

HISTORICAL FAILURE IN THE USE OF PROXY FORCES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CONFLICTS

by
Kono Ragnar Carragee

A research study submitted to Johns Hopkins University with the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Global Security Studies

Baltimore, Maryland
December 2020

© 2020 Kono Carragee
All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

In recent years conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Middle East have thrust the role of proxy forces back into the spotlight. This study examines the past use of proxy forces and the potential for improvement based on examples of failures. This study will revolve around the question: “How can lessons learned from failures in the use of proxy forces translate into modern conflicts.” This study uses two case studies from the Cold War era to highlight factors that led to failures in these specific instances. While there are examples of recent proxy force failures there is more extensive information available on past examples.

While much has changed since the Cold War in terms of the geopolitical and technological environment, the fundamentals of proxy warfare remain the same, a larger nation state funding a smaller resistance group with the goal of either overthrowing a target government or achieving another strategic goal. This study discovered that lessons learned from prior failures can be useful today. There are some key factors in past failures which can be used as examples of how to prevent similar issues in the future, while much has changed since the Cold War some things remain the same.

Primary Reader and Advisor: Professor Mark Stout

Secondary Readers and Advisors: Benjamin Runkle & Stephen Grenier

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my closest friends for their words of encouragement and tolerance throughout this program and research process. To my professors for their guidance and encouragement throughout. To my family for their unwavering support. To pops who I wish could have seen me get to this point.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | iii |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW | 3 |
| RESEARCH QUESTION: | 8 |
| CASE STUDY 1: THE CONGO: | 9 |
| CASE STUDY 2: THE CONTRAS: | 21 |
| DISCUSSION/ FINDINGS: | 34 |
| CONCLUSION: | 39 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY: | 40 |
| CURRICULUM VITAE: | 46 |

INTRODUCTION

The use of a subordinate force to achieve regional or political goals has long been a factor in conflict. Understanding these conflicts can be crucial to the effective use of similar forces in the future. Analyzing failures of proxy forces in present-day warfare can be difficult due to the availability of information and potential ongoing operations. The Cold War consisted of great power competition and the use of proxy forces. As information has become declassified and more in-depth studies have been done there are a wealth of lessons to be learned. This study seeks to analyze two of these to better understand what common factors led to failures.

For the purposes of this paper, “proxy forces” means a sponsored, organized group working against a government or country to attempt to accomplish a strategic goal. Vladimir Rautin, has offered a succinct summation of the players in proxy conflicts: he posits in such conflicts there are a “beneficiary,” “proxy,” and “target.”¹ For the purposes of this paper our interpretation of this sees the “beneficiary” as a large external nation-state using a smaller “proxy” to achieve a goal. The “proxy” is a non-state organization of expatriates and nationals conducting operations with funding, training, weapons, and advisement provided by the “beneficiary.” The “target” is a nation or ruling party with interests’ counter to the beneficiary’s/proxy’s interests.

Because this study seeks to draw lessons from failed proxy wars, it is necessary to define what a “failure” in this context. Here, failure refers to cases in which the proxy force fails to achieve their strategic goal. This also results in at least the partial failure of the beneficiary to

¹ Rauta, V. (2018). A structural-relational analysis of party dynamics in proxy wars. *International Relations*, 32(4), 449–467. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117818802436>

achieve the goal(s) it was seeking through the use of its proxy, be it a political partnership, a larger regional goal, or acquisition of resources.

Based on these criteria this paper uses two case studies.

- 1) Congo –1960-1965 the U.S.S.R. backed forces who attempted to overthrow a pro-U.S. government, inconsistent support, faulty leadership, and organized opposition ultimately resulted in failure.
- 2) The Contras in Nicaragua – Partisan forces backed by the U.S. from 1980 until the mid-1980's, largely abandoned due to criminal activity on the part of some proxy forces, as well as violations of international and domestic law by the CIA and the Reagan Administration.

These two historical examples fit the profile and have enough information available to effectively analyze what factors led to failure. This paper will then briefly discuss how lessons learned from these examples could be applied to potential future conflicts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A variety of scholars have studied success and failure in proxy wars. Collectively they have pointed to at least 3 common causes of failure. The first relates to consistency and sufficient levels of support by the beneficiary which is in part a function of politics and fear of larger international conflict. The second is alignment of goals between beneficiary and proxy, generally the beneficiary is protecting an interest of their own while the proxy is hoping to achieve a strategic goal. The third is the quality of cultural awareness by the beneficiary, especially as related to leadership of the proxy force, if leadership is unreliable or unable to properly motivate their forces the likelihood of success is limited.

Most modern literature focuses on quasi-terrorist organizations in the Middle East, the concept of hybrid warfare and more predominantly counterinsurgency (COIN). Many scholars argue that while lessons learned from the Cold War are important, the new age of proxy warfare is more complicated. While there are several schools of thought, many scholars agree that the current environment in which proxy forces operate is more complex than during the Cold War, due to factors including globalization, technological advances, and more complex interstate politics. Despite this there is evidence that these lessons are still relevant today.

A common point that many scholars focus on is that there are a variety of definitional issues surrounding proxy forces which influence foreign policy related to it. Vladimir Rauta wrote at length of the need to simplify terminology surrounding proxy warfare to better study and employ foreign policy surrounding it. He argues that as the phenomenon is studied in different fields (Cold War historiography, intelligence studies and emerging research on external

support in proxy wars) there are a lack of standards in the naming of actors and thus the benchmarks and theoretical schools of thought surrounding it.²

General Joseph L. Votel and Colonel Eero R. Keravuori laid out in a 2018 article in *Joint Forces Quarterly* the tactics that U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) has started taking with regional partners. They reiterated the Army doctrine put forward by former Defense Secretary James Mattis, the “By-With-Through” (BWT) operational approach. They posit that U.S. operations are led *by* partners (state or non-state) *with* U.S. support *through* U.S. authorities or partner agreements, in this article they argue for a more universal application of this approach. In the context of non-state partners, they posit that; “The approach pursues more culturally acceptable and durable solutions by developing and supporting partner participation and operational ownership.” They highlighted the importance of proxy vetting, goal alignment but also pointed out the pitfalls; including the tensions between the Syrian Kurds and NATO ally Turkey, showing the importance of cultural understanding in the employment of proxy forces.³

Andrew Mumford, a preeminent figure in the study of proxy forces, argues that Cold War conceptions of proxy war were narrow in the sense that they focused on the great power ‘beneficiaries’ and ignored the role that non-state actors and insurgents play in regional power struggles. He highlights the role that pre-existing local tensions played, pointing out that the great powers could not have exploited them to vie for regional influence otherwise. He posits that Cold War polarity and the threat of nuclear war necessitated ‘indirect intervention’ on the part of the superpowers. He notes however that proxies often have their own agenda; “... which makes the management of the relationship between the benefactor and the proxy during conflict

² Rauta, V. (2018). A structural-relational analysis of party dynamics in proxy wars. *International Relations*, 32(4), 449–467. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117818802436>

³ Votel, J. L., & Keravuori, E. R. (2018). The By-With-Through Operational Approach. *JFQ: Joint Force Quarterly*, 89, 40–47.

invariably tricky, especially as proxies begin to develop greater perceptions of autonomy or forge differing interpretations of strategic objective to the benefactor.”⁴

Idean Salehyan, writes extensively on how modern insurgencies often become transnational and lead to cross-border disputes. He argues that these often lead to regional conflicts which have the potential to escalate into larger scale international conflicts. He points out this could in turn be counterproductive to the goals trying to be achieved by using a proxy force in the first place. While his works primarily focus on COIN, he highlights the importance of proper management and support of proxy forces in terms of training, equipment, and instruction. He notes the pitfalls of such actions, pointing out that strengthening forces with questionable allegiance to the target states without integrating them into the existing force structure can result in future conflicts.⁵

A key component of understanding the importance of the relationship between a beneficiary and a proxy comes from Principle-Agent Theory. This theory derives from economics and has to do with the delegation of work by a more powerful entity to a smaller one, in this context relating the beneficiary to the principle and the proxy to the agent. Several prominent scholars in the field apply this theory towards the study of conflicts, specifically surrounding interest alignment and resource devotion. Tyler Groh discussed this relationship as mutually beneficial, highlighting however the importance of goal alignment to achieve a common interest. “In Proxy War, an indigenous actor with knowledge of the local language and ability to blend into the environment may not have adequate resources or skills to accomplish its

⁴ Mumford, A. (2013). Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict. *The RUSI Journal*, 158(2), 40–46.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2013.787733>

⁵ Salehyan, I. (2010). *TRANSNATIONAL INSURGENCIES AND THE ESCALATION OF REGIONAL CONFLICT: LESSONS FOR IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN*. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11847>

objectives alone; an intervening state lacking these skills may still be able to accomplish its objectives alone but at a significantly higher cost.”⁶

Eli Berman and David Lake wrote extensively on this topic, in their rationale the most important aspect in a proxy principal agent relation is interest alignment. They write that; “...the alignment of interests, or objectives, between the principle and the agent is of paramount importance.”⁷ Ultimately in their study they concluded that the balance of incentives is crucial, if inadequate incentives are provided to a proxy the likelihood of their success is greatly hindered. They also found that historically the U.S. is inconsistent in providing incentives to proxies and must learn to properly balance incentive and punishment.

Dr. Geraint Hughes of Kings College in London wrote in his book *My Enemy's Enemy*; “The extent to which proxies rely on foreign assistance can differ, but the recipients of such aid require sufficient indigenous support, tactical sophistication and technological expertise to make external support count.”⁸ While he only briefly touches on the topic of proxy leadership he highlights how internal rifts and fear of abandonment can greatly hinder the success of a proxy. He touches on the points other authors highlighted on the importance of adequate funding and resourcing, consistency of beneficiary support, and goal alignment.

Former Colonel Dr. C. Anthony Pfaff writes about the moral hazards and risks of the employment of proxies, especially as the U.S. shifts to increased employment of such forces in lieu of traditional boots on the ground.⁹ He wrote in a 2018 article for *National Interest*; “...dependence on proxies comes with its own risks and moral hazards. Though Dwight

⁶ Groh, T. L. (2019). *Proxy War: The Least Bad Option* (1st ed.). Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvqsdq0k> 31

⁷ Berman, E., & Lake, D. A. (Eds.). (2019). *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence through Local Agents*. Cornell University Press. 3

⁸ Hughes, G. (2012). *My Enemy's Enemy: Proxy Warfare in International Politics*. Sussex Academic Press. 32

⁹ Pfaff, C. A. (2017). Proxy War Ethics. *Journal of National Security Law & Policy*, 9(2), 1–43.

Eisenhower once called proxy war ‘the cheapest insurance you can find,’ the last seven decades of American foreign policy reveal otherwise.” He highlights that while great power competition increases, U.S. support for proxies needs to be more calculated to prevent the proxy force from escalating the conflict to a larger scale and deviating from mutually agreed upon goals and terms.¹⁰

¹⁰ C. Anthony Pfaff, P. G. (2018, March 27). *How (Not) to Fight Proxy Wars* [Text]. The National Interest; The Center for the National Interest. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-not-fight-proxy-wars-25102>

RESEARCH QUESTION:

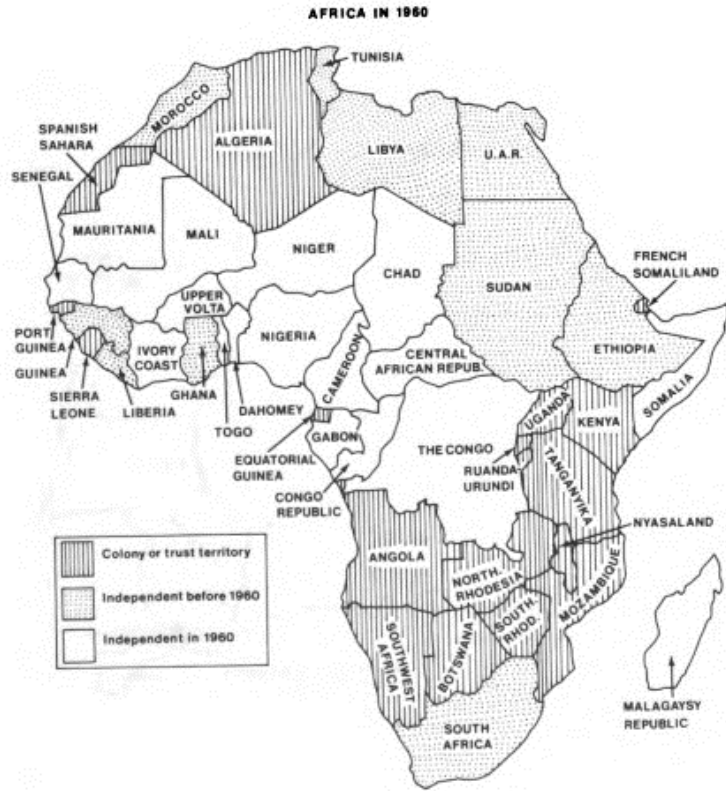
This research study revolves around the question: “How can lessons learned from past failures in the use of proxy forces translate into modern conflicts.” It utilizes social science and historical research methods to inductively analyze two case studies from the last century to provide a representation of factors which contributed to failures in the use of proxy forces. As defined earlier proxy conflicts are delineated by the roles of “beneficiary,” “proxy,” and “target.” For the purposes of this study the focus is on historical events in which a beneficiary and proxy were unable to achieve their intended goal against the target.

Historical examples were chosen due to an abundance of information and analysis on them. While it is becoming easier to analyze 21st century proxy conflicts there are still some issues in collecting information including but not limited to declassification rules and verifiable sources.

CASE STUDY 1: THE CONGO:

In the post-WWII world, a wave of decolonization had begun. By 1960 colonial powers such as Britain and France had granted independence to countries throughout Africa. Belgium was one of the few countries reluctant to relinquish control over their territories. Issues arose as Belgium had run their colonies segregated and paternalistically. Black Congolese filled very few 'elite' positions and less than 30 black Congolese throughout the country had received a higher education. Political parties were only permitted to be formed in 1958 with significant organizations forming by 1959.¹¹ The Belgian Congo had protests and gatherings calling for independence since 1954 culminating in riots in late 1959 which forced the Belgian King to declare he would negotiate independence for the Congo after 75 years of rule. This was done reluctantly as the Congo represented one of the wealthiest African countries at the time due its abundance of natural resources in the form of diamonds, copper, cobalt, and uranium.

¹¹ Passemiers, L. (2019). *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics: South Africa and the "Congo Crisis", 1960-1965*. Taylor & Francis Group. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/jhu/detail.action?docID=5729770> (Ch. 2)



¹² Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015038917426>



¹³ Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015038917426>

Hasty elections were organized as the Belgians set the date of independence for June 30th, 1960. The party which emerged victorious was Mouvement National Congolese (MNC) led by Patrice Lumumba, an activist and anti-Belgian political neutralist who had faced political persecution for his efforts to gain independence. Under the complicated parliamentary proceedings, power was split with the other leading party ABAKO led by Joseph Kasavubu, a moderate politician. Under this agreement Lumumba became Prime Minister and Kasavubu President.

The CIA's Directorate of Operations (DO) Africa Division was less than a year old when Congo gained independence. They did not have active intelligence officers in the Congo until shortly after the election when Lawrence Devlin was sent from Paris to create a station. Devlin spoke French but had little understanding of the regional situation in either Africa or the Congo.¹⁴ Tensions between the Soviets and the U.S. were high after the U.S.S.R. shot down a U2 spy plane in May. The U.S. was worried about the spread of communist influence to the newly independent African states as the Cold War began to heat up.¹⁵

On the day of Congolese Independence, the Belgian King Baudouin delivered a speech to the newly formed Congolese parliament which credited the Belgians with the 'civilization' of Congo. Lumumba proceeded to accuse the Belgians of bringing slavery and oppression, raising tension with the Belgians and sending a message to the international community and the burgeoning Soviet Union.¹⁶ Some Belgians remained after independence to train native Congolese in tasks related to national infrastructure and the economy. Within 5 days however the Congolese army mutinied demanding promotions in both pay and rank. They took to the streets

¹⁴ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 274

¹⁵ Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*.10

¹⁶ Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. 3

looting and harassing white and European civilians, resulting in an exodus and international outcry.¹⁷

Lumumba attempted to reorder the military by dismissing Belgian officers and promoting Congolese. This initially quelled the troops in the capitol, however chaos spread throughout the country. On July 9th amidst the military revolt the newly appointed governor of Katanga Province, Moise Tshombe, requested Belgian troops to restore order. Lumumba's efforts achieved little at the national level, and by July 10th Belgium dropped paratroopers throughout the country to 'maintain order' without the Congolese governments approval.¹⁸

On July 11th, Moise Tshombe declared the secession of Katanga province. He received support from both the Belgian mining companies and government amidst international outcries. On July 12th PM Lumumba and President Kasavubu appealed to the U.N. to bring a peacekeeping force, citing the Belgian troops' illegal presence and military instability. When an immediate response was not received Lumumba made a public appeal to the Premier of the U.S.S.R. Nikita Khrushchev. While there is little evidence of Lumumba being a communist sympathizer prior to this, the West was quick to react out of fear of a Soviet occupation in Africa.¹⁹

The same day as his appeal the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for the withdrawal of Belgian troops and the formation of a military assistance force. Within two days peacekeepers from Ghana and Tunisia arrived. Within a week 3500 troops from other African countries had arrived on planes supplied and crewed by the U.S. Air Force. U.N. Secretary

¹⁷ Passemiers, L. (2019). *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics: South Africa and the "Congo Crisis"* 20

¹⁸ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*

¹⁹ Passemiers, L. (2019). *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics: South Africa and the "Congo Crisis"* 22

General Dag Hammarskjold (a neutralist) only requested ground troops from African and neutral countries. Despite this the Soviet Union expressed outrage at U.S. involvement in the airlift. In a propaganda effort they contributed aircraft (5 vs. the US's 80+ planes and helicopters) to lift Soviet food and medical supplies to the Congo. They also lodged complaints with the U.N. security council about the lack of Soviet and Eastern European representation as U.N. advisors and ground forces.²⁰

On July 14th Lumumba and Kasavubu returned to the capitol Leopoldville to discover Belgian troops occupying the airport. While they were not held or met with violence, Lumumba contacted the U.N. announcing a break in diplomatic relations with Belgium. Shortly after this Lumumba reached out to Khrushchev asking him to monitor the situation, requesting intervention if the West did not order the withdrawal of Belgian forces. While initially Khrushchev remained neutral, he issued a statement that if Belgian mercenaries and troops did not withdraw the Soviet Union would intervene.²¹

While the U.S. was hesitant to engage in a direct confrontation with the Soviets, they viewed these statements as posturing. As a result, both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. openly preferred the U.N. handling of ground operations. The U.N. was also concerned with Soviet intervention, Secretary General Hammarskjold and Commander of U.N. forces in the Congo, General Carl Von Horn, took a stand of opposition to both Belgian and Soviet intervention. The U.S. backed calls for the withdrawal of Belgian forces to deescalate the situation while simultaneously both the U.S. State Department and the CIA began to target Lumumba. The Belgians agreed to withdraw troops contingent on their replacement with U.N. forces. The

²⁰ Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. 19-20

²¹ Iandolo, A. (2014). Imbalance of Power: The Soviet Union and the Congo Crisis, 1960–1961. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 16(2), 43.

Katangese government refused to agree to reintegrate and requested independence. This claim was backed by votes of neutrality from the Belgians, the U.N. and the U.S. who considered this an internal Congolese issue, hoping that the U.N. presence would encourage an eventual re-integration.²²

Lumumba visited Washington, D.C., and Canada in late July. He appealed to the State Department and the Canadian government for military and economic aid, both reiterated that any aid would need to come from the U.N. He subsequently appealed directly to the Soviets for aid. Simultaneously the U.S. Ambassador to Congo met with President Eisenhower, CIA Director Dulles, and several defense department officials to develop contingency plans in the event of a Soviet intervention. At this meeting, Lumumba was brought up, in terms of his removal and of finding a suitable replacement. Later Senate and Congressional investigations revealed that an alleged assassination plan was brought up at this same meeting.²³

On August 8th, the provincial president of the Congolese Kasai province, Albert Kalonji, declared a separate secessionist movement. This was another massive blow to the Lumumba government, both economically and bureaucratically, as Kasai produced approximately 60 percent of the world's industrial diamonds at the time. On the other side of the country on August 12th U.N. troops entered Katanga and relieved the Belgian troops of their command. Lumumba had assumed that the U.N. would back a takeover by force and viewed U.N. cooperation with the Katangese President Tshombe as a slight. He wrote a series of letters

²² Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. 23-33

²³ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*.

denouncing the U.N. Secretary General, driving a wedge between himself, moderate African members of the U.N. and the U.S.²⁴

By late August a covert plan to remove Lumumba was initiated by CIA's top brass and CIA Station Chief Devlin.²⁵ Lumumba had grown distrustful of U.N. intentions and ordered his army and police to search for spies which led to widescale harassment of Europeans and U.N. peacekeepers. The CIA and U.S. ambassador were alerted in late August that anti-Lumumba government representatives had approached President Kasavubu with a proposal to assassinate Lumumba which was rejected. The turning point came when Lumumba fielded a plan to invade both Katanga and Kasai using the ANC (the Congolese Army). In late August, the governments of Katanga and Kasai signed a confederacy against the central government. Kasai was less well funded and had a less significant defense force compared to Katanga. In Late August Lumumba ordered his troops to retake Kasai, resulting in a military failure and the massacre of local tribespeople which lost him domestic and international support.²⁶

In secret Lumumba had secured arms shipments from the Soviets which he had expected to arrive in time for the invasion of Katanga, however, he preemptively started the invasion before the Soviet arms arrived. In a press conference he hinted at Soviet aid which alerted the U.S. and the U.N. to his machinations. On September 1st in the midst of Lumumba's faltering military campaign, and tensions after a conference with the newly formed African Council, the Soviet planes bearing arms arrived in Congo sparking international outcry from the U.N. and neighboring neutral African countries.²⁷

²⁴ Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. 48-51

²⁵ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 275

²⁶ Passemiers, L. (2019). *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics: South Africa and the "Congo Crisis"* 23-24

²⁷ Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. 66-69

On September 5th Congolese President Kasavubu announced the removal of Lumumba with blessings from the U.S. Ambassador and the U.N. Deputy Secretary General. Lumumba commandeered radio networks to protest the legality of these claims, appealing to the Congolese parliament to overturn the decision and vote Kasavubu out of the presidency. Both Votes did not have a consistent turnout and were attended by police and army personnel loyal to Lumumba.²⁸ The U.N. swiftly seized control of the radio stations and closed the airports to prevent further Soviet aid. On September 14th, the new commander of the ANC Colonel Joseph Mobutu initiated a coup, announcing the suspension of the Congolese government until the end of the year and ordering the arrest of Lumumba.

In the week after Kasavubu's announcement Mobutu had approached the U.S. State Dept and the CIA for support. In the aftermath of the coup they quickly backed him. While the plot to assassinate Lumumba carried on, CIA Station Chief Devlin stalled. Devlin preferred a Congolese backed solution to Headquarters' plot to poison Lumumba.²⁹ The CIA provided information to Mobutu of an assassination attempt shortly after his assumption of power. The plot was foiled, and Mobutu became more active in his communication with the CIA. Mobutu ordered the withdrawal of Soviet and Czech diplomats on September 15th, forcing their departure by September 17th.

Lumumba was put under house arrest under protection by U.N. forces, occasionally venturing out to try to rally support for his cause. By mid-October Mobutu's forces had attempted to arrest Lumumba at his residence multiple times, each was rejected by the U.N. forces guarding him. In mid-November Lumumba's followers, led by his former Deputy Prime

²⁸ Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. 70-75

²⁹ Boateng, O. (2007). CONFESSIONS OF A CIA AGENT. (cover story). *New African*, 461, 14.

Minister Antoine Gizenga, set up a rival government in Stanleyville, the capital of the Orientale Province. Lumumba managed to escape house arrest and attempted to make it to Stanleyville, only to be arrested on December 1st.³⁰

After Lumumba's arrest Gizenga assumed control of the pro-Lumumba movement declaring himself acting Prime Minister of the 'legitimate government'. He immediately reached out to the Soviets requesting both military and humanitarian aid. Khrushchev was slow to respond, largely due to the inconsistency of Lumumba and his subsequent capture.³¹ The Soviets sent a shipment of arms to the pro-Lumumba group which arrived December 15th but was immediately reported by a *New York Times* article.³² The U.S. State Department and the CIA sent alerts to allied countries throughout Europe and the Mediterranean to inspect Soviet aircraft headed to Africa. The CIA also fielded a team in Congo to intercept arms shipments and monitor Soviet activity. The Soviets were operating on limited intelligence without their embassies or a solid support group on the ground, and thus were constricted in their ability to provide support to the Gizenga group.³³

In mid-January, a prison flight containing Lumumba was diverted to Katanga where he was brutally beaten and subsequently murdered by the Katangese military. The degree of CIA involvement is unclear, however Belgian officers were involved in his death, as the Belgians had invested a great deal of money and intelligence assets into the hunt for Lumumba. The news of

³⁰ Passemiers, L. (2019). *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics: South Africa and the "Congo Crisis" 24-25*

³¹ Mazov, S. (2007). Soviet Aid to the Gizenga Government in the Former Belgian Congo (1960-61) as Reflected in Russian Archives. *Cold War History*, 5

³² Hoffman, P. (1960, December 15). LUMUMBA GROUP SAID TO GET ARMS; Stanleyville Reported to Get Aid in Red Planes—Congo Army Seeks U.N. Base (Published 1960). *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1960/12/15/archives/lumumba-group-said-to-get-arms-stanleyville-reported-to-get-aid-in.html>

³³ Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. 169-171

his death did not emerge until February, after the inauguration of President John F Kennedy Jr. JFK publicly dejected the act while privately his ‘Special Group’ responsible for covert action planning (carried over from the previous administrations ‘5412 group’) provided another half million dollars to the Congo project.³⁴

With an effective U.N. and NATO blockade in place restricting Soviet arms shipments to the Congo Khrushchev appealed to allied countries in the region to provide financial assistance to Gizenga. Gizenga’s army was professional, and without funding would not fight. They were primarily tasked with repelling attacks by Mobutu’s forces, maintaining security of the Orientale province and attempting to seize the Northern region of neighboring Katanga. Czech attempts to establish an airlift and Soviet appeals to Egypt and African allies to aid Gizenga all failed. International pressure and shifting confidence in the ability of Congolese opposition to triumph greatly hindered support.³⁵ The CIA covertly sabotaged arms shipments to expose efforts to smuggle weapons through Sudan and intercepted Soviet money in transit. Gizenga’s troops began robbing to subsist and Gizenga’s party lost support as a result.³⁶ Ultimately this led the Soviets to largely abandon efforts to support Gizenga and their opposition movement.

In August 1961, the Kasavubu government, which was still primarily operated by Mobutu, appointed former Lumumba moderate Cyrille Adoula as Prime Minister. He took a hardline approach to ending secessionist movements in the various Congolese provinces. The U.N. grew increasingly frustrated with the Katanga government after the suspicious death of U.N. Secretary General Hammarskjöld. His plane went down in September 1961 while visiting

³⁴ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 277-278

³⁵ Mazov, S. (2007). Soviet Aid to the Gizenga Government in the Former Belgian Congo (1960-61) as Reflected in Russian Archives. 430-431

³⁶ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 280-281

Katanga, and evidence suggested it may have been shot down by Belgian mercenaries.³⁷ The U.N. launched an offensive against the Tshombe government, leading to a failed peace settlement with the Mobutu government. Mobutu's forces launched an offensive against the Gizenga government in the Orientale province and the secessionist movement in Kasai at the start of 1962, toppling both governments. Mobutu and the U.N. launched a series of offensives, coupled with an economic embargo, which brought an end to the Tshombe government in 1963.³⁸

While rebellions continued through the rest of the decade the Soviets had abandoned their efforts by the end of 1961, Khrushchev's empty threats and inconsistent support of the opposition were futile against the large-scale devotion of resources by the West.³⁹

³⁷ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 281

³⁸ Passemiers, L. (2019). *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics: South Africa and the "Congo Crisis" 27-29*

³⁹ Iandolo, A. (2014). *Imbalance of Power: The Soviet Union and the Congo Crisis, 1960–1961*. 55.

CASE STUDY 2: THE CONTRAS:

In 1961 in Nicaragua a nominally Marxist group called the Sandinista National Liberation Front, better known as the Sandinistas, formed with the goal of seizing control of Nicaragua from Anastasio Somoza. Somoza was a long-standing dictator who had some backing from the United States due to his far-right stance and support for U.S. interests in the region. In the early 1960's the Sandinistas began an armed insurgency against the Somoza government.

The Sandinistas gradually gained the support of the Soviet Union and Cuba, who provided supplies and funding. After years of fighting an insurgency style warfare the Sandinistas gained popular support across Nicaragua. In 1979 the Sandinistas led a national uprising, where they seized control and dissolved the Somoza government and National Guard. With support from the U.S.S.R. the Sandinistas established their own government which was left leaning but not Marxist. Under then-U.S. President Jimmy Carter, no action was initially taken against the Sandinista government. In 1981, the new administration of Ronald Reagan began to put pressure on the Sandinista government by withdrawing economic assistance and implementing sanctions.

Reagans conservative stance saw revolutions and leftism in Central and South America as the work of communist agitators funded or inspired by Cuba and the Soviet Union. Under President Reagan, William Casey, a veteran of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the WWII predecessor to the CIA, was appointed Director of the CIA. Casey was tasked with increasing covert, paramilitary and political action to staunch the global spread of communism, especially in Central and South America. Reagan viewed the El Salvadorian Civil War, which raged in 1980, as a Cuban-fueled revolution. Nicaragua under the Sandinistas provided the leftist El

Salvadoran revolutionaries, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), with arms and aid.

In the wake of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua several counter-revolutionary groups formed. The most prominent was the 15th September Legion composed of former members of Somoza's National Guard. In 1979 they set up an exile base in Honduras, the United States did not provide them with aid initially due to their negative human rights during the revolution. An independent group consisting of Nicaraguan civilian exiles had emigrated to the United States and began preparing for a counter revolution in 1980, with some training camps run by Cuban exiles springing up in Florida.

Reagan set the wheels in motion to frame American support for resistance groups as necessary to interdict arms bound for El Salvador and fight communism in the region. Casey concocted a plan to launch a political action and psychological operations campaign to halt arms shipments from the Sandinistas to the FMLN with the larger goal being the removal of the Sandinistas from power.

In May 1981, a Central American Station reported that the ADREN, Nicaraguan Democratic Union (UDN) and MISURASATA had agreed in principle to combine forces in a new organization. They would continue to use the name 15th of September Legion for the organization's military arm. The new organization, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), was established in September 1981. The FDN General Staff included Enrique Bermudez, Justiniano Perez, Ricardo Lau, and Juan Francisco Rivera.⁴⁰

In late 1981 President Reagan signed a Presidential Finding authorizing the Director of the CIA to launch a covert paramilitary war against Nicaragua. This finding assigned \$19 million to conduct paramilitary operations in Nicaragua to interdict arms being supplied to the

⁴⁰ Office of the Inspector General. (2007). *Contra Organizations: The Contra Story*. Central Intelligence Agency. <https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/cocaine/contra-story/orgs.html>

Salvadoran revolutionaries by the Nicaraguan government.⁴¹ Later, intelligence officials disputed this, however it set in motion the founding of a more significant proxy force to overthrow the Sandinistas.

The U.S. first ran training out of Argentina with their permission, before moving training and operations to newly built bases in Honduras. The contras were poorly equipped and most of their activities against Nicaragua consisted of small skirmishes and cattle rustling. CIA-supplied weapons arrived in Honduras in early 1982. The first significant strikes were attacks against road bridges in mid-March, after which the Sandinistas declared a state of emergency.⁴² The Sandinista government tightened security, as a result unrest broke out and arrests of Nicaraguan Indians resulted in the solidification of another anti-Sandinista organization; the MISURASATA.

By mid-1982 the new head of the CIA's Directorate of Operations (DO) Latin America Division Duane Clarridge, had established several CIA and Contra bases in Honduras. The CIA's primary base was leased from the Honduran air force and constructed at El Aguacate air base. From this site they coordinated Contra activity, supplies and arms, air attacks in Nicaragua, and assisted the Honduran air force with strikes against the FMLN in El Salvador. Issues immediately arose as CIA Director Casey and DO Clarridge had staffed key positions with CIA employees who had a South East Asia background instead of Latin American, many of whom did not speak Spanish.⁴³

The Nicaragua project gained an additional ally in former Sandinistas in Costa Rica operating under the name Alianza Revolucionaria Democratica (ARDE) led by Alfonso Robelo

⁴¹ Ross, C., Chimene-Weiss, S., Eppel, S., Feigelbaum, J., Motel, S., Pangandoyon, I., & D'Ortenzio, M. (n.d.). *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs—The Iran-Contra Affairs*. Brown University Research. Retrieved September 8, 2020, from https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/n-contras.php

⁴² Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. 513

⁴³ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. 514

and Pastora Gomez. The ARDE requested CIA support to aid in their fight against the Sandinistas. Some logistical issues presented themselves after the Falklands War between Argentina and Britain. Reagan sided with the U.K. over the conflict and Argentina withdrew support for the Contras which forced complete operation out of Honduras.

Although some exposes had started to unravel the secrecy of the clandestine support for the Contras, a November 1982 *Newsweek* article revealed the size of the Contra movement and reported CIA involvement⁴⁴. This created a firestorm in terms of attention, international condemnation, and pressure in American domestic politics. Congressman Edward Boland (D-MA) who was Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee drafted an amendment prohibiting the use of funds for overthrowing the Nicaraguan government which became law December 21st, 1982.⁴⁵ A loophole existed in the Boland Amendment however, if the U.S. was not directly involved in planning the overthrow of the Sandinista government, aid to the Contras could continue, and thus operations in Nicaragua remained largely the same.

With additional scrutiny after congressional inquiries following the *Newsweek*, the CIA forced the FDN to diversify leadership. Much of the FDN's military and political leadership were former Somoza National Guards which drew international condemnation. As a result, they created a 'congress' consisting of 8 civilian and 5 military leaders. The FDN board was led by Adolfo Calero who became the public face of the FDN, while military operations remained under Col. Bermudez. By the end of 1982 with issues surrounding resources, allies, and bases the

⁴⁴ A Secret War for Nicaragua. (1982, November 1). *News Week*, 42–50.

⁴⁵ Ross, C., Chimene-Weiss, S., Eppel, S., Feigelbaum, J., Motel, S., Pangandoyon, I., & D'Ortenzio, M. (n.d.). *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs—The Iran-Contra Affairs*.

Contra plan to seize and hold territory to declare a provisional government never occurred despite weaknesses within the Sandinista government.⁴⁶

In fiscal year 1983 Reagan increased the funding to the Contras to \$21 million. Although Contra forces had grown since 1982, CIA analysts and the Honduran government were skeptical of the ability of the Contras to perform due to the limited success of their actions up to this point. There were internal issues among the anti-Sandinista forces, both within the ARDE and the FDN. While Calero and the ‘congress’ were considered the leaders of the FDN, Bermudez retained control of the military branch and thus a large portion of control over the organization. “In January 1983, he identified himself as the FDN directorate member responsible for military affairs and effectively the ‘Commander-in-Chief’ of FDN forces.”⁴⁷ The ARDE in Costa Rica had been inactive militarily and rejected any former Nicaraguan military members, which led them to remain operationally stagnant and ineffective due to a lack of military practitioners.

The FDN, at the urging of the CIA, adopted a new public voice in the form of Edgar Chamorro, a moderate, influential, and less controversial Nicaraguan exile. Around this time allegations of human rights abuses began to tarnish the image of the FDN, made worse when Chamorro partially admitted abuses in an interview. In response the CIA created a warfare conduct manual for the FDN. A former Green Beret and CIA operative “Tayacan” put together a manual called “Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare” pulled primarily from Vietnam War manuals⁴⁸. It called for drastic actions such as kidnapping, assassinations, hiring criminal gangs and inciting riots. This proved counterproductive, and reinforced actions already

⁴⁶ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. 516

⁴⁷ Office of the Inspector General. (2007). *Contra Organizations: The Contra Story*.

⁴⁸ Tayacan. (1984). *Psychological Operations In Guerrilla Warfare (Translated Version)*. Central Intelligence Agency. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86M00886R001300010029-9.pdf>

conducted by the Contras. The document was leaked in 1984 and caused a scandal with the media who called it an insurgency manual.⁴⁹

During this period, the CIA maintained some of its advisory role, albeit it with a lack of direct military funding or support. After the Boland I amendment the lines were unclear as to where CIA could and could not assist. The CIA pressured the White House and in September 1983 Reagan revised his original Presidential Finding to allow for U.S. support of paramilitary operations against Nicaragua in an effort to force the Cubans to reduce support for hostile regimes in the region.⁵⁰

Prior to the revised Presidential Finding the CIA had begun developing a plan to disrupt the Nicaraguan economy via their oil supply and arms trade by disrupting shipping. The CIA developed their own mines for this operation at the Naval Surface Weapons Center prior to authorization to conduct the mission. Their mines utilized a design in which a sewer pipe was stuffed with C4 and was triggered by an acoustic sensor. The CIA nicknamed them 'Firecracker' mines and planned to lay them in various harbors along the Nicaraguan coast.

In the summer of 1983, the idea was pitched to Reagan and rejected, but a less aggressively worded version was vaguely approved by a smaller decision-making body, the Restricted Interagency Group. Clarridge sought the acquisition of armed fast boats capable of laying mines and a mother ship to launch them from. In late 1983, the NSPG debated the plan, voicing concerns over the implications of potentially sinking a Russian vessel. In the end Reagan approved the plan which was initiated in the fall of 1983. CIA-directed commandos began rocketing oil storage facilities in the port of Corinto, which led to fires destroying essential

⁴⁹ Wieseltier, L. (1984). Our Man in Nicaragua. *New Republic*, 191(20), 8–10.

⁵⁰ Reagan, R. (n.d.). *Reagan Presidential Finding 9-19-1983*. Retrieved September 8, 2020, from <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB210/index.htm>

Nicaraguan goods and forcing mass evacuations. CIA-Supplied aircraft also conducted bombing raids on Nicaragua's international airport in Managua. At the start of 1984, the CIA began laying mines in Nicaraguan ports⁵¹

The Nicaraguans attempted to counter these actions by establishing an offshore security zone 25 miles from their shores. The effect of the mining took a toll on the Nicaraguan people as oil shortages loomed and port fires threatened homes near oil storage facilities. The CIA had the FDN declare that the mines were theirs and that all Nicaraguan ports were a 'danger zone.' The reasoning behind this was the Hague Convention of 1907. The 'Convention Relative to the Laying of Automatic Submarine Contact Mines' which both the U.S. and Nicaragua were party to; "...makes it illegal to mine the coast or ports of an enemy *even during times of war* for the sole purpose of intercepting commercial shipping, or to lay unanchored contact mines."⁵² By having the FDN claim responsibility and designate danger zones they avoided international scrutiny.

On March 20th, 1984, a Soviet tanker the 'Lugansk' struck one of the mines, damaging the ship and injuring four sailors⁵³. The Soviets blamed the U.S. and the CIA scrambled to have the FDN deny that the damage could have been caused by their mines. Despite the attempt to warn vessels of the danger zones, by April 1984 at least 8 ships from multiple nations were damaged by the mines.⁵⁴ CIA paramilitary forces raided a number of ports along the coast damaging oil storage and Nicaraguan naval vessels. An April *Wall Street Journal* article and

⁵¹ Ross, C., Chimene-Weiss, S., Eppel, S., Feigelbaum, J., Motel, S., Pangandoyon, I., & D'Ortenzio, M. (n.d.). *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs—The Iran-Contra Affairs*.

⁵² Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 529

⁵³ Ap. (1984, March 25). Damaged Soviet Ship Set to Leave Nicaragua. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1984/03/25/world/damaged-soviet-ship-set-to-leave-nicaragua.html>

⁵⁴ Hiatt, F., Omang, J., Getler, W. P. S. W. S. writers M., & report, D. O. contributed to this. (1984, April 7). CIA Helped To Mine Ports In Nicaragua. *Washington Post*.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1984/04/07/cia-helped-to-mine-ports-in-nicaragua/762f775f-6733-4dd4-b692-8f03c8a0aef8/>

PBS News piece exposed the role of the CIA in the mine operation and congressional pressure came to a head.⁵⁵

The *Wall Street Journal* stoked domestic and international criticism of the conflict. Nicaragua brought an International Court of Justice (ICJ) suit against the United States on April 9th of 1984 for violations of international law regarding both the mining and support for the contras. Amid this international attention, the Miskito Indian resistance (MISURASATA) dissolved after negotiations with the Sandinistas, a large factor being the devotion of resources to the FDN over them. In June, the ARDE began to fall apart as Costa Rica cracked down in a bid to show neutrality towards Nicaragua.

Around this time CIA Director Casey sensed impending trouble and contacted U.S. Marine Colonel Oliver North, a member of the National Security Council. Oliver North served under Robert McFarlane who was Reagan's National Security Advisor. Casey's rationale was that the NSC was not under the same congressional restrictions as the CIA. North began to play a more central role in the 'Secret War' and was introduced to the Contras shortly thereafter by CIA's Dewey Clarridge.

In lieu of all the controversy the U.S. Congress moved to cut both CIA and American aid to the contras. On October 12th, 1984 it passed the Second Boland Amendment which mandated that;

During fiscal year 1985, no funds available to the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, or any other agency or entity of the United States involved in intelligence activities may be obligated or expended for the purpose or which would have

⁵⁵ *CIA reported directing mine-laying in Nicaraguan waters.* (1984, April 6). UPI.
<https://www.upi.com/Archives/1984/04/06/CIA-reported-directing-mine-laying-in-Nicaraguan-waters/9705450075600/>

the effect of supporting directly or indirectly, military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua by any nation, group, organization, movement or individual.⁵⁶

The FDN suffered drastically in the immediate aftermath of the funding cut and remained operationally inactive for the end of 1984. The United States officially cut funding to the Contras in 1985, forcing them to turn to third party funding. The Contras sought private funding in the U.S. but were unable to meet their requirement of approximately \$1 million a month to maintain their forces. North, with minimal input from the CIA and Director Casey, was able to secure Saudi Arabian funding in \$1 million increments funneled to FDN's Adolfo Calero. While the CIA was officially directed to cease assistance to the Contras, Director Casey did what he could to help. Alan Fiers had been appointed Chief of the CIA's Central America Task Force (CATF) in October 1984. Fiers followed congressional guidance but retained knowledge of North's Operations in the region and shared the belief the FDN was failing.⁵⁷

In November 1984, Ronald Reagan was re-elected and continued his public show of commitment to the Contras in his speeches and general rhetoric. Oliver North continued to work independently of the CIA to secure funding for the Contras. The United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO) group was set up in Washington D.C. by conservative colleagues of Reagan to aid in lobbying efforts and to serve as a source for arms supplies. Conservative lobbyists in D.C. raised more than \$6 million through the National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty foundation.⁵⁸ North worked with Retired U.S. Air Force General Richard Secord and Albert

⁵⁶ Ross, C., Chimene-Weiss, S., Eppel, S., Feigelbaum, J., Motel, S., Pangandoyon, I., & D'Ortenzio, M. (n.d.). *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs—The Iran-Contra Affairs*.

⁵⁷ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 544

⁵⁸ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 545

Hakim, an Iranian businessman, to supply the Contras with arms. Their first agreement was secured November of 1984 and arms began shipping mid-1985.⁵⁹

From February 1985 on, Oliver North provided counseling and intelligence to the Contras, funneled from the NSC and CIA's National Intelligence Officer for Latin America. He attempted to push the FDN to mount larger scale offensives to gain ground, operations up to this point had failed to do so. His activities began to catch the attention of the House Intelligence and House Foreign Affairs Latin America Subcommittee.⁶⁰ During the funding and support cutbacks at the start of 1985 the Contras logistics and operational efficiency started to fall apart. To revive the Contras ability to resupply frontline troops with weapons and equipment North began concocting a plan to provide the FDN with air support.

Utilizing Secord, a privately funded airstrip was built in Costa Rica with a plan to be operational by mid-1986.⁶¹ There were some issues in organizing this operation in Costa Rica due to the faltering ARDE and existing tensions surrounding the presence of Nicaraguan fighters. North approached the Ambassador to Costa Rica to negotiate access to an airstrip, convincing the Costa Ricans that they would have less Contras on their territory as a result. North utilized contacts gained through Secord to begin construction of the airfield while the CIA station chief looked the other way.

Unaware of the third-party dealings by Oliver North designed to skirt the Boland II amendment, Congress began to renegotiate funding based on public support and political pressure. By June 1985 Congress agreed to supply humanitarian aid to the Contras in the form of

⁵⁹ Ross, C., Chimene-Weiss, S., Eppel, S., Feigelbaum, J., Motel, S., Pangandoyon, I., & D'Ortenzio, M. (n.d.). *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs—The Iran-Contra Affairs*.

⁶⁰ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 549

⁶¹ Ross, C., Chimene-Weiss, S., Eppel, S., Feigelbaum, J., Motel, S., Pangandoyon, I., & D'Ortenzio, M. (n.d.). *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs—The Iran-Contra Affairs*.

\$27 million. An incursion into Honduran Territory by Nicaragua in pursuit of Contra forces swayed Congress into approving an additional \$100 million by October 1986, 70% of which was designated as military aid.⁶²

North utilized the air services operating from Costa Rica to fly the U.S. humanitarian aid from the Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office (NHAO) into Nicaragua. Gen. Second tasked former Air Force Colonel Richard Gadd with constructing a small air fleet and crews consisting of former CIA contract pilots from Vietnam's Air America campaign. Many of these pilots believed they were still working for the CIA. Around this time North connected with Felix Rodriguez, a former CIA paramilitary officer involved in the Bay of Pigs, the hunt for Che Guevara and Vietnam. Rodriguez was working with the El Salvadoran government and air force at the time and North recruited him to liaise between the Salvadoran government and third parties to fly supplies to the Contras out of Ilopango air base.⁶³

The operation was not nearly as efficient as North had hoped, due to questionable characters working on the project and the secondhand aircraft they acquired being not well maintained. Issues also began to arise when members of the Contras pushed the CIA to provide them with intelligence to better operate in the region. These factors greatly contributed to extended delays in the resupply of Contra operatives both in Nicaragua and in Honduras. The first arms delivery to the Contras was not until April 1986 and deliveries were inconsistent.⁶⁴

Congress passed The Intelligence Authorization Bill in 1986 which allowed the CIA to provide training and intelligence to the Contras but prohibited paramilitary operations or

⁶² Office of the Historian. (n.d.). *Milestones: 1981–1988—Office of the Historian*. United States Department of State. Retrieved October 5, 2020, from <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1981-1988/central-america>

⁶³ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 553

⁶⁴ Ross, C., Chimene-Weiss, S., Eppel, S., Feigelbaum, J., Motel, S., Pangandoyon, I., & D'Ortenzio, M. (n.d.). *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs—The Iran-Contra Affairs*.

logistical support of paramilitary operations.⁶⁵ The CIA provided encrypted communication devices to the Contras worth approximately \$13 million dollars which freed up Contra money to purchase more arms and supplies. Almost immediately however Communist assistance to the Sandinistas rendered the encryption devices useless, after cracking the cypher they were able to track Contra movements.⁶⁶

During this time, North concocted a plan which ended up being the downfall of his side of operations. He proposed diverting money from American arms sales to Iran to the Contras. Starting in 1985 the United States and Israel had been discreetly selling arms to Iran. In February of 1986, the U.S. had covertly agreed to trade arms for American hostages. While the money that Oliver North planned to divert was a small percentage of these deals it still amounted to a significant overstep on his part. He also sought to utilize the Contra resupply planes to facilitate the trade of the weapons.

A major accounting error further complicated funding efforts in August of 1986 when the Sultan of Brunei was approached for funding. Money was deposited into the wrong account and a slew of legal proceedings were required to get the funds back which drew more public attention to the operation.⁶⁷ To make matters worse public allegations began to emerge concerning Contra drug smuggling to raise additional funds for their operations, utilizing North's planes to do so. North's own reports indicated his knowledge of these operations.⁶⁸

On October 5th, 1986, an FDN supply plane was shot down by the Sandinistas and one of the primarily American crew, Eugene Hasenfus, was captured alive. He falsely informed the

⁶⁵ Ross, C., Chimene-Weiss, S., Eppel, S., Feigelbaum, J., Motel, S., Pangandoyon, I., & D'Ortenzio, M. (n.d.). *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs—The Iran-Contra Affairs*.

⁶⁶ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 555

⁶⁷ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 559

⁶⁸ *The Contras, Cocaine, and U.S. Covert Operations* (National Security Archives). (n.d.). The George Washington University. Retrieved October 6, 2020, from <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB2/index.html>

Nicaraguans that the plane belonged to the CIA. The plane's flight log was recovered from the wreckage which revealed the planes arms flights and several drug related flights to the United States.⁶⁹ It was also revealed the plane had been used in an attempted drug entrapment scheme against the Sandinistas prior to its use for the Contra supply missions.⁷⁰

The Reagan Administration quickly denied U.S. and CIA involvement, leading Congress to not pry too deeply. In late October 1986, the first shipment of arms was sent to Iran and a portion of the money was funneled to the Contras. In November several Lebanese newspapers circulated stories regarding the arms sales and the U.S.'s involvement.⁷¹ Congress quickly moved to investigate the allegations of CIA involvement in the Contra conflict, Contra drug smuggling and the questionable funding sources associated with the air transportation companies.

On November 25th, the Reagan administration admitted to the arms for hostage sales and the diversion of funds to the Contras. This set about a government wide purge and reforms to the purview of the NSC as well as restrictions on Presidential Findings. The Iran-Contra scandal as it became known set a precedent for Congressional oversight and checks and balances. Severe restrictions and scrutiny stymied the Contra operation and by 1988 CIA and U.S. aid to the Contras all but ceased while Honduras and Costa Rica condemned the operation. Eventually U.S. support resumed and the Contras ultimately capitulated with the Sandinista government, the successes of the Contras as a proxy force was negligible considering their ineffectiveness as a fighting force given the amount of resources devoted to the project.

⁶⁹ Parry, R. (1986, October). Plane Logs Show "Contra" Pilot's Prior Flights. *AP NEWS*.
<https://apnews.com/article/c76d758d94630a0ea0caa80597cfa8e7>

⁷⁰ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA*. 564

⁷¹ Ross, C., Chimene-Weiss, S., Eppel, S., Feigelbaum, J., Motel, S., Pangandoyon, I., & D'Ortenzio, M. (n.d.). *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs—The Iran-Contra Affairs*.

DISCUSSION/ FINDINGS:

As seen in the literature review scholars pointed to several major factors contributing to success or failure in the use of proxy forces. The primary factors identified were consistency and levels of support by the beneficiary, goal alignment between the proxy and beneficiary, and the quality of cultural awareness as it relates to proxy force leadership and composition. In the two cases analyzed in this study we saw evidence of all of factors contributing to the failure of these forces to operate effectively.

While there had been some minor proxy conflicts in the post-World War era Congo represented the beginning of Soviet attempts to expand their global influence through the support of revolutions and anti-Western groups. While there were a variety of factors in the failures of both Lumumba and Gizenga to manifest significant or lasting power in the Congo, Soviet hesitancy to commit, and their withdrawal of support played a large role. The lack of consistent opposition leadership and the cohesiveness of the anti-Western forces also played a significant role. Additionally, the U.N. backed forces proved more effective in consolidating divided and non-aligned parties.

Alessandro Iandolo wrote of the Soviet role in these failures that their ability to effectively back forces abroad were tested and failed. He highlighted that their commitment to their allies was inconsistent due to their fear of sparking a direct military confrontation with the west.⁷² In addition, after the ouster of their embassies and diplomatic staff they lacked reliable intelligence with which to act upon and support their allies, and were unable to consistently support their proxy. Their reluctance to commit to a new leader after the ouster of Lumumba, the

⁷² Iandolo, A. (2014). *Imbalance of Power: The Soviet Union and the Congo Crisis, 1960–1961*. 34-37

U.N. blockade of Gizenga's Orientale province and CIA sabotage of arms and fund supplies led the Soviets to abandon the Congo all together.⁷³

Lumumba's rash actions and inconsistency in relations with both the Western coalition and the Russians led to a break with President Kasavubu, which in turn led to a coup by Colonel Mobutu. After Lumumba's arrest and subsequent death his party was divided and led by a less polarizing leader, Gizenga. Gizenga relied on a professional army, funded by the Soviets, with few loyalists motivated by ideology. All the aforementioned factors which produced Soviet withdrawal of support forced him to capitulate.⁷⁴

With the Contras there were several major factors which led to their failure. Some of the factors overlapped with the situation in the Congo, namely; ineffective and divided proxy force leadership, inconsistent support and strategy on the part of the beneficiary, and a failure to mobilize popular support within the target nation by the proxy. The Iran-Contra scandal also led to limitations on American support, with the conflict ending in a stalemate, withdrawal of American support and the election of UNO to power in Nicaragua in 1990. While this could in some ways be considered a victory, the effectiveness of the proxy force to win outright was never demonstrated.

Contra leadership was dominated from the beginning by former Somoza National Guard members who had a history of human rights abuses and acted more as criminals than revolutionaries. Once U.S. support began flowing the tempo of attacks against Nicaragua intensified and international scrutiny factored in. Leadership of the FDN was diversified and the CIA attempted to implement more professional standards, however military affairs and the real

⁷³ Mazov, S. (2007). Soviet Aid to the Gizenga Government in the Former Belgian Congo (1960-61) as Reflected in Russian Archives. 429

⁷⁴ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. 277-282

seat of power was still occupied by Bermudez. There were more atrocities and military blunders which further ruined the credibility of the Contra forces both within the region and internationally.⁷⁵

With a series of funding fluctuations due to CIA mismanagement, Executive branch acts, and a shift to third party funding, the Contras were consistently worried about supplying their war effort. When funding dried up, as it did in 1984, Contra forces remained inactive, losing any ground gained and becoming demoralized.⁷⁶ While the Contras received a significant amount of funds from third parties for military purposes (mostly provided by Saudi Arabia who contributed approximately \$32 million between 1984 and 1986⁷⁷), they still lacked a solid strategy and cohesive leadership.

Some opponents of the Contra movement and U.S. support for it argue against the legitimacy of their cause. During the first few years of the conflict the Sandinista government, despite U.S. claims to the contrary, enjoyed widespread popular support. As the war raged on, government crackdowns and the effects of international embargoes factored in, they lost popular support, which paved the way for the eventual concession with the Contra movement. A 1988 article in the *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* stated; “One of the most remarkable aspects of the FDN is that until November 1986 it had made very few efforts to develop a complete, coherent political programme beyond a brief statement of its war aims.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. 512-518

⁷⁶ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. 538

⁷⁷ Sobel, R. (1995). Contra aid fundamentals: Exploring the intricacies and the issues. *Political Science Quarterly (Academy of Political Science)*, 110(2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/2152363> 297

⁷⁸ MARTIN, G. R. (1988). The Immorality of the Contras' Resort to War: The Case of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes*, 13(25), 78.

This lack of appeal to the Nicaraguan populace and controversial military campaign contributed to a failure of the Contras to gain popular support both within Nicaragua and abroad.

Clearly there are some commonalities between these two cases, the bipolarity of the Cold War and the conflict between Western ideals and communist systems exacerbated pre-existing societal fissures, manifesting in civil wars fought with weapons and money supplied by rival superpower beneficiaries. A failure to properly vet proxy force leaders, mismanagement of resources and failure to fully commit on the part of the beneficiaries led to lack of cohesion within these proxy forces. Indeed, lessons learned from these conflicts must have been factored into support for proxy forces since, and clearly factors that led to the failure of these forces is relevant today. With conflicts spread across multiple regions and the capabilities of proxy forces greatly magnified through technology, both on a social and military scale, the proxy environment is more evolved than in the Cold War, however the above elements remain the same.

As the literature review showed many modern scholars share the belief that Cold War examples are narrow in their scope. Sterman and Rondeaux wrote in 2019: “The literature on state sponsorship of terrorism is predominantly rooted in Cold War conceptions that emphasize the power of highly centralized states and their influence over non-state proxies rather than the agency of groups themselves.”⁷⁹ They also argue that current analytical works do not account for the paradigm shift that is occurring because of communications and weapon innovations, as well as the rise of transnational social movements.⁸⁰ While this may indeed be true, in this context of this study I believe that the failures exhibited in Cold War proxy conflicts can be valuable ‘lessons learned’ with regards to this exact issue.

⁷⁹ Sterman, D., & Rondeaux, C. (2019). *Twenty-First Century Proxy Warfare: Confronting Strategic Innovation in a Multipolar World*

⁸⁰ Sterman, D., & Rondeaux, C. (2018). *Twenty-First Century Proxy Warfare* (Twenty-First Century Proxy War)

In both the Congo and Nicaragua it was apparent that too little research was done by the beneficiaries before support was given, with too little effort extended on the part of the benefactors to accurately gauge the goals, limitations and potential pitfalls of backing these proxy forces. In addition, the experts dealing with the proxy forces were ignorant of the regions and cultures they were dealing with. Prados wrote that the CIA's DO Africa Division was less than a year old at the outbreak of Congolese independence and the first station chief Larry Devlin, was previously stationed in Paris and had next to no experience with Africa, did not arrive in the Congo to set up a CIA base until shortly after this.⁸¹

Throughout the duration of CIA support for the Contra conflict, Duane Clarridge was the head of the DO's Latin America Division. Clarridge was a Middle East expert with no Latin America experience and did not speak Spanish. The station chief of the frontline CIA base at Aguacate in Honduras Ray Doty and many of the other CIA liaisons to the Contras were Laos experts who also spoke little to no Spanish.⁸² A lack of cultural and regional understanding surely had to have an impact on the efficacy of their mission and guidance to the Contras. While in both conflicts relations with neighboring countries and rival benefactors were factored into the political considerations of the proxy conflicts, as the literature suggests, the agency of the proxies does not appear to have been accounted for.

⁸¹ Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. 274

⁸² Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. 508-509, 514

CONCLUSION:

While some elements have changed since the Cold War it seems the fundamentals are the same. The question of whether lessons learned from the use of proxies during the Cold War are applicable to the modern environment proved to be true to a certain extent. While technological and global interconnectedness has evolved, organizational, and political risk factors are still similar. There is no arguing that the world is very different than it was 60 years ago, however the human and political factors remain strikingly similar.

Key takeaways such as the importance of goal-alignment between beneficiary and proxy, vetting of proxy leadership and solid strategic and support planning on the part of beneficiary are still applicable today. While it can be difficult to associate one conflict with another enough similarities exist between all conflicts to relate them to each other. Using the key factors identified in this study, in-depth studies of modern proxy conflicts and factors which contributed to their failures and successes could be useful for future applications.

Clearly more analytical rigor must be given to the topic of proxy warfare as our opponents continue to use proxies and hybrid warfare methods to expand their spheres of influence and threaten U.S. interests globally. As the U.S. popular opinion towards devotion of resources to traditional warfighting and COIN wanes, it is imperative that the U.S. military and intelligence community work to bolster their ability to find, support and commit to allies, both state and non-state, with interests and goals in line with ours. If the last decade was any indication, the next several decades will likely see a massive surge in proxy conflicts. It will be a key aspect of U.S. foreign policy and power projection to be able to effectively work with non-state groups effectively, however to do so it appears that more research needs to be done analyzing conflicts and the groups fighting in them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- A Secret War for Nicaragua. (1982, November 1). *News Week*, 42–50.
- Ap. (1984, March 25). Damaged Soviet Ship Set to Leave Nicaragua. *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1984/03/25/world/damaged-soviet-ship-set-to-leave-nicaragua.html>
- Berman, E., & Lake, D. A. (Eds.). (2019). *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence through Local Agents*. Cornell University Press.
- Boateng, O. (2007). CONFESSIONS OF A CIA AGENT. (cover story). *New African*, 461, 8–18.
- Byman, D. (2018). Approximating War. *National Interest*, 157, 10–20.
- Byman, D., Chalk, P., Hoffman, B., Rosenau, W., & Brannan, D. (2001). STATE SUPPORT FOR INSURGENCIES. In *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (1st ed., pp. 9–40). RAND Corporation. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mr1405oti.10>
- CIA reported directing mine-laying in Nicaraguan waters. (1984, April 6). *UPI*.
<https://www.upi.com/Archives/1984/04/06/CIA-reported-directing-mine-laying-in-Nicaraguan-waters/9705450075600/>
- Dwivedi, S., & Kapoor, S. (2016). Challenges in the Attribution of Responsibility for the Actions of Proxy Forces Under International Criminal Law. *Proceedings of the Multidisciplinary Academic Conference*, 183–192.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(1), 57–74. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1989.4279003>
- Fox, A. C. (2019a). Conflict and the Need for a Theory of Proxy Warfare. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 12(1), 44–71.
- Fox, A. C. (2019b). Time, Power, and Principal-Agent Problems: Why the U.S. Army is Ill-Suited for Proxy Warfare Hotspots. *Military Review*, 99(2), 28–42.

- Frazier, J. L. (2017). BUILDING LEGITIMACY, PROMOTING POLICY AND DEVELOPING NETWORKS: Using Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law to effectively train, monitor and evaluate proxy forces. *Special Warfare: The Professional Bulletin of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center & School*, 30(2), 34–38.
- Groh, T. L. (2019). *Proxy War: The Least Bad Option* (1st ed.). Stanford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvqsdq0k>
- Hiatt, F., Omang, J., Getler, M., & Oberdorfer, D. (1984, April 7). CIA Helped To Mine Ports In Nicaragua. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1984/04/07/cia-helped-to-mine-ports-in-nicaragua/762f775f-6733-4dd4-b692-8f03c8a0aef8/>
- Hoekstra, Q. (2019). Helping the Contras: The Effectiveness of U.S. Support for Foreign Rebels During the Nicaraguan Contra War (1979–1990). *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 0(0), 1–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1568004>
- Hoffman, P. (1960, December 15). LUMUMBA GROUP SAID TO GET ARMS; Stanleyville Reported to Get Aid in Red Planes—Congo Army Seeks U.N. Base (Published 1960). *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1960/12/15/archives/lumumba-group-said-to-get-arms-stanleyville-reported-to-get-aid-in.html>
- Hughes, G. (2012). *My Enemy's Enemy: Proxy Warfare in International Politics*. Sussex Academic Press.
- Iandolo, A. (2014). Imbalance of Power: The Soviet Union and the Congo Crisis, 1960–1961. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 16(2), 32–55.
- Innes, M. A., & Banks, W. C. (2012). Foreword. In *Making Sense of Proxy Wars: States, Surrogates & the Use of Force* (pp. 8–9). Potomac Books Inc.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/jhu/detail.action?docID=944937>

- Kalb, M. G. (1982). *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa--from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc. https://catalyst.library.jhu.edu/catalog/bib_443767
- Martin, G. R. (1988). The Immorality of the Contras' Resort to War: The Case of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes*, 13(25), 71–87.
- Mazov, S. (2007). Soviet Aid to the Gizenga Government in the Former Belgian Congo (1960-61) as Reflected in Russian Archives. *Cold War History*, 7(3), 425–437.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14682740701474873>
- Michaels, J. H. (2012). Breaking the Rules: The CIA and Counterinsurgency in the Congo 1964–1965. *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 25(1), 130–159.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2012.623018>
- Mumford, A. (2013). Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict. *The RUSI Journal*, 158(2), 40–46.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2013.787733>
- Office of the Historian. (n.d.). *Milestones: 1981–1988—Office of the Historian*. United States Department of State. Retrieved October 5, 2020, from <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1981-1988/central-america>
- Office of the Inspector General. (2007). *Contra Organizations: The Contra Story*. Central Intelligence Agency. <https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/cocaine/contra-story/orgs.html>
- Parry, R. (1986, October). Plane Logs Show “Contra” Pilot’s Prior Flights. *AP NEWS*.
<https://apnews.com/article/c76d758d94630a0ea0caa80597cfa8e7>
- Passemiers, L. (2019). *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics: South Africa and the “Congo Crisis”, 1960-1965*. Taylor & Francis Group.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/jhu/detail.action?docID=5729770>

- Pfaff, A. C., & Granfield, P. (2018, March 27). *How (Not) to Fight Proxy Wars* [Text]. The National Interest; The Center for the National Interest. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-not-fight-proxy-wars-25102>
- Pfaff, C. A. (2017). Proxy War Ethics. *Journal of National Security Law & Policy*, 9(2), 1–43.
- Pfaff, D. C. A. (2017). Strategic Insights: Proxy War Norms. *United States Army War College Press*, 14.
- Prados, J. (2006). *Safe for democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. Ivan R. Dee.
- Rauta, V. (2018). A structural-relational analysis of party dynamics in proxy wars. *International Relations*, 32(4), 449–467. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117818802436>
- Reagan, R. (n.d.). *Reagan Presidential Finding 9-19-1983*. Retrieved September 8, 2020, from <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB210/index.htm>
- Robarge, D. (2014). CIA's Covert Operations in the Congo, 1960–1968: *CSI Publications*, 58(3), 10.
- Ross, C., Chimene-Weiss, S., Eppel, S., Feigelbaum, J., Motel, S., Pangandoyon, I., & D'Ortenzio, M. (n.d.). *Understanding the Iran-Contra Affairs—The Iran-Contra Affairs*. Brown University Research. Retrieved September 8, 2020, from https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/n-contras.php
- Salehyan, I. (2010). *TRANSNATIONAL INSURGENCIES AND THE ESCALATION OF REGIONAL CONFLICT: LESSONS FOR IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN*. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11847>
- Sobel, R. (1995). Contra aid fundamentals: Exploring the intricacies and the issues. *Political Science Quarterly (Academy of Political Science)*, 110(2), 287–306. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2152363>

Sterman, D., & Rondeaux, C. (2018). *Twenty-First Century Proxy Warfare* (Twenty-First Century Proxy War). New America. <http://newamerica.org/international-security/reports/twenty-first-century-proxy-warfare/>

Sterman, D., & Rondeaux, C. (2019). *Twenty-First Century Proxy Warfare: Confronting Strategic Innovation in a Multipolar World* (Twenty-First Century Proxy War). New America. <http://newamerica.org/international-security/reports/twenty-first-century-proxy-warfare-confronting-strategic-innovation-multipolar-world/>

Tayacan. (1984). *Psychological Operations In Guerrilla Warfare (Translated Version)*. Central Intelligence Agency. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86M00886R001300010029-9.pdf>

The Contras, Cocaine, and U.S. Covert Operations (National Security Archives). (n.d.). The George Washington University. Retrieved October 6, 2020, from <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB2/index.html>

Understanding the CIA: How Covert (and Overt) Operations Were Proposed and Approved during the Cold War. (2019, February 28). National Security Archive. <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/intelligence/2019-03-04/understanding-cia-how-covert-overt-operations-proposed-approved-during-cold-war>

Votel, J. L., & Keravuori, E. R. (2018). The By-With-Through Operational Approach. *JFQ: Joint Force Quarterly*, 89, 40–47.

Weissman, S. R. (2014). What Really Happened in Congo: The CIA, the Murder of Lumumba, and the Rise of Mobutu. *Foreign Affairs*, 93(4), 14–24. JSTOR.

Wieseltier, L. (1984). Our Man in Nicaragua. *New Republic*, 191(20), 8–10.

Yeisley, M. O. (2011). Bipolarity, Proxy Wars, and the Rise of China. *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 5(4), 75–91.

CURRICULUM VITAE:

Kono Carragee was born in upstate New York February of 1992. He graduated from the Lehman Alternative Community School in 2010. He went on to attend Tompkins Cortland Community College for two years before transferring to Cornell University, graduating in 2015 with a B.S. in Development Sociology. Kono began working for the Cornell Survey Research Institute in 2014 leaving this position as a Senior Research Assistant in 2018 upon acceptance to graduate school. He is a candidate for an M.A. in Global Security Studies concentrating in Strategic Studies from Johns Hopkins University's Advanced Academic Programs (anticipated completion December 2020). He currently works as a Student Trainee for United States Citizenship and Immigration Services at the Potomac Service Center in their Background Check Unit.