

**Field Manual
No. 100-20**

**Air Force Pamphlet
No. 3-20**

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Departments of the
Army and the Air Force
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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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*This publication supersedes FM 100-20, 16 January 1981.

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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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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.

CHAPTER 1

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.)

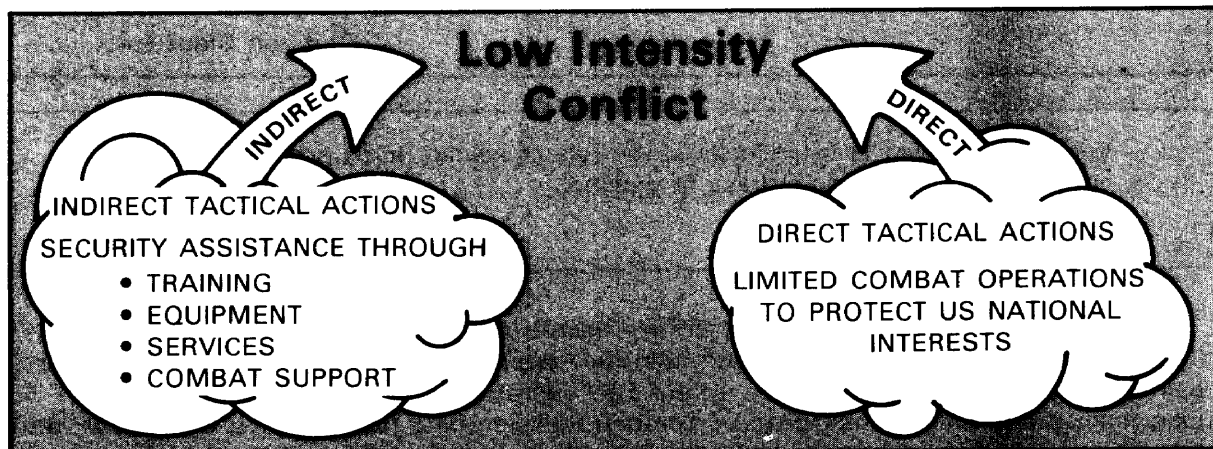


Figure 1-1. Indirect versus Direct Applications

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