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Making a difference with Aviation Foreign Internal Defense

Carrano, Eric M.

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

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THESIS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH AVIATION FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE

by

Eric M. Carrano

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Thesis Advisor: Anna Simons
Second Reader: Brian Greenshields

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This thesis analyzes how U.S. Aviation Foreign Internal Defense (AvFID) proved itself to be a critical component in the successful campaign against the Hukbalahap (i.e., Huks) in the Philippines and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador. In addition, this thesis explores how AvFID was employed in Vietnam and why AvFID was not successful there. The overall argument is that airpower was not a decisive factor in the two successful counterinsurgency campaigns examined. However, airpower certainly played a critical role in quelling both insurgencies and without U.S. AvFID the air forces in the Philippines and El Salvador would not have been able to employ airpower as effectively as they did. In contrast, Vietnam offers a case study where AvFID failed; this thesis explores why. Ultimately, the reader should walk away with ideas about how to implement AvFID more effectively, and that if done right, can help ensure that AvFID *can* make a significant difference in a counterinsurgency campaign.

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH AVIATION FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE

Eric M. Carrano
Major, United States Air Force
B.S., United States Air Force Academy, 2000
M.S., South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, 2008

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requirements for the degree of

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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2012

Author: Eric M. Carrano

Approved by: Anna Simons
Thesis Advisor

Brian H. Greenshields
Second Reader

John Arquilla
Chair, Department of Defense Analysis

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFDD – Air Force Doctrine Document

AFSOC – Air Force Special Operations Command

AvFID – Aviation Foreign Internal Defense

CAS – Close Air Support

CCTS – Combat Crew Training Squadron

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

COIN – Counterinsurgency

DoD – Department of Defense

ESAF – El Salvadoran Armed Forces

FAS – Fuerza Aerea Salvadorena

FID – Foreign Internal Defense

FMLN – Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front

Huk – Hukbalahap

IDAD – Internal Defense and Development

ISR – Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

JUSMAG – Joint United States Military Advisory Group

NSC – National Security Council

OSS – Office of Strategic Services

PAAC – Philippine Army Air Corps

PC – Philippine Constabulary

PAF – Philippine Air Force

PKP – Partido Komunista ng Pilapinas

SMM – Saigon Military Mission

SOF – Special Operations Forces

ST – Special Tactics

U.S. – United States

USAF – United States Air Force

USAFFE – United States Armed Forces Far East

U.S. MAAG – United States Military Assistance and Advisory Group

U.S. MilGroup – United States Military Group

USSOCOM – United States Special Operations Command

WWII – World War II

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I. INTRODUCTION

In January 2012, President Barack Obama and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta released the United States' (U.S.) new defense priorities for the 21st century. A key principle of the new strategy document is that "*U.S. forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations*."[1] It also states that, "*Whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives*, relying on exercises, rotational presence, and advisory capabilities."[2] It is clear that the U.S. wants to avoid massive military footprints on foreign soil that result in becoming bogged down in conflicts like Afghanistan and Iraq. It is also apparent that the Department of Defense (DoD) plans to address these new priorities through Special Operations Forces (SOF) working by, with, and through allies and partner nation-states.[3]

One way for SOF to work by, with, and through allies and partner nation-states is to assess, train, advise, and assist the partner nation's military forces to protect themselves from internal threats. This is essentially the mission of Foreign Internal Defense (FID). The effectiveness of FID, and for the purposes of this thesis, Aviation FID (AvFID), remains controversial especially when one considers the U.S.'s experiences in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. However, there are historical instances when AvFID did make a difference. Thus, in light of DoD's new defense strategy and the U.S.'s experiences in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, it is essential to review how the U.S. successfully worked by, with, and through states to combat irregular threats in the past.

This thesis analyzes how U.S. AvFID proved itself to be a critical component in the Philippine's and El Salvador's overall successful campaigns against the Hukbalahap

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[1] Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, January 2012, 6. Emphasis in original.

[2] Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, 3. Emphasis in original. .

[3] David Barno and Travis Sharp, "SOF Power," February 14, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/02/14/sof_power?print=yes&hidecomments=yes&page=full

and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) insurgencies, respectively. In addition, this thesis explores how AvFID was employed in Vietnam and why AvFID was not successful. It will first examine what FID and AvFID are, while exploring AvFID's origins and its relationship to special operations.

In each of the case studies presented, the focus will be on the country's history, particularly its political, economic, and social aspects. The intent is to better understand what led to the insurgency and ensuing civil war. Next, I will analyze the U.S. involvement, the strategic plan (if one existed), the role and relationship of U.S. military advisors to the host nation's military, and what role AvFID played in the overall strategic plan to combat the insurgency.

My overall argument is that airpower, while not a decisive factor in the two successful campaigns I analyzed (i.e., against the Huks or FMLN), nevertheless played a critical part in quelling both insurgencies. Without U.S. AvFID, the Philippines' and El Salvador's air forces would not have been able to employ airpower as effectively as they did. In contrast, the Vietnam case study points to an instance when AvFID failed. Ultimately, the reader should be able to walk away with issues worth contemplating before attempting to implement AvFID, as well as the idea that AvFID *can* make a significant difference in a counterinsurgency campaign.

FID falls under the purview of irregular warfare and is considered one of five principal activities or operations that are performed to confront irregular threats. *Joint Publication 3–07.1, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense*, defines FID as "the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency."[4] The responsibility for the FID mission resides with U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). As such, the responsibility of the air component of FID, AvFID, belongs to Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC).

[4] Department of Defense, "Joint Publication 3–07.1 – Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense," April 30, 2004, ix.

Air Force special operations traces its roots to World War II (WWII) with the formation of the 1st Air Commando Group.[5] Commanded by Lieutenants Colonel Philip G. Cochran and John R. Alison, the 1st Air Commando Group was ordered by General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold to directly support General Orde C. Wingate's guerrilla forces, the Chindits.[6] Considered an unconventional warfare unit, the 1st Air Commando Group primarily supported the Chindits, who operated deep behind Japanese lines in Burma, with air resupply and medical evacuation, using gliders and other nonstandard aviation platforms. At the end of WWII, the 1st Air Commando Group was deactivated and absorbed into conventional units.

Similarly, during the Korean War, three wings were activated to support unconventional warfare missions only for all three to be fully deactivated by 1957.[7] In fact, it was not until President John F. Kennedy's administration that special operations received a dedicated sponsor. President Kennedy did not think that the current military organization was capable of adequately responding to insurgencies or wars of national liberation that dominated the world scene at the time. Consequently, President Kennedy directed his Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, to have the military establish units dedicated to counterinsurgency (COIN). In response to pressure from the Kennedy administration, the Air Force activated the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) in 1961. The mission of the 4400th CCTS, nicknamed "Jungle Jim," "was to train foreign air force personnel in the application of airpower in COIN."[8] The first detachment of the 4400th CCTS, code-named "Farm Gate," deployed to Vietnam in November 1961. The purpose of "Farm Gate" and subsequent AvFID detachments was to train the South Vietnamese Air Force to employ airpower against the Viet Cong. As

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[5] Wray R. Johnson, "Whither Aviation Foreign Internal Defense," *Airpower Journal* 11, no.1 (1997): 69.

[6] Philip D. Chinnery, *Air Commando* (New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 1997), 5–6.

[7] Johnson, "Whither Aviation," 70.

[8] Johnson, "Whither Aviation," 70.

U.S. involvement in Vietnam increased, the Air Force increased the size of its special forces. Within a little over a year the 4400th CCTS was absorbed into the reactivated 1st Air Commando Group, which became subordinate to the Special Air Warfare Center in April 1962.[9]

After Vietnam, the military establishment, including the Air Force, vowed to never fight another war like Vietnam and attempted to purge itself of irregular warfare, particularly COIN. The term COIN was discarded and replaced by "internal defense and development" (IDAD). "Stability operations" was the term used to describe operational activities associated with IDAD.[10]

Despite not having units dedicated to the AvFID mission, the Air Force still continued to perform AvFID missions, but on an ad hoc basis. However, things started to change for special operations in 1986 with the passage of the Goldwater Nichols Act. Following this legislation, USSOCOM and AFSOC were formed. Yet, the Air Force's reluctance to embrace the AvFID mission, to include its *own* special operations community's reluctance, can be seen in how long it took for AFSOC to activate a unit dedicated to AvFID.[11] In 1994, Air Force Special Operations Command finally activated the 6th Special Operations Squadron (SOS), the first and only Air Force active duty AvFID unit. For the last 18 years, the 6th SOS and its advisors deployed around the world and trained, advised, and assisted numerous countries. In 2009 and 2010 these countries included "Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Jordan, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Korea, Thailand, Poland, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Mali, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Guatemala and El Salvador."[12] Then, on September 28, 2012, AFSOC moved

[9]Johnson, "Whither Aviation," 73.

[10]Johnson, "Whither Aviation," 4.

[11]See Wray R. Johnson, "Whither Aviation Foreign Internal Defense," for more on why it took so long to form an AvFID unit.

[12]"Factsheets: 6th Special Operations Squadron," *Hurlburt Field*, February 24, 2011, accessed November 20, 2012, http://www2.hurlburt.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=3496.

the 6th SOS to Duke Field, home of the 919th Special Operations Wing, a U.S. Air Force Reserve unit, signaling that the bulk of the AvFID mission will transition to the Reserves.[13]

As for what exactly AvFID is, published guidance can be found in United States Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2–3.1, *Foreign Internal Defense.* Interestingly enough, the term AvFID is not precisely defined in AFDD 2–3.1. After a close read one can ascertain that AvFID generally entails working by, with, and through the host nation's air forces to achieve the U.S.'s and that host nation's strategic and operational objectives.[14] Yet, according to Air Force doctrine, AvFID involves much more than just training other air forces. Notably, "FID is a very large domain encompassing the total political, economic, informational, and military support the U.S. provides to enable other governments to field viable internal defense and development (IDAD) programs for counterinsurgency, combating terrorism, and counter-narcotics."[15] For this reason, given this span of responsibilities, it seems critical to assess the political, economic, and social situation prior to analyzing the role U.S. AvFID has played abroad in helping other states conduct counterinsurgency campaigns.

[13]Michelle Vickers, "Hurlburt Squadron Moves to Duke Field," *919th Special Operations Wing,* October 1, 2012, accessed November 5, 2012, http://www.919sow.afrc.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123322133.

[14] United States Air Force, "Air Force Doctrine Document 2–3.1, Foreign Internal Defense," 17 September 2007, 2.

[15] United States Air Force, "AFDD 2–3.1, Foreign Internal Defense," 1.

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II. THE PHILIPPINES

Hukbalahap, or Huk (pronounced "hook") for short, is the abbreviation for the Tagalog phrase "*Hukbo Na Bayan Laban Sa Hapon"* which literally translates into "People's Army [To Fight] Against Japan."[16] As the name suggests, the origins of the Huk insurgency would seem to lie in the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during WWII. However, this would be an inaccurate assessment. Even though the Huks were veterans of the resistance movement against the Japanese in WWII, the origin of the Huk insurgency dates back to Filipino peasant unrest during the 1930s.[17]

Central Luzon in the Philippines is the area where the people of the Huk rebellion lived.[18] This is a lowland area of the Philippines and is primarily farmland. The farms were owned by wealthy *datu* (landowners) and the land was worked by tau (peasants).[19] The *datu-tau* relationship, commonly referred to as the *datuk*, was akin to a familial bond.[20] According to Benedict J. Kerkvliet, "[the tau] were more than tillers of his land. They were people on whom he could rely to promote his interests out of gratitude to him. They were *his* tenants. He could ask them, for example, to defend his property against bandits or rival claimants and to vote for his favorite candidates."[21] In a similar fashion, the *datu* "provided start-up loans, funded weddings and other ceremonies, and were generally concerned about the well-being of their tau."[22] In essence, the *datu* and *tau* took care of each other and helped each other in times of need. Unfortunately, the

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[16] Napoleon D. Valeriano and Charles T.R. Bohannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), viii.

[17] Wray R. Johnson and Paul Dimech, "Foreign Internal Defense and the Hukbalahap: A Model Counterinsurgency," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 4, no. 1 (1993): 31.

[18] Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 1.

[19] James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 113.

[20] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 113.

[21] Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 17.

[22] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 114.

intricacies of this relationship started to erode at the end of the Spanish colonial period (1565–1898) and declined at a more exponential rate after U.S. annexation of the Philippines in 1899.[23]

There are several factors that help explain the deterioration of the *datuk*. First, with support from the U.S., the Filipino economy transitioned from self-sustainment to capitalism. The economy went from being internally focused to one centered on exports and generating revenue. As this transformation in the economy occurred, the *datu* were incentivized to focus more on the output from their farmland and less on their relationship with the *tau*. Fixated solely on profit, the *datu* stopped making interest-free loans, tacked on high interest rates to loans that in all likelihood would not be repaid, demanded the *tau* perform odd jobs around the farm without pay, and generally stopped caring about the *tau*.[24] The *tau* thought these actions violated the spirit of their relationship and felt exploited.

Second, the Philippines experienced tremendous population growth between 1903 and 1939 as the overall Filipino population more than doubled from seven million to sixteen million people.[25] During the same time period, the four principal provinces of Central Luzon experienced a similar rate of population change as "the population increased from 717,000 to over 1.3 million people."[26] Since most people in Central Luzon made their living by farming, the supply of arable land did not meet the new demand generated by the huge increase in population. By 1930, the *tau* became frantic for land to work on. Furthermore, the increase in demand for arable land by the *tau* placed the *datu* in a position where they could take advantage of the *tau*. As Kerkvliet points out, "if for some reason a landowner forced a tenant to leave, the tenant had less hope than before of finding another landowner. The other side of the coin was that landowners could demand more from tenants and threaten to replace anyone who refused

[23] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 113.

[24] Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 13–17.

[25] Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 17.

[26] Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 17.

their terms. And as they became more concerned about making profits, their terms became stiffer and more strictly enforced."[27]

Finally, the government also played a significant role in the downfall of the *datuk*. Around the same time the U.S. annexed the Philippines, the central government started to expand its reach into the rural areas.[28] One new government law was to survey and title all land in the Philippines. This action was in direct conflict with the *datuk* as it "placed landownership, based on a government-recognized title, above the peasant's traditional right to landholding, based on his ties to the landlord and on his continued use of the land."[29] Consequently, the *datu's* title became more valued than the *tau's* claims since the *tau's* claims were primarily verbal agreements with the *datu*. If there was a dispute, the *datu* would be in a better position for an outcome in his favor.[30] Clearly, the initiation of the survey and title favored the *datu* and helped to facilitate the erosion of the *datuk*. The effects of the shift from self-sustainment to capitalism, along with the tremendous population increase in such a short period of time and the government's enactment of the mandatory issuance of title makes it easy to see how the *datuk* deteriorated at a quick rate after the U.S. annexed the Philippines.

These events happened before the Japanese invasion of the Philippines in 1941. After the Japanese invaded and successfully ousted the U.S., the peasants located in the Central Luzon area formed the Huk resistance movement. To increase their chances of survival against the Japanese, the Hukbalahap formed a united front with various other resistance groups in the Philippines. It was also at this point in time that the Huks became associated with the communists.

The Communist Party in the Philippines (Partido Komunista ng Pilapinas, or PKP) was officially organized on November 7th, 1930. Approximately two years later, the Filippino government outlawed the PKP and the party's leaders were forced to operate covertly. Subsequently, the leaders of the PKP united with the Socialist Party of

[27] Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 18.

[28] Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 22.

[29] Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 22.

[30] Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 22.

the Philippines and openly declared their allegiance to the Communist International.[31] In 1941 the Japanese invaded and the PKP went underground once again. Following the Japanese occupation, the communist leaders from the PKP and Socialist Party infiltrated the newly formed Huk organization. The communists astutely realized that the war presented a unique opportunity to capture power and popularity among the peasants.[32] In addition, the communists foresaw that if they successfully expelled the Japanese from the Philippines, a power grab for control of the country would develop.

The communists successfully infiltrated the Huks. They were so successful that eventually most government officials and scholars claimed that communists and the Huks were one and the same. In retrospect, this proved to be an inaccurate assessment of the situation. Wray R. Johnson and Paul J. Dimech point out two reasons: "first, the ideology of the PKP was incompatible with the worldview of the Filipino peasant, and second; the PKP could not put into effect its policies when they conflicted with the movement's innate momentum."[33] The majority of the people in central Luzon were Christian. The piety of the Filipinos proved too much of an impediment for the communists to overcome. The PKP were also not very well organized, and when they tried to implement certain communist initiatives in the central Luzon area, they failed. Furthermore, when many former Huks and Huk supporters were interviewed at the conclusion of the Huk rebellion, they displayed their displeasure at mistakenly being called communists.[34]

As the communists predicted, a power grab for control of the state developed after the U.S. drove the Japanese from the Philippines. The United States Armed Forces Far East (USAFFE) was the American-led resistance group, comprised of Americans who stayed behind after the Japanese invasion. [35] The Huks did not get along with USAFFE, as USAFFE also included members of the previous Philippine regime. For their part,

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[31] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 115.

[32] Robert Ross Smith, *The Hukbalahap Insurgency: Economic, Political, and Military Factors* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army), 23.

[33] Johnson and Dimech, "Foreign Internal Defense and the Hukbalahap," 35–36.

[34] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 114.

[35] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 115–116.

those in USAFFE did not like the Huks given the communists' infiltration into the Huks' ranks. Tension was high between the two groups, often resulting in armed fights. Eventually "USAFFE declared that any guerrillas not members of the USAFFE (that is, the Huks) were regarded as enemies of the U.S. government."[36]

Once General Douglas MacArthur regained control of the Philippines, the U.S. decided to allow wartime collaborators back into the new Filipino government "in order to reclaim the status quo ante bellum."[37] General MacArthur also started to meddle in Filipino politics and decided to set up his friend, Manuel Roxas, to become the next president. Roxas happened to be a wealthy landowner in central Luzon and was anti-Huk.[38]

Needless to say, these post-Japanese occupation events did not sit well with the Huks. Furthermore, on July 4th, 1946 the Philippines became independent with elections to be held later that year. The Huks participated and won six seats in the Filipino Congress.[39] One went to Luis Taruc, one of the Huks' main leaders during the Japanese occupation and soon to be leader of the Huks overall. However, newly elected President Manuel Roxas did not allow the Huks to take their seats. This provoked an outcry from the peasants in central Luzon and boosted the Huks' popularity. Hostilities soon followed, and before the U.S. realized it, the Filipino government was facing a strong insurgency.

In 1948 President Roxas outlawed the Huks and confronted the insurgency with a "'mailed fist.'"[40] He reorganized the Philippine military police into the Philippine Constabulary (PC) and placed a Japanese collaborationist, Alberto Ramos, in charge of the newly formed organization.[41] The methods the PC used to quell the insurgency were

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[36] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 116.

[37] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 115.

[38] Cecil B. Currey, *Edward Lansdale: The Unquiet American* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company), 34–35.

[39] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 116.

[40] Currey, *Edward Lansdale*, 38 and 49.

[41] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 116.

brutal and the PC did not differentiate between peasants and insurgents. Specifically, "the special tactic of these [PC] squadrons was to cordon off areas; anyone they caught inside the cordon was considered an enemy."[42] Many innocent people were killed. Roxas' 'mailed fist' strategy was devastating to the central Luzon peasants, but it did not succeed in quelling the rebellion. In actuality, Roxas' policies further drove the peasants into the Huks' open arms. The majority of central Luzon peasants either supported the Huks or joined their ranks to fight the Filipino government. As the Huks' ranks swelled, their leadership eventually changed the organization's name to "Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Balayan, or 'People's Liberation Army'"[43] They were still referred to as Huks, and the area they controlled in central Luzon was called "Huklandia."

In April 1948, President Roxas abruptly died of natural causes and Vice President Epido Quirino succeeded him.[44] Unfortunately, President Quirino did not alter any of the government's methods for dealing with the insurgency. Hostilities only intensified and U.S. leaders did not know whether the Quirino government would survive. As a result, the U.S. decided to increase its level of assistance.

In late 1950, President Truman signed National Security Council (NSC) 84/C. The document attributed the insurgency to grievances felt by the peasantry and recommended the U.S. advise and convince the Philippine government to implement the proper political, economic, and social reforms.[45] NSC 84/C was a unique document in that it accurately assessed the situation in the Philippines and did not focus solely on military force as a solution to the problem. Clearly, President Truman and his NSC team were aware of the failed 'mailed fist' operations that both Roxas and Quirino implemented. NSC 84/C also paved the way for an increase in military and economic assistance to the Philippines. From 1947 to 1952, U.S. aid reached a total of $20 million, and from 1952 to 1954 assistance reached a total of $27 million.[46] This was a relatively

[42] Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*, 196.

[43] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 118.

[44] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 118.

[45] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 120.

[46] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 122.

small amount of aid when compared to the amount the U.S. spent in Korea from 1950 to 1953. According to a Congressional Research Service report, the Korean War cost the U.S. $30 billion.[47] Given the Administration's accurate assessment of the Huk insurgency together with the assistance rendered, it becomes easier to understand how the Philippine government was finally able to successfully counter the Huks.

How exactly did the Philippine government pull out a "win" against the Huks? Ramon Magsaysay and two U.S. officers, Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Edward Lansdale and U.S. Army Major Charles "Bo" Bohannan, proved to be critical advisors to the successful counterinsurgency campaign against the Huks. Lansdale and Bohannan arrived in the Philippines in 1950. Although working for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Lansdale and Bohannan were assigned to the Joint United States Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG). Both Lansdale and Bohannan had previous experience in the Philippines during and after WWII. Lansdale worked for the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the CIA, and was an expert in psychological operations. Bohannan fought in the Philippines during WWII and was a survivor of the Bataan Death March.[48] Lansdale and Bohannan both still had numerous contacts within the Philippines and were well thought of by Filipinos.

Lansdale first met Ramon Magsaysay in Washington D.C in early 1950. Magsaysay, who had fought against the Japanese, was a Philippine congressman at the time. During their first meeting, Lansdale regarded Magsaysay as the kind of critical leader that the Filipinos desperately needed.[49] By the time Lansdale and Bohannan arrived in the Philippines, Magsaysay was appointed President Quirino's Secretary of Defense. Magsaysay and Lansdale viewed the insurgency in much the same way. From the peasants' perspective, the government was unjust and not functioning properly. The Huks received the peasants' support because the Huks represented a better option than that offered by the Filipino government in Manilla. Thus, in order to crush the

[47] Stephen Daggett, *CRS Report for Congress: Cost of Major U.S. Wars* (Congressional Research Service Order Code RS22926, June 29, 2010), 2.

[48] Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations.*

[49] Currey, *The Unquiet American*, 71.

insurgency, the government needed to change and to implement reforms that appealed to and benefited the peasantry. The reforms would display to the peasantry that the Filipino government existed to serve its people. At the same time they would undermine support for the Huks and their legitimacy.

Lansdale and Magsaysay formed a remarkable team. As the Secretary of National Defense, Magsaysay was able to implement numerous effective solutions that focused primarily on the professionalization of the military forces. Specifically, Magsaysay ensured that the military personnel, when in direct contact with the local population, treated the peasants with respect and did not commit human rights violations. As a result, this reform measure imparted a favorable image of the Philippines' military and government upon the peasantry. In late 1953, Magsaysay was elected President of the Philippines. As president, Magsaysay was able to continue his reform of the Philippine government and apply the political, social, and economic reforms needed to successfully defeat the Huk insurgency.

As for the role that U.S. AvFID played in helping to defeat the insurgency, it is important to note that Philippine aviation did not even become organized until 1935. The U.S. played a major role in assisting with the establishment of the Philippine Constabulary Air Corps, which was later called the Philippine Army Air Corps (PAAC).[50] The U.S. provided training on the basic tactics, techniques, and procedures of aviation. During WWII, the PAAC had been destroyed. However, with the end of the Japanese occupation the PAAC was re-established. In 1947, the Philippine Air Force (PAF) became a separate service.[51]

As the Huk insurgency got underway in 1946, the PAAC was neither properly trained nor equipped to provide airpower in an effective manner. As a result, the U.S. increased its assistance to the PAF. Through JUSMAG, the PAF received numerous aircraft to include T-6s, BT-13s, P-51s, C-47s, and L-5s.[52] The PAF also received pilot

[50] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 125.

[51] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 126.

[52] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 126–129.

training in the U.S., with Filipino pilots who survived WWII receiving refresher courses.[53] For the most part, the PAF operated independently, without U.S. direct involvement in the fight against the Huks. The important point to note here is the fact that the U.S.'s primary role was to advise the PAF on how to employ airpower versus employing airpower for it. Lansdale and Bohannan consistently tried to ensure the fight against the Huks remained the Philippines' and not the U.S.'s fight.

As for how the PAF effectively employed airpower against the Huk insurgency, it was very creative. Lansdale, himself an Air Force officer and an expert at psychological operations, advised and encouraged Magsaysay and the PAF to use airpower in a more unconventional manner. One psychological operation that the PAF consistently performed was called the "eye of God."[54] Lansdale was familiar with the use of spotter aircraft against tank formations during WWII. With the "eye of God," essentially the pilot would use a loudspeaker and fly over enemy formations to broadcast messages that would make the enemy feel vulnerable to the "all-seeing eye."[55] The PAF was able to perform the "eye of God" tactic through the use of old WWII U.S. Navy bullhorns designed for amphibious landings. Lansdale claimed to have found the bullhorns in Washington, D.C., and brought them with him to the Philippines.[56] Lansdale recalled one of the more successful "eye of God" operations as the following:

> On this day a Huk squadron was being pursued by an infantry company from a BCT [Battalion Combat Team], which had not been able to make contact with the elusive guerrillas. The officer went up in the aircraft to see if he could spot the Huks from the air. He saw them, and he saw also that his troops were hopelessly behind in their pursuit…Through the bull horn he shouted down at the Huks below, telling them that they were doomed because he and his troops knew all about them and soon would catch them…He called down to the Huks by name, pretending to recognize individuals. As the aircraft made a final circle, the bull horn sent his amplified voice down with these parting words: 'Thank you, our friend in our squadron, for all the information.' Then he flew away…The

[53] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 126.

[54] Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press), 73.

[55] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 73.

[56] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 73.

> BCT found out later that the mention of a mysterious 'friend' in their ranks had aroused the Huk's darkest suspicions of one another. Three of them were singled out and executed on the spot. The words had inflicted as many casualties on the enemy as troops could have done in a running fight.[57]

Airpower was used for more than just psychological operations. Magsaysay and Lansdale recognized that the armed fight against the Huks needed to be primarily won on the ground. However, the Philippine government had already tried and failed to do this through its 'mailed fist' technique. As Secretary of Defense, Magsaysay realized his army needed to be professionalized and needed to treat the local peasants with dignity and respect. With Lansdale at his side, he strove to accomplish this through his unannounced surprise inspections of all units throughout the Philippines, especially in Huklandia. The only way Magsaysay and Lansdale were able to do this was via air transport.

According to Corum and Johnson, surprise inspections were "one of the more celebrated capabilities that PAF L-5s and other light airplanes brought to the pacification effort."[58] Lansdale claimed that their impact was "electrifying."[59] In addition, Lansdale recalled a specific instance of a government employee who was afraid to steal stamps because Magsaysay might show up. The interesting part of the story was that the government employee worked in the post office and Magsaysay, the Secretary of Defense, had zero authority over the postal service.[60] Meanwhile, when Magsaysay arrived via aircraft, his presence may have had an even bigger impact on the local population than on the military. The peasants actually saw an important member of the government visiting their farms and felt that Magsaysay cared about their general welfare. In return, Magsaysay received first-hand accounts about how the government was or was not living up to its responsibilities. He obtained many ideas for reforms from these trips with Lansdale. These proved crucial to regaining the local population's

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[57] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 74.

[58] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 132.

[59] A. H. Peterson, G. C. Reinhardt, and E. E. Conger, eds., *Symposium on the Role of Airpower in Counterinsurgency and Unconventional Warfare: The Philippine Huk Campaign, RM-3652-PR* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation), 48.

[60] Peterson, Reinhardt, and Conger, *Symposium on the Role of Airpower*, 48.

support for the government and, as the government earned the population's support, the Huks lost the support they needed to continue their campaign against it.

Other noteworthy uses of airpower during the Huk insurgency included reconnaissance, close air support, air resupply of troops, and troop transport. The aircraft used for reconnaissance would spot enemy ground formations and then relay the intelligence back to the Philippine ground forces. Occasionally the PAF would provide close air support, but it tried to limit this in order to avoid civilian casualties.[61] According to Lansdale, the long range patrols into the hinterlands of Huklandia could not have happened without the air resupply efforts of the PAF.[62] Resupply also had a tremendous psychological impact during the war. As Colonel Napolean D. Valeriano and Major "Bo" Bohannan point out in their co-authored book, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience*, "food for soldiers, especially for troops on patrol or actively engaged in operations, is often a problem that generates unnecessary civilian hostility."[63] The PAF realized the importance of food to the Philippine soldiers in the field and devised a method of air-drops that was eventually shared with colleagues at Fort Bragg. In essence, they inserted fresh eggs into a volleyball, surrounded by hay or straw in a box. The box was then air-dropped by the PAF. According to Colonel Valeriano, "some of my officers would swear on official oath they were able to receive fresh eggs by this method."[64]

Without a doubt, the Philippine counterinsurgent forces could not have employed airpower effectively without U.S. assistance. Even though it was not called AvFID at the time, the United States supported the PAF through AvFID with the necessary aircraft, equipment, and training. The U.S. also effectively implemented FID when the U.S. correctly assessed the situation in the Philippines and inserted an impressive advisory team to include Lansdale and Bohannan. This support, in addition to key advice from Lansdale and Bohannan, proved to be critical to the success of the Philippine

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[61] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 129.

[62] Peterson, Reinhardt, and Conger, *Symposium on the Role of Airpower*, 46.

[63] Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations*, 84.

[64] Peterson, Reinhardt, and Conger, *Symposium on the Role of Airpower*, 47.

counterinsurgency campaign. Overall, the role of airpower was not a decisive factor. However, air power certainly played a critical role and without the training and the advice from the U.S., the PAF would not have been able to conduct missions from the air as effectively as it did. Therefore, it can be concluded that U.S. AvFID proved itself to be an effective as well as a critical component in the Philippine government's overall successful campaign against the Hukbalahap insurgency during the 1950s.

III. VIETNAM

Vietnam is located on the eastern side of the Indochina Peninsula, covers approximately 331,000 square kilometers[65], and borders China, Cambodia, Laos, and the Gulfs of Thailand and Tonkin. In the mid-1960s, both North and South Vietnam had approximately 34 million people[66] and was considered a culturally and ethnically homogenous society.[67] Nevertheless, Vietnam did have some ethnic minority groups, to include 3,500,000 million Montagnards, a French term for "mountain people living almost exclusively in the hill, mountain, and plateau areas,"[68]over 1,000,000 Chinese, 700,000 Cambodians in former districts of the Kingdom of Cambodia,[69] and a significant Buddhist population.

Over the course of its history, Vietnam has been the target of numerous invasions and occupations. First invaded and colonized by the Chinese 2,000 years ago, Vietnam remained a Chinese colony for the next 1,000 years.[70] The Vietnamese always resented and resisted the Chinese throughout their occupation. Finally, in 939 A.D., the Vietnamese successfully expelled their Chinese rulers.[71] Over the next 400 years the Chinese would consistently attempt to reconquer Vietnam, sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing. However, the Chinese recognized Vietnam's independence in 1426 and did not try to return again until 1788, when they failed.[72] The departure of the Chinese in 1426 did not mean, however, an end to foreign interference.

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[65] Central Intelligence Agency, "Vietnam," *Central Intelligence Agency - The World Fact Book*, October 4, 2012, accessed on October 13, 2012, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vm.html.

[66] George McTurnan Kahin and John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam* (New York: The Dial Press, 1967), 4.

[67] Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1963), 5.

[68] Kahin and Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, 3.

[69] Kahin and Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, 4.

[70] Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*, 5–10.

[71] Kahin and Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, 4.

[72] Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 104.

In 1540, Portugal arrived and became the first western nation to exploit Vietnam. The British and the Dutch soon followed in the late 17th century and broke up the Portuguese control. However, the Brits and the Dutch did not stay long since they did not find Vietnam to be particularly profitable for them.[73] Alexandre de Rhodes, a French missionary, arrived in Vietnam in 1627 and is credited with adapting the Vietnamese language to the Roman alphabet.[74] From this point onward, French influence in Vietnam exponentially increased to the point where, by 1884, Vietnam's rulers were willing to accept Vietnam becoming a French protectorate.[75] As with the Chinese occupation, though, the French ran into some resistance.

Needless to say, the extent of foreign influence in Vietnam has been considerable. With regard to Chinese influence, "Confucianism, Taoism, language forms, political theory, and …[Chinese] military theory"[76] are prevalent. Of particular importance, the Vietnamese perfected the art of guerrilla warfare; against the Chinese they "relied on mobile methods of warfare, abandon[ed] the cities, avoid[ed] frontal attacks, and harass[ed] his enemies until, confused and exhausted, they were ripe for final attack."[77] Though French influence was not as profound as that of the Chinese, it still made its mark. For example, some Vietnamese had the opportunity to study in France, to include Ho Chi Minh. In addition, most educated Vietnamese spoke French. When the U.S. became involved in Vietnam in the 1950s, the ability to speak French became a valued trait in the U.S. military. Otherwise, U.S. personnel relied on French or Vietnamese translators.

Yet, even though the Vietnamese were influenced by Chinese and French thinking, a strong sentiment of Vietnamese nationalism ran through the population. Ironically, Vietnam's strong sense of nationalism had roots in "the Chinese concept of the Mandate of Heaven, which embodies several time-honored duties. The principal task of

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[73] Timothy J. Lomperis, *The War Everyone Lost – And Won: America's Intervention in Viet Nam's Twin Struggles* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 22.

[74] Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 673.

[75] Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams*, 24.

[76] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 228.

[77] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 101.

any holder of the Mandate of Heaven in Viet Nam has been the preservation of Vietnamese identity."[78] Thus, even though the Vietnamese have always borrowed from others, they invariably put their own twist on what they borrowed. The Vietnamese did this to ensure that their identity was not lost.[79] As such, "it has always been the almost sacred charge of Viet Nam's rulers to rid the country of foreign invaders and meddlers."[80] Given the concept of the Mandate of Heaven and the importance of Vietnamese identity, one can begin to understand the strong sense of nationalism that the Vietnamese possessed. In addition, one can also ascertain why the Vietnamese always put up a stiff resistance against foreigners meddling in Vietnamese affairs, regardless of the foreigners' intentions.

In 1940, the Japanese invaded and assumed control of Vietnam from the French. The Japanese positioned Bao Dai as emperor of Vietnam. During the Japanese occupation, the Vietnamese nationalists resisted. According to Kahin and Lewis, "the most effective nationalist organization, the Communist Party attracted many Vietnamese patriots who had no particular interest in communism. Here, then, were the beginnings of a fusion of nationalism and communism that was to develop much further."[81] The Communist Party operated militarily under the Viet Minh organization led by Ho Chi Minh and his military commander, Vo Nguyen Giap. Ironically, Ho Chi Minh and General Giap operated with U.S. personnel from the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and French resistance fighters against the Japanese (see Figure 1).

[78] Lomperis, *The War Everyone Lost*, 15.

[79] Lomperis, *The War Everyone Lost*, 15.

[80] Lomperis, *The War Everyone Lost*, 15.

[81] Kahin and Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, 14.

OSS Deer Team members pose with Viet Minh leaders Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap during training at Tan Trao in August 1945. Deer Team members standing, l to r, are Rene Defourneaux, (Ho), Allison Thomas, (Giap), Henry Prunier and Paul Hoagland, far right.

Figure 1. OSS Deer Team members with Minh and Giap[82]

The Viet Minh assisted the OSS to recover U.S. pilots shot down by the Japanese. In addition, the OSS utilized the Viet Minh's intelligence networks to gain valuable information about Japanese occupation forces.[83] The Viet Minh established themselves as a potent force, and, as WWII came to a close, Ho Chi Minh strategically positioned himself and the Viet Minh to take over Vietnam. However, Ho Chi Minh mistakenly thought that independence would be granted by the French. After Japan surrendered in 1945, the French attempted to re-establish its colonial rule in Indochina.

As soon as Ho Chi Minh realized that the French would not relinquish control and grant Vietnam independence, he resurrected the Viet Minh military organization with Giap at the helm, and the Viet Minh recovered their hidden WWII weapons. In addition, Ho Chi Minh successfully convinced Bao Dai to relinquish his position as emperor, which paved the way for Ho Chi Minh's communist party to take over in Hanoi. Even though Bao Dai subsequently left Vietnam for Paris to live in exile for the remainder of his days, he still influenced Vietnamese politics. On September 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh

[82] Claude G. Berube, "Ho Chi Minh and the OSS," *Historynet.com*, October 6, 2009, accessed on October 13, 2012, http://www.historynet.com/ho-chi-minh-and-the-oss.htm.

[83] Kahin and Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, 17.

established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and declared Vietnam independent.[84] Shortly thereafter, the French and the Viet Minh went to war.

At first, Giap attempted to decimate the French via conventional tactics. After suffering defeats, Giap switched to guerrilla warfare tactics and slowly built up his army into a formidable fighting force.[85] The French had a tough time against the Viet Minh and their guerrilla tactics. As a result, the French asked the U.S. for help. President Truman established the U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) in 1950 to assist the French.[86] After President Eisenhower took office in January 1953, Vietnam became his administration's problem.

On June 23, 1953, an American team led by General John W. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel and then Colonel Edward Lansdale, U.S. Air Force, arrived in Vietnam to assess the situation and provide recommendations to French General Henri Navarre.[87] Lansdale came directly from the Philippines where he assisted President Ramon Magsaysay defeat the Hukbalahap rebellion. After Lansdale spent about six weeks in Vietnam, he observed, "The majority of the Vietnamese, still hungering for independence, had no side to join. They were opposed to both the Communist Vietminh and the French. As the war raged around their families and homes, they gave lip service to whichever side was locally dominant, in order to stay alive."[88] Lansdale concluded that the French were not going to win unless they made drastic reforms that placed Vietnamese nationalists in charge of running their own country.[89] Interestingly enough, Lansdale's assessment totally differed from General O'Daniel's optimistic assessment. O'Daniel predicted that "Navarre would achieve 'decisive defeat' of Viet Minh guerrilla forces by 1955."[90]

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[84] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 230.

[85] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 230–231.

[86] Currey, *Edward Lansdale*, 135.

[87] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 110.

[88] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 111.

[89] Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 111.

[90] Currey, *Edward Lansdale*, 135.

The lack of synchronization between Lansdale's and O'Daniel's reports is highly revealing of what was to come with further U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The war between the French and the Viet Minh culminated in the large conventional battle at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, when 16,000 French troops were surrounded by 40,000 Viet Minh in a basin enclosed by wooden hills.[91] The results were disastrous and the French surrendered. Dien Bien Phu is considered by most historians to be the straw that broke the camel's back for the French in Vietnam and the battle that led to the Geneva Convention peace agreements.

At the Geneva Convention, the French agreed to hand over control of their colony to the Vietnamese. In addition, sovereignty was granted to Ho Chi Minh's nation-state north of the seventeenth parallel with Hanoi as the capital, while Bao Dai was given the southern half of the state of Vietnam with Saigon as its capital. Both sides agreed to hold general elections in 1956 to reunify the country.[92] But, still in exile status in France, Bao Dai had no intention of giving up his luxurious lifestyle. Instead, he placed Ngo Dinh Diem, a vocal opponent of communism, at the helm of South Vietnam as Prime Minister.

The insurgency in South Vietnam began as soon as Diem took office. The insurgents' aim was to reunify Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh's communist government and to remove all foreign interference. It is tough to pinpoint exactly which groups considered themselves part of the insurgency since many different groups resisted the Diem regime. Those that were most prominent included "communists, the religious sects,"[93] former Viet Minh soldiers, and members of organized crime. However, the Diem regime placed most of the blame for the violence on the remaining Viet Minh soldiers still located in South Vietnam.[94] Eventually, the insurgents came to be collectively referred to as the Viet Cong.

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[91] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 233.

[92] Currey, *Edward Lansdale*, 139.

[93] Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), 75.

[94] Pike, *Viet Cong*, 75.

With Diem confronted by insurgency, the U.S. began to be more involved in Vietnam. After losing China to communism and only achieving an armistice in Korea, the U.S. was very concerned with "'falling dominoes.'"[95] Since neither President Truman nor President Eisenhower was willing to commit U.S. combat troops, the U.S. decided to conduct an "advise and assistance" effort.

In the wake of his success in the Philippines, the U.S. sent Edward Lansdale back to Vietnam in 1954 with the hope he could achieve another success. Lansdale, working undercover for the CIA, belonged to a group called the Saigon Military Mission (SMM). SMM's mission was "to assist in the birth of a southern government that could successfully compete with and oppose Ho's Democratic Republic of Vietnam."[96] In this capacity, Lansdale developed a close relationship with Diem and became his principal U.S. advisor.

Diem initially satisfied most U.S. bureaucrats with his efforts to suppress communism. However, as Diem fought communism, he also suppressed every other form of opposition. An "autocratic Confucian,"[97] Diem did not allow for his opposition to form political parties and his government often responded against minority groups with a mailed fist. In mid-1963, government forces fired upon and killed Buddhists celebrating the birthday of Gautama Siddhartha Buddha.[98] Buddhists throughout Vietnam protested and a few responded by burning themselves in public. These self-immolations had a profound impact. The impression they made that stuck was that Diem's "democracy" was so bad people were willing to kill themselves rather than live under his regime. In addition, Diem's brother and most trusted advisor, Nhu, established the Cao Lao, his own political party. The Cao Lao served as the Diem regime's political police and "resorted to torture, terror, or murder to silence those who refused to join or who spoke out against it."[99]

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[95] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 236.

[96] Currey, *Edward Lansdale*, 140.

[97] Lomperis, *The War Everyone Lost*, 50.

[98] Currey, *Edward Lansdale*, 283.

[99] Currey, *Edward Lansdale*, 181.

Furthermore, Diem put an end to local elections and placed personnel loyal to him and his family in charge at the local level. Essentially, Diem only wanted people loyal to him and his family to control Vietnam. Despite the efforts made by Lansdale and his team, the U.S. was not able to successfully convince Diem that his government needed to: be responsive to and representative of the population, address the legitimate grievances of the population, and serve to protect the rights of individuals, especially minorities. While Diem tightened his un-democratic rule, the U.S. continued to finance his government. This did not help the situation; especially since Diem made sure the huge influx of U.S. aid served his interests and those of the small urban middle class disproportionately. Diem saw no reason to change conditions for the disadvantaged classes or the peasants in the countryside.[100] As Kahin and Lewis point out, "Saigon could much more easily insulate itself from the troublesome realities beyond its outskirts. U.S. aid thus provided Diem with a degree of financial independence and isolated him from basic economic and political realities and reduced his need to appreciate or respond to his people's wants and expectations."[101]

In addition to Lansdale's efforts, the U.S. military mission established "two principal objectives: first, to create a conventional army of divisional-sized units and supporting elements to meet any North Vietnamese invasion; and second, to establish 'follow-through programs' to sustain these conventional forces."[102] The U.S. military objective of building a conventional South Vietnamese army to counter a North Vietnamese invasion reflects the U.S.'s misunderstandings about the Vietnamese insurgency. From the U.S. military's perspective the insurgency was a precursor to a full-scale conventional invasion by North Vietnam.[103] Consequently, the U.S. felt it needed to build and prepare the South Vietnamese army for a conventional war. In addition, the U.S. military incorrectly believed that the overall problem in Vietnam was a military problem when, instead, most insurgents' aim was to reunify Vietnam and remove foreign

[100] Kahin and Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, 79.

[101] Kahin and Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, 79–80.

[102] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 239.

[103] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 239.

interference. Underlying problems had more to do with political, social, and economic factors. Unfortunately, the U.S. military leadership did not understand this, as was made brazenly obvious when "Gen. Earle Wheeler, Army Chief of Staff from 1962 to 1964, stated that 'the essence of the problem in Vietnam is military.'"[104]

It is also important to point out here that the U.S.'s two military objectives never took into account how the military piece fit into the overall South Vietnamese government plans to counter the Viet Cong. In counterinsurgency, the purpose of the military is to support the government and, ideally, its reforms, as well as to protect the people from the insurgents. Overall, the government needs to gain the support of its people and woo them away from the insurgents, and in the process also de-legitimize the insurgents. Unfortunately, the South Vietnamese government's initiatives, or lack thereof, and U.S. military reform initiatives were never aligned throughout the war.

In January 1961 President Kennedy took office and did not agree with the conventional mindset that permeated the Department of Defense. He did not think that, given its structure, the U.S. military was capable of adequately responding to insurgencies or wars of national liberation that dominated the world scene at the time. Consequently, President Kennedy directed the Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, to have the military establish units dedicated to COIN.[105] In addition to his desire for military units focused on COIN, President Kennedy also wanted units to conduct unconventional warfare or covert paramilitary operations against the North Vietnamese.[106]

Historically, covert paramilitary operations fell under the CIA. However, President Kennedy was dissatisfied with the CIA and its recent performance, exemplified by the failed Bay of Pigs operation in April 1961. Instead of the CIA, President Kennedy wanted the military to be responsible for guerrilla operations in North Vietnam.

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[104] Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 37.

[105] Johnson, "Whither Aviation," 70.

[106] Richard H. Shultz, Jr., *The Secret War Against Hanoi: The Untold Story of Spies, Saboteurs, and Covert Warriors in North Vietnam* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 3.

According to Shultz, "this was the beginning of what would turn into the largest and most complex covert-operations campaign carried out by the U.S. government during the Cold War. From 1964 until 1972 it would be executed by the military, not the CIA."[107] The process by which the covert paramilitary programs in Vietnam were transferred from the CIA to the military was known as Operation Switchback.[108]

In response to pressure from the Kennedy administration to change the conventional dynamic that existed within the DoD, the Air Force activated the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS) at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida on April 14, 1961.[109] The mission of the 4400th CCTS, nicknamed "Jungle Jim," "was to train foreign air force personnel in the application of airpower in COIN."[110] As previously discussed, this is the mission of AvFID. However, with President Kennedy's authorization to send U.S. Army Special Forces to Vietnam, Jungle Jim's mission was tweaked. The 4400th would not just be a unit dedicated to training, it was "'designed to fight'" and "to train indigenous airmen while working with and supporting the Special Forces, rangers, and irregular forces along the border."[111] In essence, advisors were now expected to train the South Vietnamese Air Force for COIN against the Viet Cong and, at the same time, assist the U.S. Special Forces in unconventional warfare operations against the North Vietnamese (i.e., the missions transferred to the U.S. military via Operation Switchback).

The first detachment of the 4400th CCTS, code-named "Farm Gate," deployed to Vietnam in November 1961. Farm Gate arrived as an independent unit, "but soon came under the control of the Second Advanced Echelon, a provisional element of Thirteenth Air Force, commanded by Brigadier General [Rollen H.] Anthis."[112] Thirteenth Air Force fell under the authority of the Pacific Air Forces Commander, Hickam Air Force

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[107] Shultz, *The Secret War Against Hanoi*, 3.

[108] Shultz, *The Secret War Against Hanoi*, 31.

[109] Robert F. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia: The Advisory Years to 1965* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, 1981), 79.

[110] Johnson, "Whither Aviation," 70.

[111] Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia*, 80.

[112] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 246.

Base in Hawaii. The initial purpose of "Farm Gate" and subsequent AvFID detachments was to train, advise, and assist the South Vietnamese Air Force to employ airpower against the Viet Cong insurgency. However, the Farm Gate airmen believed that they would be involved in combat while training the South Vietnamese Air Force.[113]

At first, the members of Farm Gate only conducted training and occasionally ran support missions for U.S. Army Special Forces. Confused about what they were supposed to do and "highly motivated and eager to fight," the morale of the Farm Gate airmen dropped.[114] About a month after arriving in Vietnam, Farm Gate was approved for combat operations, but only if a Vietnamese was aboard the aircraft being used.[115] This approval marked the beginning of the end of the U.S.'s advising and training mission, as Farm Gate started to veer away from training to combat.

Instead of training and advising the South Vietnamese Air Force, the Farm Gate airmen concentrated on fighting the insurgency through close air support and air-to-ground interdiction missions (i.e., conventional air operations). In addition, they performed unconventional warfare missions over North Vietnam. As a result, the Vietnamese airmen were pushed aside and placed in a secondary or supporting role to the U.S. airmen fighting the war. The war slowly became the U.S.'s fight instead of remaining South Vietnam's war.

By 1965 the U.S. deployed Army, Air Force, and Marine combat units. It was around this time that the AvFID mission completely vanished and the U.S. overtly took control of the war effort. Brigadier General Harry C. "Heinie" Aderholt, former commander of the 1st Air Commando Wing, was critical of this development and stated, "'Either because the 2nd Advanced Echelon [later the 2d Air Division] in Saigon didn't understand or didn't give a damn, the Farm Gate boys started flying close air support for the Vietnamese army…We should never have had our regular Air Force and Army units over there. It should have been dealt with as an insurgency, and it should have been the

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[113]Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia*, 82

[114] Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia*, 82.

[115] Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia*, 82–83.

Vietnamese's fight and not ours.'"[116] The South Vietnamese armed forces that the U.S. trained and advised were now assigned to internal defense duties.[117] Worse, with the South Vietnamese armed forces having been trained for conventional warfare and not internal defense, they proved incapable of fighting a superior enemy, the Viet Cong.

Even though the AvFID mission was thoroughly discarded and ignored, it is still important to understand why the Farm Gate airmen resorted to conventional air rather than COIN operations. Probably the best analysis is provided by Andrew Krepinevich in his look at the U.S. Army in Vietnam and his examination of what he calls "The Army Concept of war." According to Krepinevich, "The Army Concept of war, is basically, the Army's perception of how wars *ought* to be waged and is reflected in the way the Army organizes and trains its troops for battle. The characteristics of the Army Concept are two: a focus on mid-intensity, or conventional, war and a reliance on high volumes of firepower to minimize casualties."[118] Since counterinsurgency operations tend to focus on the opposite of what conventional operations require (i.e., "light infantry formations, not heavy divisions…firepower restraint, not its widespread application"[119]), conventional operations are largely irrelevant to fighting an insurgency. In fact, conventional operations in the form of massive firepower and large movements of foreign forces do more harm than good against insurgents.

Essentially, this means that the U.S. military fought the Viet Cong in a way that would not defeat it. The U.S.'s gross misunderstanding of counterinsurgency warfare in Vietnam is perhaps best encapsulated in the now-famous exchange between a former instructor at the Army War College, Colonel Harry G. Summers Jr., and a North Vietnamese colonel *after* the Vietnam war: "'You know,' [Colonel Summers] told a North Vietnamese colonel after the war, 'you never defeated us on the battlefield.' To which his Communist counterpart replied, 'That may be so, but it is also irrelevant.'"[120]

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[116] Warren A. Trest, *Air Commando One: Heinie Aderholt and America's Secret Air Wars* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 123–124.

[117] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 240.

[118] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 5.

[119] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 5.

[120] Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 17.

The same thinking that permeated the Army was also prevalent in the U.S. Air Force. U.S. airpower theory can be broken down into "three fundamental tenets: that airpower is inherently offensive, manifestly strategic, and by that fact must be independent in order to realize its full potential."[121] Buttressing these three tenets, are the concepts of overwhelming firepower and directly attacking an enemy's forces or an enemy's means of fighting (i.e., logistics routes, communication lines, etc.). The purpose of fighting this way is to capitalize on the strategic nature of airpower, prep the battlefield for the ground forces to "mop-up" the remaining enemy forces and their war-making capacity, and minimize U.S. casualties. General Curtis E. LeMay, Vice Chief of Staff and then Chief of Staff of the Air Force from July 1957 to February 1965, "personally favored a direct and open response with the necessary strength. He defined 'necessary' as '*more* than is actually necessary to do the job,' hitting 'with overwhelming weight' to avoid 'stretching things out over a period of time.'"[122] Such a conception of airpower theory works very well against a conventional enemy who has fixed military forces and a highly visible war-making infrastructure and capacity. Unfortunately, the Viet Cong insurgency had neither of these to target. The insurgency relied on guerrilla warfare, hit and run tactics, and a narrative that slowly convinced the Vietnamese people to view the Viet Cong and the communists as a better option than the Saigon government.

The Farm Gate airmen did perform some successful COIN air operations to include psychological operations and resupply missions. However, their primary mission was definitely combat operations.[123] Later, when the U.S. employment of airpower in Vietnam was reviewed, General Aderholt "blamed Brigadier General Rollen H. Anthis, who had no COIN experience, and his 2d ADVON staff for misusing [Farm Gate]. He described Anthis as 'a raving madman' who 'didn't know shit from Shinola about COIN warfare.'"[124] Similarly, Neil Sheehan, in *A Bright Shining Lie*, portrays General Anthis as someone who refused to believe that air combat operations and the resulting civilian

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[121] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 268.

[122] Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia*, 79.

[123] Trest, *Air Commando One*, 123.

[124] Trest, *Air Commando One*, 124.

casualties were driving the Vietnamese people directly into the hands of the communists. Worse, Anthis did not believe there was anything wrong with Farm Gate taking over the fight from the South Vietnamese. According to Sheehan, "Every service wanted as big a role as possible in Vietnam as soon as Kennedy committed the United States to the war. The more the Air Force bombed, the bigger its role. If air power was restricted the way it ought to be, the Air Force would not have much to do in Vietnam. It was in Anthis's personal interest and the interest of his institution to believe that the bombing furthered the war effort, and so he believed it."[125]

Overall, there is quite a bit to extrapolate from the Vietnam experience. First and most important, Diem's and subsequent regimes in Vietnam did not implement political, social, and economic reforms sufficient to convince the Vietnamese people that the Saigon government was legitimate or had the population's best interests at heart. From the population's perspective, the Viet Cong came to represent a better option. Second, the U.S. military and the South Vietnamese fought the war as if Vietnam was a military problem. As described earlier, the reasons for the insurgency were political, social, and economic. The military effort needed to be coordinated with and subordinate to the political, social, and economic efforts of the government. Third, the AvFID advisors were tasked to perform missions other than AvFID (i.e., covert paramilitary operations/unconventional warfare). Unfortunately, a unit can only do so much. If given multiple mission sets, the unit will invariably have to prioritize. In the case of Vietnam, the Farm Gate airmen preferred combat operations, including the paramilitary covert operations, as opposed to the training mission. Finally, for the brief time the U.S. advisors trained them, the South Vietnamese were being trained for the wrong fight. Worse, the advisors shifted away from training the South Vietnamese to fighting the war themselves. Ultimately, the U.S. made the fight its own. From the Vietnamese perspective, the U.S. simply replaced the French as another imperialist power, which played directly into both the Viet Cong's and North Vietnam's hands.

[125] Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 113.

IV. EL SALVADOR

El Salvador, a small country approximately the size of Massachusetts, has the highest population density in Central and South America.[126] El Salvador became a Spanish colony in the 1520s during the age of exploration and colonization. Incentivized to generate wealth quickly for the Spanish crown, the colonizers centered the Salvadoran economy on exporting a single profitable crop. The "monocrop economy, in which the cycles of development and decline were similar and only the crop changed," focused first on cacao, then indigo, and finally coffee.[127] To implement in the monocrop economic model, the Spanish instituted the *hacienda* system, which made the indigenous population or peasants dependent on landowners for their existence.[128] The feudal relationship that resulted was further distinguished by the landowners deceiving the peasants into accepting loans that the peasants would never be able to repay. This turned the peasants into "*colonos,* or serfs" and permanently tied them to the hacienda. [129] A*parceria* or sharecropping was also prevalent, as was the use of slaves from Africa.

The monocrop economic model and the hacienda system were not stable systems for economic development. As the global economy experienced shifts, from expansion to recession or depression, El Salvador's economy experienced periods of extreme expansion and depression, in large part due to the country's lack of economic diversification. During the economically depressed periods, some wealthy landowners took advantage of opportunities to, for instance, claim the rights to communal lands without properly compensating the previous owner(s).[130] This placed what was already a small amount of available land in El Salvador into the hands of a controlling minority. Subsequently, "the pattern of land concentration led to vast unemployment and

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[126] Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 23.

[127] Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 27–29.

[128] Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador,* 27.

[129] Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador,* 27.

[130] Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador,* 28.

underemployment among the peasantry."[131] Adding to un- and underemployment was the fact that indigo and coffee cultivation only required peasants to work the fields for three months out of the year. As a consequence, those who were fortunate enough to find work on the plantations could not find much work the remaining nine months.

Furthermore, the same few wealthy landowners controlled the political scene in San Salvador, often establishing laws that would only benefit them. The peasantry often responded, especially during economically depressed times, with protests and violent revolts. In turn, the colony's security forces, paid by and entirely subservient to the oligarchy, brutally suppressed the revolts.

By 1821, El Salvador gained its independence from Spain. However, the economic, social, and political effects of Spanish colonization remained deeply embedded and helped sow the seeds for future conflict. In fact, after El Salvador's independence, the severity of the revolts only increased in size and frequency. A few factors contributed to this situation. First, El Salvador's government issued a series of laws in 1881 and 1882 that "recognized only private property and thereby abolished the peasantry's traditional communal forms of landownership, the *ejidos* and *tierras comunales*. This abolition of common lands as a legally recognized form of property eventually meant the dispossession from their homes—and means of livelihood—of the great majority of the rural population."[132] These laws were specifically designed by the oligarchy to take land away from the rural poor under the auspices of development. The peasants were effectively driven off their communal lands and into the cash-crop workforce.[133] Consequently, the peasants found the pre-existing economic structure overturned, which created further friction between the two classes.

Second and directly related to the passage of the new economic laws, the government found itself increasingly relying on coercion to ensure the oligarchy retained

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[131] Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 28.

[132] Liisa North, *Bitter Grounds: Roots of Revolt in El Salvador* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 1985), 17.

[133] Hugh Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War: A Study of Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Lynee Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1996), 18.

control over its newly acquired lands.[134] The peasants did not appreciate this. As one would expect, when the government resorted to repression to enforce highly unpopular laws, this only added fuel to the existing fire. Third, the government manipulated the judicial system to establish new laws that guaranteed an adequate supply of labor to work the oligarchy's lands.[135] The manipulation of the judiciary and the subsequent forcing of "forced" labor into the cash-crop workforce only deepened the rift between peasants and wealthy landowners. Finally, El Salvador's government and the oligarchy continued to support a monocrop export economy and did not make efforts to diversify. As mentioned previously, this economic model hurt the peasants particularly during depressed economic time periods.

In the mid to late 20th century, El Salvador experienced further instability, and when economic, social, and political conditions are analyzed, it comes as no surprise that a civil war broke out. By the 1970s, the economy was still controlled by a small oligarchy, and the government was ruled by the military, which proved to have minimal regard for human rights.[136] To maintain control in the densely populated country, the oligarchy and military established a pact. As Hugh Byrne describes it, "Between 1932 and 1979 the core of the system rested on an alliance between the landowning class and the armed forces within which military leaders were guardians of the political order, defining the limits of political reform, while the landowning class oversaw the economic order and set tight limits on any change in this area."[137] With a global recession and a significant drop in coffee prices during the late 1970s, El Salvador's economy was in poor shape.[138] There was still little to no economic opportunity for the peasants to

[134] North, *Bitter Grounds*, 22.

[135] North, *Bitter Grounds*, 22.

[136] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 327.

[137] Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 23.

[138] A.J. Bacevich et al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador* (Cambridge, MA: Institute For Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc., 1988), 3.

improve their living conditions. In fact, hundreds of thousands of peasants left El Salvador for neighboring Honduras to seek better opportunities to own land and secure a job.[139]

According to Steffen W. Schmidt, El Salvador's political system in the 1970s "had become a complex kaleidoscope reflecting various political factions, each promising the poor a utopia."[140] The political factions were mainly Marxist-Leninist groups. As it turns out, it was relatively easy for the communists to gain support in El Salvador. One reason was simply that the current government was not sufficiently responsive to the peasantry. Compared to the existing government structure and laws that primarily benefited the oligarchy, the communists offered the peasants a better life and more opportunities. In addition, the Catholic Church in El Salvador played a role in mobilizing the population to support the pro-communist political factions and the insurgency that followed.[141]

Catholic priests and monks within El Salvador found themselves taking active positions advocating for the rights of the peasantry. The Catholic Archdiocese openly criticized the government and called for an end to repression and for a more progressive government. The Church eventually found itself in a dangerous predicament with its priests later targeted by government assassins. This culminated in the assassination of El Salvador's Archbishop, Oscar Romero, on March 24, 1980.[142]

Just before this, El Salvador's communists received a huge boost in popularity thanks to the Sandinistas' successful communist revolution in neighboring Nicaragua. El Salvador's peasants thought that if the Nicaraguans could successfully overthrow a brutal and repressive government, they could do the same.[143] On October 15, 1979, breakdown

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[139] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 327.

[140] Steffen W. Schmidt, *El Salvador: America's Next Vietnam?* (Salisbury, N.C.: Documentary Publications, 1983), 78.

[141] Yvon Grenier, *The Emergence of Insurgency in El Salvador: Ideology and Political Will* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 129–130.

[142] Marvin Gettleman et al. ed., *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1981), *62*.

[143] James S. Corum, "The Air War in El Salvador," *Airpower Journal* 12, no. 2 (1998): 28.

within El Salvador's political structure culminated in a military coup d'état and the military demanded that President Romero step down.

The replacement government after the coup was known as the "progressive junta," but unfortunately the new government was anything but progressive.[144] It proved incapable of addressing the peasants' grievances, which only exacerbated the country's underlying problems. Moreover, there was confusion and deep division within the Salvadoran military. Some military leaders wanted to address the issues and implement progressive reforms. Others did not want to implement reforms because they enjoyed too many benefits living under the old system. The coup ultimately led to a weakened military establishment and chaos ensued within the government.[145] Dissatisfied with the "progressive junta," civil war broke out in 1980 between the military-led government and various political factions.[146]

As stated earlier, political factions in El Salvador were, for the most part, Marxist-Leninist. By 1980, most joined a united front, the FMLN, which ultimately orchestrated the insurgency's operations. There were other rebel factions involved in the insurgency, but they will not be addressed in this thesis as they played a minor role compared to the FMLN.[147]

Just as it had in the past when confronted by rebellion, the government responded to the FMLN and the insurrection initially with violence. It used targeted assassinations and sent out "death squads" to quell the rebellion. The results were tragic, and in 1980 alone, the death squads committed more than 10,000 murders.[148] The government's brutality was widely publicized in the world arena. Disgusted with gross human rights violations, President Jimmy Carter decided to cut U.S. aid to El Salvador. Meanwhile, the use of death squads had an interesting effect in El Salvador itself. Instead of suppressing

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[144] Schmidt, *El Salvador: America's Next Vietnam?*, 105.

[145] Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 23.

[146] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 329.

[147] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 329.

[148] Benjamin Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, RAND Report R-4042 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), 23.

the rebellion, their use resulted in an increase of popular support for the FMLN and the overall rebellion. By 1981, the FMLN fielded approximately 12,000 fighters and launched a "'final offensive'" against the government, thanks to which it appeared as though the government was about to be overthrown and replaced with a communist government.[149] Faced with the probability of another communist government emerging in Central America and afraid that El Salvador's communist revolution would spill over to other Central and South American countries, President Carter decided to reinstate aid to El Salvador on his way out of office. [150]

The Reagan administration picked up where President Carter left off and decided to increase the U.S.'s commitment. Still suffering from the after-effects of Vietnam, the U.S. government did not want to commit U.S. combat troops and thereby Americanize the civil war in El Salvador. Eventually, the U.S. agreed to only send military advisors, equipment, financial aid, and intelligence support. American military advisors were specifically prohibited from participating in any combat operations. Ironically, the deployment of advisors to El Salvador was similar to how the U.S. initially involved itself in Vietnam. To avoid the potential political fallout of El Salvador "becoming another Vietnam," the Reagan administration and Congress weighed the exact number of military advisors to send. They agreed on a maximum number of 55. Even so, Congress eventually allowed other U.S. military personnel to be assigned in El Salvador on a temporary duty basis.[151] As a result, the U.S. Military Group (U.S. MilGroup) sometimes exceeded the 55-person limit. In 1984, for instance, there were 100 U.S. military personnel present in El Salvador, and in 1987 there were over 150 present.[152] Although the number of military advisors eventually exceeded the 55-person mandate, overall the U.S. military had an exceptionally small footprint in El Salvador.

How much, meanwhile, did the U.S. invest in El Salvador? During the course of El Salvador's civil war, which lasted approximately twelve years, the U.S. provided

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[149] Bacevich et al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 4.

[150] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 329.

[151] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 334.

[152] Bacevich et al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 5.

nearly $6 billion in total aid to El Salvador's government. Of the $6 billion in total aid provided, the military received $1 billion. Annual military aid culminated in 1984 when El Salvador received $206 million. This $206 million in military aid seems substantial until one considers how small and not so strategic a country El Salvador is. However, when one analyzes the amount of aid Israel and Egypt received in 1984, $1.7 billion and $1.3 billion respectively, $206 million is certainly insubstantial.[153] Taking into account the small amount of aid along with the exceptionally small U.S. military advisor footprint in El Salvador, one begins to wonder how the Salvadoran government was able to successfully counter the FMLN insurgency.

In the fall of 1981, the U.S. sent Brigadier General Woerner and other military specialists to assess the situation in El Salvador. The result was the "Woerner report"[154] and the subsequent strategic plan that both the U.S. and El Salvador leadership agreed to.[155] The strategic plan identified key priorities for El Salvador's government to focus on in order to survive and successfully stamp out the rebellion. These included addressing "land reform, political reform in the form of honest elections, economic development, and the end of human rights abuses."[156] A key part of the strategic plan tied aid to whether or not El Salvador progressed in attaining these priorities, with special emphasis placed on ending human rights violations. If El Salvador's government failed to make improvements, then the U.S. would cut off its aid and support. However, before the government could really focus on implementing social and political reforms, it needed to buy itself time in order to physically survive the FMLN's onslaught. With El Salvador's government on the brink of collapse in 1981, the U.S. and El Salvador concentrated on their military response.

The military plan both countries agreed to focused on strengthening El Salvador's ground component, which made sense given the nature of the conflict and threat. The FMLN was waging an insurgency. In its effort to overthrow the government by targeting

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[153] Bacevich et al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 9.

[154] Bacevich et al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 4.

[155] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 332.

[156] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 332.

government institutions and forces, the FLMN sought to win over the majority of the population. Specifically, the U.S.-El Salvador military plan concentrated on increasing the size of El Salvador's armed forces and their professionalization and training.

In 1980, the El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) had approximately 10,000 troops with minimal basic equipment (e.g., the ESAF did not have tactical radios in 1980) and 7,000 paramilitary police.[157] By 1984, with the influx of U.S. aid, ESAF more than quadrupled in size to 42,000 troops and received modern military equipment. [158] As far as training was concerned, the U.S. Army sent its Special Forces, professionals in irregular warfare and counterinsurgency, to train and advise El Salvador's ground forces on how to best fight and defeat the FMLN. Despite the U.S.'s focus on strengthening El Salvador's ground forces to combat an irregular threat, the U.S. also supported El Salvador's air force in the form of AvFID.

In 1980, El Salvador's air force, the Fuerza Aerea Salvadorena (FAS), was small with fewer than 1,000 personnel, four flying squadrons, and 67 aircraft. [159] The training level was subpar, especially at the enlisted level where "most enlisted men were simply conscripted (or "press-ganged") young men, many of them in their midteens." [160] Compounding the problem, the FAS, as with the rest of the ESAF, was only trained in conventional warfare and had little understanding of counterinsurgency. The congressionally mandated 55-advisor limit also presented a challenge to the U.S. Air Force (USAF) advisors. The 55-mandate meant that only five personnel from the USAF were allowed to be in El Salvador at one time. The five-person USAF group was usually comprised of one section chief and four maintenance personnel or instructor pilots.[161] Given these small numbers, the USAF could not make El Salvador's civil war the U.S.'s fight.

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[157] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 330–333.

[158] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 330–333.

[159] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 330.

[160] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 330.

[161] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 334.

Of the $1 billion total U.S. aid given to El Salvador's military, the FAS received approximately $250 million.[162] By 1987, "the FAS had more than doubled in size since the start of the war"[163] and its aircraft inventory included A-37s, UH-1H helicopters, O-2 reconnaissance aircraft, C-123 transports, and AC-47 gunships. The strategic plan placed considerable emphasis on the FAS helicopter force. The helicopter was preferred over fixed-wing aircraft thanks to its ability to maneuver in El Salvador's mountainous terrain, access remote areas, and provide gunship support to El Salvador's army in contact with the FMLN.[164] Specifically, the U.S. provided the FAS with "88 UH-1H Iroquois transports, 23 UH-1M gunships, and 14 Hughes 500 armed reconnaissance helicopters."[165] Because five advisors were insufficient to fully train the FAS, the U.S. provided pilot training to FAS airmen outside of El Salvador at Fort Rucker, Alabama and at the Inter-American Air Force Academy at Albrook Field in Panama.[166]

Since the FMLN did not have airpower at its disposal and since the war was being fought on the ground, the FAS's main task was to support El Salvador's ground forces. FAS support came in the forms of transport, air resupply, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), and close air support. At the start of the war, El Salvador's Army and Air Force did not train for joint operations which are critical for most support missions, especially close air support (CAS). [167] In addition, the FAS had minimal ability to conduct night operations.[168] As a result, the ESAF's ability to neutralize the FMLN, who primarily operated at night, was severely hampered. In addition, the FAS's mission capability rate (i.e., their ability to fly missions) was not very good and FAS

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[162] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 327.

[163] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 339.

[164] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 333.

[165] Alan J. Vick et al., *Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era: The Strategic Importance of USAF Advisory and Assistance Missions* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), 104.

[166] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 334.

[167] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 331.

[168] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 334.

pilots did not fly as many missions as they could have given the amount of aircraft in their inventory. This was in large part due to a lack of qualified pilots and maintenance discipline within the ranks.[169]

Despite these areas of ineffectiveness, the FAS did have some successes. Its most important accomplishment during this phase was that it provided enough support to the ground troops to effectively stop the FMLN's offensive. Together, the FAS and El Salvador's army ultimately prevented the collapse of El Salvador's government. Thus, during the early years of the civil war, from 1981 to 1984, we can rate the performance of the newly U.S. trained and equipped FAS as fair.[170]

When exactly the state of affairs started to turn around to favor El Salvador's government is debatable. According to Colonel James J. Steele, commander of the U.S. MilGroup from 1984–1986, the situation started to change in 1984. Specifically, "the government forces were obviously getting better; the Air Force was particularly effective, and the guerrillas saw their prospects for a quick victory beginning to fade."[171] Supporting Colonel Steele's assessment, a former leader of the FMLN also took note of the increased effectiveness of the FAS. According to Miguel Castellanos, the improved air mobility of the El Salvadoran Army in 1984 "caused a very significant turn in the war, since they now acted deep inside enemy lines."[172] In addition, the FAS learned how to fly and fight at night. This new-found ability minimized the FMLN's initiative, hampered the supply of weapons coming from Nicaragua and Cuba through Honduras, and severely threatened the FLMN's overall ability to operate effectively.

An important point to highlight here is that it took approximately four years of aid and training before significant progress in the military forces' performance and effectiveness was discernible, especially in the air force. This prolonged period of time should not come as a surprise since military forces cannot be transformed overnight.

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[169]Bacevich et al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars,* 32.

[170] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars,* 334.

[171] Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, *El Salvador at War: An Oral History* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1988), 146.

[172] Miguel Castellanos, *The Comandante Speaks: Memoirs of an El Salvadoran Guerrilla Leader*, ed. Courtney E. Prisk (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 88.

Transformation takes time, resources, dedication, and consistent quality training. The increase in effectiveness of the FAS that Colonel Steele and Miguel Castellanos observed can be attributed largely to both the increase in U.S. resources and the quality of training that the FAS received. The U.S.'s AvFID program in El Salvador can thus be judged to have certainly made a difference in El Salvador's campaign against the FMLN.

However, was the AvFID effort combined with the overall U.S. foreign internal defense effort in El Salvador adequate to fully neutralize the FMLN? From 1985 to 1989, the EFAS largely held the initiative. The FMLN was on the run and it appeared that the FMLN would soon be eliminated. But, the FMLN adapted to the new situation and adopted guerrilla warfare tactics which largely consisted of uncoordinated, hit and run tactics. By refusing to go away the FMLN frustrated the EFAS and the El Salvadoran government. By 1989, fighting was stalemated and remained so until peace was agreed to in 1992. Consequently, we could say that despite the U.S.'s foreign internal defense efforts and the efforts of the El Salvadoran government, the EFAS were not able to successfully eliminate the FMLN.

A few contributing factors help explain why the EFAS was not able to successfully eliminate the FMLN. The army and the FAS continued to fight the war in a conventional manner and did not adapt their tactics to the FMLN's new modus operandi.[173] Whenever the FMLN massed and attacked, the ground forces and the FAS were successful in their counterattack. However, when the FMLN resorted to guerrilla tactics, the government forces were not as successful. Despite the advice received from the USAF advisors and U.S. Army Special Forces, the El Salvadorans decided to continue to fight by applying mass and firepower. However, as advisors had learned in Vietnam, mass and firepower do not have the same effect in a counterinsurgency campaign as they do in a conventional campaign. U.S. advisors in El Salvador were for the most part frustrated with the ESAF's reluctance to transition to counterinsurgency operations. One American advisor who A.J. Bacevich interviewed "referred derisively to

[173] Vick et al., *Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era*, 105.

ESAF's 'search and avoid patrols.' Another likened the security of Salvadoran night positions to 'a boy scout jamboree—campfires and transistor radios.'"[174]

A second and arguably more important factor in the FMLN's persistence was the government's inability to address the underlying grievances of the population. An insurgency is a political war. Individuals drawn to insurgency usually have multiple problems with the reigning government. Barring genocide, and when neither side is able to fully eliminate the other, it logically follows that an insurgency will continue to exist until the problems are resolved or an agreement is reached between the insurgents and the government. To the government of El Salvador's credit, it did achieve some progress, which came in the form of free elections and a reduction in human rights violations.[175] Despite the government's efforts however, and even with the election of Jose Napoleon Duarte, who was viewed as a moderate, this progress was not enough. The population still distrusted the government and did not feel that political, economic, and social reform initiatives were working sufficiently well. Hence, support of the FMLN and violence continued. However, by 1990 events shifted for all players.

At the end of 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed. Discontinued Soviet financial and military support via Nicaragua and Cuba meant that the FMLN's chances of survival significantly decreased. The Soviet collapse, coupled with a population exhausted after a three year stalemate and a horrific civil war that saw approximately 75,000 El Salvadoran die, led the FMLN and the government to negotiate a peace settlement in 1992. [176] An important aspect of this final settlement was that the FMLN was officially included in the El Salvadoran political process. A sign of how lasting the peace has been is that the President of El Salvador today represents the FMLN political party.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the incorporation of the FMLN into El Salvador's political process has not been without controversy. Some view the FMLN's survival and inclusion in the El Salvadoran political process as a failure of El Salvador's government,

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[174] Bacevich et al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars*, 37.

[175] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 340.

[176] Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 3.

the ESAF's military strategy, U.S. policy, and U.S. foreign internal defense initiatives. This may be true to a certain extent, but the fact remains that the U.S. did achieve its ultimate goal of keeping El Salvador a democratic nation-state.[177] In addition, El Salvador is arguably a stronger democracy with the inclusion of the FMLN, since it offers what the population fundamentally wanted – an entity within the government to represent them. Today, El Salvador is still a democracy and an ally of the U.S. El Salvador's military is now a professional force and proved itself to be an important coalition member during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Without question, El Salvador could not have employed airpower as effectively it did without U.S. assistance. The U.S. supported the FAS through AvFID in the form of aircraft and equipment, financial aid, and training. This support proved to be a critical component in El Salvador's counterinsurgency campaign. Overall, the role of airpower was not a decisive factor in the counterinsurgency campaign against the FMLN. However, airpower certainly played a critical role and without the training and advice from the U.S., the FAS would not have been able to conduct missions from the air as effectively as it did. Ultimately, AvFID made a significant difference in El Salvador's civil war.

[177] Corum and Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars*, 341.

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V. CONCLUSION

The role of airpower was not in and of itself the decisive factor in the Philippines' and El Salvador's successful COIN campaigns. However, airpower did play critical roles in both theaters, and without question it could not have done so without the U.S.'s AvFID efforts. In contrast, Vietnam exemplified how AvFID can be misapplied or implemented improperly. Worse, such a misuse can lead one to incorrectly conclude that AvFID does not make a difference. Thus, when looking at AvFID across a range of cases, one can say that when AvFID is implemented properly, it *can* make a difference. In addition, one can extrapolate quite a bit about how to implement AvFID properly in irregular warfare and COIN environments.

First, arguably the most important factors to consider in a counterinsurgency campaign are the political, economic, and social factors. People are rebelling and killing their own for a reason. The reasons why they are rebelling and killing need to be understood and addressed. If the government in power does not adequately address the population's grievances through reform, then the conduct of the insurgents will most likely continue.

Second, an outsider or foreigner can gain an understanding of the rebellion through numerous methods, to include learning the country's history and by interacting with the people who have grievances against the government. Edward Lansdale perfected this art. He never trusted government reports about what was going on during the Huk rebellion. Instead, he preferred to go out into the countryside to interact with the local population and to understand what was truly taking place at the local level. Occasionally, Lansdale even interacted with the insurgents themselves. It was through this type of interaction that Lansdale and Magsaysay were able to make informed decisions about which reforms to implement. Through reform, the goal of the government should be to gain legitimacy in the eyes of its citizenry. Furthermore, from the population's perspective, the government must be worthier of its support than are the insurgents.

Third, relationships are critical. Much of Lansdale's success in the Philippines can be attributed to his favorable relationship with Magsaysay. Similarly, it can be argued that Lansdale's lack of success in Vietnam is partially attributable to his inability to become Diem's primary advisor. Lansdale's unsuccessful attempt to remove Diem's brother, Nhu, as an influence provides an important lesson for future advisory efforts. If similar instances occur when the American advisor cannot become the primary advisor, then this could serve as a warning sign that the effort may prove futile. Furthermore, since the military effort should be subordinate to the political, social, and economic reform efforts of the government, it follows that the person in charge of the military COIN effort should either be someone who understands the target foreign government or someone who can successfully develop relationships with key foreign government officials who are in a position to implement the necessary reform measures. As alluded to earlier, the latter is preferable.

Fourth, since the efforts of a COIN campaign should focus on government reform, it logically follows that most of the interactions to implement the reforms will take place at the interpersonal level. As such, the army or a police force will be the lead agencies, not the air force. Thus, airpower should be used in a supporting role and in lock-step coordination with the ground effort. This does not mean that airpower is insignificant or cannot make a difference. The Philippine and El Salvadoran case studies clearly show us how important it can be.

Fifth, the military cannot fight the insurgency as if the conflict is a military problem. As mentioned earlier, the reasons for the insurgency are political, social, and economic. The military effort needs to be coordinated with, and in support of, the political, social, and economic reform efforts of the government. As the case studies reveal, these reform efforts should not focus on simply killing insurgents. This does not mean that armed insurgents, whose intent is to kill government forces, should not be killed. Rather, the government should focus more on removing support for the insurgency and avoid unintentionally creating additional insurgents.

Probably the most effective method of creating additional insurgents is to kill innocent civilians. Unfortunately, airpower can easily kill innocent civilians, particularly

given the massive firepower at its disposal. Thus, it is crucial to use and train others to use airpower correctly in COIN. As explored in the Philippine and El Salvador case studies, the most effective COIN airpower missions were psychological, ISR, air resupply, and transport missions. CAS and air-to-ground interdiction missions were effective at times, but only when great efforts were taken to avoid civilian casualties.

It is important to point out again that one of the most effective methods of airpower employed during the Huk rebellion was transporting Magsaysay to remote areas of the Philippines for his surprise inspections. These inspections were extremely important because they allowed Magsaysay, as Secretary of National Defense, to ensure his troops were behaving in a professional manner in Huklandia. Meanwhile, when Magsaysay arrived via air, his presence may have had an even bigger impact on the local population than on the military. The peasants actually saw an important member of the government visiting their farms and felt that Magsaysay cared about their general welfare. In return, Magsaysay received first-hand accounts about how the government was or was not living up to its responsibilities. He obtained many ideas for reforms from these trips with Lansdale. These proved crucial to earning the local population's support for the Philippine government and, as the Philippine government earned the population's support, the Huks lost the support they needed to continue their campaign against the government. It is with the simple employment of airpower such as in this example that AvFID can help produce the desired results in a COIN campaign.

While airpower enthusiasts would not consider the mission sets described above or the position of being an aviation advisor to be strategic in the sense of using the USAF and its resources in the ways they would prefer, there is nonetheless an important strategic asset argument to make. AvFID *is strategic* in the sense that it enables the USAF to get involved in helping address threats in a target country before they rise to a crisis level. Of course, if these threats do rise to the international level, USAF advisors, along with Army advisors present, will be the immediate go-to personnel in that country.

In addition, as previously mentioned, airpower enthusiasts prefer to fight in a way that allows them to capitalize on airpower, prep the battlefield for the ground forces to "mop-up" the remaining enemy forces and their war-making capacity, and minimize U.S.

casualties. When faced with budget cuts, like those the U.S. government is currently facing, USAF senior leaders have historically supported “strategic” airpower programs over not so strategic-seeming programs. Since AvFID is currently not considered the type of mission in which airpower can be employed strategically, the USAF is unlikely to want to continue to support it in fiscally difficult times. Whenever this happens, the overall USAF capability in irregular warfare suffers. Already this can be seen with what is currently happening to the 6th SOS, the sole USAF unit dedicated to AvFID. The 6th SOS recently retired its rotary wing (i.e., helicopter) capability and moved the squadron from the active duty wing at Hurlburt Field, Florida to Duke Field, Florida, home to a SOF reserve wing.

As happened after Vietnam, with Iraq over, and with the near conclusion of Afghanistan, the USAF appears to be distancing itself once again from AvFID; the mission and capability is being transformed, absorbed or completely discarded. Yet, this is surely short-sighted since no one is suggesting that irregular warfare or insurgency in other countries is going away.

One way to ensure that history does not repeat itself yet again is to mandate that the USAF establish an active duty unit dedicated solely to AvFID. Sometimes the only effective way to get a bureaucracy to act is through legislation. As legislation was needed to form USSOCOM, a similar piece of legislation now appears to be needed for AvFID.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to determine what a future AvFID organization should look like and where the mission should fit within AFSOC or the larger Air Force to ensure that it is not pushed aside. However, this thesis does point to a set of questions for further research. As previously mentioned, it is absolutely critical to have the air effort coordinated with the ground forces. Air Force Special Tactics (ST) Airmen are organized into squadrons in close proximity to the Army SOF units with which they operate. Thus, it initially appears to make sense to have AFSOC and Army FID units in close proximity, as they train and deploy together, so that the host nation receives a holistic training experience. Perhaps it similarly makes sense to locate AvFID

operational squadrons close to Army FID units. Research has already been undertaken that suggests this would be best for the NATO SOF Air Wing.[178]

In addition, the ST community is small, yet growing and recently activated its own wing within AFSOC. Could lesson learned by the ST community be transferable to AvFID? Likewise, Army SF units are organized into Groups, each of which is regionally aligned. Should AvFID units be similarly organized along geographical lines so that the advisors can become regional experts and, more importantly, develop and *maintain* the critical relationships needed within the target country?

Sixth, when deployed, advisors should be tasked to perform a single mission set. In Vietnam, AvFID advisors were tasked to perform missions other than AvFID (i.e., covert paramilitary operations/unconventional warfare). Unfortunately, a unit can only do so much. If given multiple mission sets, the unit will invariably have to prioritize. In the case of Vietnam, the Farm Gate airmen preferred combat operations, including paramilitary covert operations, as opposed to training. However, this does not mean that an AvFID unit cannot perform combat or unconventional warfare missions. This point, rather, is to highlight the importance of not overtasking or creating confusion with what the unit's mission is while in-theater.

Seventh, AvFID is a long term investment and it takes time to see its return. In El Salvador, it took approximately four years of aid and training before significant progress in the military forces' performance and effectiveness was discernible, especially in the air force. Progress in the Philippines took roughly the same amount of time. This prolonged period of time should not come as a surprise since military forces cannot be transformed overnight. Transformation takes time, resources, dedication, and consistent quality training. Thus, it is important for senior leaders to have this expectation going in.

Eighth, it is possible that a correlation exits between limiting the number of advisors and the overall effectiveness of the advisory effort. In El Salvador, the advisor

[178]It is recommended that the reader refer to the following study: Eric Carrano, Shamsul Rahman, and Andrew Sheehan, "The NATO SOF Air Wing: Organizing for Uncertainty," in *The NATO Special Operations Headquarters Air Warfare Center: A Smarter Defense Approach* ed. Arthur D. Davis and Keenan D. Yoho, NPS Technical Report, NPS-DA-12–001 21–38, accessed November 21, 2012, http://calhoun.nps.edu/public/bitstream/handle/10945/7008/NPS-DA-12–001.pdf?sequence=1, 21–38.

limit was 55 and, in the Philippines, Landale's team was even smaller. Needless to say, the overall military advisor footprint in Vietnam was massive. Also worth noting is that Americans were solely in an advisory position and did not participate in combat operations in either the Philippines or El Salvador. The combination of the small U.S. advisor footprint and not participating in combat operations prevented the U.S. from making the fight its own and reinforced the host nation's ownership of the problem. In contrast, as soon as the U.S. received permission to participate in combat operations in Vietnam, the advisory mission slowly disappeared and the fight became the U.S.'s. Furthermore, due to the U.S.'s small footprint in the Philippines and El Salvador, the U.S. was able to assist in an inconspicuous manner. This prevented the U.S. from appearing to be an invading force or a country seeking to influence other countries' affairs. Even better, it helped prevent the local government from appearing to be a U.S.-puppet government, which strengthened its legitimacy in the eyes of its population. In contrast, in Vietnam, the U.S. simply replaced the French as another imperialist power, which played directly into both the Viet Cong's and North Vietnam's narratives. Finally, the missions in the Philippines and El Salvador likely benefited from a lack of attention to these conflicts by the military establishment. The Huk rebellion coincided with the Korean War. Lansdale believed this was an important factor in his success since he had the leeway to do what he thought was best as Washington was distracted with Korea. A similar situation existed in El Salvador; the overall U.S. military establishment was not interested in that conflict. In contrast, in the case of Vietnam, the armed services were fighting each other for a bigger role in the conflict.

Without additional research and a larger data set, it is hard to pinpoint exactly which factor had more of an impact among the following four, but it is likely a combination among them: size of the U.S. footprint, ensuring the host nation fights its own fight, avoiding the appearance of the U.S. as an invading force, and less involvement by our military establishment. These factors have important implications for the 21st century U.S. military, especially when one considers the new DoD strategic vision. As the vision suggests, the U.S. would be wise to avoid massive military footprints and costly wars, which it did not do in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. has other means by

which to accomplish its objectives, to include indirectly and through AvFID. Since AvFID made a difference in the past, it is reasonable to presume it can do so in the future.

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