CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE UNPREDICTABLE RESULTS OF COVERT ACTION

In March 1917, the German general staff executed what may still be the most important covert-action dirty trick in history. Hoping to monkeywrench the Russian effort in World War I, the Germans made a deal with what looked to be a bunch of kookie left-wing radicals in Switzerland. These radicals included Swiss socialists and some exiled Russian revolutionaries calling themselves Bolsheviks. They wanted to get their hero, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, back into Russia.

Lenin had left Russia in 1900, after completing a thirteen-year stretch in Siberia for propagandizing on the streets of St. Petersburg. Since then, for seventeen years, he had been hopping harmlessly around Western Europe, writing tracts and getting into arguments with other radicals. He had returned to Russia briefly during the constitutional changes of 1905–1907, but left again in fear that the impending counterrevolutionary repression might land him back in Siberia.

As late as January 1917, Lenin had cautioned some young followers in Geneva, Switzerland, that his generation wouldn't live to see the revolution. His only hope was that theirs might. But a month later, thousands of hungry Russians in line outside empty food shops accomplished his revolution for him. As the mobs swelled, police proved unable and then unwilling to restore order. In barely a week, the tsar was shoved aside and a provisional civilian government set up in his place.

Lenin longed to return and see if he could get anywhere in the power struggle. But because of the war, and his own bad reputation, passage couldn't be arranged. Britain and France flatly refused to let him out of Switzerland on the side their forces controlled, and the Germans were his deadly enemies. According to Edmund Wilson's history, *To the Finland Station*, Lenin actually "thought seriously about going in an airplane, but in the morning he knew he couldn't manage it." Lenin might have been trapped in Switzerland for years.

But the German high command knew of Lenin, and his antiwar writings. It decided that if it injected him into the volatile Russian political picture, he might create just that touch of added turmoil necessary to close the eastern front and remove Russia as a threat to Germany. At least it was worth a shot. So the Germans arranged the famous "sealed" railway car for Lenin's voyage to Sweden. From there, he could make his way home and reenter politics.

As we all know now, the plan worked perfectly—except for one thing.

The lessons never seem to sink in. The history of meddling by one country in the affairs of others, no matter who does it or why, is littered with backfired actions like the Lenin caper. Governments often misjudge what their own people will do; so how can even the most learned and advanced of rulers safely make assumptions about other societies, and other cultures? The manipulators never stop to consider what their dioxin might kill besides the weeds.

Wilbur Crane Eveland, a former CIA undercover operative, published his memoirs, *Ropes of Sand*, in 1980, and in reviewing it, former CIA officer Victor Marchetti told this story from their combined experiences:*

"Eveland recounts how he helped to fix parliamentary elections in Lebanon in 1957, and was planning also to fix the presidential election, scheduled for the following year, on behalf of President Camille Chamoun. But in the 1957 election, the CIA had helped elect so many pro-American candidates that the established Arab nationalist politicians were furious, realizing that the cheating was eroding their power base. Partially as a result of this, the feud that had been brewing between Arab nationalists and the pro-Western Christians erupted into civil war. President Eisenhower sent in the marines; they were withdrawn after a few months, but what had been perhaps the most stable state in the Middle East was on the road to total polarization and eventual disintegration."

Barely two years after Marchetti wrote those words, the marines were back in Lebanon.

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*Eveland's book published by W.W. Norton. The review appeared in *Inquiry* magazine, November 10, 1980.

MACBETH had some good advice about covert-action dirty tricks. Like occasional well-intentioned presidents who can't say "no" to their foreign policy experts, Macbeth was just too weak to follow his own counsel. Shortly before he went ahead and killed the king anyway, he said, "We but teach bloody instructions, which, being taught, return to plague the inventor. This evenhanded justice commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice to our own lips."

Suppose Castro really *was* behind the assassination of John Kennedy. (The bulk of the evidence opposes this thesis, but it's plausible, and sexy, and so it persists.) Would Kennedy and the people of the United States have a just complaint, considering what we tried seventeen times to do to Castro? We started the shooting contest; all you could say about Castro would be that he found a surer marksman. What if Castro started a campaign of industrial sabotage against the U.S., or tried to contaminate some city's water supply?—all variations on a theme we started.

Nowhere does Macbeth's advice apply more strongly than to the export of arms. And yet the United States, under the constant encouragement of the government foreign policy elite, has turned more and more of its economy toward that lethal business. We not only pass the poisoned chalice that will return, we make it one of our chief exports, all in the name of fighting communism.

In the decade of the 1970s, annual international arms transfers, world wide, more than doubled, from $9.1 billion to about $20 billion. Meanwhile, U.S. arms sales rose from $1.1 billion in 1970 to about $16 billion in 1980. While the statistics aren't precisely comparable, the U.S. was clearly leading the way in the arming of humanity.*

It wasn't just the amounts that were scary. The weapons we were exporting became ever more sophisticated, too. And although the U.S. has tried to create legal devices to control who can use these weapons and how, the controls are largely fictitious. For example, the airplanes that the U.S. supplied to Iran in the mid-1970s—really, multifaceted, rocket-equipped, computer-guided airborne mass killing machines—were covered by written limitations on their use. Supposedly, Iran could employ them only to resist attack (presumably by the Soviet Union, or the Soviets' perceived ally, Iraq). But, as we have seen, the main known use of all this equipment during the

*These figures come from a recognized authority on the subject, Andrew J. Pierre, and his book *The Global Politics of Arms Sales* (Princeton University Press, 1981). In an interview, Pierre said he was able to obtain only transfer figures for the world, and sales figures from the U.S. Since sales precede deliveries, sales figures would run ahead of actual transfers. Pierre said he wasn't able to obtain comparable figures, and the author, in phone calls to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, couldn't do better. It's also worth noting that one can't be confident about any precise figures for something like arms deals, which many of the participants are trying to keep secret. But the point here is *relative* growth, which can be sensed even if the figures are imprecise.

U.S.-Iran alliance was to put down a movement for equal rights and self-rule in Baluchistan. These attacks on Baluchistan, besides being basically inhumane, later turned out to have worked against the U.S.'s desire for a Baluchi bulwark against Soviet aggression in Afghanistan.

The weapons *were* finally used against Iraq, in the Iran-Iraq war that began in 1980. But by this time, the U.S. and Iran had become enemies, the Soviet-Iraqi alliance had broken down, and the State Department was *rooting for Iraqi victories*. In this new war, still going on in 1983, our Saudi allies were aiding Iraq. They feared that Iran's superior U.S.-made military equipment would tip the Iran-Iraq power balance, which other countries in the area found handy.

ONCE the U.S. delivers weapons to an ally, usually along with a big contingent of technicians to help the buyer use them effectively, a publicly perceived military alliance is formed. The U.S. is in no position to criticize its ally publicly for violating the terms of the sales agreement. The weapons are used only during crises—their use *creates* crises—when our insistence on legalities would appear to be a sign of betrayal. For instance, over the years, Israel has repeatedly violated the restrictions that the U.S. placed on the weapons it delivered—Israel's use of cluster bombs in the 1982 invasion of Lebanon is one example.

Cluster bombs go off in two waves; the first bomb explosion merely scatters many smaller bombs over a wide area, and then each of those other bombs explodes. This means there is no place to hide, so such bombs are especially sinister when used in populated areas. In Israel's 1967 war with its Arab neighbors, our ally even used U.S.-made weapons to attack a U.S. electronic spy ship, killing thirty American sailors. We kept our mouths shut and stayed loyal, like some Mafia member who just watched his friend be rubbed out for the good of the organization.

Sometimes, it appears, the men who run foreign policy for the U.S. executive branch make under-the-table deals with arms recipients, in order to circumvent the official restrictions. These restrictions have been imposed by Congress to reflect what the U.S. electorate apparently wants, and is told it is getting. The foreign policy experts think they know better.

At times, the intention of the recipient country to use the weapons for offensive purposes is so obvious that signed statements to the contrary seem nothing but a charade, to get around the law. The Reagan administration's arming of various Latin groups trying to overthrow the government of Nicaragua in 1982 and 1983 would seem to be one example of this illegal subterfuge. By law, the groups were being armed merely to intercept shipments of weapons leaving Nicaragua for El Salvador. Despite a lot of combat activity, however, no gun shipments were being intercepted, and anyone could see the real purpose of these groups.

Congress has tried to limit the use of U.S. arms in other ways, such as by requiring purchaser countries to pay at least some respect to human rights. In the case of El Salvador, however, an "embassy official" who declined to be identified practically admitted to the *New York Times* that Reagan routinely lied his way around this law. "It forces the president to overstate things in order to get the aid that must be sent. What choice did he have?" the official complained.* Apparently telling the truth wasn't even under consideration.

IN the case of Central America, however, the proximity of the fighting, and the fact that public attention had been focused on the region for a long time, allowed the situation to be exposed so Congress and the public could wrestle with the issue. The long, U.S.-supported war against the desert peoples of the Western Sahara is another matter. Few Americans even know that anybody lives on the Sahara Desert, let alone that Saharans have their own country (or want to), or that since 1975 U.S. high-technology weapons have targeted them. We have killed thousands of these people and made most of the rest refugees.

The Western Sahara is hardly a threat to anyone—a hunk of sand and gravel about the size of Colorado, which probably would have fewer than a million inhabitants even if all the refugees came back home. Other than the basic interest we have everywhere in quietly encouraging self-determination, civil liberties, prosperity, and free markets, our only interest in the Western Sahara would seem to be having access to the territory's phosphate deposits.

When things are normal, the Western Sahara is the world's second-largest supplier of phosphate. The largest supplier is Morocco. And Morocco is the U.S. ally that is using our arms and advisors to fight the Saharan independence movement; the Moroccan monarchy declares that it has an ancient claim on Saharan territory. If Morocco wins, it will control the Saharan mines as well as its own, and thus have a lock on more than half the world's phosphate. In fact, just by continuing the fight, Morocco has shut down the Saharan mines, and thus eliminated its main competition. (If either side tried to operate the mines now, attacks by the other would close the mines down again.)

So helping the Moroccans in their Saharan war would seem to be contrary to the interests of phosphate consumers—for example, the American public. On the other hand, if the Saharan people were allowed their independence, consumers would have two major independent African sources of phosphate, competing for sales.

Not only does the arming of Morocco alienate the Saharans, who could wind up controlling the phosphate, it also alienates neighboring Algeria, an important supplier of oil and natural gas. Algeria is afraid of Moroccan strength, and for good reason: the king of Morocco not only claims

*February 26, 1982; the reporter was Raymond Bonner.

that his ancestors endowed him with sovereignty over the Western Sahara, he claims they endowed him with sovereignty over much of Algeria, too. If he gets the Sahara, who knows where his army will stop?

Algeria, therefore, has been the main source of support for the Saharans. Algeria had to fight a bitter war with France to gain its own independence, and it spent the first couple of decades of that independence living under socialism. It was sympathetic to the Soviet Union on most international matters. But in recent years, Algeria has manifested an understandable desire to edge away from that, and to entertain trade and friendship with Western countries. In fact, Algeria helped negotiate the freeing of the U.S. hostages from Iran in 1980, and when the hostages stopped in Algeria on their way home, they were widely reported as having landed on "free soil."

One would imagine that the United States would want to encourage this trend by refraining from belligerent actions like arming Morocco, a country that Algeria legitimately fears. Thus every realistic inducement seems to be toward nonintervention in the Saharan dispute, with benevolent feelings toward Saharan independence. Yet all these inducements have been ignored, for the standard geopolitical reasons. We continue to cast all international disputes in the mold of our own dispute with the Soviet Union. So, unbeknownst to most Americans, their tax money has been staked on Morocco.

From the looks of the war so far, though, the Moroccans can't win. Nor should they. They can come down to the Sahara in modern uniforms, with the best guns, tanks, planes, and helicopters that the U.S. can provide. But they wind up being evacuated, leaving their dead behind. The soldiers of Polisario,* the Saharan political organization, have the run of the land.

Dressed in turbans and robes and driving Land Rovers, they have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to take U.S. observers all over the Western Sahara, from the Algerian border to the Atlantic Ocean, even within sight of the few fortified cities the Moroccans hole up in. The Polisario display captured weapons, all of U.S. manufacture, including ground radar, cluster bombs, air-to-surface guided missiles, mines, various kinds of artillery, and downed F-5 jets. On the squares of towns long since deserted by their civilian populations, the Saharans display the bodies of dozens of Moroccan soldiers, lined up side by side looking like a flagstone footpath.

The Saharans can't stay in any one place for long. Given a sitting target, the Moroccans could call in air power and strike relentlessly with electronic guidance systems. So the population lives as refugees. Most have moved voluntarily to areas under Polisario control, including semi-autonomous refugee camps in Algeria. Very few Saharans fled to the several Saharan coastal cities under Moroccan control. The overall size of those cities has dwindled by 25 percent since before the war, and most of those

*An acronym for the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro, two former territories linked by the Spanish colonialists.

who live there now may not be Saharan. The one American reporter* who has talked to and written about the townspeople says most are transplanted Moroccans sent down to Moroccanize the country.

There is abundant evidence that most Saharans think the Moroccans are alien invaders. A U.N. mission was dispatched to the area in 1975, composed of representatives from Iran (then a U.S. ally), the Ivory Coast (a government closely tied to France and the West), and Cuba. The mission unanimously reported "an overwhelming consensus among the Saharans within the territory in favor of independence and opposing integration with any neighboring country." The commission said the Polisario had "considerable support among all sections of the population."

Our war against them stayed secret until 1979, when the Polisario displayed its captured U.S. equipment for Representative Stephen Solarz, a Brooklyn Democrat who chaired the House subcommittee on Africa. In authorizing arms for Morocco, Congress had specified that they could be used only for defense, and thus not in the Saharan war. The U.S. government had insisted all along that this restriction was being enforced.

But when Solarz and a few others howled that the law was being violated, the Carter administration just asked Congress to reverse the ban on U.S. intervention. Moroccan press agentry has long sought to woo U.S. support for its Saharan campaign by falsely painting the Polisario as lackeys of Moscow. This idea plays to the proclivity of the U.S. press to categorize everyone in the same us-or-them reference that the U.S. government uses. On November 23, 1979, the *Wall Street Journal* printed a page-one story, stating in its lead, "Cubans may be fighting on the guerrillas' side."

No other report of Cubans in the Saharan war has appeared, before or since, but the story quoted "military sources" as saying that "some guerrillas killed in recent battles were uncircumcised outsiders who 'looked Cuban.'" The story conceded that no Cuban prisoners had been taken, but suggested that this was because the Moroccans killed most of their prisoners.

The story ran under the headline, "Stakes Are Substantial as Guerrillas Step Up War Against Morocco," implying that the guerrillas were aiming to overthrow the government of Morocco, rather than to establish a government of their own in what had been a separate colony since the nineteenth century. The story said that the U.S. side wanted a referendum on independence, but that the guerrillas "oppose any such vote," which is the exact opposite of the truth. The story said the Sahara had a "long history as part of Morocco"—untrue—and that "it is likely that Morocco would win any referendum" because most "tribesmen" were loyal to Morocco's King Hassan.

The story, presented as a straight news account, was probably the most prominent write-up the Saharan war has had in the U.S. press. It warned

*Tami Hultman of *Africa News*, who has also written about the Saharan war for the *Washington Post*.

that if King Hassan, "a friend of the United States," didn't maintain control of the Sahara (which he never had), "Morocco's free-enterprise government could be weakened," and "leftists could gain another African foothold. If American aid proves ineffective, the U.S. could appear to the world as a weak and indecisive ally that waited too long to help a friend in a showdown," the story said. Briefer accounts that appeared in back pages of other papers reported the same situation.

In fact, the Soviet Union had studiously avoided aiding the Polisario, perhaps because of its strong trade ties to Morocco. The Soviets, too, need Moroccan phosphate, and the Soviets are Morocco's biggest customer for citrus fruit. Morocco—not Algeria, not Guinea, not Angola, not Mozambique, but Morocco—is, in fact, the U.S.S.R.'s largest trade partner in Africa.

Morocco's small pro-Soviet political group ardently supports King Hassan's war effort. No Eastern bloc country recognized the Polisario government-in-exile. On the other hand, the Organization of African Unity, the main regional organization of African governments, voted thirty-three to two with eight abstentions to endorse the Polisario's call for independence and free elections in the Western Sahara.

Washington has long thought of King Hassan as being a pro-Western voice in the Moslem group of nations, where, at least until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the West had been short of friends. Hassan declined to join other Moslem countries in condemning the Camp David peace settlement between Egypt and Israel, and pro-Israeli groups in the U.S. still see him as soft on the Israeli issue.

These groups make up an abnormally large part of the Brooklyn constituency of Representative Solarz. After returning from Western Sahara, Solarz had said, "I came away from my trip persuaded that the proposed sale of offensive arms to Morocco for use in the Western Sahara would have significantly negative consequences for U.S. foreign policy, and that the advantages cited in behalf of such action are either minimal or nonexistent."

But 1980 was an election year, so Solarz, chairman of the House subcommittee on Africa, caved in to the pressure from the pro-Israeli groups in his district. In Congress, he actually supported the sale of high-tech air weapons to Morocco. Deadly cluster bombs were supplied. So were heavy transport helicopters—needed because the Polisario controls all the roads in the Sahara making it impossible for the Moroccans to use any surface transportation bwtween cities or military bases.

The result was predictable. The Polisario didn't give up. It just went out and got more sophisticated weapons of its own, probably from Algeria or Libya, or someone else who got them from the Soviet Union years ago. The Soviets probably didn't know their weapons were going to be used to fight Morocco, any more than we originally knew that U.S. weapons were going to be used to fight the Polisario.

But in for a dime, in for a dollar, and now the Polisario acquired portable, heat-seeking surface-to-air missiles, among the scariest nonnuclear weapons on earth. They can knock the Moroccan helicopters out of the sky, and they can just as well bring down a Pan Am 747. Fortunately, the Polisario have thus far *not* turned out to be as irresponsible as Moroccan propaganda would have predicted.

There is an ironic similarity between the Polisario soldiers and the Afghan guerrillas who have become the object of much sympathy in the U.S. If you were to stand a Polisario fighter side-by-side with a *mujahadeen* (Afghan guerrilla), you probably couldn't tell them apart. Their dress is almost identical from the turban on down, except that the Afghan stuffs wool into his robes in winter. Both would be devout Moslems, most likely of the Sunni sect. Both would likely be carrying Soviet-style AK-47 automatic rifles that were originally supplied by the Soviet bloc for use by others.

Their responses to a series of ideological questions might be hard to distinguish. On economic policy, they would share a fundamental conviction that their goats ought to be able to graze the same turf their fathers' goats grazed. Yet one, the Afghan, is looked upon as a courageous freedom fighter, an *anti-communist*, while the other, the Polisario guerrilla, is bombed, strafed, and rocketed by U.S.-supplied planes for being a *communist*. Actually, for all our sympathy, any military aid the Afghans have received from the U.S. wouldn't last them ten minutes against the kind of firepower we have supplied to King Hassan of Morocco to use against the Polisario.

The Polisario guerrillas are, if anything, more in line with American ideals than is the king of Morocco, or, for that matter, the governments of many other U.S. allies. "All we want is a plebiscite," says Magid Abdouallah, the Polisario's observer at the U.N. "The United Nations has called for a plebiscite, the OAU has called for a plebiscite, and only Morocco will not go along." Of course, a plebiscite—a free election—is something King Hassan hasn't offered to try in his own country. Yet the U.S. has staked its reputation, and the blood of the Saharans, on Hassan.

Historically, the kingdom of Morocco never had sovereignty over Western Sahara. It did have some trading concessions, but in the nineteenth century Morocco was colonized by France, while the Sahara became Spanish. Morocco was among the first colonial nations to gain independence; that was in 1956. Spanish Sahara was one of the last. A dying Francisco Franco gave it up in 1975, and didn't lift a finger to stop the Moroccan army from marching in when his own army left.

Africa News, a weekly digest published in Durham, North Carolina, and probably the most consistently reliable source of information about Africa,*

*The staff monitors African shortwave radio broadcasts and African newspapers, and has contacts that must make the CIA envious. It also operates on a shoestring and appreciates donations. Address: P.O. Box 3851, Durham, N.C. 27702.

has published evidence that the U.S. may even have helped ignite the Saharan war, by covertly trying to engineer what Henry Kissinger thought would be an easy Moroccan takeover. As Franco lay dying, Kissinger sent General Vernon Walters, then deputy head of the CIA, on a secret mission to the Mediterranean, to tighten the U.S. hold on Morocco by doing a favor for King Hassan. According to the testimony of Spanish military officials before the Spanish Chamber of Deputies, quoted by *Africa News*, Walters persuaded Franco not to interfere with Morocco's plan to annex the Sahara.*

Walters wouldn't comment on the story, but his stated reason for not commenting certainly doesn't cast doubt on it: "It would look like the king of Morocco and the king of Spain [*sic*] are pawns of the United States, and that wouldn't be in anyone's interest," he told *Africa News*.†

It is unlikely that the Saharan war would still be going on if not for a steady—and until 1980 illegal—flow of weapons from the U.S. Our arms sales to Morocco, which had been running less than $10 million a year, soared to $296 million in 1975, and stayed high. Foreign military credits from the U.S. government to Morocco also rose more than tenfold, from $3.6 million in 1974 to $45 million in 1978. In 1980, Saudi Arabia agreed to pay $232.5 million for F-5E and other jet fighters and helicopters destined for Morocco. Some sixteen F-5A fighters were transferred from Iran and Jordan to Morocco.

In 1977, Westinghouse was authorized to sell Morocco a $200 million air defense system, which brought U.S. technicians into the Western Sahara. There followed more than $100 million worth of helicopter gunships. Morocco faced no new outside threats. Clearly all this gadgetry was intended for the Saharan war, where it could not legally be used.

In Algeria, an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 Saharan refugees live in tents and govern themselves through a system of indirect elections without Algerian or other outside supervision. Each camp has committees for health, education, handicraft (including tent making), food distribution, and the administration of law. There are clinics and schools. Almost everyone is said to be involved in some part of the self-governing process.

The *Wall Street Journal* article on the war reported—from the Moroccan side—that "most of" the refugees in the Algerian camps were "victims of the recent droughts in the Sahara," for whom "war is considered something of a diversion." It said the refugees also included Moroccans who were

*Terms of the alleged deal weren't spelled out, but Morocco lets the U.S. use military air facilities there (though these are hardly irreplaceable; Morocco is no better positioned strategically than many nearby NATO countries). Morocco also consented to deploy its troops as African window-dressing to the international "peace" force in Zaire's Shaba province after the 1978 U.S.-French-Belgian intervention there.

†The author tried many times over several months to reach Walters about this. His office said he was traveling and unreachable by phone, and when the day of his promised return finally arrived, the office said he had already left on another trip.

"involved in attempts to overthrow King Hassan and fled Morocco during ensuing purges. . . ."

But George Houser, who was helping distribute U.S. charity in the camps on behalf of the Africa Fund in New York,* says, "I have visited many refugee camps in Africa over many years, but I have never seen a group of people who are as self-reliant and as well-organized as are these Saharawi [Saharan] people. . . . I had the feeling, as others have, that in visiting these camps I was seeing something of what the nation of the Western Sahara would be like under the independent control of Polisario. I had a feeling that in visiting these camps I was visiting a nation in exile."

Women and children predominate in the camps. Most men are back in the Sahara, fighting. They have on occasion taken the battle into southern Morocco itself. There is a danger that such incidents could spark a full-scale war between Morocco and Algeria. That could cause terrible carnage, and set back economic progress for the whole region. Ironically, it could also bring down the Moroccan monarchy, which the American republic is, for some reason, shedding enormous blood (all of it other people's) trying to preserve.

What Lenin might reach his Finland station in such confusion?

IN the Saharan war, the uncontrolled and illegal use of U.S. weapons appears to have been the conscious, though secret, intention of a few foreign policy manipulators. In other cases, though, it is the intention of no one. CIA, army, and State Department officials all acknowledge that they don't keep close tabs on American weapons shipped overseas. Despite the law that says they must, they can't.

The law not only limits the occasions of the use of these weapons; it bans the recipient country from reselling them without U.S. permission. Sometimes, recipient countries can pressure the U.S. into letting them spread armaments in ways that might be contrary to U.S. interests. In 1981, for example, Israel, arguing that it needed foreign exchange, persuaded the Reagan administration to approve its sale of jet fighters to Ecuador; the Carter administration had vetoed that sale.

Most Americans know why we arm Israel with jet fighters. But how many Americans know anything about Ecuador, or who its enemies are? Its main enemy is Peru, with whom it fights intermittent shooting wars over the ownership of certain tracts in the Amazon. Peru, in 1981, was just pulling back from twelve years of socialism and military dictatorship, and effecting plans for democracy and private enterprise. Did we really want to threaten Peru just then? A few months after the jet sale was announced, terrorists bombed the U.S. embassy in Lima.

Do we want sophisticated, high-tech weapons in that part of South America

*Address: 198 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10038.

at all, or are we better off keeping the wars small? The Argentine navy that invaded the Falkland Islands and fought England in 1982 relied on ships and planes obtained from the United States. That firepower, which we supplied Argentina, not only killed Englishmen, it also put the U.S. in a terrible diplomatic quandary. We wound up alienating much of Latin America by supporting Britain, which immediately weakened our negotiating position in the Central American crisis.

AT least Israel asked U.S. permission before selling its U.S.-made arms, as the law requires. Other recipients don't always bother. U.S. intelligence usually can keep track of something as big as a squadron of jet fighters. But watching smaller arms—including many kinds of powerful missiles and automatic weapons—is impossible. There is plenty of evidence that recipients all over the world have disregarded resale restrictions.

As a result of our various adventures in fighting communism, and the Soviets' in promoting it, the world is awash in arms that are lightweight, lethal, low-cost, and easy to use. Getting them poses no serious impediment to any group of revolutionaries, vigilantes, or just plain nuts who are willing to spend a little time looking.

The word *terrorist* has become politically contentious in recent years, with persons on both the left and right ends of the political spectrum applying it to the other end's heroes. But almost all the people who have worn the terrorist label, willingly or unwillingly, do have one thing in common: they are using weapons that were produced for another purpose.

The U.S. screams about a truckload of American-made M-16s that had been sent to Vietnam and is later found with leftists in Honduras. Afghan rebels rely on Soviet-made AK-47s they looted from the communist government. Most of the guerrillas in the world today may be fighting with arms intended to defend the very kind of government they are being used to attack.

There are interesting parallels on the larger arms scene, too. Possibly the most valuable bases the Soviet Union and the United States have in the Third World, from the standpoint of both modern facilities and strategic location, were provided for each by the other. The United States, thinking it had an ally in southeast Asia that would be a bastion of anti-communism, built a wonderful naval and air facility at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. In 1975, the Soviets took it over, giving them their only modern military outpost on China's other flank and allowing them a presence in the Indian Ocean.

Meanwhile, the Soviets, thinking they had a real ally in the horn of Africa, built a marvelous new naval and air facility at Berbera, in Somalia. This allowed them a military presence near both the Persian Gulf and the potential turmoil spots of Africa. To their surprise, however, in 1977, Somalia's dictator, Siyad Barre, kicked the Russians out and sought aid from the West. Lo, without overthrowing a single government, the U.S. was offered, and

accepted, this spiffy Russian-built base, providing the only mililtary thing we legitimately needed and didn't have: a means of protecting our commerce with Persian Gulf ports.

The United States and the Soviet Union bear about equal responsibility for letting the arms traffic get out of control. Sophisticated new weapons designed to put increased firepower into the hands of individual soldiers are rolling off assembly lines in both countries, and are being shipped to third parties all over the globe, after which no real accounting is kept. The arms often wind up on the black market.

From a shelf in almost any library you can pull down a volume of *Jane's Infantry Weapons* and find advertisements for mayhem. An antipersonnel grenade maker guarantees "uniform dispersion of fragments in every case." A firm called Euromissile proclaims, "A mere infantry soldier now has the means of killing enemy tanks anywhere within a 6,500-foot range... minimum training required." Euromissile lists addresses in France and Germany that you can write to. If you can destroy a tank, think what you could do to a speaker's platform. Besides the ads, *Jane's* features detailed and fully illustrated instructions on how to assemble and operate almost every known small arm from the Thompson submachine gun to the M-11 and the Strella.

The M-11 is the perfect assassination weapon. It is a machine gun held in one hand, like a pistol. It fires bullets by gas propulsion, without sound, flash, or smoke. It can empty its 32-round clip in 1.7 seconds. It comes in two pieces, each 9 inches long, and weighs about 7 pounds. Some 14,000 of the M-11, and a similar M-10, were made in Georgia in the 1970s, priced at about $80 each—though when the manufacturer went out of business, leftover M-10s were sold at auction for $5.

"They're all over the world now," says Geoffrey WerBell of Powder Springs, Georgia, whose father helped design the guns. "Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Venezuela, different countries in South America. The Israelis bought the initial production." The WerBell family has done work for the U.S. government for many years. They don't like to discuss every detail, but rumor has it they design such things as explosive pens and cigarette packs for the CIA.

The WerBells are particularly adept at silencers for guns. Explains Geoffrey WerBell, using a silencer "doesn't imply anything, it simply implies that if you're going to use it you don't want everybody else to get excited and cause great pandemonium." Says another U.S. gun merchant, discussing the capabilities of the M-11, "I could kill a hundred people in the next room and you'd never hear it." The WerBells have been involved in many private international arms deals.

The Strella is a Soviet-made, heat-seeking, precision guided missile. You can tote one comfortably on your back, yet it will knock a jetliner out of the sky. It is the weapon the Polisario obtained after the U.S. improved the quantity and quality of aircraft firepower it was delivering to Morocco. You

can get tips on exactly how to use the Strella by reading *Jane's Infantry Weapons*, which also lists some countries that have them: People's Yemen, Egypt (which got them while it was still a Soviet ally), North Korea, and India.

In 1973, Italian police burst in on five Arab terrorists setting up Strellas in a rented apartment 4 miles from the Leonardo da Vinci Airport near Rome, directly under the traffic pattern for the north-south runway. Italian authorities speculated that the weapons came from a Soviet consignment to Egypt, which then sold them to Libya, which has become an equal opportunity deployer for the guerrilla industry.

Libya is one of two main arms supply sources for the Irish Republican Army, the other being the United States. At least two arms shipments from Libya to the IRA have been intercepted—one by boat on a tip from intelligence sources, the other when a box of weapons marked "machine parts" was accidentally broken open by a clumsy British airport worker. Libya has plenty to offer. The U.S.S.R. has supplied it with large quantities of, among other things, RPG-7 rockets, which weigh less than 10 pounds and will destroy a tank, let alone a limousine or speaker's platform. The IRA has used RPG-7s against armored British military vehicles and police stations.

From the U.S., the IRA gets rifles. The most popular are the AR-15, made by Colt Industries, and the AR-180, made by Armalite Inc. Both may be bought legally in the U.S. by almost anyone. Both are versions of the M-16, the principal U.S. military rifle, which was developed by Armalite (the WerBells say they helped design the noise moderator). Colt bought manufacturing rights to the M-16. *Jane's Infantry Weapons* prices the M-16 at $85, though the AR-15 and AR-180 commonly retail for about twice that much.

Federal law prohibits the sale to civilians of fully automatic weapons like the M-16; "automatic" means that a squeeze of the trigger causes repeat firing until either the trigger is released or the magazine is empty. Fully automatic rifles are the same as machine guns. The law against selling them to civilians appears to be why the AR-15 and AR-180 were designed. They are different from the M-16 in that they are semiautomatic; that is, they produce one shot for each pull of the trigger—so they're legal.

But a few hours of tinkering can undoctor the AR-15 and AR-180 so they, too, will be fully automatic. Many IRA weapons the British have recovered have been converted in this way. The AR-180 also has a folding stock, so it can be easily concealed. Still, by U.S. law, it and the AR-15 are "sporting" weapons. Guns found on IRA members have been traced by their serial numbers to U.S. buyers, but without further evidence the buyers can't be prosecuted.

That's because the State Department doesn't require the registration of serial numbers of weapons shipped overseas. A federal court in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, reversed the convictions of five men acccused of shipping

more than a hundred AR-180s to the IRA. Despite traced serial numbers showing that the men bought the guns, the court ruled that there was no way to prove they didn't sell the guns to some third party who then transferred the guns to the IRA.

The defense in the Philadelphia case argued successfully that the machine guns could have entered Ireland from anywhere. A half-million firearms a year are legally exported from the U.S., not including the three firearms everyone is allowed to take with him out of the country without a special export license. In addition, many U.S. firearms, including M-16s, and AR-180s that can be converted into M-16s, are made overseas by agreement with U.S. companies.

Clearly, there are far more military-type guns than there are soldiers in the world, as evidenced by the tremendous stores held by private arms dealers. The biggest of these is generally thought to be Samuel Cummings, who was set up in business while working for the CIA; supposedly, Cummings's formal tie with the CIA has been cut, although obviously they still interact.

According to Cummings himself, and others, his warehouses bulge with more than half a million light arms and more than 100 million rounds of ammunition, enough to equip an active-duty army the size of those of the U.S and U.S.S.R. From his base in Monaco, Cummings controls agents around the world, and maintains connections with East bloc, West bloc, and Third World governments. He says he can buy surplus machine guns for as little as $5 to $25 each. Both the Costa Rican civil war of the 1950s and the Bay of Pigs invasion, and possibly other wars, were fought with weapons that *both sides* had bought from Sam Cummings.

Whatever his connection with the CIA now, Cummings clearly wouldn't be in business without the contacts that were bought for him by the U.S. taxpayer. He learned the gun trade in the army in the 1940s and joined the CIA right afterward. His private firm laundered weapons for the CIA in the 1950s. Though he apparently sells now only to governments, those governments often deliver arms to the black market, either by design, corruption, or carelessness. The Soviet bloc is believed to have its own private arms distributor, a Czech trading company that operates through a purportedly independent arms merchant in Amsterdam.

Those who don't want to pay the prices of private arms dealers have equipped themselves through theft from the many U.S. military depots all over the world. A House Armed Services subcommittee has reported that many tens of thousands of U.S. military weapons have been lost or stolen from storage, that records were "haphazard" and that "losses of sizeable quantities of weapons and munitions were frequently written off as inventory errors without any investigation."

Many weapons are distributed through the aid and training that the U.S. gives to Third World police forces, particularly in Latin America. Police are shipped potent U.S. military weapons, then pass them out to private right-

wing terror groups representing businessmen and big landowners. Latin exiles in the U.S. make convincing cases that such weapons handouts have occurred in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, and Uruguay, as well as in Central America.

The rightist groups set about to provide the kind of ruthless vigilantism that has decimated the populations of El Salvador, Guatemala, and other countries. But often their nonprofessionalism lands the guns in the hands of guerrillas, either through capture in a fight, or through theft from poorly guarded storehouses.

MUCH of the vigilante violence the U.S. spawns abroad has returned to create terror in our own country. The investigation into the killing of Orlando Letelier, the Chilean exile leader living in the U.S., and his American assistant, uncovered a sickening chain of connections. CIA operatives had cooperated extensively with counterpart agencies in both Chile and South Africa that showed no respect for U.S. peace or justice.

Chilean agents with whom the CIA worked had hired Americans to help in their hit jobs against Letelier and others in the U.S. They worked also with anti-Castro Cuban exiles living in the U.S. to project terror onto the Cuban exile community here. As recently as 1978, four Cubans were acquitted of weapons charges in federal court, Miami, on defense claims that they were working on behalf of the U.S. government, even though the Justice Department, on behalf of the government, denied it. The men were arrested with a 20-millimeter cannon, a 50-caliber machine gun, a 30-caliber machine gun, and five AR-15 rifles.

The Justice Department made a sincere—in fact, extraordinarily diligent—attempt to prosecute the Letelier and other killings. But most of the culprits escaped because the Chilean government, which owes its existence in large part to U.S. covert action, refused to turn over murderers and witnesses. By some accounts, Chilean officials threatened and intimidated witnesses in the U.S. The U.S. government leveled no meaningful sanctions on the Chilean government for this behavior.

DINA, the Chilean secret police, which the CIA helped organize, plotted to kill U.S. citizens and visitors to the country on the streets of Washington, D.C.—Macbeth's cup of poison, returned again. All during the plot, DINA was dealing with active and retired CIA personnel. Among the retired agents were Edwin Wilson and Frank Terpil. Wilson and Terpil used their CIA connections to sell high-tech weapons and explosives all over the world. Their main client, though, was Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya, who hired them to arrange the murder of a Libyan opponent of his in Colorado.

Former CIA men regularly go into business working privately for countries where they had once represented the U.S. government. The pattern begins at the top—former CIA directors Richard Helms and William Colby do a

big business consulting for foreign countries—and reaches all the way down to people like Daniel Arnold, former CIA station chief in Thailand, who now gets $50,000 a year as the Washington representative of the same Thai government that the CIA used to practically run.

THE two main organizations funneling heroin into the United States over the past quarter century both started in business with a nest egg provided by American taxpayers through our anti-communist intelligence agencies. One was the remnant band of soldiers from Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang army, who kept invading Yunnan province, China, from a base in Burma during the early days of Mao Zedong's revolutionary government.

When the KMT (as the Kuomintang was called) soldiers were finally driven out of Yunnan, many did not go to Taiwan. Instead, they stayed in the jungly, mountainous Golden Triangle, where Burma, Thailand, and Laos meet, near China. They spent most of their time in a region of Burma that has carried on a prolonged rebellion against the Burmese government, and is beyond control of that government except for occasional armed incursions.

The one efficient crop in that region is the opium poppy, and the KMT army took control of collecting and buying opium from local farmers, converting it into heroin in local laboratories, transporting it south out of the jungle, and, finally, selling it. The CIA had supported the KMT when Chiang's men were still an active thorn in China's side. The agency's responsibility for the resultant KMT heroin network might be considered unwitting had its role stopped there.

But Civil Air Transport, and its successor CIA airline, Air America, continued servicing the KMT at remote airstrips. And when the Vietnam war came along, the CIA's support service for dope dealers increased. Montagnard (or Hmong, or Meo) tribesmen, whom the CIA organized to fight the various communist guerrilla groups in the region, made their living growing opium poppies. And Air America often flew the product out to Saigon or other Asian capitals for transshipment to the U.S., although there has never been conclusive proof that CIA headquarters in Virginia directed this activity.*

The other big heroin operation the CIA helped get off the ground worked out of the Mediterranean, particularly the port of Marseilles. The racketeers

*The best published documentation of all this may be found in *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* by Alfred W. McCoy (Harper & Row, 1972). Other sources for the author include numerous interviews with U.S. officials and others in southeast Asia and the U.S., and viewing some truly remarkable films that British television crews made inside the Golden Triangle. For contacts that led to these films and many of the interviews, I owe a great debt to Joseph Nellis, Washington lawyer and former chief counsel to various congressional anticrime committees, and to an outstanding Thai journalist who must remain anonymous.

there were put on the CIA payroll right after World War II to buy their help in keeping the dock unions out of leftist hands. They worked with the Sicilian Mafia, which struck its bargain with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the CIA's predecessor, during World War II.

Charles "Lucky" Luciano, perhaps the most powerful Mafia boss who ever lived, arranged for the Mafia to aid the allied invasion of Sicily. In exchange for this, he was freed from prison in the U.S. in 1946, and allowed to leave the country for Sicily. From his base there, he continued to direct racketeering in the U.S. until his death in 1962. For a while, he even took up residence in Cuba, where the Mafia ran casinos and laundered money that was smuggled in from its Las Vegas and other U.S. operations.

Luciano's lieutanant, who took over formal leadership of his U.S. crime family when Luciano was deported, was Vito Genovese. Under arrangements Luciano set up, Genovese was translator for top U.S. Army officials, as Italy was captured and the Fascist government replaced.

In the 1970s, much of the U.S. heroin traffic started coming from Latin America, which also supplied the increasingly popular drug, cocaine. Many of the traffickers were known to the CIA, But the agency kept their identities and their businesses secret, in exchange for intelligence about leftist organizations, which the CIA obviously considered a greater threat. Whether the average American voter and taxpayer would have agreed that nipping revolutionary movements in the bud in various banana republics was more important than keeping heroin off the streets of American cities is debatable. But they never had a chance to debate it.

The CIA valued the intelligence that drug dealers could collect. This tradeoff also gave them leverage over important politicians from all political factions in Latin America. Politicians, regardless of their ideology, seemed unable to resist the lure of heroin money. Many knew that the CIA had information that could ruin them—although they also knew that such blackmail was a two-way street, and that they could sabotage or expose CIA operations.

The CIA's attitude in all this was summed up by Joseph Nellis, former chief counsel to the House of Representatives' Select Committee on Narcotics and now a Washington lawyer. While with the committee, Nellis made a daring trip into the Golden Triangle to meet the major heroin warlords and hear their offers to sell their product to the U.S. government, which could then destroy it.

Says Nellis, "The CIA did help bring some very powerful, cheap heroin into Vietnam, out of the Shan states, the northern states of Burma, [in exchange] for radio communications intelligence. In return for that intelligence, the CIA winked at what went in its airplanes." Officials in the Drug Enforcement Administration also confirm this.

Dope shipment plans and military information were often discussed in the same private radio transmissions, because intelligence agents and goverment

officials were involved in the drug trade. Today, in Latin America, the same thing goes on, Nellis says.

"Drug traffickers employ very sophisticated means of communications," Nellis says. "Let's assume the CIA has infiltrated a drug smuggling ring [in Latin America] and it is using a very high-powered radio. Maybe the radio involved in the drug smuggling operation is also transmitting defense secrets in code. I was an intelligence operative in World War II, and I can tell you that the ways of the intelligence community are devious. If a message were passed to a Latin American government, the CIA would know about it within twenty-four hours."

Why let the Latin smugglers get away with dope trafficking? "It's important for the CIA to know which members of the cabinet can be bought," Nellis says. "If CIA deals with a cabinet minister, they have to know whether he's honest or not. *Mordida* [the payoff] is a way of life down there." So the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's hands are often tied by anti-communist considerations.

"If the DEA runs across a high-powered radio, it has no way of knowing [whether] the CIA is running it," Nellis says, "[If] it tells the friendly government [about the dope ring], the CIA loses a listening post. The DEA would be told to stay away from it because the defense implications are more important than the narcotics implications. These decisions are made in the National Security Council, where they should be made. And none of us ever knows all the reasons."

Probably the most vivid example on record of this kind of thing occurred June 22, 1972, in the office of Panama's dictatorial chief of state, General Omar Torrijos. John Ingersoll, director of the Justice Department's Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (precursor of the DEA) came to Torrijos in person, almost on his knees, with an astonishing disclosure.

The U.S. Customs Service had uncovered, and brought to the BNDD's attention, a giant smuggling ring. One courier alone was stopped at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York with 175 *pounds* of heroin in his luggage. The investigation, still secret, had found General Torrijos's brother Moises, Panama's ambassador to Spain, at the center of the dope ring. It wasn't the first occasion when high Panamanian officials had been found in such a position. But apparently the upper echelons of the U.S. government were most concerned with maintaining General Torrijos's cooperation in spying on and thwarting left-wing groups.

Our foreign policy experts were terrified of offending the leader of this den of dope purveyors. They were also terrified that the citizens of the United States—who had not been told any of this—might find out and demand a halt to support for Torrijos. So Director Ingersoll—obviously not acting on his own—traveled to Panama and laid out for the dictator all the evidence about the ring, involving Moises Torrijos and other prominent Panamanians. Then, according to the official BNDD minutes of the meeting, he said:

"Recently a grand jury in New York City has indicted Moises Torrijos on a charge of conspiring to smuggle heroin into the United States. This indictment is sealed, in the hands of the court, and has not been released. [The reason such indictments are kept secret is so the persons named in them will continue to move about in public until they can be arrested.]

"If Ambassador Torrijos enters the United States," Ingersoll went on, "he will be arrested and prosecuted. This information is limited to a few individuals in the United States government, and we hope General Torrijos will be able to deal with the matter before it becomes public knowledge. I am passing it on in the hope you will investigate the matter further, recall your brother, and persuade him to remove himself from the illicit drug business."

General Torrijos's response was equally remarkable. "The general stated that he would recall Ambassador Torrijos and investigate the matter," the BNDD notes read. "If his brother was guilty, he would go to jail. However, he could not have his brother in prison while his mother was living. He . . . felt that he would find that his brother was duped. . . . He described his brother as an intellectual idiot who does not understand the difficulties of life and how to survive."

Despite the general's promises, and his assessment of his brother's competence, he kept his brother on as ambassador to Spain for another six years, during which the brother steered clear of U.S. soil. The U.S. government did nothing, and the public remained unaware. The heroin may well have kept flowing. The general removed his brother the smuggler from office only when this embarrassing episode was uncovered. That happened quite by chance, as Congress investigated the treaty for turning over the Panama Canal. How many similar episodes have taken place—or are taking place today—is anybody's guess.