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THE FUTURE U.S. ARMY: OUTLOOK FOR THE 1990'S

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THE U.S. ARMY AND LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

SUMMARY OF REMARKS BY

GENERAL PAUL GORMAN, USA RET.
(Former Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command)

The remarks of General Gorman were delivered on 2 May 1990 at the fifth in a series of eight guest speaker presentations to be held for members of Congress and their staffs. The series is co-sponsored by the AUSA Institute of Land Warfare and the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis. The overall theme of the series is "The Future U.S. Army: Outlook for the 1990's." A separate Background Brief will be issued on each of the eight topics to be presented.

General Paul Gorman, former commander of the United States Southern Command, argues that even the most powerful forms of arms are often rendered irrelevant in the field of low-intensity conflict. This realm of conflict, he says, "escapes the soldier's definition of war and the diplomat's definition of peace," and is a genre of warfare which is particularly problematic for the United States, where both the Executive and Legislative branches are deeply involved in decisions regarding the deployment and redeployment of U.S. operational forces.

Gorman contends that in meeting the challenges of low-intensity conflicts abroad, the United States Army will bear the major responsibility for assisting other countries. Thus, the Army will be the premier Service in the low-intensity conflict realm.

The Army's goal in low-intensity conflict should be "minimum presence and maximum effectiveness." Toward that end, the United States must also have at hand the best intelligence possible, both for assessing material needs and for evaluating the political context of a given conflict. Tailoring aid is the answer. Even the most high-technology aid from the United States is useless if it does not meet the real needs of the forces in the field. Gorman advocates an overhaul of the entire United States security assistance program, emphasizing that current problems are beyond the scope of small legislative adjustments.

In training, Gorman would emphasize mission rehearsal and advanced simulation technologies which would be sufficiently vivid to make all forms of deployment possible. He would focus on developing technologies which decrease the vulnerability of the individual, for example, by embedding computerized processors in their gear, allowing for more detailed friend-or-foe discrimination.

In an era in which socialist political orders are in disarray, while democracy is seen as the political model of the future in much of the world, the United States is the object of a great deal of goodwill and admiration. Furthermore, in Gorman's analysis, the United States has significant strengths in the low-intensity field. The United States Army, in particular, has been a leader in developing techniques which could be applied to several of potential low-intensity conflict areas, for example riverine warfare.

Gorman cautions, however, that United States combat forces themselves should "almost never" be inserted into an actual conflict. It should be the goal of the United States to make clear that the object of assistance in low-intensity conflicts is to make host country military capable of doing the job successfully by themselves and not to indicate or imply that United States forces automatically will be introduced to save a desperate situation.