station in Coalisland. See "Who is the IRA insider?", The Mail, London, 23 February, 1992.

victory, particularly at Entebbe and Mogadishu. This is perhaps even more strikingly the case with British low-intensity operations whose historical and geographical range underscores the vital importance of intelligence. Colonial regimes could only be maintained if the imperial power, and its security forces understood what was happening amongst the local inhabitants. Failure to obtain accurate intelligence caused major internal security difficulties.

The United States experience, as has been shown, both in success and failure, likewise demonstrates the dominant role of intelligence in operations at relatively low levels of intensity. There can be little surprise at this discovery, since the American wars with the Indians and, more recently, with Third World peoples display many of the same characteristics as those of the colonial wars experienced by the British. Both London and Washington give considerable priority to the intelligence-gathering and disseminating functions even if the application of this priority varies from situation to situation.

It has been demonstrated that terrorism, even in its 19th-century and purely national manifestations, posed dramatic difficulties for the security forces faced with small groups of highly dedicated, ruthless, individuals in the midst of increasingly industrialized, populous and complex societies. International terrorism, especially in its most modern forms, adds the vast dimension of a world-wide struggle in a highly permeable, inter-dependent and inter-related society, to the basic difficulties of counter-terrorist work.

The post-World War II world reflects not only nationalistic, but also irredentist, minority rights, tribal, and ideologically-based stimuli for the growth of terrorism. Today, an increasingly pervasive media describes terrorist activities to an audience of millions. These activities and their attendant publicity when combined with the enhanced vulnerabilities of modern society, open the door to the recent rapid growth in the phenomenon of terrorism.

The threat of national terrorist movements in the 19th-century was difficult to combat because of the problems posed in the area of intelligence gathering. This is much more so the case in today's more complicated and far reaching terrorist activity, particularly, as one must take into account the level of sophistication of the terrorist groups themselves.

Countries with or without experience in this field are often stymied in gathering the information needed to combat groups and activities that outstrip their own national counter-terrorist resources. It is clear that terrorism itself has no respect for, and indeed tends to frustrate the very concept of, national borders.

Intelligence is the core of a successful counter-terrorist operation. To counter the modern phenomenon of international terrorism, one must be able to mount a co-ordinated international intelligence response.⁸³⁹ This lesson has not

⁸³⁹ Under ideal circumstances, allied or friendly countries would be able to count on assistance from foreign sources as a matter of course.

been lost on security force commanders who, in all countries mentioned in this study, have wished to increase their intelligence capabilities. They have also placed emphasis on the organization of elite military units able to make maximum use of such intelligence. In the British case there is an established link between the SAS, and the British intelligence services, through which timely intelligence is rapidly transformed into a plan. West German and Israeli experiences in this field confirm the need for both of these elements, effective intelligence and specialized forces, capable of incorporating such intelligence into successful operations. American difficulties in recent years appear to have been caused, mainly by a breakdown in the link between these two elements. Given the international nature of today's terrorism, acquiring timely, accurate intelligence requires international co-operation, with all the political complexities implied by such co-operation.

Other trends of a more technical nature are also disquieting although international co-operation may help to provide a partial solution. The United States, with undoubtedly the most ambitious and aggressive national intelligence service, is clearly moving towards kinds of intelligence collection which may prove to be far from optimal.⁸⁴⁰ Today the American emphasis is on what is termed 'high tech' intelligence -- information drawn from communication interceptions, satellite photography, electronic monitoring, and the like. At the same time there has been a significant downplaying of the development of human intelligence

⁸⁴⁰ Simon O'Dwyer Russell, "CIA network wrecked in Middle East," The Sunday Telegraph, London, 22 October, 1989.

sources,⁸⁴¹ or 'humint', as a means to provide tactical and strategic information. This situation has become well known and much debated in American intelligence circles and clearly has international and foreign policy implications.⁸⁴²

Beginning in the 1960s, the United States became increasingly reliant upon acquiring intelligence through 'high tech' gathering techniques at the expense of covert intelligence acquisition which was allowed, to some extent, to wither. This situation is the result of several factors ranging from budget cuts to plain distrust of covert operations. Some sources suggest that the number of covert agents has dropped as much as 40 percent since the 1950s.⁸⁴³ However, most intelligence actually required, particularly for counter-terrorist operations, and within that speciality, hostage rescue missions, demands the type of information which human intelligence alone can provide. As President George Bush, himself a former CIA director, has noted, it was the lack of human source information which prevented him from trying to rescue American citizens held hostage in Beirut, Lebanon.⁸⁴⁴

The problem appears to reside not in the usual area of resources but rather in the perceived need to reduce the risk

⁸⁴¹Bernd Debusmann, "Poor Intelligence Cripples U.S. Military Might, Experts Day," Reuters, 4 October, 1989.

⁸⁴²Ibid.

⁸⁴³Peter Cory, et al., "Where spies really matter," U.S. News and World Report, (28 August/4 September, 1989), p. 24.

⁸⁴⁴Patrick Worsnip, "Shortage of spies in Lebanon hampers efforts to find hostages," The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 5 August, 1989.

of political embarrassment so often associated with covert operations and especially with failure therein. While there is no doubt that the potential for such political embarrassment exists with all kinds of covert operations, recent experience, especially that of the British, suggests that the proper management of covert operations can yield results⁸⁴⁵ in benefits accruing to the dispatching state considerably greater than the costs caused by the occasional discovery of a covert activity.

Success in hostage rescue missions depends on the quantity and quality of timely information available. Such information will likely be given by a human source on the ground, someone with "their eyes on the sparrow (target)." Rescue operations are tactical by nature and require extremely detailed information (see Chapters III and IV). The following checklist illustrates the nature and detail of information required in a rescue mission.

On The Terrorist:

- 1) How many terrorists?
- 2) How are they armed?
- 3) What is their motivation, psychological and physical condition?
- 4) What are their initial demands?
- 5) What is their deployment/position within the aircraft, building?
- 6) What nationalities are the terrorists?
- 7) Ages, sex, description?
- 8) Names, nicknames employed in conversation?
- 9) What terrorist group do they represent?

⁸⁴⁵"U.K. spy agency to take over from police in fighting IRA", The Toronto Star, 9 May, 1992. As noted in this article, " 'The purpose of this change is to enable the security service to use to the full the skills and expertise which they have developed over the years in their work on counter-terrorism,' Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke said."

Methodology?

- 10) What languages are spoken?
- 11) What is the intelligence level and vigilance of the terrorists?

On the Hostages

- 1) How many are there?
- 2) How and where are they being held, i.e., place or building?
- 3) Physical and psychological condition of hostages?
- 4) Are any hostages of particular interest to terrorists?
- 5) What are their ages, sex, description?
- 6) What are their names and particulars?

On The Aircraft

- 1) Airline, handling agent.
- 2) Type of aircraft and exact internal layout.
- 3) Condition of aircraft.
- 4) Information regarding fuel, range speed and flight duration.
- 5) State of aircrew, names, description.
- 6) Aircraft call sign and frequencies employed.
- 7) Situation inside aircraft.
- 8) Flight manifest.
- 9) Food and water situation on board.

On the Building

- 1) Street map, exact position of building.
- 2) Engineer plans of building.
- 3) Telephone numbers and where telephones are located.
- 4) List of all persons occupying building and where they are positioned.
- 5) List of all key holders.
- 6) Alternate exit/entry sites.
- 7) A comprehensive list of electrical, gas, oil and water points.
- 8) Air conditioning plant and duct work.
- 9) Plans to all adjacent buildings.
- 10) Sewer outlets nearby.

Much of the data necessary to plan a hostage rescue can only be provided by human sources such as witnesses, agents and released hostages, although some technical means will be used.

There appears to be a danger that the American trend towards high technology, instead of human intelligence, may spread to other countries. On the other hand, the United States' lack

of success in a series of recent covert operations, particularly in the Middle East,⁸⁴⁶ and Latin America, should warn other states that human intelligence is far more important, especially in operations involving a hostage rescue.

International co-operation could improve this situation in several ways. First, more experience in working with foreign intelligence agencies and military forces may lead to a general improvement of national intelligence services. Moreover, international co-operation would provide the United States with a clearer perception of the many advantages of human intelligence, perhaps encouraging the US to return to its former high level of interest in the area. These two improvements might well dovetail nicely to prove the benefits of international co-operation, not only in the military arena but also in general national intelligence operations.

Another important consideration is that poorer countries, which can rarely afford 'high tech' assets to acquire intelligence, are much more likely to be able to afford human intelligence sources. They may well find that co-operation with wealthier states could lead to valuable, and otherwise inaccessible, information being provided to them from high tech sources. In return, countries such as the United States could discover, on occasion, that some smaller states can have access to useful human intelligence sources, and this can make those states attractive partners in intelligence

⁸⁴⁶David B. Ottaway and Don Oberforfer, "Administration Alters Assassination Ban; In Interview, Webster Reveals Interpretation," The Washington Post, 4 November, 1989.

gathering abroad. In the specific case of hostage rescue missions, as has been seen, Third World countries seem, somehow, always to be involved. Therefore, the building of international intelligence links with Third World countries should also provide real benefits.

Forward-Basing

Hostage rescue operations are by their very nature extremely sensitive. For a counter-terrorist force to be effective it must be able to move quickly to the incident site, or close to it, to rescue the hostages. For a number of geographical, historical and political reasons getting into range is often far from easy. The United States' Delta Force, for example, which is currently based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, would normally take about 16 hours to arrive at the scene of a Middle East hostage-taking. This delay might limit, or even preclude the proper on-site reconnaissance, planning and intelligence gathering, all of which are essential for success. Although counter-terrorist teams must be ready for rapid deployment, the travel time to distant locations can reduce the time available to plan the operation and, thereby, could seriously hamstring any rescue attempt.

Clearly, the Americans could use a prepared special operations base in Great Britain, West Germany or Cyprus where facilities could permit a long-term basing of specialist counter-terrorist forces who would respond to terrorist actions in Europe and the Middle East. Such an arrangement would also ensure access, at short notice, to key allied counter-terrorist forces and agencies, which could be of immediate operational, technical or moral support.

The lack of a forward-base has already contributed to the failure of one counter-terrorist mission. Delays in supporting Egyptian commandos in the 1985 assault on an aircraft in Malta contributed to the failure of this mission.⁸⁴⁷ A closer support base, and better co-operation may have reduced the confusion and the resulting deaths of 57 passengers.

The United States has deployed the MH-53J Pave Low III (Enhanced) helicopter⁸⁴⁸ to the Special Operations Squadron, based at Woodbridge in Suffolk. This arrangement is aimed at supporting America's Special Forces and to ensure that an effective special operations and counter-terrorist aviation capability is available should they be required in Europe or Great Britain.

For forward-basing to be fully successful, allies in or near the region must be prepared to permit the local positioning of not only special operations units but also small numbers of highly-trained special forces personnel and their support personnel. In addition to speeding up the response capability of counter-terrorist forces, this would also give local police, para-military and military forces, tasked to conduct counter-terrorist operations, an opportunity for joint training. This would benefit countries whose national capabilities for counter-terrorism are slight, and would be of value even in states, such as Great Britain and West

⁸⁴⁷William E. Smith, et al., "Massacre in Malta," Time, 9 December, 1985, p. 26.

⁸⁴⁸"USAF special mission aircraft in close-up," Jane's Defence Weekly, 19 August, 1989, p. 306.

Germany, where exchange training and other co-operative initiatives would be useful to all concerned. Forward-basing also provides forces of the dispatching state with greater exposure to general conditions outside their own homeland. More dramatic still might be the benefits for countries, such as the United States, in developing pools of selected personnel who have proven their capacity to operate with foreign forces.

As with intelligence considerations, however, the political constraints, particularly for potential receiving states, have delayed or halted such deployments.

Communications

Secure, rapid communications are the foundation for success in the increasingly fast, complex military operations characteristic of the latter part of this century.

Counter-terrorist operations, particularly hostage-rescue missions, are not exempt from this general rule of modern warfare. Communication security is of paramount importance.

One of the most potentially dangerous events during the Mogadishu and 'Eagle Claw' operations occurred when an Israeli reporter monitored the radio communications. Such incidents could have led to dire results. Although the reporter's actions were not considered to have compromised the missions, the fact that an 'outsider' was able to monitor these activities is a shortcoming which cannot be permitted in future operations. Hostage-taking and hijacking are politically sensitive and highly volatile acts. The discovery of counter-terrorist forces either preparing, or conducting, an operation can easily force the terrorist's

hand. Considering the widespread availability of sophisticated off-the-shelf equipment for both communications and monitoring, and given the particularly vital requirement to maintain the principle of surprise, counter-terrorist missions must have rapid and secure communication by both voice and paper.

Secure communications must be possible amongst all elements of a CT force, conducting hostage-rescue or other counter-terrorist activities. Terrorists fully appreciate the vulnerability and centrality of communications and it is very likely that they will soon be able to not only intercept rescue force communications but possibly have the capability to disrupt or jam them. In consequence counter-terrorist units must possess the best secure communications equipment available, as the success of an operation depends on it. International co-operation would help in this regard by ensuring compatibility of equipment types. As well, the provision of modern, efficient and compatible communications equipment to the counter-terrorist forces of poorer states would be a good investment. Communications considerations are perhaps the least subject to political concerns, thus international co-operation in this area would normally carry few risks.

Training Assistance, Attachments and Exchanges

There can be little doubt, after the study of British, American, German and Israeli experiences in counter-terrorism, that co-operation among the various national special forces is essential. Co-operation in training, attachments and exchanges, as well as in the actual

counter-terrorist operations⁸⁴⁹ themselves, will improve the professional skills of special forces and the co-ordination of more effective responses at a national level. This study has shown a wide range of co-operative efforts and the benefits they have produced, particularly, in hostage-rescue operations. Current emphasis should be on the potential for further development and improvement in these areas of joint activity.

The benefits of international co-operation in the area of training, both at the individual and collective levels, are evident not only for the countries discussed in this paper, but for countries all over the world, from Canada to Somalia, from Dubai to Egypt.⁸⁵⁰ Attachments and exchanges have vastly broadened the experiences of key personnel in national

⁸⁴⁹Such counter-terrorist assistance has recently expanded to include those nations fighting drug barons. See Askold Krushelnycky, "SAS in secret war on cocaine," Sunday Express, London, 31 December, 1989.

⁸⁵⁰Australian SAS -- Training exchanges or assistance with the British and New Zealand SAS; GSG9, Delta. Canada -- Training exchanges with the British SAS, GSG9, GIGN and Delta. Japan -- Training exchanges with the British SAS, GSG9, Israel. Singapore -- Training exchanges with the British SAS, GSG9, Israel and India. Hong Kong -- Training exchanges with the British SAS, SBS, GIGN, GSG9 and Royal Dutch Marines. Indonesia -- Training exchanges with the GSG9 and British SAS. Philippines -- Training exchanges with the British and Australian SAS, US and Israel. Pakistan -- Training exchanges with the British SAS. Sri Lanka -- Training exchanges with the British SAS. Malaysia -- Training exchanges with the British SAS. Honduras -- Training exchanges with the US. Ecuador -- Training exchanges with Israel. Chile -- Training exchanges with the GSG9, Israel and South Africa. Saudi Arabia -- Training exchanges with the GIGN, GSG9 and US. Bahrain -- Training exchanges with the British SAS and GSG9. Jordan -- Training exchanges with the British SAS. Oman -- Training exchanges with the British SAS. Tunisia -- Training exchanges with the GIGN and US. Morocco -- Training exchanges with the GIGN and British SAS. Sudan -- Training exchanges with the British SAS, Egypt and US. Egypt -- Training exchanges or assistance with the GSG9, GIGN and US. See Leroy Thompson, The Rescuers, op. cit.

counter-terrorist forces. Such experiences greatly enhanced the professional development of both Wegener and Beckwith, founders of their countries' counter-terrorist units.

Nowhere has international co-operation been more obvious than in the counter-terrorist operations themselves, and most emphatically in hostage rescue missions. In the main cases studied, which include several of the major hostage rescue operations undertaken in recent times, the assistance provided to individual national forces by the presence, advice, operational and technical support and moral reinforcement of other countries has been seen repeatedly. The appearance of Wegener as an 'observer' with the SAS in London, in May, 1980 and the previous assistance given by the SAS to GSG9 during the Mogadishu rescue stand out in this regard. The question remains: what areas might allow for further development of training, attachment, exchange and operational co-operation and in what ways could such development be facilitated?

In exchanges and attachments it seems clear that while special forces, responsible for counter-terrorism are generally small, their highly specialised skills appear to lend great scope for attachments, and perhaps even more for exchanges as a means of improving the international response to terrorism. Saudi Arabia is currently reaping the benefit of West Germany's skills in counter-terrorist operations through the secondment of Wegener and a number of his officers who are organizing, equipping and training Saudi CT

forces.⁸⁵¹ Exchanges are probably more acceptable to lesser powers, while attachments can be seen as useful at all levels as noted, throughout this paper. This subject will be covered more thoroughly when political factors are more fully discussed before the conclusion of this chapter.

Training would also appear to need improvement. The deployment of small numbers of specialists is far less expensive than military units such as air force squadrons and army battalions. Such training, while not without the potential for embarrassment on occasion, has been and could continue to be done without great fanfare, and far from the public limelight. Greater exposure to other countries and their forces, to the personalities involved, their standard operational procedures and their equipment, can hardly fail to provide the stimulus for more effective operational co-operation when, and if, required. Moreover, such training should normally lead to greater understanding and sympathy among the allied and friendly forces and the individuals who comprise them. In the case of sophisticated friendly forces, such training could also be an incentive to modify and improve the structure and doctrine of counter-terrorist forces, as well as the means to compare the advantages of various types of weapons, tactics, organization and equipment. The benefits are evident in the numerous training

⁸⁵¹"German Experts To Establish Saudi CT Unit," Defense and Foreign Affairs Daily, 12 May, 1987. This article states that Wegener and five other officers will be spending three years assisting the Saudis to organize a CT unit similar to the GSG9. See also "UN considers its own army to intervene early in world crisis," The Toronto Star, 2 February, 1992. According to this article there is a little known provision in the UN Charter, Article 43, which describes a standing army under UN command. This could arguably include an international CT, force should the need arise.

attachments and exchanges between the American Special Forces and the SAS, particularly as Beckwith closely followed SAS training methodology and organization when he commanded Delta Force. In all of these areas, joint training should add to that potential international co-operation 'on the day,' if and when, increasingly sophisticated international terrorism is to elicit an increasingly sophisticated and co-ordinated international military response.

The foregoing is not intended to minimize the serious obstacles that enhanced co-operation would likely bring to the fore, which are largely as a result of political factors. However, the fact remains that the most fundamental constraints to co-operation among national special forces combatting terrorism are political considerations, to which this paper will now turn.

Political Considerations

Armed forces, even special elite units, serve political masters who have concerns beyond those which are strictly related to the employment of effective military force. Preparation to combat terrorism, if it occurs at all, does not happen against the background of a tabula rasa, but rather in the context of a complex national and international environment. That environment limits the responses governments are willing to make to the international terrorist challenge.

As seen in this paper, terrorism is a political act with political objectives in mind, even if the exact nature of those goals are, at times, unclear. It is not surprising

then that many of the factors affecting responses to terrorism are of a political stripe.

Terrorist acts are also usually spectacular, short-lived and aimed at quite specific objectives. They attract considerable attention at the time of their occurrence after which national political life returns to normal. During a terrorist incident, governments are forced to focus inordinate interest on the event but are, generally, only too pleased to be able to return to more routine concerns of government when the crisis is over.

In addition, national governments have differing perceptions of terrorism: some governments actually support some terrorist organizations. Most, however, denounce the terrorism phenomenon and many of these are, have been, or might well become the targets of terrorists. A successfully co-ordinated approach to terrorism depends on these states agreeing to a concerted response to terrorism. But since the states are very divergent, depending on the extent to which they feel themselves threatened, they will show varying degrees of zeal in attempting to defeat that threat.

The United States is clearly more concerned than the former Soviet Union on how to deal with terrorism, however, this may change in the near future.⁸⁵² Likewise, middle powers such as Great Britain, France and Germany perceive the problem in

⁸⁵²Lardner Jr. George, "Cold War Adversaries Discuss Co-operation; International Terrorism Said to Be Most Likely Target of Any CIA-KGB Joint Operation," The Washington Post, 13 November, 1990, see also "Cloak and Flowers," The New York Times, 6 October, 1991. This latter article notes that the CIA and the KGB "could team up to combat terrorism."

quite different ways from that of virtually untargetted states such as China. The varying degrees of urgency felt by other states in the world community range from the deep concern of countries in exposed positions, such as Israel, to the unruffled calm of countries such as Finland or New Zealand.

There are a great many political barriers to obtaining a co-operative effort on the issue of terrorism in an international state system as complex and varied as it is today. A heightened perception of threat will bring strident calls from one capital for an international response of great sophistication to terrorism. Yet, another capital with no perceived terrorist threat will have little interest in the problem and will be occupied with quite different priorities and concerns. Into this already complex situation comes the further obstacle that the Western, often former colonial, powers are frequently the major targets of international terrorism. Any international co-ordinated response involving Third World countries may well involve delicate issues of sovereignty with recently independent countries, or those in a neo-colonial relationship with a developed nation. Even among allied or friendly countries, the differing levels of national power may cause governments to be extremely wary of unequal relationships which can become, or already are, domestic political issues. This potential political quagmire lies ready to undermine decisive international co-operation in combatting terrorism.

There is another option in dealing with terrorism that involves a dramatically different approach from the reactive, frequently military and international courses so far

discussed. Instead of dealing with the symptoms, individual states, as well as the international community, could concentrate harder on solving the deep and underlying cause of terrorism which would undermine the raison d'etre of terrorist organizations and acts. Unfortunately the present problems giving rise to terrorism, on the international scene, are extremely deep rooted and unresponsive to either a general panacea or to rapid ad hoc solutions. Such problems resist attempts at easy fixes. The Palestinian situation bears dramatic witness to this state of affairs on the international scene, however, recent events indicate a glimmer of hope.⁸⁵³ The national terrorism phenomena in places such as Northern Ireland, the Basque country, India and elsewhere offer continuous proof that the conditions from which terrorism thrives are not easily remedied. Hence, it seems clear that the international community, as well as individual states, will continue to place emphasis on dealing with the manifestations of terrorism rather than root causes. Most Third World states, often guarding their newly-won sovereignty, will probably remain reluctant to enter into long-term agreements aimed at combating terrorism, particularly where such accords place them in easily criticized public postures alongside Western powers. The hostage-taking incidents described in this paper have elicited some co-operation among both Western and Third World states. Although such efforts have resulted in quite close and longer lasting co-operation among Western and Western-leaning countries in some respect, they have spurred little

⁸⁵³ Bob Hepburn, "Mideast peace deal still far off, Baker says," The Toronto Star, 19 October, 1991.

follow up in concrete long-term agreements between the Western powers and the Third World states.

This is not to say, however, that no Western-Third World co-operation is possible. Terrorism now affects many Third World states, a situation that may require these Third World nationals to deploy much needed resources in order to increase their own security and intelligence capabilities, as well as to create counter-terrorist forces by themselves. Some states already involved in this rather painful process have been mentioned in this study, and there is no doubt that the costs in terms of lost development opportunities may have a negative political spin-off. This is due to the re-allocation of funds from economic or social development to security and intelligence agencies, in response to a terrorist threat. However, the success of co-operative efforts elsewhere may stimulate Third World governments to greater interest in international co-operation, as may their own domestic, political situations. Co-operation and training with highly respected elite military forces from other, even Western countries, may provide a much needed deterrent against terrorism and outweigh the political costs incurred through such co-operation.

Terrorist operations, like most military operations, seek objectives which are the weak points in the 'enemy' structure. Such 'soft targets' are less likely to be found in states whose special forces are assisted by or include members of internationally reputed elite counter-terrorist forces from abroad. It is clear that the level of terrorism has lessened in those countries whose troops have received training from the SAS for example.

Be that as it may, it is clear that political factors have a direct impact on the potential for military co-operation on an international level for countering terrorism. Bearing in mind the foregoing political considerations, this paper will now turn to ascertaining what possible international co-operative measures could be implemented in the four areas identified earlier in this chapter.

Intelligence

From the Western perspective, there are two tiers where co-operation in intelligence is possible. The first is inter-allied co-operation, a long-standing arrangement generally functioning smoothly, and on an often routine basis. The second, much more problematical perspective, involves Western relationships in the intelligence area with countries of the Third World. The difference between these two tiers is naturally enough based upon two factors, the perception of the threat, and Western assessments of the degree of professionalism and capability present in many Third World intelligence services.

Nor is the two-tiered system a straightforward one. Western powers have varying levels of links with different parts of the world, the United States being particularly strong in Latin America, while Great Britain benefits from strong links with many Commonwealth and Middle East countries. Even within the Western alliances there are somewhat different perceptions of threats emanating from various quarters. This is of course particularly true between NATO members on the one hand, and Third World countries on the other.

In democratic alliances such as NATO, intelligence co-operation with many Third World countries is often questioned because of their poor human rights records. The resulting criticism from influential Western groups may affect both the level of co-operation from Western intelligence services and the kind of assistance those services may be willing to provide Third World states.

Even among friendly, but not necessarily allied countries, there are often political difficulties in the area of counter-terrorism intelligence co-operation. Intelligence gathering in the Western world has long been perceived as an unseemly, if not actually sordid, activity. Espionage, in particular, has had negative media coverage although the need for it has, in this century, usually been understood by governments. Western capitals remain highly sensitive to the potential political costs of flawed covert intelligence-gathering operations. They are reluctant to enter such activities without assurances that such embarrassments will be unlikely. Information exchanges, even between allies in wartime, have been beset with problems which reflect the intensely sensitive nature of intelligence gathering and use. In peacetime, it is an even more sensitive activity. A shared perception of a threat in an alliance can aid immensely in furthering co-operation. Major powers, active in intelligence gathering, while reluctant to share their information, are still anxious to have alliance co-operation in dealing with terrorism. Smaller powers, which are less likely to be active in intelligence gathering, are also eager to have access to information, the only source for which may be a major allied state. Hence co-operation may develop, in part, as a result of the confidence gained

through the exchange of intelligence even though this is largely provided by the greater state.

The extremely delicate nature of various responses to terrorism further complicates this already complex and shifting relationship among allies. States sharing a roughly similar view of the balance of power requirements in Europe may differ greatly on matters relating to international terrorism. Compromise of sources and information, fear of third-party links, and the general frustration of highly threatened governments, with what they perceive as insufficient activity of generally allied but less threatened states, all lead to lesser co-operation in counter-terrorism than in other spheres.

Highly threatened countries, even when they are not formally allied to one another, may still be able and willing to forge close links in their counter-terrorist operations. A good example is provided by Germany and Italy, who while far from being close security allies, as Great Britain and the United States, nonetheless co-operate effectively in this field.

Allied states which lack a common threat perception, may have great difficulty in mounting co-operative counter-terrorist efforts. Italy and the United States, for example, differ on the seriousness and nature and degree of the challenge, which cripples their efforts to co-operate.

Forward-Basing

As pointed out in our case studies, the timely arrival of counter-terrorist forces is essential for success in hostage-rescue missions. Because home-based special forces

may need lengthy periods of time to deploy to the site of a terrorist activity, lives, as well as the potential for success, are threatened. In such cases, the threatened government will obviously try to gain the use of a deployment site as close as is safely possible to the terrorist activity. Unfortunately, political and military considerations make such arrangements highly difficult to bring about. Western European allies of the United States, for example, feel that a visible American anti-terrorist presence, or the basing of such units in their national territory will more likely result in being targetted themselves by terrorist organizations.

Given the high level of terrorist activity related to Middle Eastern issues, countries in that region, although generally favourable to the United States, nonetheless, believe that the political disadvantages of allowing the stationing of American military forces, particularly counter-terrorist forces, far outweigh any political advantages that they might bring. This is true in other parts of the world as well. It should be noted that counter-terrorist operations are not the only type of military activity at an international level similarly stymied. The anti-drug struggle in Colombia, Bolivia, Turkey and other parts of the world have experienced similar obstacles. These obstacles exist because of the commonly held view that such deployments, involving states of power, are related to the issue of national sovereignty. All countries are jealous of their sovereignty because their status, as independent states, could be jeopardized. Raymond Aron suggests that no country can be sovereign unless it has population, territory, and government control over that

population and territory.⁸⁵⁴ If any of these three elements are missing, the state is not considered sovereign. This is due to the fact that should the state not have the power to make its writ run throughout its territory, the country in question does not have the right to claim equality with other sovereign states making up the international system. Since international recognition is an essential attribute of statehood, its lack can lead to questions of the gravest kind. Nowhere is this concern more telling than in those countries, either newly independent from colonial rule or those that find themselves in relationships with super-powers or great powers which threaten their claim to sovereign state status.

The inability to defend oneself against internal and external threats is the prime example of the sort of issue which threatens countries' attempts to assert their sovereignty. A country which must appeal to others for help opens itself to question. While developed nations with long histories have little reason to worry over such matters, the Third World, however, abounds with states whose sovereignty is shaky and whose regimes are likewise. The insecurity of such governments prevents them from entertaining requests for forward-basing arrangements from major powers. If one adds to this other political factors, such as the possible accusation of being the pawn of a greater power, it becomes clear that only great benefits, in other areas of national concern, can make such agreements palatable. Since such a government probably would not perceive the terrorist threat

⁸⁵⁴ See Raymond Aron, Paix et guerre entre les nations.

with the same concern as does the threatened country seeking the forward-basing arrangement, the potential for such arrangements is limited.

Conversely, alliances or other arrangements such as the Commonwealth, may ease the problem greatly. If defence agreements already exist, or if a greater power has forces already stationed in a Third World country, the addition of small groups of specialist troops, especially where their deployment avoids public exposure, may well cause little difficulty for a receiving government. Formal alliances have long included agreements on stationing of forces which could facilitate special deployments. Nonetheless, the negative experiences of some governments caused by lack of consultation, separate decision-making and flawed operations have led to the reluctance of even close allies to accept such deployments in their territory.

A number of technical, administrative and operational problems exist and, therefore, complicate the political dimension. They include the status of specialist forces, rotation of personnel, sub-units or units and the security of personnel. The greatest risk, however, remains a political one. While the US success in deploying Special Forces' assets to Great Britain demonstrates that such arrangements are possible, Washington's lack of success in the Middle East and elsewhere underscores the political difficulties involved. The GB-US accord reflects the similarity of these two countries' perception of the terrorist threat, as well as their shared ideological views.

Despite the above, it is conceivable that in a number of ways a more subtle and flexible type of arrangement might bear some fruit. In countries where the dispatching state already has facilities, as mentioned before, the stationing of a small force might not raise undue alarm. Both states, party to the agreement, may have to remain flexible, and may even have to turn a blind eye to certain sensitive aspects of such a stationing arrangement. Generally though, there is no reason why, in some states at least, such teams could be deployed under some sort of 'cover' arrangements. An additional benefit of such arrangements for the forward-based personnel would be the enhanced security provided by an appropriate cover story which purports to explain their presence.

CONCLUSION

Terrorism, as it is known today, is the continuation of a long historical experience going back many hundreds of years. However, modern terrorism appears much more complex and certainly more widespread, than any historical example of the phenomenon known before our time. Issues likely to cause fanaticism have rarely existed in larger numbers than in the present era and the increasing ease of communications have added to the special nature of the post World War II and post colonial world. This has resulted in the internationalization of the objectives and the activities of terrorists. Even where terrorist objectives remain essentially national in scope, there is a tendency for such groups to link themselves with their equivalent movements in other countries. In addition alliance relationships, inter-dependence, and neo-colonial relationships tend to make the terrorists' enemies as frequently foreign as home-grown.

Historically, the reactions of governments to terrorism were national and involved resources common to the state apparatus of most countries. Currently, the interstate nature of terrorist activities has called for a growing level of co-operation among countries facing this threat. Special Forces, whose modern examples grew largely out of the Second World War experience were already in place when modern international terrorism came to the fore. Such forces appeared to governments as the most likely instrument to take on the sometimes delicate role needed in counter-terrorist operations. Many recent operations have given dramatic evidence of both the utility of such forces and the difficulties surrounding their use.

This thesis has produced some insights into past, present and conceivable future uses to which these forces might be employed in a counter-terrorist context. In so doing, this paper has focussed on the experiences of Great Britain and the United States in this domain. The long discussion of British colonial and post-colonial military experience in low-intensity operations has demonstrated, not only the history and value of special forces, but also the long term need for readily available and adequately configured units, with good communications, imbued with a co-operative spirit, and supported by an effective and rapidly available system of gathering and disseminating intelligence.

The United States' experience both at home and abroad in a series of small wars, has shown the same. In addition, while Washington's efforts in this area have been rather less successful historically than that of London, most lessons are viewed in, essentially, the same manner on both English-speaking sides of the Atlantic. The British, however, emphasized the human element in counter-terrorist operations, while in contrast the US tendency appears to have favoured high technology and sophisticated equipment as the key means to success.

The discussions above, as well as the lessons learnt from Israeli and West German operations have emphasized repeatedly the potential advantages to be gained through co-operative international efforts. The analysis of these highly diverse experiences tends to point to areas where international

co-operation can assist counter-terrorist forces, and can be especially advantageous during hostage-rescue missions. It is concluded, therefore, that intelligence, forward-basing, secure communications, and attachment and training assistance can provide a significant advantage when terrorist action demands an effective counter-terrorist response.

More difficult still, than these more technical considerations, have been the political ones. International co-operation, while significant, has in some respect remained limited in both scope and effectiveness. Such co-operation has only come about in the face of considerable pressures. The most significant pressures against international co-operative efforts have been political. From this study one thing has come out quite clearly: the greatest progress in international co-operation has occurred between countries who share similar views of the threat posed by international terrorism.

Threat perception is crucial to an understanding of the likelihood of future inter-governmental co-operation to combat global terrorism. Governments' views on the extent to which they should be concerned by the terrorist problem may vary greatly, and the countries least likely to be targets tend to be the least anxious to assist.

As has been shown, well established networks exist to acquire, analyse and share intelligence and there is scope for employing and expanding these networks in the context of counter-terrorism. A number of allied and friendly governments are already involved in forward-basing, and there could be some further scope for expansion of such links.

Suggestions and comments have been made as to the advantages of attached and exchanged personnel which, if implemented, could assist with the job at hand. Equally important, communication problems are far from insurmountable given the impetus to overcome them.

Again and again, however, the likelihood of considerably enhanced co-operation runs afoul of political constraints and reality. International co-operation in the employment of elite counter-terrorist forces, particularly in hostage-rescue missions, is not and cannot be the complete and final answer to the international terrorist dilemma. It has, however, already given signs of its efficiency under certain circumstances in providing timely interventions to combat terrorist activities. It is far from clear whether the political will exists, in a sufficient number of important countries, to overcome the constraints noted in the body of this paper, which act against international co-operation in this field. If such a will would become manifest, this study would suggest much could be done. If not, one will probably continue to merely work around the edges.

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APPENDIX I

The Iranian Embassy - 16 Princes' Gate, London

(ALL TIMES APPROXIMATE)

Date/Time	Terrorist Activity	Police, Government, Military Responses or Other Activities
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DAY I
30 April

1130	Iranian Embassy Staff and visitors become aware of a commotion at the entrance of the Embassy. Member of the Embassy Mr. Moheb telephoned the local police authorities telling them that the Embassy was under assault. PC Lock taken hostage.	2 Iranian employees escape from Embassy.
1135		Members of the Diplomatic Protection Group (A11) arrive.
1142		Scotland Yard receives a report that a police officer had been seized by gunmen and was being held inside and that shots had been fired. ¹
1209	A total of 26 people are taken hostage by 6	Deputy Assistant Commissioner John

1

FBIS 42, REUTER: "BRITISH POLICEMAN 'HOSTAGE' IN IRANIAN EMBASSY," 30 APRIL, 1980, 1146 GMT - First information indicated that "A BRITISH POLICEMAN WAS FORCED INSIDE THE IRANIAN EMBASSY...BY A MAN ARMED WITH A RIFLE." Further information from "A RECEPTIONIST AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS, NEXT DOOR TO THE EMBASSY, SAID "A WINDOW CLEANER BURST IN HERE AND SAID HE HAD HEARD SHOTS FIRED FROM INSIDE THE EMBASSY."

terrorists.² The group called itself Martyr Muhieideen Al Nassir. (Named after a PFLA leader executed in 1962 by the Shah's government).

Dellow arrives to take charge of the incident. Police make their first contact with the gunmen.

Dellow makes an initial reconnaissance and receives reports from the police officers who had taken the initial call.

Tactical Command Post (Alpha Control) is set up immediately.

Home Office Crisis Centre becomes operational. Police establish contact with terrorists.

1300-1350

Dellow sends informal request to SAS to give advanced warning of possible³ deployment. DII (Blue Berets) Metropolitan Police marksmen arrive and take up positions around the Embassy.

Surrounding streets are cordoned off and an immediate Sterile Area set up.

1309

Police establish that Constable Trevor

²FBIS 65, "TEHRAN REPORTS IRANIAN EMBASSY STAFF TAKEN HOSTAGE IN LONDON," 30 APRIL, 1980, 1230 GMT. This report stated that "ABOUT 1 HOUR AGO AN ARMED MAN ENTERED THE BUILDING OF THE EMBASSY OF THE IRANIAN ISLAMIC REPUBLIC IN LONDON AND AFTER TAKING CONTROL OF IT TOOK THE STAFF AS HOSTAGES. SCOTLAND YARD POLICE HAVE GIVEN THE NUMBER OF ASSAILANTS [sic] AS THREE."

³See J.A. Dellow, "The London Perspective on International Terrorism," in the Proceedings of the 10th Annual Symposium on the Role of Behavioral Science in Physical Security, Outthinking the Terrorist: An International Challenge, April 23-24, 1985, p. 46.

Lock, was taken
hostage while on
guard at the Embassy
and is unharmed.⁴

- 1330 Dellow asks formally
the Home Office⁵ for
SAS deployment.
- 1350 Salem Towfigh better
known as OAN reads the
demands to the hostages
and tells them that they
are members of the
Democratic Revolutionary
Front for the Liberation
of Arabistan. Initial British
Security Service
appreciation of the
situation of the
Embassy seizure
speculated that an
Arabistani separatist
organization⁶ is
responsible.
- 1425 The Newspaper "The Guardian"
makes initial contact with
the terrorists by telex.
Dialogue cut short.⁷ Members of C13 Anti
Terrorist squad and
the Metropolitan
Special Patrol Group
arrives.
- 1435 Police receive the
terrorist's demands
for the release of 91
prisoners
incarcerated in Iran.
- 1445 BBC is contacted by
terrorists to explain that
Cordons begin to be
put up by police.

⁴William Borders, "3 Gunmen In London Seize Iran's
Embassy," The New York Times, 1 May, 1980. Although this
article was published the following day it asserted that the
terrorists "have the pistol, thought to be a .38-caliber
revolver, that they took from the captured guard, Constable
Lock, a member of Scotland Yard's special Diplomatic Patrol
Group." This was not so as Lock remained armed after only a
cursory search by terrorists. Information such as this
getting into the hands of the terrorists could have
jeopardized the lives of Lock and the hostages.

⁵Dellow, op. cit., p. 46.

⁶FBIS 57, REUTER, "FURTHER ON 'HOSTAGE' IN LONDON
IRANIAN EMBASSY," 30 APRIL, 1980, 1341 GMT. This news piece
reported "AT LEAST TWO AND POSSIBLY THREE GUNMEN" had forced
their way into the Iranian Embassy. "SCOTLAND YARD POLICE
HEADQUARTERS COULD NOT CONFIRM A REPORT THAT THE GUNMEN WERE
IRAQIS. 'WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON THEIR NATIONALITIES,' A
SPOKESMAN SAID."

⁷REUTER: "SEIZURE CLAIMED BY ARABISTAN IRANIANS," 30
APRIL, 1980, 1411 GMT. News item reported that "A POLICE
SPOKESMAN SAID THE PEOPLE HOLDING THE EMBASSY WANTED THE
WORLD TO KNOW THEY WERE IRANIANS FROM ARABISTAN, SOUTH IRAN.
THEY DEMANDED THAT THIS POINT BE MADE CLEAR -- THEY WANTED
THE WORLD TO KNOW."

they wanted 91 prisoners released. One of the female hostages Freida Mozafarian becomes ill and a doctor is requested.

Police offer to take her for medical attention.

1500

SAS operations group are notified on site.⁸

1520/1545

Police have a press conference and give details of the gunmen and their hostages.

1620

Embassy secretary Freida Mozafarian released from Embassy⁹ and rushed to hospital.

1730

Embassy hostage Chris Cramer sends a list of terrorist demands via telex to the BBC.

1745

Karkouti, a Syrian journalist telephones BBC.¹⁰

⁸ Dellow, op. cit., p. 46. The SAS operations group's task is to make contact with the incident commander who in turn, if properly prepared, is aware of the CRWT requirements and will have taken steps to provide the SAS the necessary areas for the SAS planning and intelligence cells and holding areas for the CRWT. Dellow has stated that all this was done during the siege.

⁹ FBIS 91, LONDON PRESS ASSOCIATION "IRANIAN LONDON EMBASSY GUNMEN RELEASE WOMAN HOSTAGE," 30 APRIL, 1980, 1540 GMT. This news excerpt said that a "HOSTAGE [was] RELEASED BY THE CAPTORS. IT WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY KNOWN WHETHER SHE HAD BEEN INJURED DURING HER SHORT IMPRISONMENT. AN AMBULANCE SPOKESMAN SAID SHE WAS 'IN A COLLAPSED STATE' AS SHE WAS TAKEN TO ST. STEPHEN'S HOSPITAL IN FULHAM." This same news excerpt reported that "AN IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN IN TEHRAN ACCUSING IRAQI AGENTS OF TAKING OVER THE EMBASSY." This Iraqi implication continued as "THE SPOKESMAN, NASSIR-E-SADAT SALAMI, CLAIMED THAT THE THREE GUNMEN HAD STORMED THE EMBASSY SAYING THEY WERE ARABS FROM THE SOUTHERN IRANIAN OIL-PRODUCING PROVINCE, KHUZESTAN." He said further that "IRAN EXPECTED SUCH ACTIONS AFTER PRO-IRAQI GUNMEN TRIED TO ASSASSINATE THE IRANIAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN BEIRUT 10 DAYS AGO."

¹⁰ FBIS 94, "LONDON: IRANIAN EMBASSY GUNMEN DEMAND RELEASE OF 91 ARABS IN IRAN," 30 APRIL, 1980, 1641 GMT.

(Footnote Continued)

- 1802 Police report that the terrorists are from Khuzestan (Arabistan).
- 1941 Cramer transmits a second message to the BBC. OAN says if the prisoners are not released by 1200 1 May, embassy and hostages will be blown up.
- 2330 A call is put through to Tehran to the Iranian Foreign Ministry from the Iranian hostages seeking conciliation. Iranian Foreign Minister returns call and tells hostages that they will be martyrs if they die. SAS CRW teams arrive.

POINTS OF NOTE - DAY I

By the end of the first day, it was assessed by the police that the hostage-taking could last a few days particularly as the terrorists were behaving very calmly. Police authorities were as yet not certain that the terrorists had any type of explosives or grenades in their possession.

In early discussions between the police and the SAS, the latter did not favour an early rescue operation¹¹ because the SAS wished to acquire as much information and intelligence on the Iranian embassy including the location of terrorists and

(Footnote Continued)

According to this report "THE CALL WAS TAKEN BY THE SENIOR DUTY EDITOR, MIKE BROWN AT THE WORLD SERVICE HEADQUARTERS IN BUSH HOUSE IN THE STRAND." It was further stated that "THE CALL WAS MADE BY ONE OF THE HOSTAGES, ...MUSTAFA KARKOUTI," according to Brown, "THE GUNMEN HAVE ASKED FOR 91 ARAB PRISONERS IN WHAT THEY DESCRIBED AS ARABIC LAND TO BE RELEASED FROM JAIL."

¹¹Dellow, op. cit., p. 46. According to Dellow "the military commander will, with urgency, prepare an immediate action plan for use should a sudden demand be made. The SAS planning group then, in the light of intelligence and the overall police strategy, commences preparing plans that will allow them to respond to a whole range of options should they be required to do so by the police commander."

hostages. As for the hostages, police authorities were attempting, with the assistance of two Iranians who fortuitously escaped as the gunmen moved in, to learn their identities.

ON-SITE COMMAND, CONTROL AND COMMUNICATIONS

It is obvious that the handling of the seizure of the Iranian embassy required intimate co-operation and consultation on site between the police, the military and the British Security Service and in turn with the Home Secretary. This co-operation quickly evolved into a morning meeting on site which was chaired by the Metropolitan Police-Incident Commander -- John A. Dellow, with representatives of the various departments and police branches involved. Dellow has commented that:

On the first evening of the siege I obtained a blanket authority from Government to commit the SAS on my own initiative in the event of a sudden deterioration of the situation, when there would be no time to request formal second authority. During the siege I advised Government on several occasions of the criterion that I would apply in requesting the commitment of the military, and on each occasion Government accepted this.¹²

The control apparatus on site consisted of a senior representative of the Home Office, the SAS commander, a senior British Security Service representative and the Incident Commander. A field telephone was installed in a first-floor room of the embassy to allow the police to talk to the terrorists.

¹²Ibid.

DAY II
1 May

Date/Time	Terrorist Activity	Police, Government, Military Responses or Other Activities
0620	Karkouti telephones the BBC and says that the threat of killing the Iranian hostages remains unchanged. Hostage, Chris Cramer becomes ill.	Police are advised of an SAS contingency plan to rescue the hostages. In preparation for such an event all media and unauthorized persons are evacuated from the area behind the Embassy.
1000		At the Albert Hall Dellow holds a second press conference and denies SAS presence in the vicinity of the Embassy.
1120	Terrorists release Cramer. ¹³	Police interview Cramer and glean vitally needed intelligence about the terrorists' numbers, arms and whereabouts of the hostages.
1145	Access to Ethiopian Embassy initially given by Ambassador.	Police request postponement of deadline. OAN agrees. Police release terrorist statement to members of press corps. It was the intelligence view that the terrorists and their hostages were being kept in

¹³FBIS 50, "IRAN: SITUATION AT IRANIAN EMBASSY IN LONDON," 2 MAY, 1980. This report stated "BBC EMPLOYEE CHRIS CRAMER IS RELEASED FROM THE EMBASSY JUST BEFORE THE NOON DEADLINE AND A SCOTLAND YARD SPOKESMAN SAYS THIS HAS CREATED AN 'ATMOSPHERE OF GOOD WILL.'" Furthermore, "PRESIDENT BANI-SADR RECEIVES A MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER THATCHER EXPRESSING CONCERN FOR THE HOSTAGES, CALLING THIS INFRINGEMENT OF DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY A 'REPUGNANT ACT' AND PLEDGING [Sic] TO 'DECISIVELY COUNTER IT.'" See also Tony Conyers, "Thatcher gives pledge to Iran Government," The Daily Telegraph, London, 2 MAY, 1980. This report states "The text of a personal message from Mrs. Thatcher to President Bani Sadr of Iran might have been kept a diplomatic secret had they not been released first by the Iranian authorities in Teheran."

the Ethiopian
Embassy side of the
Iranian Embassy.

1200	Deadline set by the hostage-takers passes.	Police have control of all the Embassy communications. Messages can only be passed on police field telephones.
1240	OAN phones in a communique giving a new deadline of the 1400 hours 1 May. ¹⁴	Police negotiator Superintendent Fred Luff passes the communique to the press. This information is forwarded from the Home Office Crisis Centre to the Foreign Office to the Iranian government with the concerns of Prime Minister Thatcher.
1400	Second deadline passes.	
1500	Pro-Khomeini demonstration occurs - and some demonstrators arrested.	Police request that the media exercise discretion i.e. self-imposed censorship regarding police activities.
2330	Ethiopian Embassy evacuated and access given to British authorities.	(This access to both buildings enabled the BSS and SAS to set up technical monitoring devices.

POINTS OF NOTE - DAY II

By the second day of the Embassy take-over the first operational intelligence requirement was to gather as much information as possible on what was going on inside the embassy. This was vital as the BSS were attempting to produce an intelligence picture so that the SAS could prepare

¹⁴FBIS 53, "LONDON: GUNMEN EXTEND DEADLINE TO 1300 GMT," 1 May, 1980, 1156 GMT. This news report states that the terrorists, "EXTENDED THEIR DEADLINE TO KILL THE CAPTIVES AND BLOW UP THE BUILDING TO 2 PM." Furthermore the statements underlines that, "AFTER 2 PM ALL RESPONSIBBILITY [SIC] FALLS ON THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT. IF THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT WILL ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEY ARE NEGOTIATING WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, THAT WILL EXTEND THE TIME."

an assault plan. It appears, however, that the police authorities (and in turn the Incident Commander) were concerned at this time not to risk disturbing the captors. To monitor all activities around the embassy premises, a closed circuit television (CCTV) was installed in such a manner to cover all the exits and entrances to the building.

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Police authorities gained access into No. 15 Princes' Gate. However, the other building adjacent to the Iranian embassy, No. 17 Princes' Gate, belonged to the Ethiopian embassy. After a senior level government official pleaded for access, a clearance to use the Ethiopian embassy was granted at approximately noon on the second day of the hostage taking.¹⁵ The Ethiopian ambassador reflected upon his decision and argued that his staff occupy the building in spite of the ongoing sensitive and potentially dangerous situation. This request by the ambassador was rescinded when during the second day the terrorists threatened to blow up the Iranian embassy if their demands were not met by the British authorities. On that notice, the Ethiopian ambassador was persuaded to evacuate his embassy's premises and grant access to the British police just before midnight. While this international negotiation was continuing, plans were made for the technical penetrations -- the placing of listening and visual devices in the building where the hostages were being held.

¹⁵Discussion with a British Government official, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada 31 March, 1982.

It should be underlined that the skills of observation and technical penetration¹⁶ developed by the police and the BSS were of great intelligence value. By this time, through the analysis of the sounds and lights from within the embassy, it was believed that the hostages were concentrated on the second floor. However, movement was detected between and on the third and fourth floors and from there downstairs to the field telephone on the first floor.

An intelligence break came just after noon on the second day with the release of Christopher Cramer who was suffering from a stomach ailment. His release gave the police detailed information about the activities within the embassy and said that there were five terrorists although he was not positive that he had seen them all as other hostages had mentioned a sixth one. His information corroborated the police analysis that the hostages and their captors were concentrated on the second floor. Furthermore, Cramer was able to describe some of the weapons carried by the terrorists. These were two Browning pistols, a revolver and a number of grenades.¹⁷ The exact whereabouts of the captives also became known. The male hostages were held in an office on the second floor while the women were kept in a small office at the top of the stairs.

No. 15 Princes' Gate became the base for technical penetrations into the Iranian embassy. Listening devices

¹⁶Robert McGowan, et al., "The Day of the S.A.S.," Daily Express Special Edition, p. 8.

¹⁷Chris Cramer and Sim Harris, Hostage, pp. 57-62. Cramer notes his concern over his debriefing by the police.

began in the early evening of the second day, painstaking work because of the interruptions caused by the noise level produced by the penetrations themselves.

As noted in the chronology for the second day the deadline passed. However, shortly before midnight a terrorist threatened to throw out the field telephone. At the same time, two new demands were forwarded to police authorities:

- 1) that a representative of the BBC should be brought to the embassy to collect the demands of the terrorists.
- 2) that the demands of the terrorists be published.

The negotiators maintained that in return for any concessions from the British police the British and female captives must be released.

The SAS were prepared to launch an assault on the embassy, if necessary by 2000 hours. If the assault option was to be taken, it would have to be after dark and preferably late at night in order to catch the captors off-guard.

Date/Time	Terrorist Activity	Police, Government, Military Responses or Other Activities
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Day III
2 May

0830		Food is sent into Embassy.
0900	OAN threatens to shoot the hostages. PC Lock tells the police that	Police say OAN's request to talk to the media is

a shooting will take place unless the terrorist leader (OAN) is given the opportunity to talk to the press.

impossible. OAN then demands to speak to Tony Crabb of the BBC.

0930

Crabb is taken by police to talk to OAN. On arrival Superintendent Ray Tucker escorts him to the Embassy and talks to Sim Harris one of the hostages.

1250

Food sent into Embassy.

1500

Tony Crabb arrives. OAN demands a bus to take his men, the hostages and an Arab Ambassador to Heathrow. Non-Iranian hostages would be released. Upon arrival at an unspecified country in the Middle East the rest of the hostages and the Ambassador would be released. These demands were to be negotiated by the Ambassadors of Iraq, Jordan and Algeria, on OAN's behalf, with the British government.

Demands are rejected and no public reply is issued. British government informally approaches the representatives of Syria, Jordan, Algeria and Kuwait to see any Ambassadors would visit the Iranian Embassy to talk to the gunmen.

POINTS OF NOTE - DAY III

The complex and time-consuming technical and intelligence effort continued from the early morning on. At approximately 0130 in the morning P.C. Lock was taken to a window at the front of the building by one of his captors and told the police negotiators that the drilling (technical penetration of the walls) must cease or action would be taken against the hostages. Some of the female hostages had heard noises as they were sitting against a wall and drew it to the attention of the terrorists.

The drilling had probably been noticed by the terrorists because the police had so effectively sealed off the embassy

that there was very little noise. In order to provide noise cover, the police arranged for aircraft to fly over the embassy and left a compressor operating in the street behind the embassy. These adjustments to the noise level were probably noticeable to the terrorists as well.¹⁸

At approximately 0800 negotiations were reported to be slow to start again. OAN, was reluctant to resume talking at first as he was angry over the lack of progress by the police in meeting the terrorists' demands. When police negotiators began talking of providing a BBC man to hear his demands he apparently calmed down somewhat.

BBC executive Tony Crabb arrived and had a conversation with OAN and took down some complaints and made observations, some of which were:

- 1) The terrorists complained that the police had used psychological aggression. This referred to the lack of telephone contact with the outside world. OAN also told of the drilling that they had heard during the night hours.
- 2) Dr. Gholan Ali Alfronz the Iranian Chargé d'Affaires appeared at the window and through talking with Crabb, the latter deduced that a

¹⁸Christopher Dobson, et al., "London Becomes The Arab Battleground," Now, 9 May, 1980, p. 41. It has been reported that "For four days before the attack, air traffic control officers had, at the request of the police, brought in airliners on a flight path directly over the Albert Hall to keep up a barrage of noise to disguise the sound of drilling and other preparations being made by the SAS teams." See also "SAS really did roar to the rescue," Soldier 12 January, 1987, p. 13.

fairly comfortable relationship existed between the captors and captives.¹⁹

- 3) Drawing from the media reports it would appear there were no indications of rescue preparations.²⁰

Date/Time	Terrorist Activity	Police, Government, Military Responses or Other Activities
<hr/>		
Day IV		
<u>3 May</u>		
0730		Police contact OAN and attempt to calm him down. Negotiations carry on during the day.
0900		Negotiations described by police as 'very affable'.
1500		Crabb returns for another discussion. Police bargain for release of two of the hostages. In return police promise to broadcast the terrorists' statement.

¹⁹"As violence erupts near the Embassy... USE FORCE SAYS IRAN," The Daily Mail, London, 2 May, 1980. According to this report the Iranian Government had told the Foreign Office "to use force if necessary to end the London Embassy siege."

²⁰Norman Webster, "Gunmen let 2 deadlines pass in London siege," The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 2 May, 1980. This report states "No rescue attempt seems to be contemplated as yet. London's police are well-schooled in the waiting game - approach - based on two famous six-day sieges here in 1975 - and seem to be waiting for time and exhaustion to do the job."

- 2020 Terrorists release Mrs. Kanji.²¹
- 2100 BBC receives terrorists statement and broadcasts it. Food is supplied.
- 2115 Second hostage Ali Guil Ghanzafar is released from the Embassy.²²

POINTS OF NOTE - DAY IV

The first successful listening device began picking up conversations in both English and Farsi at about 0900.

Within three more hours a second technical monitoring device was in operation. As the information began to flow, the Farsi interpreters became inundated and transcribers from other government departments were pressed into service.

The SAS and police and intelligence authorities quickly agreed upon the kind of information needed:

- 1) the aims, intentions and psychological state of the terrorists;
- 2) the level of dissension or cohesion amongst the terrorists.²³

The technical penetrations enabled the police negotiators to discover that the terrorists had psychological and physical dominance over their captives and that there were no indications, as yet, of any disunity amongst the captors.

²¹George Brock, et al., Siege: Six Days at the Iranian Embassy, p. 85.

²²Ibid, p. 87.

²³Interview with a senior SAS officer, London, England, 2 June, 1986.

By late afternoon it was established that the terrorists and hostages were within a well-defined area on the second floor of the embassy. An analysis from sound and other means suggested that the hostages were in a general office with others in a small adjacent room. The command centre for the terrorists appeared to be situated in a small room to the front of the embassy.

In return for the release of Mrs. Kanji, one of the hostages, the police authorities had the original terrorist statement transmitted by the BBC World Service at 2100 hours. In response the terrorists released another hostage just after that hour.

The two hostages Hiyech Sanei Kanji and Ali Guil Ghanzafar were able to provide more information for the intelligence picture. Mrs. Kanji gave the police detailed descriptions of the six terrorists and emphasized that a bond of empathy was developing between the captors and captives. Further, she confirmed that the terrorists were not professional killers but appeared to be well educated and only hoped to put pressure on the Iranian government to accept their demands.

Indications were that the terrorists took turns on guard duty but no specific time pattern was set. According to the released hostages, the terrorist guarding the hostages carried a pistol, the others patrolled the embassy with machine guns and each carried a grenade. There did not appear to be any demolitions or gas masks.

At the time of Mrs. Kanji's release, the male hostages were located on the second floor of the general office and the

women in a small adjacent office. They were not being restrained. Mrs. Kanji further described how P.C. Lock had developed a good rapport with the terrorists and had achieved their respect and confidence.

The terrorists apparently had changes of clothes and occasionally took the opportunity to shower. They took turns praying once at night, in contrast to their captives who prayed all the time and as a group.

As far as Mr. Ali Guil Ghanzafar was concerned he was reluctant to give details and apparently would not assist the police authorities should any prosecution for criminal offences be pressed against the terrorists.

Date/Time	Terrorist Activity	Police, Government Military Responses or Other Activities
<hr/>		
Day V <u>4 May</u>		
0400	Relations between terrorists and hostages becomes hostile.	
1000		Negotiations resume between police and terrorists.
1530		During the afternoon the Foreign Office meets with Arab diplomats from Syria, Kuwait, Jordan and Algeria. Arabs refuse to negotiate with terrorists unless they can offer safe passage. This request is refused by the British government.

2020 A hostage (KARKOUTI) is released by OAN

A total of five hostages released to date.

POINTS OF NOTE - DAY V

In response to the request by the British government for Middle-East mediators the representatives of Kuwait were prepared to assist if Iran was agreeable. The Jordanians would lend assistance under certain conditions and the Syrian and Algerian ambassadors agreed to assist but were disappointed that there was no escape route for the terrorists. Although chances of securing an acceptable mediator were not great, the British government continued the search for suitable candidates among the Arab community in London.

The next hostage to be released, a Syrian journalist, Mustapha Karkouti, (Day 5 at 2020 hours) told the police that the relationship between the captors and captives was volatile and that the terrorists were fed up with the slowness of negotiations. He said that the terrorists would probably surrender if they were guaranteed their safety.

Date/Time	Terrorist Activity	Police, Government, Military Response or Other Activities
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Day VI
5 May

0105	OAN notices a bulge in wall of the Embassy. OAN relocates hostages and terrorists.
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	The bulge is caused by a fibre optics TV operating from the building next door.
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OAN is requested by hostages Harris and Lock for permission to talk to the police negotiators. OAN agrees.

0140	P.C. Lock appears at a window.	
1205	One television network Independent Television News (ITN), breaks police request and sites, unknown to the police authorities, a TV camera to cover the rear area of the Iranian Embassy.	Lock and Harris discuss the situation with Luff and emphasize how critical the situation is inside the Embassy.
1245	The terrorist leader OAN becomes agitated and nervous due in part to the slow progress of the negotiations. In talking to the police OAN tells them that he will kill a hostage in forty-five minutes.	BBC reports continuing discussions between the Foreign Office and the Arab Ambassadors. Relations between hostages and terrorists are breaking down.
1305	An Iranian hostage Lavasani is taken to a room where OAN, Lock and Harris were located.	
1331	Shots are fired. Terrorists have shot a hostage and say they will shoot another. Deadline increased to 1700.	Authorities are uncertain if a hostage is killed. Arab Ambassadors are contacted but their decisions remain unchanged. SAS CRW team are notified and are in readiness at the scene. ²⁴
1645		Police negotiate for an extension and the Commissioner of Police is dispatching a letter to OAN.
1710	ITN camera is fully operational overlooking the back of the Embassy.	Arab Ambassadors suggest a PLO representative as an intermediary.

²⁴Dellow, op, cit., p. 46. He has stated "I would ask to commit his unit [the SAS] only if I considered that hostages were gravely at risk and that an assault and rescue operation was necessary to save life. As the siege progressed, this last matter was defined more specifically to indicate my intention to rescue the hostages if I have evidence of two hostage deaths or more."

FCO rejects the suggestion.

1800 Terrorist leader OAN is infuriated by delays and that no Arab intermediary was available and tells the authorities that two hostages will be killed in 45 minutes.

Commissioner McNee sends a letter to OAN pleading for a peaceful solution to the hostage taking.

1820 The police requested Said²⁵ Dash, the Imam²⁵ of the London Central Mosque to meet and reason with the terrorist leader. The discussion with the terrorist was emotional and left the Imam distraught.

1850 OAN calls to Alpha Control. All that is heard is the firing of three shots. A dead hostage is pushed out of the door. The body is that of ABBAS LAVASANI.

At Home Office Crisis Centre Mr²⁶ Whitelaw²⁶ contacts the Prime Minister and obtains her approval. He then orders the SAS to break the siege by force.

1909 Dellow commits the SAS and records the order in writing and hands it to²⁷ the SAS commander.

1923 SAS CRW team goes²⁸ into the assault.

1940 19 hostages are reported safe. One of the hostages Samad-Zadeh was

²⁵Brock, op. cit., pp. 113-114.

²⁶"Something for Britain's Pride," The Economist, 10 May, 1980, p. 41.

²⁷Dellow, op. cit., p. 46.

²⁸Dobson, et al., op. cit., p. 41. Regarding the assault it was reported that, "The surprise was total, helped by days of careful planning round a scale model of the building painstakingly constructed from police photographs and information pinpointed by sensitive listening devices." See also Clare Hollingworth, "Scale Model Helped SAS Plan Rescue," The Daily Telegraph, London, 7 May, 1980.

killed by the terrorists during the assault. Police authorities report 'Siege ended' and recover control of the incident.

2025

Home Secretary says that the SAS operation to rescue the hostages is a success.

POINTS OF NOTE - DAY VI

Technical monitoring had reported that the hostages were still situated on the second floor in the same room. The tensions of the previous day appeared to have subsided for the moment.

Negotiations went through a particularly tense phase when the terrorist leader appeared to lose momentary control of his fellow terrorists. At approximately 1331, three shots were heard and it was believed that a hostage had been killed. After the shooting, the terrorists spoke to a senior policeman. A deadline of 1700 hours was issued for the Arab ambassadors to be brought in or otherwise a hostage would be shot. At approximately 1730 hours a technical source reported a conversation among the terrorists which underlined the possibility of violent action and recorded that the

²⁹Nicholas Hills, "Stunning commando raid ends embassy takeover," The Ottawa Citizen, 6 May, 1980. According to this report "Ninety minutes after the siege had been lifted, Home Secretary William Whitelaw said the operation, "'will show that we in Britain are not prepared to tolerate terrorism in our capital city. The world must learn this.'"

terrorists must "do something before sunset," and "Kill two or three or four," and "kill all by 10 p.m."³⁰

At approximately 1800 hours the police negotiator was told by the terrorist leader that two hostages would be killed every 45 minutes and their bodies thrown out of the embassy if their demands were not met. At 1800 hours, a listening device picked up the sound of a shot as well as a terrorist harassing the captives. A half hour later, at 1830 hours, the deadline was extended. However, approximately 15 minutes later shots are heard and one body was dragged to the front door and left on the doorstep.

After the murder of the one captive, (although the authorities appear to believe two were killed) the Home Secretary gave permission for the SAS to rescue the remaining hostages. At approximately 1909 hours the Incident Commander Dellow handed over the task to the Military Commander and the assault was mounted.

The time between the permission to assault the embassy and the attack itself was spent on obtaining last-minute tactical intelligence pertaining to the locations of the terrorists and their hostages.³¹

³⁰"British commandos testify at inquest: Fight for Iran embassy described," Reuters, London, 4 February, 1981.

³¹Stephen Handelman, "How the SAS fights terror for Britain," The Toronto Star, 13 March, 1986. This article underlines that the SAS "are careful to emphasize the value of careful planning and good intelligence before anti-terrorist operations."

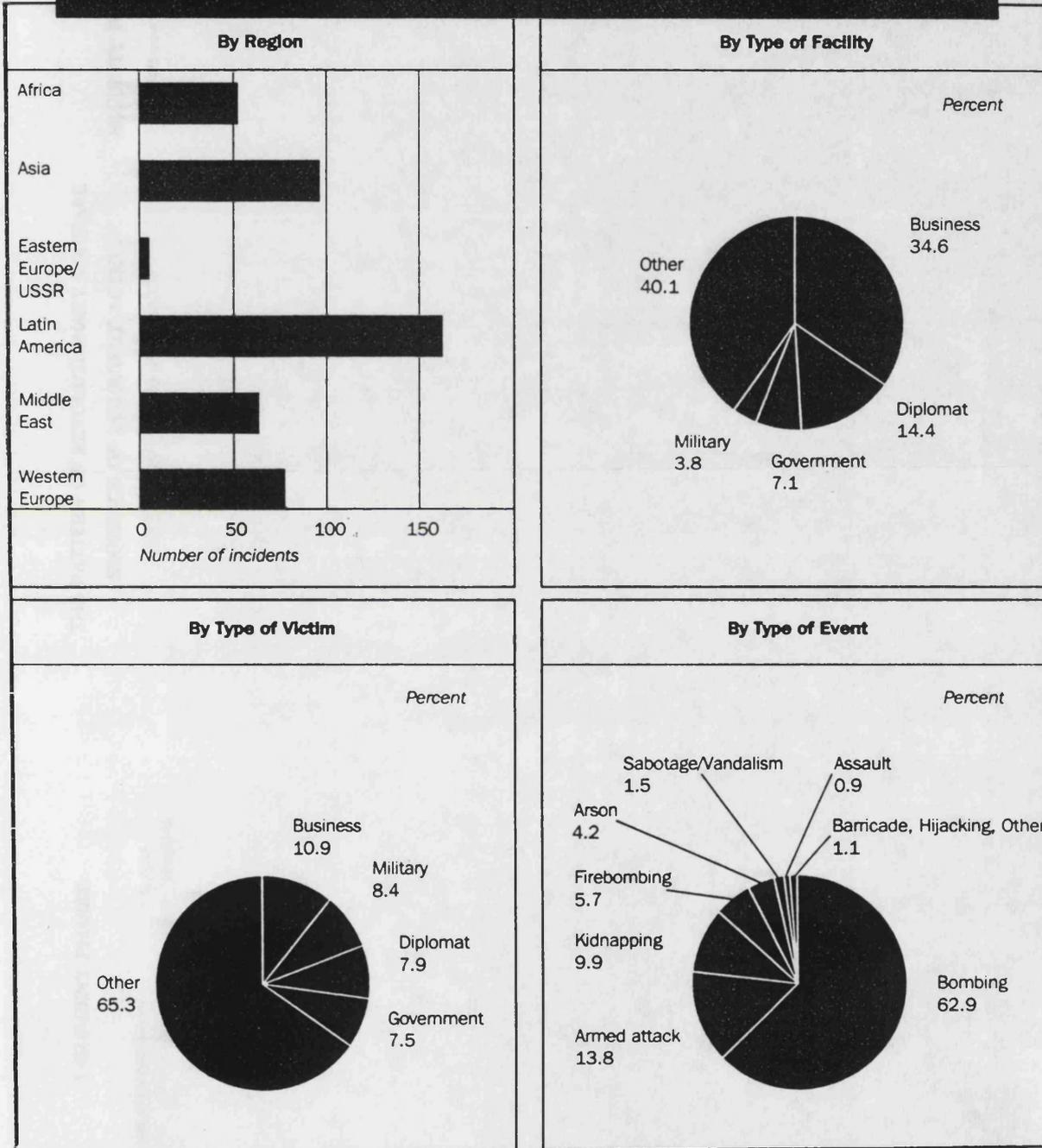
As noted in the daily description one television network (ITN) broke the police request to maintain a perimeter clear from media intrusion. The placing of an ITN team that could cover the initial preparations and approach of the SAS to the building demonstrated a gross lack of responsibility. Had the terrorists been watching a television tuned to ITN they may have been tipped off to the assault and began killing the hostages. This was truly an important lesson and hence media controls have become much more restrictive.

Just before the assault began, the terrorist leader was kept talking with police negotiators on the telephone. The rescue was launched and the remaining hostages were saved in one of the most dramatic rescue operations in recent history. Five terrorists, including their leader, were killed. Fowzi Nejad,³² the only surviving terrorist, was later convicted for the manslaughter of two hostages and sentenced to life imprisonment. Nine months later the verdict of justifiable homicide was handed down to the SAS personnel directly involved in the killing of the five terrorists.³³

³²"Killer jailed for life," The Globe and Mail, Toronto, 23 January, 1981.

³³Stewart Tendler "Verdicts of justifiable homicide on terrorists," The Times, 5 February, 1981. The report stated "The jury took almost an hour to reach its verdicts after Dr. Paul Knapman, the coroner told them they had the choice of justifiable homicide, unlawful killing, an open verdict or death by misadventure."

International Terrorist Incidents, 1990



Taken from U.S. Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism, 1990, (April, 1991), p. 38.

INSURGENT PHASES

THE PATTERN OF REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE

Communist Concept Based
On Sino-Japanese War
1937

British
Interpretation

SEQUENCE OF INSURGENT ACTION

(With aim of achieving a revolution)

SECURITY FORCES COUNTER ACTION

(With aim of countering a revolution)

'Passive'
(Organizational)

'Preparatory'

Activity by anti-government organizations, including political agitation and manoeuvring, propaganda activities, formation of cells and cadres (political, intelligence and military) and civil and industrial unrest. Infiltration into positions of authority. In general covert preparations by those who aim to achieve a revolution. Any overt military preparations take place in the remotest areas.

Civil Law
Enforcement
Activity

'Active
Resistance'
(Terrorism)

Civil disobedience, disturbances, riots, strikes, lawlessness.
Sabotage, particularly against communications, assassinations, coercion and terrorism on a limited scale. Use of propaganda and psychological means to discredit the government.
Ambushes and minor insurgent activity on limited scale; increased terrorism, a climate of dissidence, civil and industrial disobedience is engendered.

Internal
Security
Operations

'Active'
(Direct
Action)

'Insurgency'
(Guerilla
Warfare)

Operations involving use of guerilla tactics by local formed units have resulted in the guerillas gaining control of parts of the country. Insurgent bases are established in relatively safe areas. Increased activity in daylight.
More ambitious operations by formed units with some perhaps from a neighbouring country.
A whole series of operations ranging up to actions between formed units with a simultaneous situation of wide-spread guerilla activity. Areas dominated by guerillas are enlarged and may be declared as liberated.

Counter
Insurgency
Operations

Almost
Using
Techniques
Of Limited
War

'Counter
Offensive'
(Decision)

'Open
Offensive'

As above, but having escalated to include regular land and perhaps even sea and air forces of the opposing sides. The revolutionary movement now assumes the form of a people's war against the government. Large areas are dominated by the guerillas.

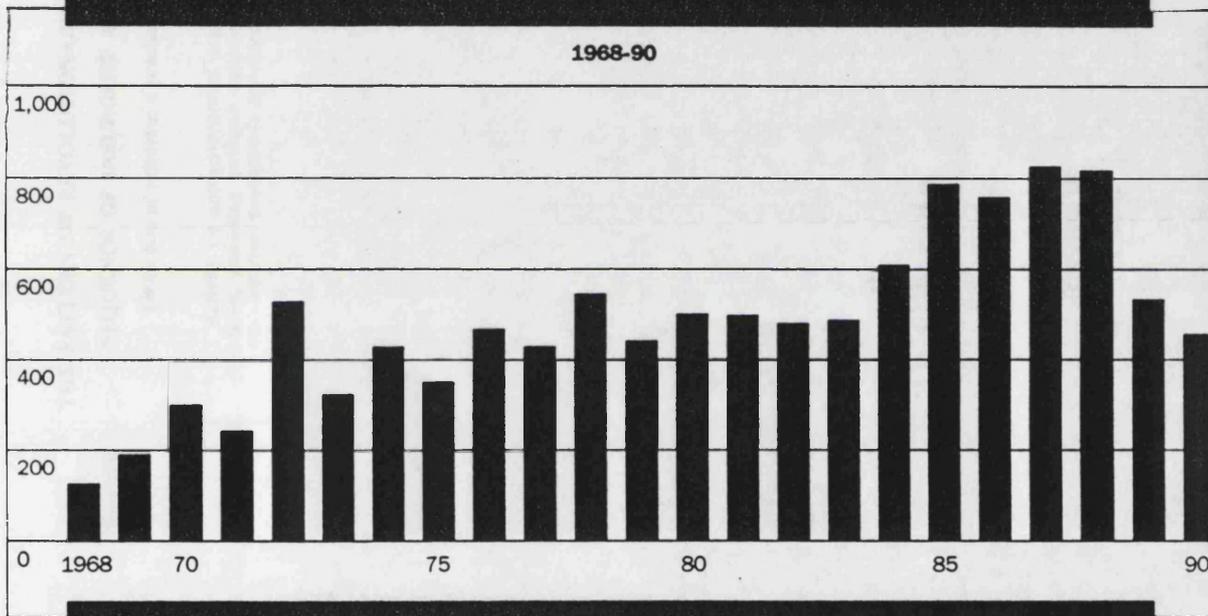
Negotiations leading to a cessation of hostilities with the revolutionaries either in a position to achieve their aim without further fighting or with the legal government more firmly in control than at the outset.

Summary. The pattern of revolutionary warfare in this diagram has been given in phases and shown as a simple progression. But in practice the phases all merge, can be altered and may even be reversed. Different parts of the country may be at different phases of the revolt at the same time. The counter action has been shown by degrees for the security forces but its success entirely depends on a total identification of military and government aims within the national plan.

Counter
Revolutionary
Operations

Extracted from Ministry of
Defence, Land Operations,
Volume III, - Counter
Revolutionary Operations, Part
I. - Principles And General
Aspects, 29 August, 1969.

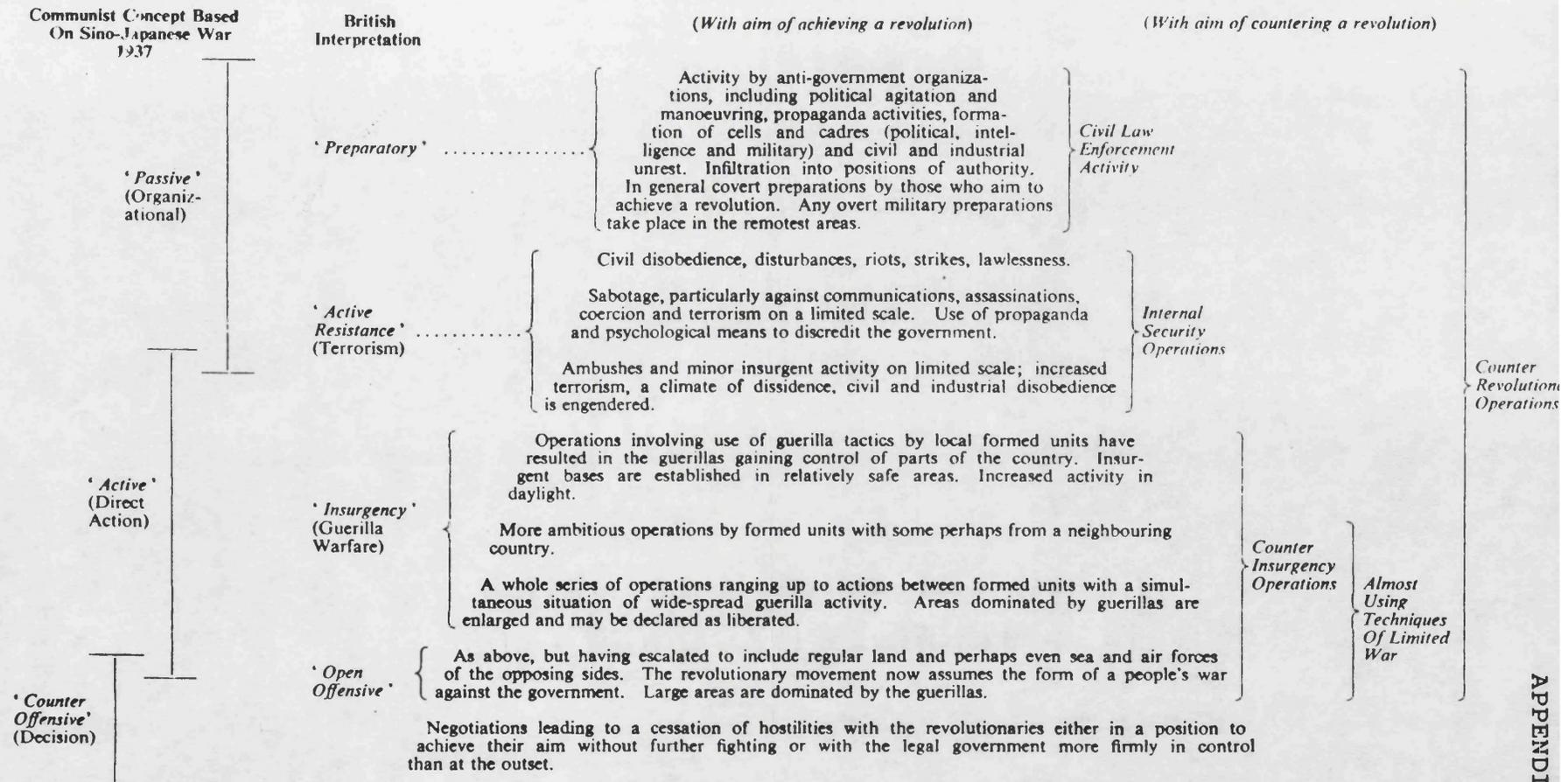
International Terrorist Incidents Over Time



Taken from U.S. Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism, 1990, (April, 1991), p. 39.

INSURGENT PHASES

THE PATTERN OF REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE



Extracted from Ministry of Defence, Land Operations, Volume III, - Counter Revolutionary Operations, Part I, - Principles And General Aspects, 29 August, 1969.

Summary. The pattern of revolutionary warfare in this diagram has been given in phases and shown as a simple progression. But in practice the phases all merge, can be altered and may even be reversed. Different parts of the country may be at different phases of the revolt at the same time. The counter action has been shown by degrees for the security forces but its success entirely depends on a total identification of military and government aims within the national plan.

Counter Revolutionary Operations