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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

October 23, 1986

NATIONAL SECURITY STUDY  
DIRECTIVE NO. 5-86

Development of a National Policy and Strategy  
for Low Intensity Conflict (S)(u)

Low Intensity Conflict will be one of the most significant national security challenges we will face through the remainder of this century. Future peace and freedom may depend on how effectively we meet it. (S)(u)

Our ability to apply the political, economic and military instruments of national power in a concerted way to deal with Low Intensity Conflict must be improved. What is needed as a first step is a coherent policy and strategy at the national level to guide the multifaceted activities characteristic of Low Intensity Conflict. Further, we need to better define the roles and missions for the Departments and Agencies in prosecuting this insidious threat to our national security. (S)(u)

Accordingly, a special Senior Interagency Group (SIG), chaired by my Deputy Assistant for Defense Policy, will be convened to address Low Intensity Conflict within the broadest terms. The immediate goal of the special SIG, its attendant Interagency Group and working group will be to develop by December 31, 1986, an NSDD that promulgates a national strategy for Low Intensity Conflict, identifies necessary resources for implementing the strategy and defines an enduring approach for interagency coordination and planning. (S)(u)

The terms of reference that will guide our efforts follow:

- Define Low Intensity Conflict. What national problems constitute Low Intensity Conflict? (S)(u)
- Assess the Low Intensity Conflict threat faced by the United States and our allies. How does the threat to national interests posed by Low Intensity Conflict compare with the threats posed by other sorts of conflict? (S)(u)

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- Determine what instruments of national power are appropriate for dealing with Low Intensity Conflict. What instruments already exist that can be utilized in Low Intensity Conflict? How well suited are these instruments? How might they be modified to increase their effectiveness? (The group should consider all relevant instruments, including military forces, security assistance, economic and humanitarian assistance, diplomatic efforts, and international communication.) (S)(u)
- Determine interagency coordination requirements for Low Intensity Conflict. What sort of planning, command, and control arrangements do we need to deal with Low Intensity Conflict? Should there be a permanent task force at the NSC? Should one exist at other levels or outside Washington? Can past ad hoc coordination arrangements be modified and institutionalized to create a more permanent structure for dealing with Low Intensity Conflict? How should the management of responses to short-term Low Intensity crisis differ from the management of U.S. responses to longer-term Low Intensity situations? (S)(u)
- Determine the capacity of national intelligence and political/analytical capabilities to anticipate where instability may evolve into Low Intensity Conflict. If we can reliably identify the preconditions for Low Intensity Conflict, how can we develop and implement appropriate political, economic, and security policies to resolve the situation? (S)(u)
- Consider ways in which public understanding of the threat posed by Low Intensity Conflict and public support for U.S. responses might be enhanced. (S)(u)

I look forward to full participation by all Departments and Agencies of the government that have a role to play. A united effort is essential in meeting this most important challenge.

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Ronald Reagan

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