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WASHINGTON POST

26 May 1985

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U.S. Seems More Willing To Support Insurgencies

Funding for Anticommunists Gains on Hill

First of two articles

By Joanne Omang
and David Ottaway
Washington Post Staff Writers

The Reagan administration, supported and sometimes prodded by a broad range of congressmen and senators, appears increasingly willing to give direct aid to anticommunist and antileftist insurgencies in many parts of the Third World.

So far the support for these insurgencies is largely rhetorical, and the record of U.S. aid delivery is confused and contradictory—and probably incomplete, because the public record does not include all covert operations. But a chorus of administration speeches has begun to generate a flurry of independent papers, hearings, arguments and legislative efforts that could presage a wider shift in public attitude.

"We must not break faith with those who are risking their lives—on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth," President Reagan said in his last State of the Union address. Similar messages have been repeated by numerous senior officials in Reagan's administration.

Congress, departing from its recent history of opposing U.S. involvement in messy Third World conflicts, appears surprisingly eager to help. Democrats in Congress have actively pushed for overt aid to rebels in communist-ruled Cambodia and Afghanistan.

Two Republican senators have proposed setting up a special office in the White House to coordinate U.S. aid to insurgent groups rising against Soviet-backed governments in the Third World, from Indochina to southern Africa to Central America.

Other suggestions would make aid an overt program by switching control over it from the Central Intelligence Agency to the Defense Department.

But some officials worry that too formal a doctrine might cramp their flexibility, which now permits contradictory behavior in different cases. Nevertheless, there is general agreement that real content is slowly being given to a policy that is still more sentiment than substance.

The idea of "revolutionary democracy" seems to be catching on, in spite of—or perhaps because of—the fact that it has not yet been precisely defined.

The "Reagan doctrine," former United Nations ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick said at a May 10 luncheon, "states the case for the moral superiority of democratic institutions," a superiority that is "nothing short of revolutionary" for "freedom fighters . . . defending themselves against incorporation into a great warrior empire."

"The American people have a long and noble tradition of supporting the struggle of other peoples for freedom, democracy and independence," Secretary of State George P. Shultz said in a recent article in Foreign Affairs magazine. "If we turned our backs on this tradition, we would be conceding the Soviet notion that communist revolutions are irreversible while everything else is up for grabs."

Shultz's statement reflected one of the roots of this development: conservatives' longstanding irritation at what they call U.S. passivity in the face of an active Soviet drive to foment revolution and win allies worldwide. In the 1970s, several have said, frustration soared over Soviet gains in the Third World and over the apparent reliance on covert action alone as a response.

"The '70s seem to have given the United States a reputation for unreliability," Donald L. Fortier, a National Security Council staff member responsible for political-military affairs, said in a February speech. He called the U.S. role then "reactive, just responding" to events. Conservatives and liberals both condemned covert action as an excuse to cover a void in policy.

"There was a time when armed insurgencies were almost by definition leftist and pro-Soviet. That's no longer true," Fortier said. "The trend of the '80s [is] liberation movements against pro-Soviet regimes."

William J. Casey, the director of central intelligence, noted the "good news" of widespread anticommunist insurgencies in a January speech. Moscow is "spending close to \$8 billion a year to snuff out freedom" in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Ethiopia and Nicaragua, Casey said.

The West, he added, need not match this Soviet effort: "Oppressed people want freedom and are fighting for it. They need only modest support . . . from nations which want to see freedom prevail

There are insurgencies fighting leftist governments in all the countries Casey mentioned, plus Laos, Mozambique and Vietnam. Overtly, at least, the Reagan administration has moved as cautiously as any of its predecessors in providing aid, but it is starting its praise for the new insurgencies at the enthusiastic level that it took years to attain for antigovernment rebels in Nicaragua.

When U.S. officials first sought to justify helping the Nicaraguan contra (counterrevolutionary) forces in 1981, they did not say much to Congress about the goals of the insurgents or the need to remove Marxist-Leninists from the Nicaraguan government. Instead, they cited only a tactical need: to stop Nicaragua from aiding leftist guerrillas in El Salvador, where the Reagan administration had inherited a substantial American commitment to a government threatened by left-wing rebellion.

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Gradually the terms changed. The goals became loftier. The contras are now "freedom fighters" who need U.S. backing to achieve a democratic and communist-free government in Managua. Similar descriptions are being applied to other countries' anticommunist insurgents from the start.

A senior State Department official traced the administration's new approach to President Carter's controversial advocacy of human rights. "We debated whether we had the right to dictate the form of another country's government. The bottom line was yes, that some rights are more fundamental than the right of nations to nonintervention, like the rights of individual people," the official said.

The current in-house debate, he said, has taken this a step further. "There's a growing sense that people's rights include the right to determine their own form of government; that is, we don't have the right to subvert a democratic government, but we do have the right against an undemocratic one."

In pursuit of that controversial proposition, the administration is already stepping gingerly into the twilight zone where it is not so easy to decide which rebel groups are genuinely democratic, and which leftist governments are beyond some nonviolent form of redemption.

"What we're trying to understand is what are the essential traits distinguishing one group of freedom fighters from another," said Sen. Robert W. Kasten Jr. (R-Wis.), opening a May 8 hearing on the subject before his Senate Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations.

Rep. Stephen J. Solarz, a liberal New York Democrat, offered six possible criteria, arguing that aid should be considered for groups fighting noncommunist repressive governments as well as communist or Soviet-backed regimes.

The rebel group should be indigent to the country, he said, and resisting a foreign occupier rather than an established, recognized government. It should have broad regional and international support that its government lacks, as well as backing in the United States.

And U.S. military support should advance a significant American objective as well as enhance the prospects for a negotiated settlement.

Under these guidelines, Solarz said, aid to the contras is not justified, because the Sandinista government of Nicaragua is not a foreign occupation force. Aid to the African National Congress against South Africa and to the UNITA rebels in Angola is ruled out for the same reason, he said.

But Solarz sponsored the proposal for \$5 million in overt military aid to noncommunist Cambodian insurgents that has been zooming through Congress, because that group meets his standards, he said.

In what several officials called the clearest statement yet of the administration's position, Richard L. Armitage, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, told Kasten's hearing, "the enemy of our enemy will be assured of our friendship if he shares our values in his opposition to our enemy Not every group that professes anticommunism deserves our support."

But he avoided listing criteria, saying the decisions must be made on a case-by-case basis. "The only real issue here is the type of support which should be offered—overt or covert, guns or medicine, money or food. It should come in conjunction with social reform efforts and after consultation with U.S. allies, and should include consideration of the effect on U.S.-Soviet relations, he said.

"Once we have extended aid, the recipients should have a reasonable expectation that the aid will continue," Armitage said. "The struggle of anticommunist groups takes place within and affects an international context in which the stakes are very high."

Noel C. Koch, Armitage's principal deputy, said in an interview that Kasten's hearing was "a watershed in the policy process" and that Armitage's statement is about as far as one can go in spelling out criteria for groups worthy of U.S. aid. "When you come up with a doctrine and announce it to the world and it's definitive, it's also vulnerable" to damage from cases that don't quite fit, he said.

"Basically we're supporting people trying to live in freedom and according to democratic norms," he said. "That's about as inclusive as you can get . . . without creating rigidities that are exclusionary."

Kasten is considering writing legislation to set up a "freedom fighters' fund" that would be readily available to help resistance groups worldwide, once criteria are set, according to aides.

Sens. Gordon J. Humphrey (R-N.H.) and Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) have proposed that the White House set up a presidential coordinating office "to look for and catalogue opportunities to advance the cause of freedom fighters around the world, to make policy proposals and . . . make sure the bureaucracy carries them out," as Humphrey put it.

An aide to Wallop said presidential aide Patrick J. Buchanan apparently liked the idea, but that there was resistance from the National Security Council and the CIA.

There is also resistance from the State Department, all the branches of the armed forces and the Agency for International Development to the idea of an "insurgency czar," according to Richard Shultz, a professor of international politics at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, who has written extensively on the idea for the conservative Heritage Foundation think tank.

Koch said it is still too early in the policy process to establish any central control. "You can't create a structure and set it on top of an embryonic consciousness," he said.

NEXT: U.S. aids two insurgencies



WILLIAM P. CASEY

ARTICLE APPEARED
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27 May 1985

U.S. Course Uncharted On Aid to Insurgencies

Rhetoric Bumps Into Inconsistent Decisions

Last of two articles

By David B. Ottaway
and Joanne Omang
Washington Post Staff Writers

In October 1982, rebels fighting the Soviet-backed Marxist regime in Ethiopia asked the Central Intelligence Agency to support their up-hill struggle. The answer was no.

That reply was most unexpected. Maj. Yosef Yazew, one of the dissident leaders, said in an interview that he had been encouraged by the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum, Sudan, to go to Washington to ask for the help in the first place.

But the CIA, he said, "told us the U.S. government has no policy and doesn't want to be involved in a program assisting military operations inside Ethiopia They just

wanted information collection and propaganda activities."

Rhetorically, the Reagan administration's support for "freedom fighters" battling communist and communist-backed regimes around the world has been steadfast.

"Our party has been unstinting in its support of democratic development in the struggle against totalitarianism," Reagan said in a May 17 speech to the National Republican Heritage Groups Council. This period is "a critical turning point in the struggle between totalitarianism and freedom," he said.

But administration behavior toward anticommunist insurgencies has generally been a mishmash of ad hoc decisions, or nondecisions, as to who gets aid, with no apparent

consistency or strategy. Of course, some aspects of the administration's covert assistance to various insurgencies probably aren't publicly known.

Of eight anticommunist insurgencies active in the Third World, the United States is providing military aid to two, in Nicaragua and Afghanistan. In Mozambique, the Reagan administration has decided to support the Marxist government, amazing Congress by proposing "nonlethal" military aid to help defeat a non-Marxist armed insurrection.

Other anticommunist resistance groups in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Angola and Ethiopia get no overt military aid, although food aid is going, directly or indirectly, to those in Cambodia and Ethiopia.

Now, however, there is a drive within the administration and Congress to establish a policy and a strategy for helping armed anticommunist insurgencies, to show, as one top official put it, that "socialism is not irreversible" and "the Brezhnev doctrine is dead."

That doctrine, never labeled as such by Moscow, was named by U.S. officials for the late Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, who declared in 1968 after his troops invaded Czechoslovakia that the Soviet Union and other members of the "socialist commonwealth" could send "military aid to a fraternal country to thwart the threat to the socialist order."

Many in the West interpreted this as meaning that once a country joined that "socialist commonwealth," the Soviets would take any action, including military invasion, to keep it there.

Until now, the United States has followed a patchwork policy comprised of a contradictory combination of old Carter administration decisions (Afghanistan), congressional restraints (Angola) and independent bureaucratic initiative (Mozambique) or confusion (Ethiopia).

In Ethiopia, half a dozen Marxist and non-Marxist opposition groups have been fighting for 10 years either to topple the Marxist

government or to set up independent mini-states. Despite innumerable opportunities to aid these rebels and revenge the loss to Moscow of an old U.S. ally in Africa, the Reagan administration is not known to have provided arms to any of the factions.

A 28-page memorandum submitted to the CIA by the Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Alliance (EPDA) in October 1982 spelled out—down to the cost of stationery—a plan for training a first batch of 350 Ethiopian guerrilla leaders who would go into western Ethiopia to organize and spread the resistance under way there. The group requested \$547,000 for the first six months.

When the CIA said no, the EPDA, a coalition of non-Marxist factions that split off from Marxist groups, shortly afterward ceased to function—a victim of a harsh military repression, lack of outside support and internal squabbling.

But less than a year later, the U.S. government, alarmed by reports of pending widespread famine in northern Ethiopia, launched a secret cross-border feeding operation that bypassed non-Marxist factions and sent food to the victims through the civilian arms of two Marxist-oriented guerrilla groups.

At the same time, the United States sent more than 325,000 tons of food, worth \$178 million, to the Marxist government in Addis Abbaba and U.S. private voluntary relief organizations working with it to stem the worsening famine.

These inconsistencies illustrate the swings of a policy caught between conservative hard-liners in the administration and Congress who are implacably hostile to the central government there, and pragmatists still hoping to win Ethiopia back from the Soviets with inducements.

In Mozambique, the same U.S. factions are clashing over administration proposals for \$15 million in economic support and \$3 million in military assistance to the Marxist regime for fiscal 1986.

Last year, conservatives in Congress killed the administration's \$1 million military aid request for that southern African nation. This year, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) has attached an amendment to the 1986 foreign aid bill that conditions military aid on free elections, an improved human-rights record and a cut in the estimated 1,500 to 2,000 Cuban and east-bloc military advisers to 55—the same conditions and same limit on U.S. advisers attached by liberals to aid to El Salvador.

Since none of these demands are likely to be met, the amendment probably kills the military-aid request.

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For years the administration has turned its back on the Mozambican anti-Marxist opposition movement, Renamo, and sought instead to woo the government under Samora Machel away from its Marxist domestic and pro-communist foreign policies.

The rationale has been first to promote detente between white-ruled South Africa and its black-ruled neighbors, and then to

take advantage of Mozambique's show of interest in greater ties to the West in hopes of changing its Marxist orientation.

In Angola, the administration is barred by a 1975 law from giving assistance to Jonas Savimbi's anticommunist National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The administration has made no push to reverse this legislation.

During the 1975-76 civil war in Angola, the CIA channeled about \$32 million to UNITA and another group, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) in a bid to prevent the Cuban-backed Marxists now in power from winning. The FNLA subsequently collapsed, but UNITA is stronger than ever.

Again, the administration's rhetorical backing for anticommunist insurgencies has been overshadowed by the dictates of its policy of detente in southern Africa. This seeks to gain the Angolan government's cooperation for a regional settlement that would send 25,000 Cuban troops home and gain independence for neighboring Namibia.

In Asia, Congress has taken the lead away from the administration in proposing overt humanitarian aid to rebels in Cambodia and Afghanistan. The Senate has approved \$15 million for the Afghans, and the House Foreign Affairs Committee has voted \$5 million for two noncommunist rebel groups in Cambodia.

Rep. Stephen J. Solarz (D-N.Y.), sponsor of the Cambodia-aid provision, argues that the United States must help build an effective noncommunist resistance movement as an alternative to the brutal Khmer Rouge, the main rebel force fighting the Vietnam-backed Communist regime in Cambodia.

Earlier, the United States was reported

to have funneled some food aid to the Khmer Rouge through the Thai army as part of its overall humanitarian-assistance program to Cambodian refugees camped just inside Thailand. Congress cut off that aid in 1980.

Regarding Afghanistan, Congress is concerned that covert aid may not be reaching its intended recipients and is considering \$15 million in overt nonlethal aid. Congress has appropriated \$380 million to \$400 million for covert aid through the CIA to the Afghan rebels since the Soviet invasion in 1979, according to the Federation for American Afghan Action, a support group.

At least another \$250 million is expected this year, the federation says.

The Reagan administration took over and vastly expanded a Democratic policy of aiding the Afghan rebels. But limits apparently have been placed on the sophistication of arms that may be provided, with anti-aircraft missiles capable of dealing with Soviet gunships and aircraft in short supply.

The State Department is against changing the U.S. military aid program to the Afghan rebels into an overt operation, a stand that Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-N.Y.) has attacked as "incredibly convoluted."

"The Soviets know what we're doing" covertly, and it's "ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous" to pretend they don't, D'Amato said at a May 8 hearing of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations.

D'Amato summed up the status of U.S. efforts to aid insurgent groups worldwide: "We have such a piecemeal theory. We hop from crisis to crisis . . . like little kids." D'Amato's frustration is widely shared on Capitol Hill and in many parts of the Reagan administration as well.

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WASHINGTON POST
27 May 1985

History of Aid To Rebels Is Checkered

By David B. Ottaway
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The United States has a long and checkered record of attempts to aid anticommunist movements, dating from the onset of the Cold War. Most of the efforts have failed.

The largest efforts of this kind mounted by the Central Intelligence Agency were aimed at Soviet-backed governments or movements in Cuba, Iraq and Angola. None was successful.

The CIA did succeed in engineering coups that installed friendly governments in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954), and its aid helped to pave the way for the present government of Chile (1973). It also backed the winning side in the Chadian civil war of 1981-82. Other interventions have been alleged but not documented.

It was characteristic of past efforts to begin supporting an insurgency group only to drop it later as a result of shifting politics at home or changing circumstances abroad.

Washington helped organize Cuban exiles after Fidel Castro came to power in 1959 and launched them on the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. Cuban exiles still blame that fiasco on inadequate CIA support.

In the first Nixon administration, the United States gave extensive covert aid to Mustafa Barzani, leader of rebel Kurds fighting for autonomy against the Soviet-backed Iraqi government in Baghdad. With the help of tens of millions of dollars in U.S. assistance channeled through Iran, Barzani marshaled an army he claimed included 100,000 troops.

But when the shah of Iran negotiated a settlement to an old border dispute with Iraq in March 1975, Iran and the United States abruptly cut off their support for Barzani. The decision sent 200,000 to 300,000 Kurds fleeing into Iran,

and Barzani accused Washington and Tehran of betrayal. He went into exile and died here in 1978, a bitter and broken man.

In Angola, the United States became deeply involved in the three-way struggle for power among nationalist factions at the time of the former Portuguese colony's independence in 1975. The United States gave principal backing to Holden Roberto, leader of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), and some aid to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), hoping to block a third faction, backed by Cuba, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

But the MPLA took the capital. When the extent of U.S. secret involvement in the war became known, Congress voted overwhelmingly in late 1975 to ban military aid to the two pro-western Angolan factions. The FNLA quickly collapsed, but UNITA has survived and grown much stronger, thanks partly to aid from South Africa.

Today, a move is afoot in both houses of Congress to repeal the aid ban in order to help UNITA again.

In Chad, the CIA scored its only recent public success. The agency worked with the intelligence services of Sudan and Egypt to back Hissene Habre in his 1981-1982 struggle against a Libyan-backed government headed by President Goukouni Oueddei. With French help, Habre has remained in power.