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# Security Assistance Guidelines

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Commander Henry M. Lewandowski, U.S. Navy

**S**ince the end of World War II, foreign assistance has been a cornerstone in the foundation of U.S. foreign policy. As an element of foreign assistance, security assistance has been used to strengthen the ability of friendly foreign countries to resist aggression. Today, security assistance remains a critical element in a national strategy that seeks to secure important political, economic and military objectives.

Despite those noble goals, security assistance has been one of the most controversial elements of U.S. national security strategy. Arms transfers, as they are popularly called, seem to evoke polarized responses. Partisan rhetoric clouds the air and obscures the issues. Are security assistance programs valid instruments of policy? Which objectives do they support? Under what circumstances should they be used? The following analyzes the elements of security assistance, and offers suggestions that create a framework for application of the program.

## The Advocates

Security assistance programs are cited by supporters as essential to the survival and continued security of allies and friendly nations. Advocates can adeptly define the global nature of U.S. national interests, citing chapter and verse of the nature of the threat to those interests. In short, they perceive security assistance as an indispensable element of U.S. foreign policy. To support their assessment, security assistance advocates typically include the following as some of the more compelling rationale in support of their position:

- avoid direct involvement of U.S. forces by providing a credible military capability for a recipient nation;
- strengthen regional and internal stability;

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- promote bilateral relations;
- encourage self-reliance;
- foster cooperative relationships in areas of geostrategic concern, i.e., allow access, basing rights, overflight rights, etc.;
- promote standardization of equipment and foster interoperability;
- preclude influence or coercion by unfriendly nations;
- publicly demonstrate U.S. interest and support;
- ensure access to energy and strategic minerals; and
- strengthen the U.S. industrial and mobilization base.<sup>1</sup>

### The Critics

Critics of arms transfers are unimpressed by these arguments. In fact, they have a long list of counterarguments. They point to events of the 1970s as a stimulus that removed the lid on global restraint of arms trade. In particular, the oil crisis, with the attempt of nations providing weapons to recapture petro dollars, and the end of the Vietnam war, with the U.S. entry into the arms export market, are singled out as the most significant events. The emerging nations of the Third World were targeted as the terminus of the increased arms exports. Critics blame easy availability of arms for encouraging nations to opt for the military solution to political conflict. Massive instability in the Third World is offered as evidence in support of this thesis. The following is a typical scenario used to illustrate the adverse impact of arms transfers.

In an attempt to maintain an advantage over real or perceived enemies, emerging nations seek increasingly sophisticated weaponry; systems out of proportion to the threat. Modern infrastructure requirements of those systems tend to separate the population from the military, exacerbating what is often an unstable domestic situation. In lieu of agricultural development, capital expenditures on defense "industry" becomes the rule. The critics believe that the military rapidly develops a vested interest in continuing expansion of the defense sector. This phenomenon contributes to continued underdevelopment by draining scarce resources from producers of primary commodities. As social unrest breeds domestic opposition, military governments suppress attempted insurrections. This environment creates an arena for East-West competition. It has been estimated by some sources that 65-75 percent of major arms transfers are from industrialized countries to the Third World.<sup>2</sup>

Opponents of arms transfers contend that the trend toward global militarization creates obstacles to disarmament and stability. According to the Center for Defense Information, over 40 armed conflicts took place in 1983, involving hostilities on five continents. In their view the "Major military states stretch tentacles of power and tension into distant areas of the

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world. Lightning advances in technology make the weapons of today more dangerous to civilians than to the armed forces involved. In developing countries, political processes are increasingly under military control and civil rights are widely violated. Even in industrialized democracies, decisions on military matters appear unresponsive to the public will."<sup>3</sup>

These divergent views on the effect of arms transfers in general, and security assistance in particular, do little to lift the fog of rhetoric that obscures the basic issue: is security assistance a viable policy tool? Dealing with this issue requires an examination of the evolution of the program together with its contemporary applications.

### Background

Contemporary security assistance had its genesis in the early WWII support of Europe through the Lend-Lease Act. As enacted by Congress, the legislation empowered the President to provide arms to those countries whose survival was deemed vital to the defense of the United States. This established a precedent for the transfer of arms as an instrument of national security strategy. Previous sales were uncoordinated and motivated by profit incentives. Peacetime use of security assistance as a legitimate policy instrument is often linked to President Nixon's 1969 declaration at Guam, commonly known as the Nixon Doctrine. The doctrine acknowledged the declining will of the nation to confront ill-defined threats to U.S. security with military force. It did however pledge support of friendly foreign nations to resist aggression through provision of military equipment and training. That intent has been tested repeatedly in the post-Vietnam era.

During the late 1970s, the policies of the Carter administration proved to be an anomaly in the evolution of security assistance. The Carter policy treated arms transfers as an exceptional instrument whose use should be restrained. It placed the burden of proof for need on the recipient. Human rights performance was used as a primary criterion in making the determination on whether to start or continue arms transfers. President Carter viewed the unilateral restraint of the United States as the first step in promoting multilateral cooperation in controlling arms. The Carter approach was severely criticized for being naive and counterproductive. Opponents claimed that Carter's emphasis on human rights compromised vital security interests for peripheral ideological interests.

The Reagan administration's arms transfer policy, announced on 9 July 1981, was a significant departure from that of the Carter administration. The Reagan administration's national security strategy, as articulated in NSDD-32, conceptually embodies the Nixon Doctrine, in that the strategy relies on allies and friendly nations to provide the first line of defense in contingencies not directly involving the Soviet Union. The implications of that strategy are

clear: the United States must ensure that friendly nations have the means to defend themselves. The Reagan policy views conventional arms transfers as an essential element of both foreign policy and U.S. global defense posture. Accordingly, requests for arms will be evaluated “. . . primarily in terms of their net contribution to enhanced deterrence and defense.”<sup>4</sup> Though arms control is considered important, the Administration points out that it will not jeopardize interests through unilateral initiatives. This approach recognizes that mutual restraint in arms sales is required for effective arms control.

### Security Assistance Programs

JCS Pub. 1 defines security assistance as a “group of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 [as amended]. . . , by which the U.S. provides defense articles, military training and other defense related services by grant, credit or cash sales in furtherance of national policies and objectives.” Security assistance is differentiated from the general “arms transfers” by the fact that as an element of the foreign assistance program, security assistance involves fiscal obligations that must be accommodated through the budget process. Budgetary constraints require establishing a priority of requirements to efficiently allocate security assistance dollars. Current program priorities focus on countries:

- of critical strategic and political importance to the United States;
- that are alliance partners or with which we have commitments;
- that are vital because of proximity to the United States or other geostrategic locations;
- the support of which is critical for key foreign policy and security initiatives; and
- that supply essential raw materials.<sup>5</sup>

Security assistance consists of the following major programs.<sup>6</sup>

**Economic Support Fund (ESF).** ESF is intended to ensure political and economic stability in countries whose well-being contributes to U.S. security. These funds are used for a variety of purposes that include balance of payments support, capital projects, and programs directed at satisfying basic human needs. Allocation of ESFs is based on political criteria. In contrast to development assistance, which supports long-term economic development, ESF is intended to provide immediate economic aid. The program seeks to promote economic reform and development to remove the cause of instability that threatens the security and independence of the recipient. Military items are not authorized by this program. Figure 1 displays recent trends in ESF.

**Military Assistance Program (MAP).** MAP consists of grants of military equipment, facilities and technical assistance to friendly countries. Initially

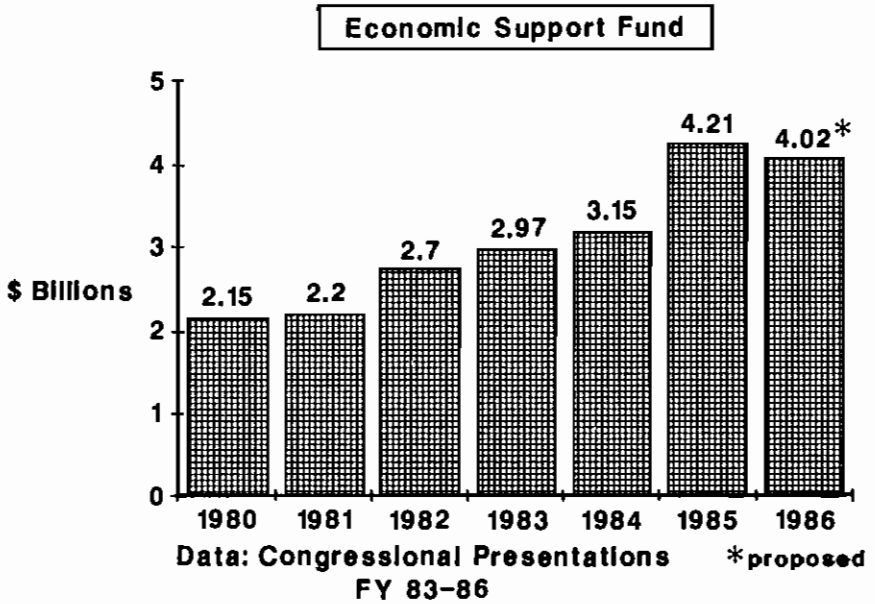


Figure 1

the program was devised to strengthen mutual defense and collective security of the non-Communist world. MAP complements Foreign Military Sales by moderating the financial impact of those sales on recipients. Figure 2 shows trends in MAP program funding.

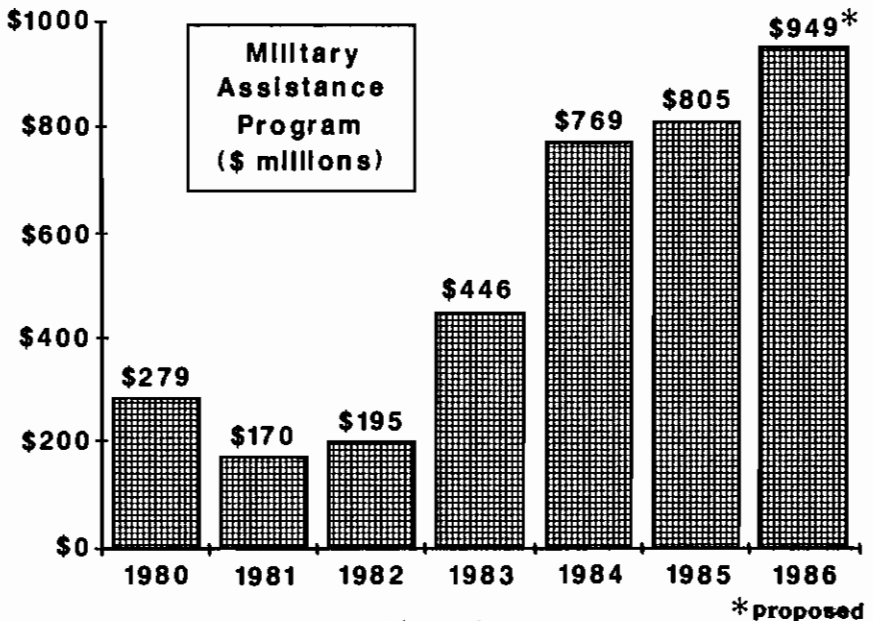


Figure 2

**International Military Education and Training (IMET).** Professional education and training under this program is normally provided in the United States to selected foreign military and civilians on a grant basis. Examples include attendance at service and war colleges, or U.S. training teams in the host country.

**Peacekeeping Operations (PKO).** These funds support the U.S. share of expenses incurred in international peacekeeping operations such as those in the multilateral force and observers in the Sinai and U.N. Forces in Cyprus.

**Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Financing.** This program of credit and loan guarantees enables friendly foreign governments to purchase military equipment, training and services. The financing program is available to governments whose economic situation or near-term security requirements make cash sales inappropriate or impossible. Terms typically include repayment at market interest at some time in the future when it is hoped that the economic and/or security problem will have stabilized. Provisions in the Arms Export Control Act require an evaluation of the impact of these sales on economic and social development of the recipient.<sup>7</sup> Prior to FY85, the loan guarantee portion of the program was "off budget." Commencing with the FY85 security assistance request, FMS financing will be subject to the same authorization and appropriation processes that ensure congressional oversight of similar programs. Figure 3 illustrates recent program trends.

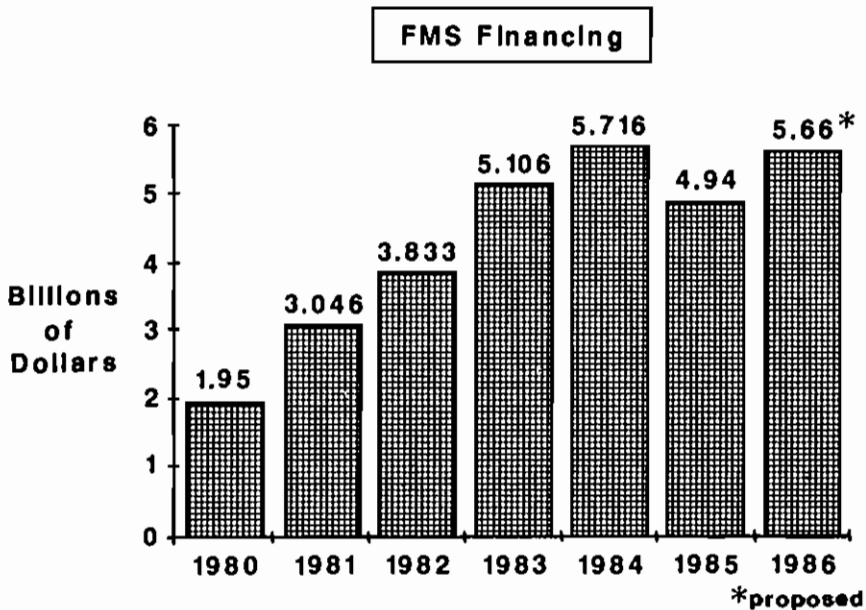


Figure 3

Two recent initiatives are changing the nature and cost of the security assistance program. The FY85 FMS appropriation included an expansion of "forgiven loans" and the creation of a concessional loan program element. Prior to FY85, forgiven loans were limited to Israel and Egypt. Concessional loans at approximately 5 percent interest, rather than the 10-12 percent market rate, have been extended to sixteen countries. In FY83, 28.6 percent of military assistance was concessional. In the FY85 program, 66.5 percent was concessional, including the forgiving of 100 percent of FMS financing for Israel and Egypt; \$1.4 and \$1.175 billion respectively.

MAP, IMET, PKO, and FMS financing programs comprise what is referred to as the "Military Assistance" element of foreign aid. MAP, IMET, and FMS forgiven loans are collectively referred to as "grant aid" since the government is not monetarily reimbursed for those goods or services. Table 1 summarizes trends in security assistance programs.

### Security Assistance Programs (\$ Millions)

	80	81	82	83	84	85	86*
MAP	279	170	195	446	769	805	949
IMET	25	28	42	46	51	56	66
PKO	59	34	151	31	46	44	37
ESF	2151	2199	2700	2971	3150	4210	4020
FMS	1950	3046	3833	5106	5716	4940	5655

\*Estimated

Table 1

### Other Programs

In addition to the above five programs, two additional programs are the source of significant levels of arms transfers. However, they are not considered to be security assistance.

**Foreign Military Sales, Cash.** Under FMS cash sales, receiving governments buy military equipment, training and services from the U.S. Government under terms negotiated contractually. All expenses incident to the sale are paid by the purchaser. FMS sales to allies such as NATO are motivated by security interests and domestic economic concerns. Cash sales to other friendly or nonaligned countries are usually a political decision based on pursuit of foreign policy objectives.

**Commercial Arms Sales.** Direct sales of military equipment by industry to foreign governments is controlled through a licensing requirement of the Arms Export Control Act. Applications for commercial export of defense equipment and services are reviewed by State and other departments. Congressional approval may be required if certain dollar thresholds are



reached. U.S. concerns over the transfer of militarily significant technology to the Eastern bloc has resulted in the application of export controls on many articles of indirect military application.

Since these two programs pay their own way, they are not considered to be part of the foreign aid program. However, FMS and commercial cash sales provide assistance to the recipient in the form of the technological advantage associated with advanced U.S. weapons systems. Programs that provide weapons to foreign governments are popularly referred to as "arms transfers." Table 2 depicts recent trends in FMS cash and commercial arms sales.

**Other Arms Transfer Programs  
(\$ Millions)**

	80	81	82	83	84	85	86*
FMS \$	15300	8550	21500	15000	14554	16000	13000
COMM'L	1900	2060	2300	2080	1675	3020	3565

\*Estimated

**Table 2**

**Security Assistance Guidelines**

How then shall we evaluate the worth of these programs? A good starting point might be to examine security interests to see if there is a logical linkage between those interests and security assistance as an element of national security strategy. An evaluation of the international environment confirms that the influence of the United States has receded from the high water mark of recent decades. In the wake of Vietnam the United States has not yet regained the will to directly confront Soviet-instigated or supported contingencies. Nevertheless, our interests have not changed. As a maritime nation, the United States remains dependent on seaborne access to far-flung markets to conduct the trade that ensures the nation's economic well-being. Those same sealanes also carry the energy and minerals on which the national security is both dependent and vulnerable. Further, the U.S. defense posture requires a mix of forward deployed forces, prepositioned equipment, and en route support and forward basing to enable direct defense of vital interests. Areas of geostrategic importance cannot be forfeited. Global U.S. interests in an increasingly interdependent world will become difficult to defend with only national military forces. Allied cooperation and global stability will increase in importance as U.S. interests proliferate. The United States must pursue a strategy that creates an economic environment conducive to stability. The Soviets have shown little inclination to initiate military adventures far from their shores. At the same time, they have shown no hesitancy to exploit opportunities attendant to social unrest and economic

instability. However, economic stability and growth are elusive objectives that require persistence. To allow those programs the time to bear fruit, nations must survive as sovereign entities. They must have the means to defend themselves. Thus, it would appear appropriate to increase security assistance as an element of national strategy.

Like other programs, security assistance must compete for scarce resources. Available funds must be applied effectively and used efficiently. This requires a careful examination of the circumstances under which security assistance should be extended. The following guidelines comprise a framework with which to evaluate proposed security assistance initiatives.

**First.** The United States must ensure that a decision to extend security assistance is guided by a clear definition of its relation to the national interest. Overly expansive definition of interests has produced what has been described as an ends/means mismatch. Such a situation compromises those interests that merit priority allocation of resources.

**Second.** Security assistance should be relevant to accomplishment of discrete objectives. Some program supporters claim that favorable economic influence should not be discounted. For example, it is claimed that \$21 billion in FY1982 arms orders (\$5 billion of which was in the form of Security Assistance) had approximately a \$60-billion GNP impact due to the multiplier effect on the economy. Those sales resulted in over \$1 billion savings to DoD and were credited with creating 750,000 jobs. Further, each \$1 million in FMS loans generates approximately \$675 thousand in revenues as well as easing balance-of-payments deficits.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, that arms transfers may favorably impact the GNP or enhance domestic employment is interesting, but not relevant to the desired end. There are more efficient means to stimulate the economy. Relevant national security objectives might include:

- To maintain access to regions of resource dependency.
- To maintain favorable order in regions of geostrategic importance.
- To support friends and allies threatened with external aggression or externally supported internal insurrection.

**Third.** Any assistance should be proportional to the threat. In assessing arms requirements of potential recipients, the regional balance must be considered. Introduction of unnecessarily sophisticated or excessive quantities of weapons can create insecurity among neighboring states. In some situations, the arms may be used to settle old disputes that are unrelated to the object of the transfer. Arms in the hands of a sovereign nation are not amenable to external control. Even economic assistance, the Economic Support Fund for example, can be used to military ends since money is a fungible commodity. At the same time, it should be recognized that unilateral restraint is ineffective and contributes to deterioration of stability. The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) has a legislatively mandated

oversight role in the arms transfer process. That agency's thorough analysis of the potential impact of proposed sales can contribute to reduced likelihood of conflict and enhance arms control and crisis stability.

**Fourth.** The United States should be careful in applying its own American standards to evaluations of human rights violations. This is particularly true of countries that have no history of Western style civil liberties. Many nations have long societal traditions that emphasize order and respect for authority at the expense of American style individual rights and freedoms. The threat of withholding security assistance that supports national objectives under these circumstances, seems more a self-inflicted wound than a viable means of promoting human rights.

**Fifth.** The United States should avoid intervention in internal political problems of friendly nations if at all possible. This is especially true where an incumbent regime is guilty of conspicuous human rights abuses and corrupt administration. U.S. support of repressive or corrupt officials may sustain the conditions that invite Marxist exploitation. This caution may have to be modified in cases where insurrection is clearly externally initiated and supported by forces inimical to the interests of the United States. Under those circumstances, it is more appropriate to ensure the continued survival of the regime while continuing to work for reform.

**Sixth.** The nation must avoid program decisions based on zero-sum assumptions. Soviet aid to a particular nation does not necessarily mean that the United States has sustained a loss; nor does it mean that the Soviets have achieved a gain. A nation's decision to accept foreign assistance is based on its relevance to achievement of their own security interests not those of the donor. Acceptance of military assistance does not irrevocably commit nations to a strategic consensus in the East/West conflict. The Soviets discovered that in Egypt and Somalia, while the United States learned the same lesson in Iran and Ethiopia.

**Seventh.** The U.S. Government should be selective in its application of security assistance programs. Each of the previously described programs serves a distinct purpose. It is not necessary to throw the "whole tamale" at each situation. For example, in cases of social unrest, the Economic Support Fund may be most appropriate in establishing an economic infrastructure that promotes political, economic, and social stability. However, it should be remembered that the ESF is not a replacement for development assistance programs, rather it is intended to ensure stability and growth in areas where the United States has clear security concerns. Similarly, in the case of depressed economies, FMS, even at concessional rates, may divert much needed funds from development projects. Grant aid, such as MAP, is more appropriate under those circumstances.

**Eighth.** The United States and its allies must come to grips with the requirement to establish guidelines for an integrated security assistance

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strategy. Unilateral efforts are often undermined when the rest of the "team" plays by a different set of rules. French sales of Exocet missiles to combatants who use them against Western shipping in the Persian Gulf is the most prominent operative example today. The Western alliance must recognize the multilateral impact of bilateral relations in an interdependent world. Failure to do so will sustain an "If we don't sell them someone else will" approach to arms sales. Because of the conflicting nature of national objectives, this will be a difficult task. Success will require consultation, negotiation, and compromise.

**Ninth.** There are finite limits to what the United States can accomplish alone. The NATO allies and Japan can and should contribute more to bolster the security of strategically important nations. Japan claims political and sociological constraints on rearmament as they spend less than one percent of GNP on defense. Simultaneously, they exploited a security environment paid for by the U.S. taxpayers to accumulate a merchandise trade surplus of \$36 billion in 1984. There are no constraints, other than self-imposed, on Japanese contributions to regional security. The major impediment is one that afflicts politicians on a global scale—lack of political courage. The United States may find attempts to promote equitable burden-sharing among its allies bearing more fruit if the security assistance track is pursued.

**Tenth.** The structure of the security assistance program should be reevaluated. In recent years, allocation of program funds has been increasingly focused on the Middle East in general and Egypt and Israel in particular. For example, Egypt and Israel will receive approximately 50 percent of funds appropriated to the Economic Support Fund in FY86. Further, they will also receive 55 percent of FMS financing.<sup>9</sup> The Congress is also considering a supplemental appropriation that would provide emergency economic aid in the form of an additional \$1.5 billion to Israel and \$500 million to Egypt. All of these funds are in the form of grants and forgiven loans. This does not mean that those amounts are not warranted. Certainly, Israel is a special case for the United States, and aid to Egypt was part of the implied U.S. obligation for the Camp David accord. The real point is that, given the previously developed strategic rationale for security assistance as an instrument of policy, the remainder of the international security assistance program is underfunded and unbalanced.

**T**his paper has been both descriptive and prescriptive. It describes the range of security assistance programs available to the policymaker/force planner and proposes guidelines for evaluation of program requirements. Armed with this kit bag of instruments, it is possible to analyze a particular situation and decide which tool is appropriate to the desired result. Security assistance is a viable element of a U.S. foreign assistance package. Some of these programs are suited to economic strategies while others apply

to security problems. Some are appropriate elements of a long-range program, while others support near-term strategies. Some may complement existing initiatives, while others may be viable substitutes. By focusing on the individual program elements, the means appropriate to the desired end is more likely to be selected.

The challenges to U.S. security interests are greater today than at any time since WWII. The United States must be prepared to respond to the valid requirements of its many regional partners. Their stability and survival may hang in the balance. Properly applied, security assistance supports basic security objectives by providing resources to:

- Promote peaceful solutions to regional rivalries.
- Ensure access to critical military facilities and basic resources.
- Confront the growing Soviet military threat.
- Reduce economic and social degradation that breeds domestic violence and invites external intervention.

The ten guidelines are not intended to be carved in stone like the Ten Commandments. They are intended to provide a basis for evaluation while recognizing that the international environment is fraught with uncertainty. Nevertheless, if the guidelines are followed, the security assistance program would become a more efficient and effective tool of U.S. foreign policy. That accomplishment would silence much of the criticism leveled at "arms transfers."

The realities of today's world require that the United States take pragmatic, measured responses to security assistance requests. If the request meets the established criteria, the United States cannot fail to help. While the Administration should not fail to heed valid criticism, neither should it be intimidated or paralyzed with doubt about the validity of its objectives. Given the nature of democracy and the divergent values that form the basis of rational analysis, it is unlikely that a universal consensus will be created in support of any national security initiative. Idealism will continue to place obstacles in the path of any initiative that hints of military solution. Nevertheless, security programs must be formulated on the basis of a world as it exists today, not on visions of a world that might be tomorrow.

In November 1984, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger addressed the National Press Club. His remarks became one portion of a widely publicized public debate over the use of military power as an instrument of diplomacy. The debate featured Weinberger as the voice of moderation urging that the use of military power be limited to strictly defined conditions. His remarks also contained what might be the definitive justification for security assistance. "Recent history has proven that we cannot assume unilaterally the role of the world's defender. We have learned that there are limits to how much of our spirit and blood and treasure we can afford to forfeit in meeting our responsibility to keep peace and freedom. So while we may and should offer substantial amounts of economic and military assistance to our allies in

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their time of need, and help them maintain forces to deter attacks against them—usually we cannot substitute our troops or our will for theirs.”<sup>10</sup>

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