

Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism, 1940-1990

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Edward Geary Lansdale and the New Counterinsurgency

Lansdale in the White House

Even before his inauguration, Kennedy had access to extensive policy planning studies on Vietnam through unofficial channels; according to one former Harvard classmate (then the State Department desk officer on Vietnam), the president-elect had even reviewed and approved a Saigon embassy "shopping list" for Vietnamese counterinsurgency.¹ Kennedy also received one or more of Edward Lansdale's "think" papers on Vietnam and was roundly impressed by his advocacy of a "nonbureaucratic" approach to counterinsurgency.² Kennedy's prompt approval just ten days after taking office of a new "Counterinsurgency Plan" for Vietnam—a shift away from a prior emphasis on a Korea-style threat to South Vietnam—suggests a more than casual acquaintance with the issues involved. The Vietnam reappraisal had been developed after the 1 September 1960 appointment of a new American commander there, Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr, who determined to "redirect . . . training and operations emphasis towards a greatly improved counterguerrilla posture."³

Although the means proposed in the Vietnam plan to readjust to insurgency were not particularly innovative, the plan represented a departure from the previous emphasis on assistance in developing a strictly conventional military establishment in Vietnam. Although the Special Forces were assigned for the first time a counterinsurgent role in Vietnam in 1960, their purpose there was only to provide Ranger training. The doctrine with which General McGarr proposed to develop the "counter-guerrilla posture" was essentially traditional, based on the U. S. military's long experience as an occupation or peacekeeping force. Only in 1961, when a presidential demand was made for a purpose-built counterinsurgency establishment, was the Special Forces/Special Warfare Center development of unconventional warfare adopted across the board as the foundation of a military doctrine of counterinsurgency. The military core of unconventional warfare, the organization, tactics and techniques of America's covert CIA and Special Forces "guerrillas," provided a nucleus for the new doctrine of counterinsurgency. The trimmings of economic development, social and political reform, and sophisticated formulations of Ed Lansdale's "decency and brotherhood" approach merely embellished that nucleus of unconventional tactics and techniques.

To the incoming Kennedy administration, there were few Americans more eminently qualified to advise on unconventional warfare and the American role in Indochina than Edward Geary Lansdale. Although Lansdale's reputation as a practical, sensitive counterinsurgent would be tarnished in the 1960s, his public legend would endure. General Lansdale was, in any case, one of the most influential of American counterinsurgents, and important if only because his role as a principal spanned the formative years of the doctrine, from the Philippines of the 1940s to Vietnam in the 1960s.

Lansdale was pulled out of Saigon in 1956, after two years as President Diem's house guest and confidant, and kicked upstairs back in Washington to

the Office of the Secretary of Defense in 1957, to serve as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Operations. Over the next four years Lansdale would quietly participate in both covert operations and military diplomacy. Although he generally operated under an appropriate cover, his reception by cronies and counterparts overseas occasionally made the nature of his activities quite transparent. Through his own flair for publicity, by 1960 he had become a celebrity-particularly in the Pacific. In January-February 1959, for example, Lansdale traveled to Saigon and Manila with the President's Committee on Military Assistance (the Draper Committee). His reception in Manila-where he was universally considered a top CIA officer-was of considerable embarrassment to the committee: A memorandum between his colleagues said he was going "officially" under Draper aegis to his "old-stomping grounds.... Covering points of tourist interests such as Manila, Saigon, etc. of South-East Asia."4

As the end of the Eisenhower administration approached, General Lansdale continued to play a part in U.S. policy on Indochina with a series of influential memoranda. Although Lansdale was almost unique in pressing for the development of unconventional warfare capabilities there, his analysis of the nature of the insurgency in Vietnam was not particularly unique. The official army history of the period observes that the military's major 1960 Indochina policy report portrayed the people of Vietnam as "apathetic, pliable, and willing to obey any authority which held superior power"; in the degree to which it ignored political change and the insurgency's revolutionary nature, the report could have been written "by an American consular officer in Indochina during the 1920s and 1930s or by a French colonial administrator."5 An 11 August 1960 report by General Lansdale expressed a similar view: "Most farmers, he believed, helped the Viet Cong either because of anger at the government-mostly attributable to the misbehavior of troops on counterinsurgency operations-or because of fear of Viet Cong terrorism."6

He still saw a Philippine-style solution for Vietnam-that is, winning over the people merely by ensuring troops behaved decently (although twenty years later he would acknowledge this was easier said than done).

The assessment put forward in Lansdale's memorandum to the Secretary of Defense in January 1961, a few days before the inauguration of John F. Kennedy, reiterated his earlier views: The Vietcong had been imposed on the South Vietnamese; the insurgency depended on sustained support from outside South Vietnam; and President Diem was indispensable to counter the communist threat.7 He differed from the military establishment primarily in recognizing that there was indeed a problem of insurgency in Vietnam, and not only the threat of a conventional invasion from the North. Lansdale's memorandum was considered deeply profound by the incoming administration, and it cemented the general's position as an in-house Indochina counterinsurgency expert.

Upon taking office, Kennedy brought Lansdale to the White House for a meeting of top Pentagon, State Department, and National Security Officers, and-apparently to their horror-intimated there that Lansdale could be the next U. S. ambassador in Saigon.8 The new administration's Undersecretary of Defense, Roswell Gilpatric, reminiscing on his dealings with Lansdale years later for an archive oral history project, explained that although Lansdale was an outcast with his military peers, and perhaps even less esteemed by the State Department, the White House was impressed with him:

Lansdale was not in favor . . . during my period, with either the military or with

the State Department. He was in the doghouse with both of them. And I was convinced

they were wrong. I was convinced he was not a wheeler dealer; he was not an irresponsible swashbuckler, and I finally succeeded in getting him his star as a general-very

difficult . . . he was the object of some distrust. I thought and still think he was a very able person.... Anyway, he remained active, both in connection with Southeast Asia and Cuba, up until the time I left in January of '64.⁹

A key to Lansdale's influence, as noted by Gilpatric, was a peculiar ability to relate to policymakers, if not to his own military colleagues:

[H]e was an unusual military type in that he was completely uninhibited in dealing with politicians and civilians. And he apparently set out on his own to educate the

new team. But since he was in my office, the office of deputy secretary, I had the most contact with him. And within a matter of weeks I'd been asked by the president to

head up a task force, the first task force on Vietnam, and I made Lansdale my project officer. So he was the one on the military side, other than the uniform people on the

Joint Staff and the Joint Chiefs themselves, that we were exposed to.¹⁰

Lansdale's personal experience clearly carried a great deal of weight with both Gilpatric and Kennedy himself: "He'd been out there a great deal. He'd been personal advisor to [Ngo Dinh] Diem. Previous to that, he'd been advisor to the Philippine government in its guerrilla problems.... I may have gotten a somewhat biased view, but I at least got a very concrete, specific one...."¹¹

Lansdale did not get the ambassadorship, but in April 1961, his reputation was such that the Kennedy administration's program to "turn around" the

Cuban Revolution in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs was put under his direction. Operation MONGOOSE, which was to become the largest clandestine operation since the Bay of Pigs, was intended to replace the Castro government and included elaborate plans to expedite the operation through Castro's murder. Lansdale later mused to a Harvard researcher about how Kennedy's more ambitious plans for him had been scotched by the bureaucrats of State and Defense: "This 'crazy'

Air Force general with a CIA taint had been for two years safely institutionalized as a special assistant. . . and was about to be retired."¹² Lansdale's

eccentricities apparently failed to detract from the appeal his imagination exerted on influential members of the Kennedy circle, even though his views on "practical counterinsurgency," while simple, were rarely practical. Lansdale remained a principal adviser on counterinsurgency during Kennedy's administration and upon his own return to Vietnam in 1965.

General Lansdale's position in the Defense Department made him a natural pole of attraction for the counterinsurgency dignitaries of allied nations and

an intermediary through which counterinsurgency innovations were considered and disseminated through the American establishment. Congressmen, journalists, and publishers concerned with the United States' posture in the Cold War naturally gravitated to Lansdale, and their interest occasionally gave resonance to the new concepts of counterinsurgency and special warfare. Publisher Frederick Praeger, already the publisher of military texts used in the

military schools, visited General Lansdale in May 1961 to talk counterinsurgency, and expressed his interest in publishing "texts on guerrilla warfare."

Over the next years, Lansdale corresponded with Praeger and advised him on "retired U.S. [officers] and officers in foreign armed forces" as likely authors. Praeger, in turn, churned out a virtual counterinsurgency library within a few years.

A proposal to use Israeli trainers to establish strategic "military-economic self-defense" communities in Laos crossed General Lansdale's desk in June 1961; it prompted both an exchange of memoranda on the theme with Walt Rostow and Lansdale's OWTI close examination of Israel's methods. The initial response to the scheme suggested his already considerable familiarity with Israeli counterinsurgency:

I do want to comment on Sander's premise that Israeli trainers should play a major role in engineering such defense groupings. We must always recognize that the skill of the Israelis in their own program was really secondary to the terrific motivation which drove them onward to success. Lack of this motivation prejudiced the programs in Burma and Algeria.¹³

General Lansdale subsequently met the new Israeli military attache to Washington, Colonel Yehuda Prihar. In a 30 August memo to Defense Secretary McNamara and Deputy Secretary Gilpatric, Lansdale reported on an initial meeting with Colonel Prihar, and stated his intention to take up an invitation from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to visit Israel to study "antiguerrilla concepts." General Lansdale (and Major J. K. Patchoell) arrived on 15 October 1961: His hand-annotated itinerary records meeting with the IDF intelligence and operations chiefs, the commander of the NAHAL organization and visits to NAHAL outposts, and "a settlement organized for self-defense" under the Territorial Defense system. Training establishments visited included the Gadna (Youth Battalions) Center near Tel Aviv, and the Airborne Center ("the Special Warfare Organ here").

General Lansdale had previously arranged a briefing by Colonel Prihar for top American defense officials in September 1961 in the Defense Secretary's office (to which he invited General Maxwell Taylor and CIA chief Allen Dulles). Memoranda concerning the briefing suggest the respect Israel's counterinsurgency skills were accorded and an awareness of Israel's earlier overseas advisory missions:

The Israeli [sic] are real experts at unconventional warfare. Colonel Prihar himself is one of the best, and was an advisor to the Burmese army in its counter-insurgency campaign. I had hoped to arrange a seminar session for him at the Counter-guerrilla School at Fort Bragg, but Lebanese officers in the class might have proved embarrassing and there was no diplomatic way of eliminating them. I am now arranging a seminar for Colonel Prihar in the Pentagon. We will tape this, so that we can produce a case study similar to the "Anti-Huk[balahap] Campaign in the Philippines ... and then disseminate a written version.... [T]his should prove of value to the U.S. military.¹⁴

Colonel Prihar was himself a classic transnational counterinsurgent, having served in the British army in World War II, joined the Israel Defense Force

in 1948, and subsequently heading the IDF Infantry School and Joint Command and Staff Schools. He had also participated in what may have been one of the first of Israel's overseas advisory missions, the "Israeli Survey Team" to advise "on ways and means to cope" with Burmese insurgency. In his Pentagon lecture, Colonel Prihar discussed

Israeli concepts of the military's role in nation building, with emphasis on the methods the Israeli Government has developed to protect national borders from infiltration (the so-called "strong village" concept) and other measures of strengthening rural areas from inroads by hostile guerrilla and other paramilitary forces.¹⁵

General Lansdale's scope also extended to the Americas, with visits to both the U. S. Caribbean Command and Venezuela in March 1963.¹⁶ The Bolivian Special Forces were the next to host General Lansdale in May 1963 (four years before their duel with Che Guevara). On 28 May, General Lansdale accompanied Caribbean Command chief General Andrew O'Meara to the inauguration of the Bolivian's new Counterinsurgency Center-Centro de Instrucción de Tropas Especiales (CITE) at La Chimba.¹⁷ Lansdale's first assignment in the Americas, however, was to complete the task that the Bay of Pigs invasion had begun-Operation MONGOOSE.

Operation MONGOOSE

Both the president and his brother Robert made it clear to the CIA and the military that "they wanted Castro out of there,"¹⁸ and that "no time, effort or manpower" was to be spared in removing Cuba's revolutionary government. The CIA's response was the largest of its clandestine operations of the time.

From 1961 to 1964, MONGOOSE pitted the covert forces of the United States against Cuba, until President Lyndon Johnson reportedly called it quits.

The Special Group Augmented (SGA) was established under McGeorge Bundy's chairmanship in November 1961 to supervise the operation. At Kennedy's request, the group appointed General Edward Lansdale as operations chief. Lansdale chose the code name MONGOOSE for the Cuba campaign. His initial plan was in keeping with his reputation for imaginative counterinsurgency, and as such was utterly unrealistic: He "drew up an elaborate scenario with a precise timetable calling for a march on Havana and the overthrow of Castro in October 1962. It was all worked out on paper."¹⁹ Although the CIA rapidly learned (or knew all along) that there were no tangible prospects of a general uprising in Cuba, it proceeded with a program of covert operations similar to the harrying raids conducted against Nicaragua in 1981¹⁹⁸³: "Mongoose gradually shifted its emphasis from resistance-building toward sabotage, paramilitary raids, efforts to disrupt the Cuban economy by contaminating sugar exports, circulating counterfeit money and ration books, and the like. 'We want boom-and-bang on the island,' Lansdale said."²⁰

Lansdale's own role was to be both coordinator and idea man, although, as Thomas Powers recalls, "He was uneven in judgment. Nutty ideas sometimes seemed to strike him as imaginative and plausible."²¹ One such idea was to exploit the alleged Cuban wont for "superstition":

Cuba was to be flooded with rumors that the Second Coming was imminent, that Christ had picked Cuba for His arrival, and that He wanted the Cubans to act rid of Castro first. Then, on the night foretold, a U. S. submarine would surface off the coast

of Cuba and litter the sky with star shells, which would convince the Cubans that The Hour was at hand.²²

Lansdale himself may have been prepared to ride a donkey into Havana as the climax to the show. In 1950, a Lansdale scheme to dress a U.S. submarine in Soviet livery in order to lure Philippine guerrillas into an ambush was scuttled by higher-ups; Lansdale later complained that the request "seemed only to arouse their suspicions that I had gone insane."²³

As Lansdale dreamed up new scenarios for Cuba, a considerable proportion of the operation was directed toward a single objective: the assassination of Fidel Castro. The plot to murder Castro had apparently been initiated in 1960, and involved the now-familiar recruitment of organized crime figures as contract killers, and the development of poisons by the CIA's Technical Services Division. Efforts were reportedly redoubled in the fall of 1961 after covert action chief Richard Bissell (Deputy Director for Plans) "was chewed out [for] sitting on his ass and not doing anything about getting rid of Castro and the Castro regime."²⁴ The CIA subsequently organized a unit with its Task Force W, the ZR/ RIFLE group, to carry out "Executive Action"-that is, assassinations-and on 16 November 1961 discussed its use for killing Castro.²⁵ Assassination teams, again linking the CIA with organized crime, went into Cuba in 1962, while more bizarre schemes continued until shortly after [President Kennedy's own murder: Among them were attempts to eliminate Castro with such devices as exploding giant clams (while he was skin-diving) and poisoned cigars.]

Colonel Lansdale may have been deliberately kept in the dark, but not because of any particular squeamishness on his part. Thomas Powers discusses Lansdale's role in the light of the CIA's silence regarding assassination in both interdepartmental meetings and memoranda, and describes the reaction of William Harvey, head of Task Force W, to a Lansdale memorandum on assassinations:

Harvey was doubly astonished . . . on August 13 [1962], when he got an official memo from Edward G. Lansdale. . . which explicitly requested Harvey to prepare papers on various anti- Castro programs "including liquidation of leaders." Harvey . . . told Lansdale in plain terms what he thought of the "stupidity of putting this type of comment in writing in such a document."²⁷

Ten years later Lyndon Johnson bluntly assessed the whole affair: "We had been operating a damned Murder, Inc. in the Caribbean."²⁸

Rather more important than the colorful eccentricities of Lansdale and the Technical Services Division was the significance of Operation MONGOOSE as a prototype destabilization or "bleeding" campaign. If the United States could not remove and replace the Cuban government, it would make the Cuban people suffer-by destroying its sugar economy, power plants, its peace of mind. Gilpatric recalls:

The agency was allowed to put agents into Cuba for purposes of sabotage, for purposes of trying to disrupt the strengthening of the regime's control [and] of keeping the Castro regime so off stride and unsettled that it couldn't concentrate its activities to harmful ends elsewhere. And so the agency . . . was very aggressive in coming forward with schemes, some of which were really quite fantastic and never got

off the ground. Others made a lot of sense, some of which did prove to be effective and successful.²⁹

MONGOOSE involved both American agents and Cuban exiles, although the latter comprised the bulk of the forces sent in on raids and sabotage missions. According to Gilpatric, forces sent in "varied from teams of four or five individuals put in to sometimes several times that, " with every detail of each operation closely monitored by the Special Group Augmented (which Gilpatric refers to as the 54-12 group).³⁰ Gilpatric also suggests that Cuban exile terrorist groups, like Alpha 66, which were allegedly renegades beyond CIA control at the time (and gunning for the president himself after the "betrayal" at the Bay of Pigs), were in fact a part of the ongoing

after the "betrayal" at the Bay of Pigs), were in fact a part of the ongoing American government effort to harass Cuba.³¹

A thread of continuity runs from the covert American programs against Cuba in the 1960s into the covert operations in Africa in the 1970s and in Nicaragua in the 1980s, in the persons of Cuban exiles recruited for the Bay of Pigs and subsequent MONGOOSE offensives. As in the 1950s, when the Lodge bill facilitated the recruitment of East European emigres for the army's new Special Forces, legislation in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs permitted the regularization of America's Cuban "paramilitary assets" as U.S. government personnel.

Details on the careers of some Bay of Pigs veterans have emerged as a consequence of both the October 1986 downing of American flyer Eugene Hasenfus in Nicaragua and the "Contra-gate" investigations. Hasenfus and Nicaraguan authorities claimed that two of the link men in the contra resupply operation in El Salvador were Cuban exiles, already well known for their service with the CIA; these allegations were subsequently investigated and confirmed by the news media and congressional aides. Among these link men were the apparent head of the operation at San Salvador's military airport, Illopango, Felix Martinez (under the pseudonym Max Gomez), and another Bay of Pigs veteran, Luis Posada Carriles (under the name Ramon Medina).³² Congressional aides were particularly outraged at the discovery-just as American counterterrorism proposals were taken to Congress-that one of the resupply officers had previously been detained in Venezuela as an international terrorist. Posada Carriles had escaped from a Venezuelan jail on 17 August 1985, after nearly ten years' imprisonment for the bombing of a Cuban civil airliner.

The 1976 bombing killed all seventy-three people aboard, including most of Cuba's 1976 Pan American Games team-a slaughter as terrible as that of the Munich Olympics (this was to date the only terrorist bombing of its kind of a Latin American airliner). Subsequent inquiries confirmed that Posada Carriles had served in the Bay of Pigs invasion as an explosives expert and was later commissioned in the U.S. Army. The State Department reported to Congress that

[Luis Clemente] Posada-Carriles was appointed as a 2Lt [Second Lieutenant] in the US Army in March 1963 under the Cuban exile volunteer program. He served in the US

Army until September 1966. Records of the Department of Army reflect that an extensive investigative file exists on Posada-Carriles subsequent to his entry on active

duty. The investigation was predicated on information . . . pertaining to his alleged involvement in Cuban exile activities in Florida and elsewhere in the Americas which reportedly included possible violations of US federal statutes.... Posada-Carriles' Army investigative file was requested (by name) and was furnished to the House

Select Committee on Assassination in 1978.³³

The CIA, in turn, could not-or would not-provide information on Posada Carriles (or Ramon Medina), and stated that "it did not provide any assistance, direct or indirect, to facilitate the escape of Luis Posada from jail in Venezuela, or his entry into El Salvador."³⁴

The Kennedy administration's Operation MONGOOSE began to fade soon after the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. At the height of the crisis, an order went down to halt the raids on Cuba, but it was disregarded: A raid led by Eugenio Martínez (later of Watergate renown) was in progress on 21 October as Kennedy announced a blockade of Cuba.³⁵ In the following months, the Special Group Augmented was disbanded, General Lansdale moved on to other projects, and the CIA's own professionals were left to get on with the Cuban unconventional warfare campaign of sabotage and assassination. Major operations continued to be mounted throughout 1963 and into the next year. But with the assassination of John F. Kennedy on 22 November, the heart went out of the offensive; Lyndon Johnson, never a fan of unconventional warfare, ordered a halt to the Cuba campaign on 7 April 1964.³⁶

Nation-Building and "Pax Americana"

In the 1960s, Lansdale was also an enthusiastic advocate of the political side of counterinsurgency. His writings are replete with advice to aspiring counterinsurgents on the need to understand the potentially insurgent people and to win their sympathy with decency and principles of fair play. American advisers-presumably decent by nature-are counseled to impart their own fair but firm principles to their foreign Counterparts so that troops in the field will cease their age-old practices of plunder and casual brutality and get on with the job of counterinsurgency. Magsaysay's ostensible reform of the Philippine army was commonly cited as a model for moderation and civic action in counterinsurgency. Lansdale pointed out in a 1957 War College discussion that the policy was only common sense:

If the people fear and hate the army, they will fear and hate the government . . . Col. Lansdale cited communist military occupation policy to emphasize communist understanding of the above point. When a communist army or guerrilla unit initially enters a village . . . individual soldiers . . . lay aside their arms and offer their help
ill chopping wood plowing, etc. They scrupulously respect property . . . and take nothing by force.... This is in marked contrast with the normal performance of governmental soldiery.... [In] the Philippines before 1950, government troopers probably killed more civilians unnecessarily than the Huk[balahap] did, despite the accusation that Huks obtained civilian support only through coercion and terrorism.³⁷

The means to achieve the prescribed change in behavior, however, remained elusive. In a 1979 letter, he acknowledged the failure of the effort in Vietnam:

Civic action was essentially brotherly behavior of troops along lines taught by Mao and [Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen] Giap to their troops. Admittedly the

Americans never succeeded in teaching this to the Vietnamese Army. Up to the very end of the Vietnam war the army was still stealing from the population.³⁸

Although Lansdale encouraged humane treatment of civilians by the military, he insisted at the same time that "anything goes" in the field of psychological warfare—a contradiction in which, more often than not, the latter notion prevailed.

Lansdale's reputation as a sensitive counterinsurgent, concerned with the nonmilitary aspects of reform and development, is belied by his actual record as well as his unpublished speeches and writings. Psychological warfare was his particular metier, and he was fascinated with its possibilities:

"Psychological warfare is probably man's oldest weapon, aside from bare hands. In using it in today's dirty, secretive wars, or in the future, the important thing to remember is that it is a weapon—and that a weapon has its own unique use and its own effect."³⁹ Lansdale was a prime example of the counterinsurgent who convinced himself that he understood the people he was working with and that, as a consequence, he could outthink and manipulate them. Psy-war, in Lansdale's view, was trickery; and trickery was to be employed even in so-called political reforms—for example, the Philippines' largely bogus program of land grants for guerrilla surrenderees.

Lansdale embraced the role of trickster, and it emerged as a prime tenet of psy-war in his lectures at the military service schools. He clearly relished the use of "dirty" tactics, especially those that contained an element of humor:

As a footnote . . . remember humor—even if it is a grim practical joke that only you can afford to smile at. Humor is often the test of a good psychological operation, since humor is constructed on the frailties of mankind—and skilled playing on these frailties increases the effectiveness of the psychological weapon. Those of you who

know of Admiral Miles' operations in China should recall the risks his Chinese agents took to wall-paint slogans poking fun at the Japanese. In some instances, the main motivation of volunteers who risked death doing this was the appeal of playing a prank.⁴⁴

The Lansdale "trickster" approach to psy-war had a lasting influence on the American military, not least through the inclusion of his exuberant accounts in military training materials long after his retirement. The Department of the Army's two-volume reference tome on psychological warfare published in April 1976 (Army Pamphlet 525-7-1) reproduced several Lansdale texts on the theme. "Practical Jokes," an article excerpted from Lansdale's autobiography *In the Midst of Wars*, concerns a "whole new approach" to psy-war, including such examples as the distribution of free hot chocolate and coffee to demonstrators "laced generously with a powerful laxative." Lansdale ignores the long-term political effects of such a prank, as well as the possibility of detection by the victims. (Similar anonymous "pranks" were played in 1969 against demonstrators in the March on Washington, when hot drinks laced with LSD were distributed: The rumor—perhaps false—that the villains were from army intelligence rapidly spread.)⁴¹ A free rein in devising and implementing such schemes, of course, is another aspect of the Lansdale approach. Other Lansdale psy-war pranks cited in Army Pamphlet 5257-1 and other army training manuals involve exemplary criminal violence—the murder and mutilation of captives and the display of their bodies.

Lansdale's method for confronting Third World insurgencies was based exclusively on his success in the Philippines. It revolved around small elite

teams of Americans placed in close and influential contact with indigenous personalities who would make the best puppet leaders. In the Philippines, the chosen instrument was Ramón Magsaysay, a soldier shepherded from the defense ministry to the presidency by Lansdale's elite team. In Vietnam, the instrument was Ngô Đình Diệm, sustained in power through his troubled first two years under the protective shield of another elite team. 42 Lansdale continued to put forward formal proposals to continue to pursue this approach in Vietnam well into the late 1960s.

Although Lansdale's view that problems of insurgency were resolvable by small teams and Machiavellian intrigue was most frequently expressed in his papers on the Philippine experience, a more comprehensive approach appears in an 18 June 1963 memorandum to McGeorge Bundy from adviser Gordon Chase.⁴³ The paper, "A High-Level Look at the Cold War," summarizes yet another Lansdale "think" piece calling on "the need for a precise strategy which will give the U.S. the win it seeks in the cold war," and proposing as the way to do this the creation of a small strategy group (to be headed by Bundy). Of the seven topics to be discussed by such a group, two are of particular relevance.

The Human Factor-The group may want to study the feasibility of forming and deploying a super-elite (under 100 persons) in such a way as to bring about a decisive change in the outcome of the cold war. One method of deployment would be to send some of the elite into a critical area, as a replacement for a complete Country Team and with simple orders to win U. S. goals. When the elite had won, it would leave behind a blueprint for follow-up actions and return home for deployment elsewhere or for splitting up into cadres.

School for Political Action-The group may want to study the feasibility of setting up a school for political action which would create skilled free world leadership capable of competing with graduates of the Lenin and Sun Yat Sen Schools and of completely defeating Communism. However, with or without such a school . . . there is a need for a good political textbook-a modern case history text of democratic leadership in the Free World, for use at leadership levels as a sort of U. S. version of "The Prince."

To propose "simple" solutions, of course, is far easier than to bring about simple solutions; and despite his access to information, General Lansdale, surprisingly, took relatively little interest in the practical details of counterinsurgency beyond his own experience. Lansdale was better known among the Kennedy circle for his "expertise" on "the political aspect" of the Cold War. As Gilpatric recalls, "Lansdale was fascinated by the political scene.... And he didn't take the same degree of interest or concern in what his military colleagues were doing on the counterinsurgency training program and development of new techniques, equipment, weapons, and so forth with guerrilla-type activities."⁴⁴

In a rather garbled paper drafted in April 1954, Lansdale described his endeavors as directed toward a political object, one that smacked of neocolonialism-a "Pax Americana." However, the U. S. empire would impose not "thugs" on its satellites but such decent people as Ramón Magsaysay

(and Ngo Dinh Diem):

The U. S. political warrior is actually extending the Pax Americana when he works effectively. In his basic plan of operation, then, he must consider the historic nature

of world leadership by one nation, including the Pax Romana with its legion and the Pax Britannica with its navy, plus the social and economic factors, in comparison with the power plays of Genghis Khan, Tamerlane or Hitler (which some of our warriors are tempted to imitate when they give power to unprincipled thugs merely because they are anti-Communist). Thus, the skilled U.S. political warrior does not picture himself as a lone gladiator. He understands that he is part of a team that has

other members, even if the other members do not understand this as clearly as he....⁴⁵

Fade-Out in Saigon

In June 1964, Lansdale proposed in a twenty-two-page paper, "Concept for Victory in Vietnam," to reunite his old Philippines team-"The Force." In his inimitably chipper style, Lansdale reiterated his fundamental belief in the power of a few individuals to influence events: "This is a concept for victory in

Vietnam, a victory won by the free Vietnamese with American help . . . a 'first team' of men who have proven their ability to defeat Asian Communist subversive insurgents, before it is altogether too late."⁴⁶

As in the comprehensive *guerre révolutionnaire* approach of the French theorists (but without their depth), Lansdale's "concept for victory" begins with measures to influence the people at home, to mobilize "the great 'will to win' of the American people [which is] still largely missing."⁴⁷ His concept for the conduct of the war, however, is one of vast generalities, and peripheral-or downright harebrained-schemes: expanding minority counter guerrilla forces ("montagnards, the sects and the ethnic Khmers"); bringing in "voluntary" forces from neighboring countries in private enterprise "Freedom Companies"; and organizing battalions exclusively for night-fighting ("changing reveille to evening and the duty day to the hours of the night").

Lansdale's proposed "Command Action" to implement pacification, guaranteeing "aggressive action against the Viet Cong, and positive action to help the people" (however the two are distinguished), typifies his approach to counterinsurgency:

Order, simultaneously issued by GVN [government of South Vietnam] and U.S. commands, military and civilian: The armed forces, and the civilian personnel of government, have a primary mission to protect the people of South Vietnam; their secondary mission is to help them. Failure to accomplish these missions will be punished by death, or such other punishment as the court-martial may direct.⁴⁸

Although General Lansdale's boundless self-confidence that a small nucleus of bold, brave, brilliant Americans led by himself could "turn around" a subversive insurgency survived the long decline of his protege Ngo Dinh Diem, Lansdale would not return to Vietnam until the Johnson administration's buildup of U. S. ground forces was well underway. Although publicly acclaimed for his counterinsurgency savvy, by 1964 the military's professional counterinsurgents began to tire of Lansdale's simplistic approach. General Maxwell Taylor, who had replaced Henry Cabot Lodge as ambassador in June 1964, shared McGeorge Bundy's low opinion of Lansdale's schemes, and together they refused to have Lansdale in a position of authority in Saigon.⁴⁹ In 1961, Taylor had been asked by President Kennedy to pick up the

pieces after the Bay of Pigs invasion, and he chaired a committee of inquiry that was brutally critical of CIA incompetence. Lansdale's handling of his post-Bay of Pigs assignment to kill Castro, in the same gung ho spirit as the invasion, may have been perhaps too much for Taylor to stomach.

In September 1965, Henry Cabot Lodge-no doubt mercifully unaware of MONGOOSE-returned as ambassador to the Saigon embassy. At his request,

General Lansdale followed shortly afterward with his handpicked "team"-most of whom had worked with him before. Lansdale's stint as chief adviser to the pacification effort then underway-"Revolutionary Development"-was, however, short-lived. The consensus, as enunciated by Frances FitzGerald, is that Lansdale was simply adrift in this last posting to Vietnam: The Saigon bureaucracy "effectively cut him off from the mission command and from all work except that of a symbolic nature." "Living in his grand villa," Lansdale would until 1968 "spend most of his time in talk with Vietnamese intellectuals, a few ex-Viet Minh officers, and his own American devotees." Lansdale would become "a hero to idealistic young American officials who saw the failure of American policy as a failure of tactics."⁵⁰

As a believer in the potential of the individual leader or operator, the isolated surgical action, the showcase project, and above all the power of psychological warfare, Lansdale was prototypical of the counterinsurgency era. He had neither the patience nor the wisdom to contemplate comprehensive programs of undramatic police work or in-depth development or reform; his vocation was for the spectacular, the theatrical. In the Philippines, Lansdale's advisory effort was seen as relatively successful: There, psychological warfare had indeed made a contribution to the defeat of an insurgent movement, although skeptics could attribute the defeat to the insurgency's own inherent weaknesses. Moreover, the psy-war tricks of terror and manipulation, which he emphasized in his lectures, do not appear to have played a significant part in defeating the Huks. Lansdale's advocacy of special operations, "practical jokes," and individual initiative was, however, shared by the creative counterinsurgents of the 1960s and continues to inform the doctrine of low-intensity conflict in the 1990s.

1. David E. Brown, "The Politics of Counterinsurgency" (unpublished course paper, Harvard University, Spring 1970), p. 6, citing his interview with Chalmers B. Wood, 24 April 1970.

2. Arthur J. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days* (London: André Deutsch, 1965), p. 320, recounts Rostow's delivery of Lansdale's 17 January 1963 memorandum on 2 February, and Kennedy's response on the situation in Vietnam: "This [situation] is the worst yet"; "You know Ikc never briefed me on Vietnam." The memorandum is summarized in the *Pentagon Papers* (Senator Gravel edition), 2, pp. 440-42.

3. Ronald H. Spector, *Advice and Support: The Early Years of the U. S. Army in Vietnam, 1941- 1960* (New York: Free Press, 1985), pp. 361-73, discusses the "U.S. Plan for Counterinsurgency in South Vietnam," 4 January 1961, extensively. General McGarr's statement is from Spector, p. 365, citing "First Twelve-Month Report of Chief MASAG, Vietnam, September 1961."

4.U.S. Government Memorandum, to Bo [Charles Bohannon], from Frank, 26 January 1959, Subject: Public Relations/Personal Prestige Program Promotions, Inc. (Bohannon

Papers, Box 17, Hoover Institution Archive, Stanford). The memo informs "Bo" of the departure on 21 January of "our mutual friend Ed," and discusses Bohannon's own assignment

to the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg for a six-week psychological warfare course.

5.Spector, Advice and Support, p. 361, citing Memo, CINCPAC for JCS, 27 April 1960, "Counterinsurgency Operations in South Vietnam and Laos."

6.Ibid., paraphrasing Memo, Lansdale for Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr, 11 August [19]60, sub: Vietnam.

7.Edward G. Lansdale, Memorandum, "Vietnam," 17 January 1961, cited in Larry E. Cablc, Conflict of Myths: The Development of Counter-Insurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War

(New York: New York University Press, 1986), pp. 186-87. In a 13 September 1960 memorandum, not long before the 11 November paratroop COUp attempt nearly toppled Diem,

Lansdale had derided suggestions that popular opposition to Diem required a reappraisal of U. S. support. Lansdale persisted in maintaining that Diem was the only answer, and as

such should be assured "of our intent to provide material assistance and of our unswerving support to him in this time of crisis" (Spector, Advice and Support, p. 368, citing

memo, Lansdale for Regional Director, Far East, ISA, 13 September 1960, Possible Course of Action in Vietnam).

8.Brown, "The Politics of Counterinsurgency, " p. 7, citing Robert Shaplen, The Lost Revolution (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 148.

9.Roswell Gilpatric, First Oral History Interview, New York, 1970, by Dennis J. O'Brien for the John F. Kennedy Library, Oral History Series, pp. 8-9.

10.Ibid., p. 8.

11.Ibid.

12.Brown, "The Politics of Counterinsurgency," p. 8, citing interview with Edward Lansdale, 21 April 1970.

13.Memorandum for Walt Rostow, From Ed Lansdale, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 7 June 1961. Kennedy Library, NSF, Box 316, Rostow, Staff Memoranda, 6/1/61-6/13/61.

14.Memorandum for Secretary McNamara, Deputy Secretary Gilpatric, From: Brig. Gen. Lansdale, Subject: Israeli. cc. Adam Yarmolinsky. 30 August 1961 (Lansdale Papers, Office of

the Secretary of Defense, Subject File, Israel, 1961, Box 46). The tape of Colonel Prihar's lecture is also held with the Lansdale Papers. Other invitees included Walt Rostow and R.

W. Komer.

15.Ibid.

16. Letter, General Lansdale to General Breitweiser, 21 March 1963. Lansdale Papers, Box 48.

17. Memoranda and personal notes, May 1963, Lansdale Papers, Office of Secretary of Defense, Subject File, Trip to Bolivia (Box 48). The Bolivian commander of the center was Lt.

Col. Hector Aranda C.

18. Thomas Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (New York: Pocket Books, 1979), pp. 167, 174, citing a 19 January 1962 meeting in Robert Kennedy's office.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

22. *Ibid.* The idea was not pursued. Powers cites a CIA official who dubbed the idea "elimination by illumination."

23. Edward Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 62; Lansdale's second-in-command, Charles Bohannon, was

also keen on the enterprise ("Bohannon and I started practicing Russian phrases, so we could pose as Soviet deck officers . . .").

24. Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets*, p. 187, citing the 1975 report of the Senate hearings on assassination plots, *Interim Report: Alleged Assassination Plots Involving*

Foreign Leaders (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 20 November 1975). Jim Hougan, *Spooks* (New York: Bantam Books, 1978), pp. 329-47, deals in a rather jazzier style with the

assassination plots, emphasizing the role of organized crime figures and Cuban exiles (sometimes the same people) in the affair.

25. Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets*, p. 188.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-93. The most serious threat appears to have been the provision of equipment, including sniper rifles, to Cubans inside Cuba.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-63.

28. Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (New York: Dell, 1974), p. 290n, citing Leo Janos, "The Last Days of the President," *Atlantic* (July

1973). The article recounts a 1971 conversation between Johnson and Janos, a former aid. "Janos elaborated, 'A year or so before Kennedy's death a CIA-backed assassination team

had been picked up in Havana. Johnson speculated that Dallas had been a retaliation for this thwarted attempt...." The reference is also made in Powers, *The Man Who Kept the*

Secrets, p. 199; Powers (p. 181) adds that the assassination program was quietly phased out in the first months of the Johnson administration, and that on 7 April 1964 Johnson

had ordered a halt to all sabotage operations.

29. Gilpatrick, *Second Oral History*, p. 41.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. The identification of Medina as Posada was confirmed by UPI journalists in San Salvador who obtained copies of his telephone bills, found records of repeated calls to Luis Posada's

wife in Miami, and his family doctor, who when asked confirmed the calls had been made by Posada. The Department of State maintained it had "no information-beyond what has

appeared in media reports-that the individual allegedly named Ramon Medina is the same as Luis Posada Carriles." See Julia Preston, "Managua Links Plane Figure to '76

Bombing," *Washington Post*, 16 October 1986; Douglas Farah, "Contra ring leader could be bomber of Cuban plane," UPI cable, 1 November 1986, AP cables of 2 and 3

November 1986. A seven-page memorandum of "Congressional Questions about Ramon Medina and Luis Posada," with State Department responses (date semilegible, but probably

20 April 1987), provides a detailed look at the matter. Photocopies of the San Salvador phone bills of Ramon Medina and associated documentation were made available to the

author by congressional aides.

33. "Congressional Questions about Ramon Medina and Luis Posada," pp. 1-2.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

35. Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets*, pp. 180-XI.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

37. Captain William W. Whitson, Department of Social Sciences, War College, Memorandum for the Record: Subject: Informal Discussion with Col. Lansdale, USAF, and Col.

Valeriano, Philippine Military Attaché, on 22 February 1957 (27 February) Lansdale Papers, Box 12 (Collected Speeches and Writings), Hoover Archive, p. 3. In his comment,

Colonel Lansdale said, "I don't recall stating that government troops might have killed more folks unnecessarily than the Huks. Perhaps Valeriano did.... "

38. Letter from Lansdale to Chief of Military History, 6 June 1979, in Spector, *Advice and Support* p. 243n

39. Col. Edward G. Lansdale, "Military Psychological Operations: Part 11," lecture delivered at the Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Virginia, in March 1960, typescript, pp. 5-6.

Lansdale Papers, Box 7, Collected Speeches.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

41. Edward Geary Lansdale, "Practical Jokes," in U.S. Department of the Army, *Psychological Operations (Army Pamphlet 525-7-1)*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, April

1976), p. 768.

42. Memorandum from Edward Lansdale to the Secretary of Defense, "Vietnam," 17 January 1961, cited in Cable, *Conflict of Myths*, pp. 187-88. Cable points out that Lansdale's

Vietnam report held that support of President Diem was indispensable for American policies. Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern*

Historical Experience (New York: Pantheon, 1985), p. 87, notes however, that Lansdale had "vainly tried to mobilize American opposition" to Diem's police state policies in the

middle fifties; Lansdale appears to have distinguished between the policies and the man.

43. Memorandum for Mr. Bundy, The White House, from Gordon Chase, Subject: "A High-Level Look at the Cold War," 18 June 1963. "Sanitized" copy declassified 12/84, Declassified Documents Series (1985:001434).

44. Roswell Gilpatric, Second Oral History Interview, with Dennis J. O'Brien, John F. Kennedy Oral History Series, 27 May 1970, p. 36.

45. Edward G. Lansdale, Colonel USAF, "A Political Warfare Lesson" Typescript, Lansdale Papers, Box 12.

46. Edward G. Lansdale, "Concept for Victory in Vietnam" ("Team Working Paper"), 8 June 1964, p. 1. Typescript, Lansdale Papers (Speeches and Writings).

47. *Ibid.* Proposals include the creation of congressional "Cold War" committees that would meet jointly with the National Security Council and ensure congressional support for

Cold War activities, as well as a scheme in which American towns could "adopt a hamlet."

48. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

49. Cable, *Conflict of Myths*, p. 59n; Cable cites memoranda in the Johnson Library on this "less flattering opinion of Lansdale." Cable himself characterizes Lansdale as "a minor

public relations genius whose promotional talents were in no way lessened when dealing with himself as the subject; who was quite capable of cheerfully gathering to his OWI

harvests the fruits of other men's vineyards"-possible by dint of the semiclandestine nature of most of the operations. (Who was to gainsay the Quiet American?)

50. Frances FitzGerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage, 1973), p. 358.

Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism, 1940-1990

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