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The development of United States counterinsurgency policy and doctrine

Address, Naval War College, MGEN Victor H. Krulak, 12/11/63

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JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY
AND SPECIAL ACTIVITIES
BEFORE THE
NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
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THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNITED STATES
COUNTERINSURGENCY POLICY AND DOCTRINE

I

INTRODUCTION

In the letter which invited me to come here today, Admiral Austin asked that I attempt to close with the positive approach which the U. S. has taken to the insurgency problem world-wide; emphasizing particularly our organization, our policies and our doctrines on the subject.

How fortunate it is that he did not ask me to do this a year and a half ago! We had no doctrine; neither national nor departmental. Mostly we had just ideas.

Now, may I try to carry out the injunction from Admiral Austin by tracing the evolution which we have experienced in the past year and a half. In doing so I hope that I shall not overlap excessively the presentations you have already heard. If I do, indeed, duplicate your prior instruction, I hope you will forgive me.

To begin with, as we approached the doctrinal problem, we had to agree upon what we were talking about. - That always helps. - In this regard, the fact that we were not addressing a new issue came quickly to light.

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Two thousand years ago a Chinese general named Sun Tzu said, "To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting - there is the acme of skill."

For twenty long centuries this has been a sound policy - to win without shooting. Nations have grown great by developing the skill to preserve their own blood and treasure, while still achieving victory over their enemies. Today Sun Tzu's philosophy is more than just a good idea; it comes close to being a necessity, because we all now know what a little shooting battle may turn into. We have come to realize that life under the shadow of the mushroom cloud is perilous enough, but that life under the cloud itself is no life at all.

II

THE PROBLEM

First Minister Khrushchev is no stranger to this philosophy, and about two years ago he apparently decided that now was the time to do something about it. He realized, if he were really going to have any chance of defeating us, he had better try to do it with some strategy that by-passed the hazard of the big bomb. His strategy, which he announced proudly and openly, is to

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possess the riches of the globe, not by worldwide violence, but by winning the support of the underdeveloped peoples of the world; by helping them to win what he called their "wars of national liberation" against colonial oppression. - And he has been busy at this project, ever since.

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For want of a better term, we called it "insurgency" - a wicked thing; - communist-fed, usually communist-led; - a formal element of the Communist program.

What Khrushchev really blocked out for us was a sort of total war; not a total war in the context of multi-

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megaton exchanges; not a total war in the context of the masses of marching bayonets characteristic of the world wars of the past; but a total war whose prosecution involves all the sources of national strength of those who foster it, and of those who oppose it, too.

Acknowledging this to be the fact, the real problem, as was plain to our counterinsurgency architects a year and a half ago, was twofold: first, it was clear that we had not recognized the true nature of the threat; and second, not having recognized it, we were not organized adequately to meet it. Aside from this, everything was fine.

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Taking these two elements of the problem in succession; first a very brief word on the nature of the threat, as it has been discussed by you during the past week. — In every part of the globe there are emerging societies — peoples who have lived in a semi-primitive state for centuries; who, now, in the face of improved world communications, and in the light of progress elsewhere, are growing restless and seeking better things. Their objectives are simple and eminently laudable. — As General MacArthur put it, "A little more food in their stomachs; a little better clothing on their backs; a little firmer roof over their heads, and the realization of the normal nationalist urge for political freedom."

Regrettably, the mechanisms for achieving these objectives are far less crystalline than are the objectives themselves, and efforts to put these mechanisms to work often have left the underdeveloped peoples in a most vulnerable position. But here is an important point; — the communists did not create these unfavorable situations, they merely exploit them. They are quite sensitive to this fragility — this vulnerability — and it is in this cauldron of change that the insurgency brew, world-wide, is boiled; — never by chance; always by design; and invariably with communist participation. This is the threat.

Turning to the second point of the problem — the fact that we were not organized to meet the threat. — To the United States of America, war in the past has been a simple mechanism,

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like a lever. - Power applied at one point results in corresponding reaction at another. War to us, moreover, has been mainly a matter of violence - tanks and ships, bombs and planes - mechanisms of destruction. All of the other elements of our national power - useful in a degree - have sat in the economy seats while the practitioners of violence have been in the dress circle.

But the terrifying array of military strength which we possess (and need, I must emphasize, for another equally grave prospect) has no real identification with the counterinsurgency battle. Our tremendous sources of violent power are an ill-suited solution to the problem, and we are thus faced with the need not only to remarshal our sources of strength but to reorganize our systems for their application.

To complicate our problem further is the melancholy fact that our enemies, in contrast to us, are organized both for the creation and the support of subversive insurgency. This is their stock in trade.

III

INSURGENCY IN BEING

I think it is fair to say that we have had all too great a tendency to equate the insurgency problem world-wide, to the jungle, to the guerrilla, to the machete, to night-time stealth and terror. These are certainly a part of it,

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but the fact is, as I am certain you know, the matter is far more complex than the age-old guerrilla problem. If it were just guerrillas, we would be home free.

As the development of a US program in this area evolved, it became clear that as a general proposition, the insurgency problem in any country or region must be identified with some or all of these four characteristics:

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- a. Economic imbalance
- b. Ignorance
- c. Political cracks, and
- d. Military cracks.

And the result, - almost inevitable - unrest, violence, and misery - with the gates wide open for trouble. Now, let us look around the world for a moment and observe where these factors have created either insurgency in being or insurgency in prospect. In taking our examples, I feel it will be well to pass over the very hottest spots and to reflect upon others, simply to remind ourselves of the global breadth of the insurgency problem today. First, let us turn to Ecuador where we have an excellent example of economic imbalance.

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Modern cities;

SLIDE 4 OFF; SLIDE 5 ON

primitive villages;

SLIDE 5 OFF; SLIDE 6 ON

modern homes;

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Indian shacks.

Fifty percent of the useful land is controlled by less than one percent of the people. The legal minimum wage is 26 cents per day, but many agricultural workers do not receive even this much, and are understandably discontented.

Here is economic imbalance in extreme form. The people are unhappy and are prime candidates for the influences of unrest and violence, and scarcely a day passes without some warning of trouble in Ecuador.

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Next, a word on Bolivia, for a picture of incredible nation-wide ignorance - and not too far from home, either. Sixty-five percent of the people in this little country are illiterate, even by the most moderate standards. A good fifty-five percent of all the people in Bolivia do not speak or even understand Spanish - the national language. Ignorance breeds hunger; hungry people are miserable - and the creators of disorder thus have the most fertile field in which to work.

Next, an example of the political cracks which are to be found around the world. Indeed, it was really difficult to pick an example from the many areas where

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political weaknesses are exploited by the communists. But just for one, let us take Guatemala. Recently deposed President Ydigoras was an opportunist - a weak politician who accepted communist support in the 1958 elections. He later split with the communists only because his own military compelled him to do so. Then, it appears that he had lacked either the will or the desire to move vigorously against the communists, and the indecision bred unrest - to the point where his government was overthrown.

Then turning to the military cracks, for weaknesses in a country's military structure, we need only look at Haiti. Here the military is divided into two parts - the regular Army, whose weapons the President keeps locked up in the palace, and the militia, which the President created as a counterpoise to the Army. Every week there is another military plot to overthrow the President - usually exposed, usually followed by a purge. They suffer more casualties this way than from guerrillas.

Let's speak of guerrillas for a moment. The guerrilla is almost the hallmark of insurgency, since unchecked lawlessness breeds trouble.

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Take Colombia, for example, where violence in the hinterland has resulted in the death of $\frac{1}{4}$ -million people in 14 years; where $1\frac{1}{2}$ -million peasants have fled their land to the

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cities because of fear; where 75% of the military is totally engaged in hunting down guerrillas. It takes little imagination to perceive how easy it is for the merchants of trouble to get a foothold in circumstances such as these; and they are alert to them all.

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It is plain that these sources of insurgency and potential insurgency should - at least largely - be eliminated by the countries themselves. Put another way, it is easy for us to say that it is up to these nations, whose societies are in the emergent state, to straighten out their own political house; to improve their own economic system; to create military and police forces which are sufficiently dependable to protect the people from terror.

However, the pure reality is that they cannot - or sometimes will not - do these things for themselves. They need help; they need encouragement; often they need just plain reveille; and our stake in the war is so large that we cannot afford to put the bugle aside.

IV

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN TO THE
UNITED STATES MILITARY?

I use the word "war" advisedly because it is a war, in the keenest sense of the word. Needless to say, the US

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military cannot win this war alone, but they are an essential element in the matrix of power that must win it.

So let us talk now about how our organization for combat in counterinsurgency operations was developed. Furthermore, let us do our organizational discussion on a soldierly basis - that is to say, starting at the bottom and not the top.

As an initial point, and ignoring any specific localities, what are the sources of our strength to combat the problems about which we have just been talking? They fall into five general categories:

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Diplomatic strength, economic strength, the power of education, the power of propaganda, and military strength. These are the sources from which the power to help our friends stems.

Actually, however, these sources of strength do not take on meaning until it is understood that, in action, they are represented by people. Put it this way - in any given country,

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the diplomatic strength is represented by the ambassador; economic power by such elements as the Agency for International Development; educational power by such activities

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as the Peace Corps; propaganda by the United States Information Agency - the Voice of America; the military, of course, by the various forms of Military Assistance Advisory Groups and missions. These are people. None of them can win the battle alone. All of them, put together, can win it. This, of course, is the Country Team idea with which you are familiar, and around it turns the bulk of our counter-insurgency effort.

SLIDE 9 AND FLIP OFF

Here I must revert to my earlier observation that when we went into this exercise we were not organized for the counterinsurgency job.

Put in its most extreme form, a couple of years ago, the ambassador might have said, "This matter of advising another government on the defeat of internal unrest is largely a political problem and, of course, that is my affair."

The economist might say, "The problem really lies in the elimination of poverty and want. This means the expenditure of dollars; and dollars are my affair."

The educator or the propagandist might say, "The real issue hinges on enlightenment; on conveying the right facts to the right people in understandable terms - and this is certainly our affair."

The military might say, "Insurgency? Guerrillas? Terrorists? These are nothing new to us. Just let us at them. This is our business."

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The fact is they are all right - and they are all wrong, too. They are every one involved, and no one of them is involved exclusively.

This coordinate performance is a new thing for us, but it is something that, I am happy to say, has taken firm hold in many countries around the world to the extent that the term "Country Team" is coming rapidly to be a word of art describing a dynamic mechanism. It is the machinery through which our counterinsurgency efforts are finding expression in many places today.

Moving to the national level, we find precisely the same problem of organization. We were not - and still are not - geared to the task in Washington as completely as we are geared to it in many other places in the world. Although we have exactly the same problems in marshalling our strength to fight the battle against insurgency, our organization at the top is still compartmented and operations are sometimes impeded as a result.

A step forward, in this regard, was taken last year by the President when he created, at the White House level, the mechanism which he called the "Special Group (Counterinsurgency)." Here he brought together, at the topmost echelon, the same general components

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which comprise the Country Team - the White House, the State Department, CIA, AID, USIA, the Defense Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Justice Department. Their function is to do counterinsurgency planning in any area designated by the President, and to pursue any and every aspect of the counterinsurgency program in the designated countries. Their organization is simply a pantographic enlargement of the organization that obtains in the Country Team. It really has just one practical function - to break down the Washington institutional walls which can impede progress. The Group meets weekly and considers a broad agenda which has been the subject of hard work for the respective staffs. An agenda might comprise items as diverse as this - training of the Border Patrol Police in Thailand; a personal report from the Ambassador to Colombia; a survey of the paramilitary assets of Western-oriented countries, worldwide; a report on operations in South Vietnam; and the development of departmental plans responding to our national counterinsurgency doctrine. As you can see, the Group's work crosses all departmental lines - particularly in the area of doctrine; - one of the topics which I was asked to explore today.

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COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE

Here is another unique problem. Just as we had trouble reorganizing our national and field arrangements to fight the insurgency battle, so have we had to rearrange our thinking on how the governing doctrine is created.

The Special Group (Counterinsurgency) agreed last summer that a national doctrine for waging the counterinsurgency war must be developed just like a Country Team plan. Each participant in the Country Team makes known to the Ambassador his conception of his own part in the over-all task. The Ambassador puts these conceptions together, much as a builder creates a house from stone. He may have to chip off the edges, here and there, but ultimately he completes the walls; whereupon he puts a roof over the structure.

Our national doctrine for facing up to subversive insurgency was developed the same way. You, I am sure, have seen it - in the document "US Overseas Internal Defense Policy." This is truly an interdepartmental paper. Everybody concerned had his pencil on it in many, many drafts and it finally ended up with White House approval. Further, and responsive to the national doctrine, you will be familiar

with the "Joint Counterinsurgency Concept and Doctrinal Guidance" issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This is in the hands of all of the CINCs. Finally, you may now read the basic directive elements of this JCS document as Section 11 of "Unified Action, Armed Forces."

COUNTERINSURGENCY IN ACTION - TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES

From what I have said, you will conclude that we are on our way to organizing properly for the game, and that we are pursuing a logical course in developing rules for play. However, a detached discussion of organization and doctrine alone do not fully respond to my terms of reference, which included some discussion of our positive approach. A living picture of counterinsurgency in action is thus necessary to complete the story.

For the practical example we may take any one of a number of countries; - Colombia, Iran, Bolivia, South Vietnam or Thailand. Just because they are very much in the public eye right now, let us settle on Thailand and South Vietnam.

SLIDE 10 ON

First, Thailand. Its insurgency worries are essentially these: The country is not wealthy; its

national income is little more than \$100 per year. In the regions up here in the North and Northeast, adjacent to external communist influence the country is backward, illiterate, and primitive; roads are few and of poor quality.

The Thai military has many odd ideas about how it should be armed and equipped. The provincial police are not prepared to assure the security of the people from the violence that accompanies subversive insurgency. Relatively little has been done to improve the economic social or educational lot of the people. Very few of them really understand the nature of the communist menace; how close it is to them, nor what it will bring if it comes.

All of these factors unite to make Thailand an almost ideal target for the growth of insurgency, and I fear that it is, indeed, growing.

We have a Country Team there, and it works as such. Here are some of the procedures that the Country Team is using to attack the insurgency problem.

First, it acknowledges the fact that the counter-insurgency battle is fought mainly in the daily existence

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of the primitive villages and not on any conventional battlefield; that, without the enthusiasm, support, good will, and resolution of these villagers, no numbers of tanks or F-104's will do the trick.

It is clearly understood that the merchants of subversion cannot survive in an atmosphere of indigenous hostility, where food and information are hard for them to come by. Or, put the other way round, the Country Team in Thailand knows that the good will of the people is a treasure beyond all calculation and, while it cannot be bought, certainly it can be won by simple deeds which respond to the drives which General MacArthur described so aptly.

So the Country Team has embarked on a comprehensive program of helping the Thais make the lot of the man who lives in the hinterland a better one.

SLIDE 10 OFF; SLIDE 11 ON

They have undertaken the building of all-weather roads - providing material, advice, and technicians while the Thais provide the labor. You can imagine what this means to poor folk who have, traditionally, been closed in completely by every rainy season. In addition, they have embarked on a program of sponsoring education, of school building,

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of encouraging local officials to provide for much more medical assistance in the back country.

A man who can pull a tooth, splint a leg or treat a case of yaws is a real hero in his home village.

SLIDE 12 OFF

They have sought to get the Thais to set up a sound police system and a paramilitary guard system to protect the villagers against violence, threats and extortion. They have sought to get the Thais to orient their military a little more toward internal security and a little less toward external matters. The Country Team has set up a back country program for enlightenment, through films and sound trucks to make the native know the nature of the communist menace, to make him know that the issue is freedom on the one hand versus slavery on the other; because, unless these people want to be free, we are wasting our time and theirs in pretending.

All these and more are in progress in Thailand now and, while they constitute little more than a beginning, they make plain, at the outset, the across-the-board nature of the techniques involved in our undertaking.

Turning now, very briefly, to the matter of tactics and techniques in South Vietnam.

SLIDE 13 ON

Here the tempo of the insurgency is at a much higher level. The war had been in the process of being lost to the Communists for at least fifteen years, and its winning demands heroic measures, since large elements of the populace are actually under effective control of the Viet Cong now. Perhaps 10 percent of the people are now fully under the Viet Cong control, and another 15 percent are under their nominal control.

Again, the Country Team is engaged in a broad spectrum of activities aimed at emancipating the citizen from insurgent domination, improving his lot, and, most of all, winning his confidence.

The strategic hamlet program is an example, and it involves participation by all elements of the Country Team. First, our military advises and supports Vietnamese military in destroying or driving off communist forces from a Viet Cong dominated area in the hinterland, and in re-establishing a firm government control.

SLIDE 13 OFF; SLIDE 14 ON

With the help and advice of other elements of the Country Team, a strategic hamlet is then created. It has organized physical defenses to ward off marauders and a home guard unit to take up the initial shock of an attack.

SLIDE 14 OFF; SLIDE 15 ON

In its ultimate form the hamlet, of which there are now over 8,500, has good buildings, schools, medical support, plus a warning system to call for help in the case of trouble.

The program, is well along, toward the ultimate goal of about 11,000 hamlets, although we are coming more and more to acknowledge that there really is no such thing as a fully completed strategic hamlet.

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In the same vein, schools are being run to train provincial administrators and to persuade them, contrary to Asian custom, that the people are important, and are not fair game for graft. Roads are being built through

US advice and material support, airfields are being constructed in the hinterland, and agricultural education is being pursued to help the native improve his own subsistence situation.

On the military side, the component of the country team is working to develop a sensibility, in our Vietnamese counterparts, of the importance of military civic action - a dramatically important means of helping the natives to raise their own living standards while improving the image of the Vietnamese military at the same time.

You will note that I have said little about the tactics and techniques of the pure counter-guerrilla campaign, for the good reason that there is relatively little new in it.

Without doubt there are some new factors, but they serve only to give the Vietnamese incremental superiority in some basic area. - Mobility, for instance, where we achieve great advantage in the use of the helicopter; logistics, where the helicopter, the powered small craft, and the parachute are favorable factors; intelligence, where our photographic and communications capability make powerful contributions; and basic tactical

strength where our air and other sources of fire power are of great usefulness.

But, in the last analysis, these aids merely make a brutally rough job a little less rough. They do not alter significantly the essential principles which have governed guerrilla fighting over the years.

With the best of training and good leadership, this problem holds no real mysteries - only bitterly painful times for those who do the job.

VI

SUMMARY

The burden of what I have been saying, up to this point, could probably be summarized in three brief thoughts. First, insurgency, communist inspired and communist directed, promises to be with us for a long time.

In the Senate of the United States, one hundred elected representatives of the people recently ratified an instrument entitled, "A Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water". To many people around the world it offers hope that the nuclear holocaust may be kept remote from

their lives, that the mushroom cloud of which I spoke at the beginning may one day be foresworn, that the likelihood of a world-wide Armageddon will be greatly reduced. We pray that they are right. But through our prayers there shines clearly a ray of cold reality.

It is this. Nations with basic differences are not likely completely to forget them. The forces of Communism wanted to bury us last year; they want to bury us today. If sheer reason has caused them to join with us, in diminishing the likelihood of reciprocal missile destruction, the very same reason will cause them to turn greater effort to achieving what they view as their legitimate purposes by other means, and the cold war - world-wide - thus comes closer than ever to the center of the stage.

Next, we are just on the threshold of knowing that the battle can be won only by a synthesis of all of our elements of national strength, and, that both at the bottom and at the top, we must organize on a team basis if we are to make real progress.

And finally, that the battle which we are fighting is less a battle of guns and bullets than it is a battle of ideas.

The battle field, moreover, is found not on some classic area of tactical terrain selected by one of the antagonists, but in nameless villages and hamlets, and the objective to be gained is not a hill or a city,

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but the hearts and minds of thousands of little people; little people without whose support there can be no victory.