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MILITARY OPERATIONS IN LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

Preface

FM 100-20/AFP 3-20 establishes Army and Air Force guidance for planning, coordinating, and executing operations in low intensity conflict (LIC). It provides direction to Army and Air Force commanders and staffs charged with duties related to these operations. It also provides support for other related publications.

This manual applies to all Army and Air Force units participating in joint and combined operations in LIC. Foreign governments receiving security assistance from the US may also use it with appropriate modification.

References to activities of terrorist and insurgent organizations and to concepts of operations of foreign governments are for illustrative and informational purposes only. They do not constitute US Army or Air Force advocacy or approval of practices prohibited by US law or policies.

The proponents of this publication are the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and the US Air Force Plans Directorate. Users of this manual are encouraged to recommend changes which will improve its clarity and utility. Army personnel should submit comments on Department of the Army Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms). Air Force personnel should forward changes on Air Force Form 847 (Recommendation for Change of Publication). Army comments should be forwarded to the Commandant, US Army Command and General Staff College, ATTN: ATZL-SWW-L, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-6900 and Air Force comments should be forwarded to HQ USAF, ATTN: XOXWD, Washington, DC 20310.

Unless otherwise stated, masculine pronouns apply to both men and women.

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Foreword

Field Manual 100-20/Air Force Pamphlet 3-20 represents the combined efforts of the Army and Air Force to develop comprehensive military doctrine and guidance to support the US government's activities in an environment of low intensity conflict (LIC).

This publication provides the basic foundation for Army and Air Force personnel to understand the complexities of operating in the LIC environment. It discusses the four major types of operations typically found in LIC—support for insurgencies and counterinsurgencies, combatting terrorism, peacekeeping operations, and peacetime contingency operations—and it explains the subtle yet critical differences between LIC and other conventional operations.

Low intensity conflicts have been a predominant form of engagement for the military over the past 45 years. In all likelihood, this will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. All military personnel must understand the characteristics of low intensity conflict if we are to conduct military operations successfully in this environment.



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Introduction

War should never be thought of as something autonomous but always as an instrument of policy. Wars must vary with the nature of their motives and the situations which give rise to them.

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.

Carl Von Clausewitz
On War

The game of strategy can, like music, be played in two keys. The major key is direct strategy, in which force is the essential factor. The minor key is indirect strategy, in which force recedes into the background and its place is taken by psychology and planning.

General Andre Beaufre
An Introduction to Strategy

The functions of the Military Departments are as follows:

To prepare forces and establish reserves of manpower, equipment, and supplies for the effective prosecution of war and military operations short of war . . .

Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication 0-2

This manual addresses military operations in low intensity conflict (LIC). These are military operations which support political, economic and informational actions.

The term low intensity conflict reflects an American perspective. Indeed, the term is a misnomer. To peoples more directly affected, the threat is immediate and vital. To us, it is subtle, indirect, and long-term; but potentially it is just as serious. The actions which take place in low intensity conflict are distinguishable from those in conventional war, more by differences in kind, than by degree of intensity.

Regardless of perspective, the instruments for the resolution of a conflict must be appropriate to its nature. The arsenal of national power includes political, economic, informational, and military instruments. The nature of the conflict environment determines the way leaders employ them.

The desired end-state is routine, peaceful competition among nations. In this environment, the states of the world pursue their own interests, sometimes in harmony, but with enough commonality of interests to avoid violence. The military instrument of

national power, although primarily focused on deterring war, is employed in support of political, economic, and informational efforts to achieve US goals and help preserve this peacefully competitive environment.

In war, military force contributes directly to the achievement of strategic aims; the direct use of military power establishes the conditions which make achievement of the desired political end-state possible. The political, economic, and informational instruments of national power support the military effort to establish those conditions.

Between peace and war is the ambiguous environment which has come to be called low intensity conflict. In LIC, the contribution of military force to the achievement of the strategic aim is indirect; that is, military operations support nonmilitary actions which establish the conditions under which the strategic aim can be realized. Frequently, these operations and actions assist friendly governments or resistance groups.

Military operations in LIC may include tactically direct actions such as direct assistance, strikes, raids, and shows of force or demonstrations. However, political, economic, or psychological objectives shape the way in which even these tactically direct operations are executed. At the operational and strategic levels military operations in LIC are best understood as indirect operations conducted for political, economic and psychological effects. While the concepts of direct and indirect operations are different, they are complementary, not mutually exclusive. It is possible, and sometimes necessary, to secure policy objectives by indirect operations, direct operations, or both.

When the United States uses military power directly against a hostile force in strikes or raids, the principles of combat operations govern tactical actions even though they occur in an environment short of declared war and are significantly influenced by constraints of policy and strategy.

Any conflict situation can involve elements of all three environments—routine peaceful competition, LIC, and war. Low intensity conflict does not invariably escalate into war. Indeed, military operations in LIC are designed to prevent that occurrence. Neither does war inevitably resolve all aspects of a conflict between nations. War can evolve into some form of LIC. Contemporary trends suggest that this type of transition is likely in the future.

Army Field Manual (FM) 100-5 and the Air Force's One and Two-Series manuals generally provide comprehensive and time-tested capstone doctrine for the direct engagement and defeat of an enemy in war. Their tenets characterize successful conventional military operations and apply, at the appropriate level, in LIC. However, in low intensity conflict, other imperatives—political dominance, legitimacy, unity of effort, adaptability, and perseverance—shape, guide, and add dimensions to these tenets. Most military initiatives require a blend of the tenets of conventional war and the imperatives of LIC. The relative influence of these principles changes with the evolving conflict. Commanders must be sensitive to this shift in emphasis, constantly focus on their objectives, and maintain a clear vision of the kind of war they are fighting.

This manual fills a void which has existed in the Army and the Air Force for some time. It complements warfighting doctrine by providing operational guidance for military



operations in LIC from which implementing doctrine can be developed. In the Army, the implementing doctrine will appear in specific operations manuals and will be integrated into branch and functional manuals. In the Air Force, it will appear in appropriate tactics, training, and operations manuals. There are also cases which require specific “stand-alone” implementing doctrine. Combatting terrorism and peacekeeping are two examples. This manual provides a common conceptual framework for successful military operations in LIC and a common doctrinal base to aid service interaction. It will enable the Army and the Air Force to provide effective support to the unified and component commands.

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CHAPTER 1

Fundamentals of Low Intensity Conflict

The political object, as the original motive of the war, should be the standard for determining both the aim of the military force and also the amount of effort to be made.

Carl von Clausewitz

What is important is to understand the role of military force and the role of other responses and how these fit together.

Caspar Weinberger

This chapter outlines the role of military operations in low intensity conflict (LIC). It describes the environment of LIC and identifies imperatives which the military planner must consider. It describes the four major LIC operational categories—support for insurgencies and counterinsurgencies; combatting terrorism; peacekeeping operations; and peacetime contingency operations. It also provides general guidance for campaign planning, and presents perspectives which are useful at the operational level. Subsequent chapters address the four major operational categories in detail.

DEFINITION

Low intensity conflict is a political-military confrontation between contending states or groups below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition among states. It frequently involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. Low intensity conflict ranges from subversion to the use of armed force. It is waged by a combination of means, employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments. Low intensity conflicts are often localized, generally in the Third World, but contain regional and global security implications.

Nuclear parity, the dynamics of modern revolutionary warfare, and economic interdependence have significantly reshaped the international arena over the last four decades. In this environment, LIC poses complex challenges to US global interests. Unfavorable outcomes of LIC may gradually isolate the United States, its allies, and its global trading partners from each other and from the world community. Unfavorable outcomes of LIC may also cause—

- The loss of US access to strategic energy reserves and other natural resources.
- The loss of US military basing, transit, and access rights.
- The movement of US friends and allies to positions of accommodation with hostile groups.
- The gain of long-term advantages for US adversaries.

Conversely, successful LIC operations, consistent with US interests and laws, can advance US international goals such as the growth of freedom, democratic institutions, and free market economies.

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US policy recognizes that indirect, rather than direct, applications of US military power are the most appropriate and cost-effective ways to achieve national goals in a LIC environment. The principal US military instrument in LIC is security assistance in the form of training, equipment, services and combat support. When LIC threatens friends and allies, the aim of security assistance is to ensure that their military institutions can provide security for their citizens and government. (A discussion of the role of security assistance in the context of overall foreign assistance and programs is at Appendix A.)

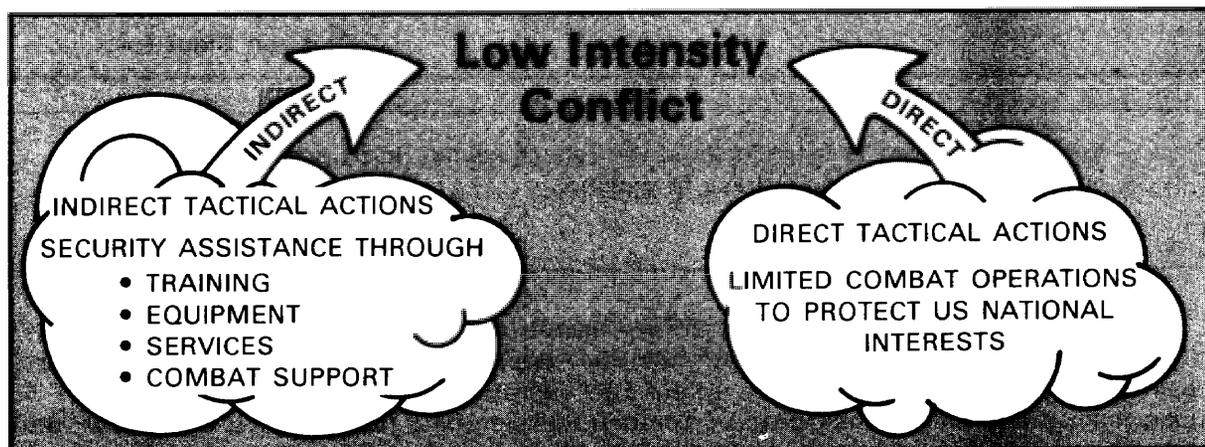


Figure 1-1. Indirect versus Direct Applications

The United States will also employ combat operations in exceptional circumstances when it cannot protect its national interests by other means. When a US response is called for, it must be in accordance with the principles of international and domestic law. These principles affirm the inherent right of states to use force in individual or collective self-defense against armed attack. (Appendix B provides an overview of the laws relevant to military operations in LIC.)

UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENT

To confront the challenge of LIC effectively, the military planner must understand its dynamics. He must put LIC dynamics into a historical context to understand how a complex group of players manipulate the LIC environment to advance their interests.

LIC Dynamics

Chief among the dynamic forces that contribute to LIC are change, discontent, poverty, violence, and instability. These interact to create an environment conducive to LIC.

Change can cause great stress in a society and often produces discontent. Governments or social systems must accommodate innovation or the sudden impact of external social influences. They may not successfully incorporate these changes within their traditional cultural value system. Addressing the problems posed by change requires considerable time and resources. The impatience of key groups and limits on resources make it difficult to respond fully to these problems.

When people sense injustice, they become discontented. Groups may form around specific issues of discontent. People may support or join groups committed to achieving

social or political change through violent means. The intensity of their sense of injustice often determines the degree to which they participate in violence.

Change brought about through violence may produce instability, but not all instability is detrimental. The United States itself was the product of change through revolution. It subsequently developed a form of government which allows social and occupational mobility through individual achievement and growth. The United States is not opposed to this sort of evolution in other nations. Its interests are not rigidly tied to the status quo. Indeed, long-term US interests may be put at risk when political groups with authoritarian, totalitarian, or other objectives impede revolutionary change and exploit instability. In fact, the threat to the United States in LIC is the exploitation of instability by groups opposed to US goals.

A Historical Perspective

Since the end of World War II, a host of groups and states have pursued their interests in the LIC environment. Many international wars and insurgences have taken a heavy toll of lives and treasure. Most of them have occurred in the Third World and they have changed the international environment. Many Third World conflicts originated in the struggle to end the system of European empires. As nations achieved this goal, clashes among more or less conventional military forces sought to rectify artificially imposed relationships among newly independent states. This type of conflict continues. More frequently, insurgents have sought to alter the political, social and economic organization of these states, bringing about internal conflicts. These conflicts are also continuing. However, the means by which groups and nations conduct these conflicts have changed significantly, increasing the risks in the LIC environment.

Nuclear parity, the success of deterrence, and an increasingly interdependent world have created a period of transition in superpower relationships. Regional powers have developed, diffusing the international balance of power. Although the absolute strength of the superpowers has not declined, their relative strength in the world is less than it was two decades ago. Lesser powers have proliferated and have their own interests to pursue. Their independent actions provide many new possibilities for conflict, irrespective of relations among the superpowers.

Taken together, these factors reveal a world with a high potential for violent conflict. Mutual deterrence of war between the superpowers suggests that conflicts will occur in the Third World, where the interests of regional powers and those of the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics meet and interact. The United States and its armed forces can expect to be involved in LIC and operations to prevent LIC for the foreseeable future.

Trends

Technological advances have also created an environment favorable to LIC. Established societies have become more vulnerable because technology has made more advanced weapons available to insurgent or terrorist groups. Large urban industrial and commercial areas present attractive targets. They depend on support facilities such as telecommunication and automation centers for their existence. These are easily sabotaged. In addition, advanced electronic communications media bring the full impact of political violence into homes worldwide. The result is instant recognition for formerly unknown or little-known insurgent or terrorist groups. Insurgents and terrorists recognize the importance of the public affairs arena to their struggles.

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The possible use of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons is potentially a serious problem in LIC. The proliferation of NBC weapons and the threat of their use vastly increase the terror potential of a nation or group with this capability.

An interdependent world and mass communications make external material support easily accessible to groups and states involved in LIC. Sources of external support are not limited just to the superpowers. All countries can, and many do, provide active or passive, material and moral support.

The Players

Increasingly in the last two decades, new players have begun to take advantage of LIC as a means of advancing their foreign policy objectives. Frequently, their activities run counter to US interests and complicate the task of US planners and policy makers.

Urban guerrillas are increasingly active players in this contemporary conflict. The conflict in Northern Ireland, the civil war in Lebanon, and guerrilla warfare in the urban areas of Latin America provide examples. Increasing urbanization in the Third World generates the social and political forces which will lead to the spread of urban guerrilla warfare.

Anti-Marxist insurgents are relatively new players in the LIC environment. They illustrate that LIC can threaten not just US global interests, but those of the USSR and other powers as well.

The appearance of vigilante groups, including death squads, also threatens political stability. These vigilante groups often believe they are performing security or political tasks, even if illegal, which their government is unwilling or unable to do. They have become a prominent feature in some insurgences. They are uncontrolled—or sometimes secretly controlled—by various factions in and out of the government. Their actions can alienate the very populace whose support their government or group is trying to win or maintain.

The development of professional, full-time revolutionaries and terrorists, some of whom are mercenaries available for hire, makes the political environment more dangerous and the response to terrorism more difficult. These individuals often receive arms, logistics, and training support through an international black market.

Some insurgent and terrorist groups finance their activities through illicit narcotics sales or through funds provided by drug dealers for protection of their trade. Political and practical constraints often limit the ability of Third World governments to institute drug control programs and vigorously prosecute them. Poor economic performance, challenges from insurgents, and the problem of staying in power in a volatile political environment compete for the attention of national leaders in the major narcotics growing and trafficking countries. Consequently, leaders of these countries may place a low priority on suppression of drug trafficking. In some cases, they may hesitate to introduce eradication programs that will eliminate a lucrative, if illegal, cash crop. They fear this action may bring appeals for aid from already tight governmental budgets, and possibly create a disaffected rural population susceptible to insurgent propaganda. At the same time, drug traffickers use their profits to undermine government actions against them by corrupting or intimidating civilian and military officials. They also protect their interests by acts of terrorism and subversion. Thus, these criminals or groups of criminals obtain and hold political power far beyond the strength of their numbers.

US and Soviet interests also impact on what would otherwise be local conflicts or power shifts. The Soviets are not responsible for all conflicts in the world, but they can and do exploit otherwise internal conflicts to implement their global strategy. Soviet surrogates and client states play an important role in this effort. They have followed a basically opportunistic and pragmatic strategy, but are displaying an increasingly sophisticated approach. This approach now includes techniques for creating instability where none existed previously. The Soviets tailor military assistance not only to appeal to their client but also to create a dependency that is costly to break. The government receiving Soviet assistance comes to rely on the USSR for training, technical advice, logistics support, spare parts, and repairs. It then finds itself in a double bind: on the one hand, it depends on the Soviets for its existence; but, on the other hand, the dependence on the Soviets (or any other nation) undermines that government's legitimacy.

Soviet advisors can influence the military and foreign policies of their client states by providing personal and interservice links that complement and shape overt ties. They recruit talented individuals for special instruction in the USSR. Soviet training of Third World nationals includes indoctrination in Marxist-Leninist ideology. The umbrella of Soviet military aid can also include the use of third country surrogates for security functions, training, overseeing of combat operations, and employment of combat forces.

LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT IMPERATIVES

Success in LIC requires planning and conducting operations based on the following imperatives:

- Political dominance.
- Unity of effort.
- Adaptability.
- Legitimacy.
- Perseverance.

These imperatives apply in all four LIC operational categories.

Political Dominance

In LIC operations, political objectives drive military decisions at every level from the strategic to the tactical. All commanders and staff officers must understand these political objectives and the impact of military operations on them. They must adopt courses of action which legally support those objectives even if the courses of action appear to be unorthodox or outside what traditional doctrine had contemplated.

Unity of Effort

Military leaders must integrate their efforts with other governmental agencies to gain a mutual advantage in LIC. Military planners must consider how their actions contribute to initiatives which are also political, economic, and psychological in nature. Unity of effort calls for interagency integration and coordination to permit effective action within the framework of our governmental system. Commanders may answer to civilian chiefs or may themselves employ the resources of civilian agencies.

Adaptability

Adaptability is the skill and willingness to change or modify structures or methods to accommodate different situations. It requires careful mission analysis, comprehensive intelligence, and regional expertise. Adaptability is more than just tailoring or flexibility both of which imply the use of the same techniques or structures in many different

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situations. Successful military operations in LIC will require the armed forces to use adaptability not only to modify existing methods and structures, but to develop new ones appropriate to each situation.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is the willing acceptance of the right of a government to govern or of a group or agency to make and enforce decisions. Legitimacy is not tangible, nor easily quantifiable. Popular votes do not always confer or reflect legitimacy. Legitimacy derives from the perception that authority is genuine and effective and uses proper agencies for reasonable purposes. No group or force can create legitimacy for itself, but it can encourage and sustain legitimacy by its actions. Legitimacy is the central concern of all parties directly involved in a conflict. It is also important to other parties who may be involved even indirectly.

Perseverance

Low intensity conflicts rarely have a clear beginning or end marked by decisive actions culminating in victory. They are, by nature, protracted struggles. Even those short, sharp contingency encounters which do occur are better assessed in the context of their contribution to long-term objectives. Perseverance is the patient, resolute, persistent pursuit of national goals and objectives for as long as necessary to achieve them. Perseverance does not preclude taking decisive action. However, it does require careful, informed analysis to select the right time and place for that action. While it is important to succeed, it is equally important to recognize that in the LIC environment success will generally not come easily or quickly. Developing an attitude of disciplined, focused perseverance will help commanders reject short-term successes in favor of actions which are designed to accomplish long-term goals.

OPERATIONAL CATEGORIES

US military operations in LIC fall into four broad categories. The categories are—

- Support for insurgency and counterinsurgency.
- Combatting terrorism.
- Peacekeeping operations.
- Peacetime contingency operations.

LIC operations may involve two or more of these categories. Understanding the similarities and differences between the operational categories helps the military planner establish priorities in actual situations.

Support for Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

US security interests may lie with an incumbent government or with an insurgency. Both insurgencies and counterinsurgencies are concerned with mobilizing the support of the people. How they distribute their efforts between building support for themselves and undermining the support and legitimacy of their opponents is perhaps the central dilemma for both the insurgent and counterinsurgent.

Combatting Terrorism

The aim of combatting terrorism is to protect installations, units, and individuals from the threat of terrorism. Combatting terrorism includes both antiterrorism (AT) and counterterrorism (CT) actions, throughout the entire spectrum of conflict. The combatting

terrorism program is designed to provide coordinated action before, during, and after terrorist incidents.

Peacekeeping Operations

Peacekeeping operations are military operations which maintain peace already obtained through diplomatic efforts. A peacekeeping force supervises and implements a negotiated truce to which belligerent parties have agreed. The force operates strictly within the parameters of its terms of reference (TOR), doing neither more nor less than its mandate prescribes. A distinguishing feature of these operations is that the peacekeeping force is normally forbidden to use violence to accomplish its mission. In most cases, it can use force only for self-defense.

Peacetime Contingency Operations

Peacetime contingency operations include such diverse actions as disaster relief, certain types of counter-drug operations, and land, sea and air strikes. The unifying feature of these actions is the rapid mobilization of effort to focus on a specific problem, usually in a crisis and guided, at the national level, by the crisis action system (see JCS Pub 5-02.4). Frequently, these operations take place away from customary facilities, requiring deep penetration and temporary establishment of long lines of communication (LOC) in a hostile environment. Peacetime contingency operations may require the exercise of restraint and the selective use of force or concentrated violent actions.

OPERATIONAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Long-range planning for LIC uses the same logic process commanders use in campaign planning during conventional war. The military leader must address these central questions:

- What conditions must be produced to achieve the strategic goal?
- What sequence of events will most likely result in the desired conditions?
- How should resources be applied to produce that sequence of events?

In LIC, the military leader cannot define the conditions he seeks to achieve in military terms alone; in many cases, they also are political, economic, or social. The sequence of events in an operation, the resources, and the control of resources may not translate easily into military terms. Thus, the Department of State, the Department of Treasury, or even the international banking industry may participate in actions associated with an operation in LIC.

The Conditions

Campaign planning for LIC will reflect the highly political environment in which the military conducts its operations. The military planner's first step is to determine the desired end state, or goal. What does he want to do? What conditions constitute success? What is the enemy's center of gravity? What is the enemy's objective and how can it be countered? The situation in LIC is often ambiguous. Mission analysis may be difficult; the analyst must understand the mission and the commander's intent in detail. Goals may change with changes in US national objectives, local conditions, or conditions elsewhere in the world. The analyst must consider the political, economic, informational, and military components of the end state. He must analyze each component to determine how to apply military resources to achieve the goal.

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A deep understanding of host nation culture is indispensable to making effective decisions and avoiding costly mistakes in LIC situations. National and subnational cultures have specific expectations of the government, priorities of concerns, and effective symbols that may prove crucial to progress. Without a thorough understanding of their culture, a commander could expect people and societies to hold the same values and expectations that he considers normal solely from his perspective, and this could prove counterproductive.

Sequencing Events

The military planner must identify all steps necessary to achieve his goal. He must anticipate contingencies. He must synchronize use of the military instrument with agencies employing the other instruments of national power in order to design programs which promote unity of effort. Planning must provide methods to resolve disagreements among the cooperating agencies. Domestic and international law, internal US politics, or US public opinion may impose constraints and restrictions. Without this coordination, military efforts may prove useless or even counterproductive.

The planner should evaluate the completed military plan in the context of the national or international campaign plan which directs the total effort. He should also assess the effects of the military and other plans on related situations in the region or in the world at large.

Applying Resources

The operational-level planner spends much of his time marshalling and synchronizing available resources and setting priorities for their use. He may have to act through an agency other than his own. To achieve unity of effort, he may have to depend more on persuasion and cooperation than on the direct exercise of authority. He must adapt military resources to fit the circumstances. Success in low intensity conflict requires the synchronized use of all elements of national power, and detailed interagency and allied cooperation.

ESSENTIAL PERSPECTIVES

When engaging in LIC operations, Army and Air Force officers may face challenges to their ethics, morality, and leadership. They will confront complex roles and missions. Some perspectives on these issues follow.

The Ethical and Moral Dilemma

Low intensity conflict, more than war, will often present the United States and its armed forces with difficult ethical and moral challenges. The type of aggression encountered in LIC is not as blatant as that in war. Subversion, sabotage, assassination, and guerrilla operations encountered in another country may pose a threat to US interests, but the threat to national survival may be neither imminent nor obvious. The US response to this threat must be consistent with US and international law and US national values. The response of the United States to these threats may be controversial because there may be legitimate grievances that provoke them. Nonetheless, the decision to stand aside is as profound in its effect as the decision to become involved.

The decision to act in any of the four LIC operational categories is essentially a political one. International law and custom presume that an incumbent government is legitimate and legally constituted. A policy of involvement by an outside power must