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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense or any other governmental entity. Written as an unclassified document using public information, this thesis will only reference unclassified material despite the available classified sources. References to this study should include the foregoing statement.

ABSTRACT

The United States government has executed numerous covert actions since the end of World War II, largely through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), with varying degrees of success. The US government uses covert action to achieve national security objectives while maintaining plausible deniability of US involvement. Covert actions have included a myriad of efforts across the spectrum of conflict, including political warfare, influence operations, cyber operations, unconventional warfare (support of insurgencies and resistance movements against hostile governments or occupying powers), and lastly, and most relevant to this thesis, Foreign Internal Defense (FID)—supporting states facing internal threats requiring non-attributable US counterterrorism (CT), counterinsurgency (COIN), or countersubversion (CS) support. The study addresses two types of Covert FID—witting and unwitting. The first, witting, is when a foreign state requires assistance, but needs plausible deniability of US support. The second, unwitting, is if a foreign state’s internal danger is a US national security issue and the state is incapable or unwilling to act or request external support. If the US conducts Covert FID without the approval of the state to counteract this threat, then the actions taken by the US requires plausible deniability.

This thesis uses the case-study methodology to determine the viability of Department of Defense (DoD) Special Operations Forces (SOF)—led Covert FID based on three historical cases. The study also analyzes the CIA’s historic primacy for covert actions, and the legal and cultural constraints of DoD-led covert action. This study finds that when SOF leads and executes Covert FID, it is a feasible national security option for policy makers, ambassadors, and Geographic Combatant Commanders in situations requiring plausible deniability of US FID support to a state—witting or unwitting.

Additionally, this study provides an analysis of the doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership and education, personnel, facilities and authorities (DOTMLPF-A) requirements to make this a viable SOF concept to support ARSOF 2022 and SOCOM 2020 visions. Finally, this thesis is applicable to the Special Operations community and interagency civilian decision makers who may not have a background in Special Operations but are influential in governmental policy.

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De Oppresso Liber

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.”

—Edmund Burke

Since the end of World War II, the United States government has conducted covert support to other state governments facing internal threats. Covert refers to operations executed in such a way to maintain plausible deniability of US involvement. The military term that encompasses US support to state government countering internal threats is Foreign Internal Defense (FID). For this study, FID includes counterinsurgency (COIN), countersubversion (CS) and counterterrorism (CT) (JP 1-02 2013, 43, 252, 266; JP 3-22 2010, ix; JP 3-05 2011, II-11; ADP 3-05 2012, 9). Although beyond the scope of this study, US overt FID operations take place daily throughout the world. Covert FID is used instead of overt FID when the government of the requesting state or the US government requires some degree of plausible deniability of US involvement for various reasons—domestic security control, domestic and international politics, and international treaties to name a few. Like most covert operations, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) primarily led these operations, and in many cases with the support of the Department of Defense (DoD). Special Operations Forces (SOF) generally played a large role in DoD’s supporting efforts.

The President of the United States (POTUS) has historically used Covert FID in two ways—the state is either witting or unwitting of the US covert FID support (Jones 2014). In the first case, witting, the US conducted Covert FID to provide a state plausible deniability that the United States is supporting the state’s efforts to counter or defeat internal threats, such as insurgencies, and terrorism. This thesis looks at two case studies that fit this description—Covert COIN operations in Laos during 1962-1973, and the “Phoenix Program”—Covert CS operations in South Vietnam during 1967-1972. In the second case, unwitting, the US requires plausible

deniability because the US conducted Covert FID without the approval of the state. In this case, the state has an internal threat that is a national security issue for the US government, but the state is incapable or unwilling to act or request external support to disrupt or defeat the threat thereby forces the US to act. The US then conducts Covert FID, which could include COIN, CS, and/or CT operations, through indigenous surrogates trained and advised by CIA or SOF personnel, or other capabilities, like the now infamous post-9/11 covert drone operations.

This thesis also analyzes the covert drone program and the implications of the efforts to transition the effort to DoD. The two distinct cases also result in different operational and policy implications, as well as tailored and nuanced approaches to the specific execution of Covert FID based on the respective case. Additionally, each case has specific implications for DoD and the employment of SOF.

Significance of This Study

Based on the literary review, this is the only paper that specifically addresses in the concept of Covert FID in detail. The goal of this study is to determine the feasibility of DoD, and particularly, SOF-led Covert FID as a new policy option that provides policy makers and military commanders an additional international relations tool. Additionally, this thesis provides a doctrine, organization, training, material, leader training, personnel, facilities, and authorities (DOTMLPF-A) analysis with other recommendations to link this concept to support USASOC 2022 and SOCOM 2020 visions.

Research Methodology and Design

This thesis will use the case-study methodology of analyzing and comparing three case studies to determine and develop a model of DoD Covert FID. The research paper is composed of five chapters. Chapter 1, the introduction, explains the significance of the research, the research

question, the research methodology and design, scope and delimitations, assumptions and limitations of the research, and an overview of each chapter. Chapter 2, the literature review, exposes the nuances of this approach to FID compared to other Special Warfare missions or interagency efforts, not only from a capabilities point of view, but also from the perspective of policy and authority implications related to sensitive activities. This chapter provides the reader with an understanding of the past and current research related to Covert FID for practical application within the strategic nature of warfare. This also provides the reader with sufficient background to understand the rest of the thesis chapters. Chapter 3, research methodology, uses a case-study comparison of Covert FID operations in Laos, Vietnam, and Pakistan to explain the general execution of the campaigns, outcomes, and lessons learned to answer the primary research questions. By explaining the nature of the dynamics of each historical political and operational environment, the paper will also show how challenges influenced international foreign relations with the United States and established the conditions for the requirement to use Covert FID operations. Chapter 4, analysis and recommendations, synthesizes the research using the thesis—anti-thesis—synthesis problem framing and problem-solving method, to fully answer the primary research questions, resulting in a series of recommendations on the feasibility of the SOF executing Covert FID campaigns. Addressed to DoD and US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), these recommendations will cover the necessary to capabilities and requirements to execute Covert FID from the perspective of DOTMLPF-A. Lastly, Chapter 5, conclusion and areas for future research, provides a summary of the synthesized findings to answer the primary research questions to develop some proposals for future research regarding Covert FID campaigns.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study will examine three case studies of CIA Covert FID operations to

determine the feasibility and doctrinal concepts for the DoD execution of future Covert FID operations. The first research step focused on finding historical cases studies that met two basic criteria: 1) Covert, 2) FID-type operation—either COIN, CS, and/or CT. Two of the three case studies had SOF participation under CIA authorities in Southeast Asia using COIN and CS. The third case study on Pakistan, while unacknowledged by the administration and not supported by SOF, provided enough open-source discussions. Especially related to the potential transfer of the CT effort from the CIA to DoD, open-source data mining provided additional context with better analysis and synthesis on strategic and policy issues. Initially, the research focused on ensuring a “covert finding” bound each case study. However, the research showed that this was not a feasible criterion because the US Government did not fully implement the current covert finding process until after 1986 (Daugherty 2004, 62).

Due to the multitude of military and interagency terms and their conflicting meaning used between the interagency and military, the author opted to use the clearest military terms possible throughout. The author has gone to great lengths to make this as accurate, insightful, and useful as possible by defining terminology, avoiding assumptions as much as possible, and allowing the reader to come to his or her own conclusion about the author’s findings or recommendations. Lastly, only unclassified open-source information was used for this thesis, which for the first two case studies on Laos and Vietnam, there were numerous references. The final case study was more difficult since this is still a largely unacknowledged program by all involved. There is lack of open-source material that is factual on the covert nature of the program. Yet, there exists a wide variety of sources that describe the program in enough detail, as well as the issues related to transfer of the program from CIA to DoD, to provide enough context to be useful for this thesis.

Research Questions

The two primary research questions for this thesis are: 1) Is Covert FID a suitable activity for USSOCOM? 2) Is Covert FID better suited to USSOCOM than the CIA? This thesis will answer these two questions to the synthesis of the literary review and the case study methodology.

Assumptions

To clearly understand the analysis and recommendations of this thesis, it is the intentions made by the author to clarify information or bridge the missing information in an unclassified setting. First, for clarity, this paper will assume that COIN, CT, and CS are a subset of FID based on the current joint publications. DoD defines FID as a “participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security” (JP 3-22 2010, ix; JP 3-05 2011, II-11; ADP 3-05 2012, 9). Since the US effort in both overt and covert operation is to help the host state “counter” these threats, then logically, countering insurgency, subversion, and terrorism are fundamentally subsets of FID (see Figure 1).

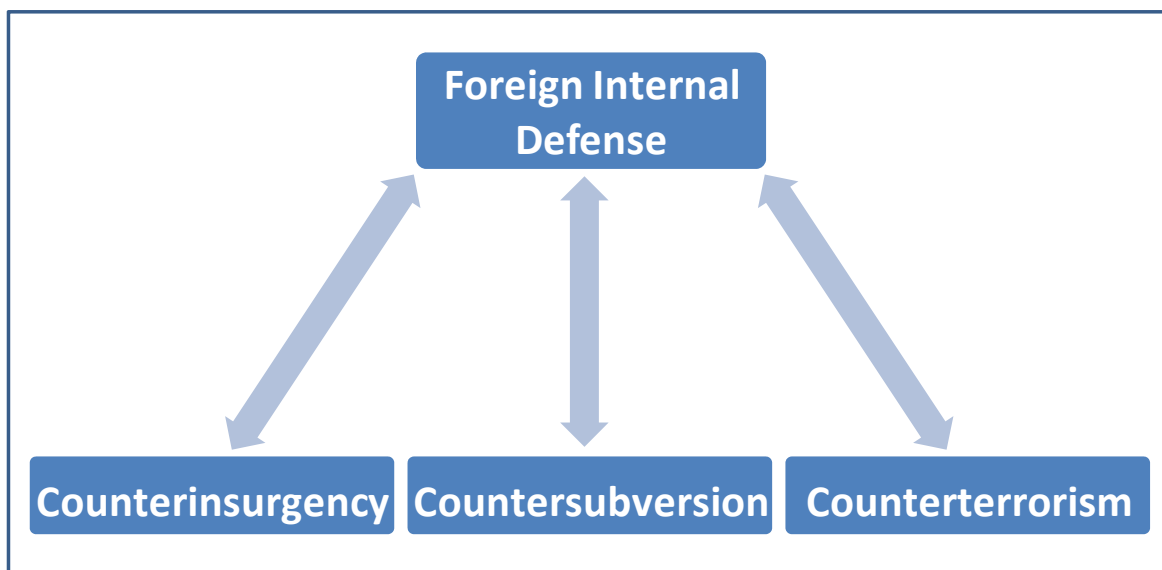


Figure 1: Subsets of FID

This is an assumption because there is an ongoing debate throughout DoD as to whether

COIN, CT, and sometimes CS are subsets of FID or separate operations that can be unilaterally conducted by US forces only. To explain, DoD defines COIN as a “comprehensive civilian and military effort designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes,” and makes no reference to supporting another state (JP 1-02 2013, 59). The joint definition of CT is similarly vague regarding location, wishing away the fact that the CT operation will be conducted within the sovereign boundaries of a friendly or threat nation. DoD defines CT as “actions taken directly against terrorist networks and indirectly to influence and render global and regional environments inhospitable to terrorist networks” (JP 1-02 2013, 43). Since there is not a CS definition, this author will assume efforts against subversion are CS and will use DoD’s definition of subversion as “actions designed to undermine the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of a governing authority” (JP 1-02 2013, 252). Regardless, the CS, CT and COIN unilateral arguments are beyond the scope of this thesis, this author will simply assume them subsets of FID for this thesis.

Second, the author will assume that the DoD definition of “covert operations” will suffice for this paper. The DoD defines a covert operation as one “that is so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of or permit plausible denial by the sponsor” (JP 1-02 2013, 61). Conversely, the DoD defines a clandestine operation as “any activity or operation sponsored or conducted by governmental departments or agencies with the intent to assure secrecy and concealment” (JP 1-02 2013, 38). Comparing the two definitions, a covert operation differs from a clandestine operation in that a government’s emphasis is placed on concealment of the identity of the sponsor rather than on concealment of the operation, as in a clandestine operation (JP 1-02 2013, 38 & 61).

Third, the author assumes witting and unwitting are tied into Covert FID. DoD defines witting to be an entity that is not only fully aware of facts or information, but also aware of its

connection to specific operations or activities (JP 1-02 2013, 288). In the first example, an operation can be covert, but the host nation is witting, and both the United States and the host nation want plausible deniability of US intervention for political-military reasons. Although there is no joint definition for unwitting, it can be defined as the opposite of witting—an entity that is not aware of the facts, information, or its connection to specific operations or activities. An example of this includes when a government is unable to maintain control of or effectively govern its territory, and a threat to US interests emerges in that area that the state cannot or will not address. Then the US may conduct Covert FID, building indigenous COIN, CS, and/or or CT capabilities from locals in those areas for example. If the country is unwilling to accept US support, the US could essentially execute Covert FID to assist the state without the state knowing who was responsible for the efforts.

Fourth, due to these parameters, it is this author's assumption that Covert FID is participation by agencies of a government to wittingly or unwittingly assist another government, or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security in a manner that conceals the identity of or permits plausible denial to the sponsor and or the supported government (modified by author based on JP 1-02 2013, 61, 288; JP 3-22 2010, ix; JP 3-05 2011, II-11; ADP 3-05 2012, 9). If witting, sanctioned Covert FID happens when a government requests a state's support, but needs plausible deniability of the support to maintain domestic control. If unwitting, unsanctioned Covert FID occurs when a state maintains total plausible deniability of the efforts to support a government due to the political sensitivities or risk to either the state or the host government (see Figure 2).

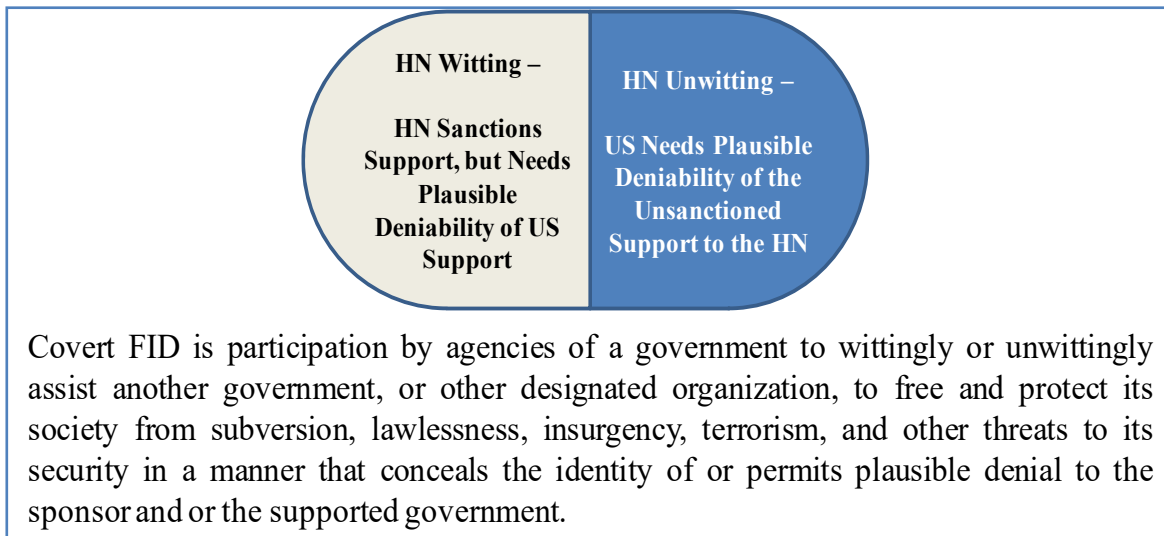


Figure 2: Covert Foreign Internal Defense

Covert FID Definition modified by author based on (JP 1-02 2013, 61, 288; JP 3-22 2010, ix; JP 3-05 2011, II-11; ADP 3-05 2012, 9).

Fifth, the author acknowledges that there are contextual risks using only unclassified open-source information to research a topic that may have critical information that is still classified. To overcome this, the author assumes that the open-source information is available to provide enough context for strategic and operation understanding and analysis. Readers that have additional classified knowledge may not agree fully with the analysis or findings of this thesis.

Finally, the author assumes risk by basing all recommendations on a completely unconstrained resource, policy, and authority environment. It is up to the reader to apply the concepts developed here to find the application to real world events that may warrant the application of Covert FID. It is also assumed, based on open-source information that these recommendation nest with emerging operational concepts in support of USASOC 2022 and SOCOM 2020 visions.

Limitations

This research is primarily limited to secondary sources referenced in the bibliography. The author interviewed individuals with specific backgrounds or expertise, but no primary sources

were interviewed for the three case studies. The case studies benefitted from a few well-written books that included first person accounts. Lastly, this thesis is an unclassified document using public information that is available through the National Defense University Research Library, the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) library, and internet databases. This thesis references unclassified material only despite available classified sources.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

“To this end, the agency worked closely with the Green Berets, recruiting, training, financing, and directing the Laotian hill tribes (the Hmong) ... at least until 1970, the most effective of all the CIA’s defensive and diversionary wartime paramilitary operations.”

—James Callahan

“The CIA conducts such activities only when specifically authorized by the National Security Council. Thus, CIA covert actions reflect national policy.”

—DCI William E. Colby

This chapter provides the historical context for the caused the emergence of Covert FID and examines the relevant literature related to the topic of Covert FID.

Historical Context

The emergence of the Cold War, and ultimately Covert FID, dates back to 1946. In 1946, George F. Kennan, a Minister-Counselor to the United States Ambassador of the Soviet Union, sent a historic diplomatic cable, nicknamed “long telegram,” to the Department of State (DoS) headquarters. This telegram described the intricacies of Soviet foreign affairs to provide the Truman administration Kennan’s understanding of Soviet foreign policy (Kennan 1946, 1). Kennan’s intent was to provide the administration context and recommendations to frame US policy in post–World War II (WWII) Europe. His point argued that US foreign policy on Communism was a long-term struggle without the possibility of a negotiated settlement (Kennan 1946, 1 & 9). This ultimately shaped President Truman’s staff Communism containment plan commonly referred to as the Truman Doctrine (Rumelt 2011, 82; Rositzke 1977, 2).

From the Truman Doctrine, the Domino Theory emerged and manifested to affect decisions fearing the perceived spread of Communism in Southeast Asia during the 1950s and 1960s (Bell 2001, 117; Smith 2007). The theory posited that if one state became Communist, then adjacent

states would follow suit, creating a global spread of Communism like “falling dominos” (Eisenhower 1954). The further conception of the Sino-Soviet conspiracy idea came after the Chinese revolution in 1949 that was immediately followed by the Korean War in 1950–1953 (Landon 1973, 23). This latent fear transposed to Southeast Asia with Communist regime changes in adjacent countries, ultimately driving the US to intercede in Laos and South Vietnam (Record 2002, 157; Bell 2001, 117 & 213). The intercession of the US government in Southeast Asia links directly into the first two case studies.

The threat of Communist expansion through Communist-supported insurgencies and revolutions caused an increase sense of urgency to study insurgency and COIN. Interest in COIN, and related terms of counterrevolution and counter guerrilla operations, had increased significantly to counter the Communist-supported insurgencies. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy ushered in a new era of focused COIN efforts not only for Special Forces, but for the CIA as well (Prados 2006, 284-285). President Kennedy’s focus helped shift overall US policy towards efforts to “collaborate with established governments, aimed at real or imagined domestic enemies” (Prados 2006, 283). The Army, specifically Special Forces, and the CIA were ahead of their time.

The Army published the first counter guerrilla manual in 1950, *Operations Against Guerrilla Forces*, followed in 1963 with *Counter guerrilla Operations* and then *Counterinsurgency Forces*. Interestingly, and most applicable to the Laos case study and operations today, is the fact that all three of these manuals discussed use of local indigenous populations as surrogates for uniformed professional military and security personnel to conduct “paramilitary” and “counter guerrilla” operations (ST 31-20-1 1950; FM 31-16 1963; FM 31-22 1963). It was also during this time Special Forces shifted focus from UW—support to insurgencies and resistance against a hostile nation or occupying power—to counter guerrilla and COIN operations. It was this

split from the CIA's singular focus of UW, based on the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) experiences in WWII, to COIN. Although, Special Forces would spend the 1960s enhancing UW operations in Southeast Asia, they transitioned to FID by literally using their expertise in aiding insurgencies to overthrow hostile nations to now supporting a friendly nation to defeat an insurgency.

The CIA, also born out of the OSS, rapidly adapted to the reality of the Cold War, and focused on the topic of COIN as well. For instance, the CIA commissioned studies like "Project Brushfire" in late 1950, which studied possible contingencies related to "the political, psychological, economic, and sociological factors that affected 'peripheral wars'" (Prados 2006, 283; Schiattareggia 2013, 39). The Agency also studied how to deter and counter guerrilla warfare (Prados 2006, 284). While the study of "limited war" policy began under President Eisenhower, President Kennedy would bring COIN into the forefront, just in time for the decade plus of COIN operations in Southeast Asia (Prados 2006, 283). Both the Agency and the Special Forces benefited from President Kennedy's requests for forces capable to counter Communist insurgencies and revolutions. While working in unison, but largely under CIA covert authorities and programs, both CIA and SOF executed Covert COIN and CS operations, like the operations in Laos and the Phoenix Program in Vietnam.

With the increase of Soviet supported communist insurgencies, President Kennedy, in 1961, directed the first whole-of-government studies on "detering guerrilla warfare, limited war, counterinsurgency, and paramilitary operations" (Prados 2006, 284). Throughout this period, the Agency pushed for leading roles in these conflicts, specifically covert roles, to "...[strengthen] internal security and defense" of partner nations (Prados 2006, 286). The Agency, as well as Special Forces, would become well versed in COIN and FID throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

This expertise would diminish between the latter 1970s and the early 2000s because both the Agency and Special Forces had other higher priority missions in the interests of US national security.

In the first case study, Laos, after the international community agreed to Laos' neutrality in the 1962 Geneva Accords, Covert FID was conducted to stop the destabilizing factions, primarily the Pathet Lao, supported by North Vietnam. The US intent was to support the Laotian government's legitimacy and not violate the Geneva Neutrality Act. However, the reality of Laos being threatened by the Pathet Lao Communist insurgent threat, along with their continued external support provided by North Vietnam, caused the US to look at Covert FID as a viable option to protect the Laotian "domino" of the Domino Theory. The ultimate fear was that if the Communist Pathet Lao insurgency succeeded in overthrowing the Royal Lao government or was able to maintain its sanctuary areas surrounding the Ho Chi Minh trail, then North Vietnam would have unhindered access to South Vietnam. This was vital because the administration believed South Vietnam was the linchpin in stopping the domino effect in Southeast Asia, driving most of the overt US support to South Vietnam.

The largest covert COIN/FID effort, Laos, has only been recently researched in depth due to documents being declassified over the last ten years, most recently in 2009 (Ahem Jr. 2009). Interestingly, for those involved in this effort, the idea of Covert COIN, and for this paper, Covert FID, was a reality in 1960. Based on the research and publications available, many of the sources include interviews and firsthand accounts from the CIA case officers involved.

Most literature discusses the Pathet Lao insurgency, focusing on the fighting with the Royal Lao Army and the cross-border operations enroute to North Vietnam, while few discuss the Hmong and USSOF's efforts to counter an insurgency. This framework is important because Laos provides

this research a specific case of SOF and CIA cooperation that helped shape future Covert FID operations.¹ Secondary source books and articles that were most helpful for this topic include: 1) Roger Warner's *Backfire* that covered the entire Laotian effort largely utilizing first person accounts; 2) Thomas Ahem Jr.'s declassified CIA study, *Undercover Armies: CIA and Surrogate Warfare in Laos, 1961-1973*; and 3) Richard L. Holm's declassified CIA article of his personal experience in Laos, "No Drums, No Bugles: Recollections of a Case Officer in Laos, 1962-1964" (Warner, 1995; Ahem Jr. 2009; Holm 1964). Additionally, other researchers and authors understand the Covert COIN aspects of this effort, such as: 1) John Prados' *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* or his *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations from World War II through the Persian Gulf*; 2) Loch K. Johnson's *America's Secret Power: The CIA in a Democratic Society*; 3) Robert B. Asprey's, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*; 4) Harry Rositzke's *The CIA's Secret Operations: Espionage, Counterespionage, and Covert Action*; 5) Derek Jones' "Ending the Debate: Unconventional Warfare, Foreign Internal Defense, and Why Words Matter;" and lastly, Volney F. Warner's "Afghanistan: Context and What's Next" (Prados 2006, 344-362; Prados 1995, 261-296; Johnson 1989, 26; Asprey 1994, 750; Rositzke 1977; 181; Jones 2005, 67; Warner 2010, 24). The last two sources were the most influential on the beginnings of this thesis. Derek Jones coined the term "covert FID" in his 2005 Command and General Staff College monograph (Jones 2005, 67). While Volney F. Warner, in a special 2010 issue of Joint Force Quarterly published an article of his interview of an individual

¹ References of sources used to search the covert actions in Laos, refer to the following secondary research documents: Schlesinger Jr. 1965; Fall 1969; Herring 1977; Spector 1983; Herring 1979; Vietnam Study Task Force 1971; Conboy 1995; Herring 2008; Marek 2011; Goldstein 1973; DoS 1961; Stevenson 1972; Randle 1969; Wing, et al. 1964; Berntsen 2008; Blaufarb 1972; Human Relations Area Files 1960; Brown and Zasloff 1986; Hilsman 1967; Castle 1991; CIA 1964; Toye 1968; Burdick and Lederer 1999; Champassak 1961; Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars 1970; Goldstein 1973; Specialoperation.com 2013; Langer and Zasloff 1970; Stevens 1993; Gaddis 2005; Branfman 1970; Zasloff 1975; Dommen 1971; Sibounheuang 2002; Prados 1999; Jones 2006; Mommyer 1985; Corum and Johnson 2003; Newman and Shepperd 2006; Nalty 2005; Berger 1984.

he referred to only as “M,” due to the sensitive nature of his job, who described potential efforts within the FATA in Pakistan as “covert COIN” (Warner 2010, 24). This broad range of authors and researchers understood the COIN, and thus FID, context without confusion.

There are, however, numerous studies incorrectly labeling the Covert FID effort in Laos, as UW or they were less than optimal in the specific application of Covert FID.² Examples include, Dean S. Newman’s April 2005 Special Warfare magazine article titled, “*Operation White Star: A UW Operation Against An Insurgency*,” by, in which Newman incorrectly surmises that the US efforts were UW, vice Covert FID. His idea that UW, defined as support to insurgency, could be used against an insurgency is a misnomer (Newman 2005, 28-36). Author Hy Rothstein also confuses terms, in *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare*, in which he states that UW was used in Laos, yet clearly states that “the joint DoD-CIA project to enable the Lao army to **counter insurgent activity** (author’s emphasis) by the Pathet Lao guerrillas operating with assistance from the North Vietnamese army” (Rothstein 2006, 37). Another more recent example, Ryan C. Agee and Maurice K. DuClos’ “Why UW: Factoring in the Decision Point for Unconventional Warfare” is a Naval Post-graduate School Thesis on UW that incorrectly used Laos as a UW case study (Agee and DuClos 2012, 71–92). Even US Army doctrine is not immune to this misapplication of terms—the most recent Special Forces Unconventional Warfare Doctrine, notes Laos as an example of UW (ATP 3.05.012013, 1-4 & C6). This small sampling of authors is indicative of the common misinterpretation of Covert FID operations in Laos. These authors obviously misunderstood and misinterpreted the nuances of the US efforts to train and advise indigenous forces to disrupt and defeat the Pathet Lao insurgents, with the purpose of supporting

² References of authors that posited ideas towards a holistic security approach, but distract from this paper’s focus on Covert FID: (Newman 2005; Boyatt 2001; Wilson 2001; Dickson 2001; Kershner 2001; Boyatt 1994; Jones and Tone 1999; Boyatt 1999; Boyatt 1998; Karsner 2005; Briscoe 2004; JFQ 2009).

the Royal Laotian government and the defense of its sovereign borders.

While there is confusion with the Laos example, there is little to no confusion over the context and type of operations for the other two case studies. The Phoenix Program has been widely written about and is understood to be Covert CS. Due to the media and congressional hype about the drone program, there is little to no confusion on the fact that this is a Covert CT effort. Covert CT efforts however, especially in relations to drone operations are widely discussed, debated, and draw equal praise and criticism. Although not discussed in this thesis, the raid on Osama bin Laden's safe house in Pakistan was also a covert operation under CIA authorities.

In South Vietnam, the US efforts were largely overt, with the US military in the lead, CIA supporting. The Phoenix Program, as the second case study, emerged out of the CIA efforts to stem the tide of the Viet Cong insurgency in conjunction with other pacification programs in the rural areas most threatened by the Viet Cong, together referred to as the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Staff (CORDS). The case study used for this thesis focuses on the CIA's efforts to specifically target Viet Cong shadow government and underground elements subversive tactics throughout villages in South Vietnam. While this study will not analyze much of the criticism of the Phoenix Program, it will study how this covert operation was broadly executed in wittingly with the South Vietnamese parallel effort, called Phung Haong, which loosely translates to Phoenix. This was a covert operation largely because of the CIA involvement and funding.

Due to the large body of sources related to this topic, the following were the most useful and informative: 1) John Prados' *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations from World War II through the Persian Gulf*; 2) Orrin M. DeForest and David Chanoff's *Slow Burn: The Rise and Bitter Fall of American Intelligence in Vietnam*; 3) Dale Andrade's *Ashes to*

Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War; 4) John Cook's *The Advisor: The Phoenix Program In Vietnam*; and 5) Douglas Valentine's *The Phoenix Program* (Prados 1996); DeForest and Chanoff 1990; Andrade 1990, xi; Cook 1997; Valentine 2002).

Additionally, Douglas Pike wrote many works on the Vietnam War detailing the philosophy behind the Vietnamese Communist insurrection, but three in particular, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Technique of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* written in 1966, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam* written in 1991, and *The Viet-Cong Strategy of Terror* written in 1970, were helpful in connecting the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) and Communist Party of North Vietnam's organizational and operational procedures. Pike's work focused on the NVA's comprehensive political-military operational estimate and area assessment inside South Vietnam (Pike 1966; Pike 1970; Pike 1991).

Today, largely due to the experiences of the post-9/11 operations, FID, and the related COIN, and CT operations, are widely known and studied. Countless COIN and CT books and bodies of research are readily available to scholars. However, despite the interest in the topic, the idea of Covert FID has gone largely unexplored, other than with respect to the third case study, Pakistan, and the US use of drones to conduct Covert CT operations within the sovereign borders of Pakistan. It is important to note, that despite the large body of research on this case study, by the US government not tacitly acknowledging the drone program operating within Pakistan, they have kept this a covert operation, maintaining its plausible deniability for the POTUS.

Maintenance of plausible deniability by administrations is not new. With a deep heritage in espionage, subversion, and support to resistance organizations, the CIA began to transition to other covert operations after the start of the Cold War (The White House 1962). This allowed every POTUS the ability to use covert actions for the advancement of sensitive political efforts and

plausible deniability. “Plausible denial” is an accepted concept in intelligence activities that denotes organizing a “legitimate feature of authorized covert operations” (US Congress 1989, 15). For instance, if the activity is discovered, then the government can deny knowledge of the action. Plausible deniability requires non-attributable personnel, equipment, support, and government oversight.

Mark Lowenthal superbly discussed the issues with covert actions and plausible deniability:

“One oversight issue relating to covert action centers on the operating concept of plausible deniability. In the case of large-scale operations ... deniability is somewhat impossible. Nevertheless, many covert actions are much smaller in scale, making it possible to deny plausibly any US role. Some critics of covert action argue that plausible deniability undermines accountability by giving operators an increased sense of license. Because the president will deny any connection to their activities, they operate under less constraint” (Lowenthal 2008, 201).

Lowenthal’s points are important to consider, especially when discussing DoD covert efforts. With today’s information age technologies, biometrics, and instant global distribution of stories, videos, tweets, etc, covert operations become infinitely harder to protect and maintain plausible deniability. The fact that a neighbor was able to text about the “covert” raid on bin Laden’s compound in real time is indicative of the issues for successful covert operations in the future. This issue also fuels criticism that plausible deniability is no longer relevant or reliable anymore because of technological advances.

DoD Support to Covert Operations

Military personnel assist in the improvement of the security environment by increasing the capability or capacity of military and/or law enforcement to quell the nascent stages of an “internal threat.” Since we are considering COIN, CS, and CT as a subset of FID to counter inherent “internal threats” of another state, SOF has historically married US government intentions, and a

state's legitimacy stature, to shape freedom of maneuver for sustained populous interactions and proactive security cooperation (ADP 3-05 2012, 9; JP 3-22 2010, ix; JP 3-05 2011, II-11). For instance, Linda Robinson, senior analyst for RAND, recently stated,

“[V]illage stability operations and local police was the largest such initiative since [the Vietnam War].... To me, that experiment has really rescued a forgotten skill set of the Special Ops forces so they can go out into the villages and live with [civilians] and help those willing to stand up and defend themselves. That is a sustainable solution where you get countries [providing for their own internal security], denying safe haven to terrorists” (Eagle 2013).

Even though Robinson thinks that “village stability operations” was a forgotten after Vietnam, SOF has historically used this skill set in various forms of both overt and Covert FID since the Vietnam era. An example of overt FID was the support to the El Salvadoran regime against the FMLN insurgency in the 1980s (Schwarz 1991). Covert being efforts conducted under the guise of the CIA and still classified. Arguably, because of the classifications or ignorance either willful or inadvertent, critics like Gary Berntsen state, “in the decades prior to September 11, 2001, the US military played only a limited role in US [covert] efforts” (Berntsen 2008, 31). Since the current DoD doctrine less than optimally addresses this support in *Joint* and *Army FID* and *Stability Operations* manuals, it is no wonder critics assume this is a lost ability (JP 3-22 2010; FM 3-05.2 2011; FM 3-07 2008; Catanzaro and Windmueller 2011; Connett and Cassidy 2011; USAJFKSWCS 2011). Using previous doctrinal guidance that denotes “remote area operations,” SOF would work “in insurgent-controlled or contested areas to establish islands of popular support for the host nation, or host-nation government, and deny support to the insurgents” (FM 3-05.202 2007, A-9; FM 31-20-3 1994, 1–19). This is beneficial to note for this paper because SOF used this technique during two of the three case studies presented.

CIA's Covert Culture

The CIA uses the term “special activities” historically to encompass FID-like training to

help other states counter internal threats when they work to “preserve a friendly regime” and the state needs plausible deniability of U.S. support (Jones 2006, 6; Daugherty 2004, 15). Daugherty also highlights that *EO 12333* “explicitly and unambiguously assigns all peacetime covert action missions to the CIA, unless the President specifically assigns another agency to do so” (Daugherty 2004, 14). For Reference, *Executive Order (EO) 12333: United States Intelligence Activities* defines special activities as, “activities conducted in support of national foreign policy objectives which are planned and executed so that the role of the US government is not apparent or acknowledged publicly” (Barnett, Tovar and Schultz 1984, 31). Even President Reagan directed the CIA to “undertake covert action to counteract terrorism with or without the help of foreign governments,” and later established “the legal right to capture abroad terrorists who had committed acts against American citizens” in 1986 (Daugherty 2004, 209).

While conducting research on the CIA and covert special actions, thirteen books described the culture of the CIA through the respective authors’ beliefs that this agency is the best qualified to manage covert actions. In total, all the books offer critiques of CIA successes and failures from its inception in 1947 to the present. When combined, these books argue that the CIA is a lower-cost foreign policy option available to the president that has fewer unintended consequences.³ Of note, two books, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*, by Tim Weiner, and *Beyond Repair: The Decline and Fall of the CIA*, by Charles S. Faddis, seem to be reputable works that are highly critical of the CIA and its presumed effectiveness (Faddis 2009; Weiner 2008). Every author acknowledged that SOF is a great asset and a needed contributor, but only James Callahan said specifically that the SOF was “until 1970, the most effective of all the CIA’s defensive and

³ References of sources used to search the covert culture: Daugherty 2004; Berntsen 2008; Lowenthal 2008; Callahan 2010; Berkowitz and Goodman 2000; T. K. Adams 2001; Rositzke 1977; Schultz 2013; Prados 2006; Nutter 2000; Landsdale 1972; Barnett, Tovar, and Schultz 1984; R. Warner 1995.

diversionary wartime paramilitary operations” (Callahan 2010, 185). Additionally, the three case studies of Covert FID operations in Laos, South Vietnam, and Pakistan will only address the covert nature of FID specific to each case study.

Authorities and US Code

This section answers four supporting research questions that are critical to understand the application of Covert FID. First, what are the differences between Title 10 and Title 50 regarding covert operations, and do they constrain SOF conducting Covert FID? Second, if there are no legal constraints, are there political constraints to USSOCOM from conducting Covert FID (i.e., “no boots on the ground”)? Third, if there are political constraints, are the variations definable (ex. between administrations and even within administrations depending on which term of election)? Lastly, if there are ways to overcome political constraints within the bounds of Title 50 and use Title 10 for DoD Covert FID, what are those ways?

This research will briefly address the individual authorities of the Code of Laws of the United States of America (USC) Title 10 versus Title 50, but not offer a suggestion of combining Title 10 and Title 50 (OLRC: USC 1874; OLRC: Title 10 1956; OLRC: Title 50 1952). Additionally, to avoid confusion, Title 50, Sections 413, and 414, comprising section 501 of the National Security Act of 1947, chapter 343, “was editorially reclassified” as the Subchapter III-Accountability for Intelligence Activities and section 3091 of this title (OLRC: Title 50, Section 3091 2014).

The CIA operates in accordance with Title 50 and must have presidential approval before execution of covert action (OLRC: Title 50, Section 3091 2014). The CIA is the time-honored governmental proponent of all national security intelligence-driven operations and traditionally conducts covert actions. In addition, the term “activity” implies non-military actions while

“operations” are military-centric (JP 1-02 2013, 2 & 194; Witty 2010, 15). Tied to section 3091 that directs the CIA are sections 3092 through 3094, which mandates that all covert actions will fall under CIA purview and will need a presidential finding prior to funding (OLRC: Title 50 1952, 3091–3094). These sections have all been updated by the US government and focus on the fact that the disclosure of covert actions can have serious ramifications from the US government.

In his article, “Demystifying the Title 10-Title 50 Debate: Distinguishing Military Operations, Intelligence Activities and Covert Action,” Mr. Andru Wall, former senior legal advisor for USSOCOM, focused on the differences between Title 10 and Title 50 and the framework for the conduct of overlapping military and intelligence operations outside perceived theaters of war. US Code defines roles, responsibilities, and constraints for Title 10 and Title 50 operations where Title 50 is for intelligence agencies, Title 10 is generally for the DoD, but DoD can also conduct covert operations (Wall 2011).

As a DoD element, USSOCOM ascertains Title 50 operations authorities for intelligence and intelligence supporting (OLRC: Title 50, Section 3091 2014). For all other operations, USSOCOM can conduct covert operations under Title 10 if it does not violate Title 50, 3091 (OLRC: Title 10 1956, §167 (G)). If DoD operations “specified by the president or the secretary of defense” follow the guidelines of Section 167, part J, number 10, and not violate Section 167, part G of Title 10, then such operations should not violate the Geneva Convention stature. Andru Wall argued that the loss of the Geneva Convention status because of “secret operations” is a transparency issue and “can be quickly identified and dismissed as policy arguments rather than legitimate legal concerns” (Wall 2011, 88–89). Wall also points out that Geneva Convention transparency is just one of two “policy arguments masquerading as Title 10-Title 50 issues” whereby “[t]ransparency is the most amorphous concern in the Title 10-Title 50 debate” (Wall

2011, 88–89).

Given there is an increased reliance on SOF to achieve national objectives, the appropriate legal and policy frameworks have not changed as SOF engages non-state actors. To combat that issue, DoD officials briefed the 112th Congress that Section 167, Part J, number 10 should also keep the statement, “such other activities as may be specified by the president or the secretary of defense” (OLRC: Title 10 1956, §167 (J)(10)). They argued that this statute provides the president and the secretary of defense the flexibility to meet changing circumstances by giving the president an avenue for the DoD to conduct Covert FID (Vickers 2011, 11).

Finally, in discussing the new effects of the Title 10-Title 50 debate, Wall’s argument still seems valid. The issue that Wall points out in his Title 10-Title 50 debate is that the DoD and the CIA are more interoperable, and if you have a DoD operation, you have a military commander, and you can operate under DoD guidelines. The mission may be classified as Title 50 if there is a presidential finding, but the DoD will conduct the mission regardless of who is funding it (OLRC: Title 50 1952, § 3093).

“In other words, when an operation is termed a “Title 10” operation, that statutory label simply refers to the statutory origins of the mission commander’s authority; this does not preclude other government agencies operating under separate statutory authorities from using their personnel and resources to support the “Title 10” operation (Wall 2011).

Summary

After researching Covert FID, the review of the literature indicates there are no definitive studies that answer the two main research questions— 1) Is Covert FID a suitable activity for USSOCOM? 2) Is the execution of Covert FID better suited for DoD than the CIA? Ultimately, it is important to understand the historical context of Covert FID, at least as much as the historical record allows. Due to the sensitivities and ultimately incorrect terminology used, this paper seems

to be the first to apply a descriptive and coherent framework to explain Covert FID. Besides the case studies mentioned in this paper, published works on Covert FID efforts range in completeness of information because they were small operations that did not get explicit attention, they are still classified, or case studies like Laos (1962-1973) are routinely misunderstood as UW. Given that, it is important to see the integration of SOF into these types of efforts, but SOF has never led these types of efforts.

This chapter also proposes that due to the unique nature of SOF, it is plausible that USSOCOM FID operations could be considered “covert” under Title 10 and not fall under Title 50 statutes of covert action. Three case studies fitting the Covert FID description—US provided Covert COIN, to the Laotian Government from 1962 to 1973, the Phoenix Program carried out Covert CS in South Vietnam from 1967 to 1972, and the CIA’s recently executed Covert CT drone strikes in Pakistan—will be discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin.”

— Sun Tzu

Although there are no definitive studies that address Covert FID specifically, this chapter will use three historical Covert FID case studies: Laos-Covert COIN, Phoenix Program-Covert CS, and Covert Drone Strikes in Pakistan-Covert CT (see Figure 3).

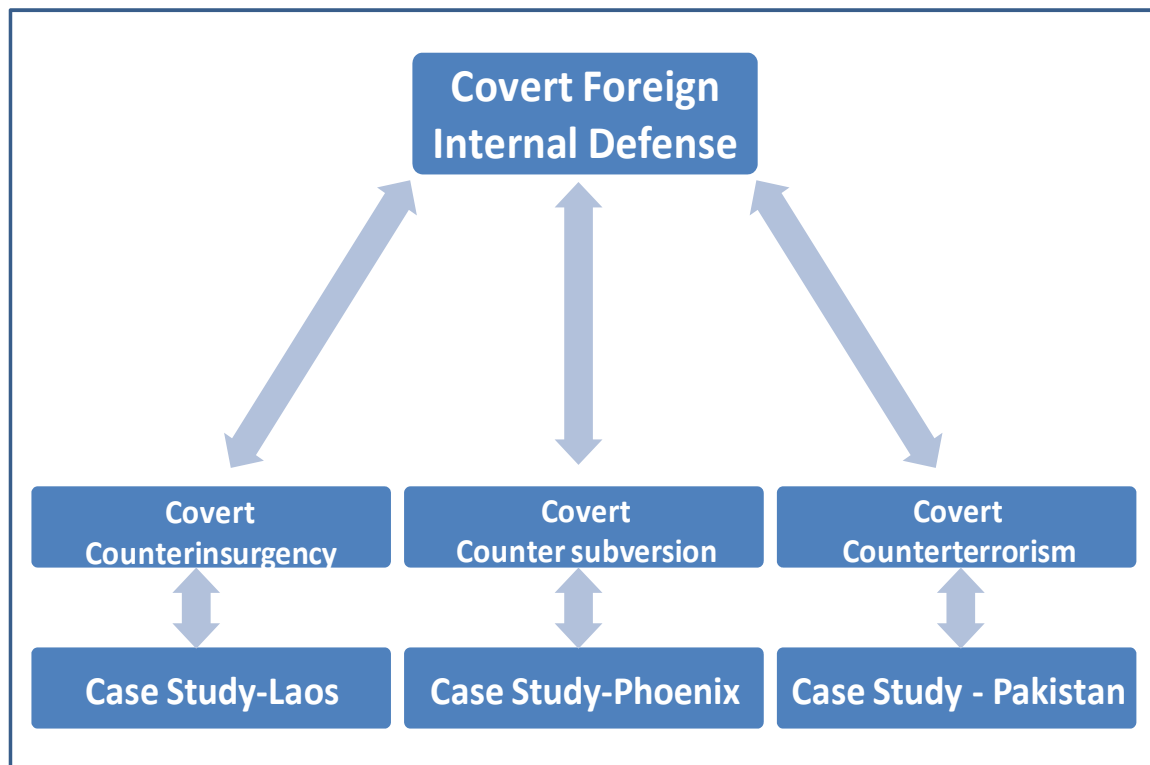


Figure 3: Case Study Hierarchy

The thesis will analyze the three case studies to develop a series of recommendations on the feasibility of SOF executing Covert FID campaigns. The next chapter will analyze the findings based on the case study review to develop recommendations for DoD and USSOCOM’s requirements to execute Covert FID.

As developed in chapter 2, the three case studies provide different operational concepts with respect to Covert FID operations in support of a state—witting or unwitting. The first case

study, which took place in Northern Laos between 1962 and 1973, explores how Covert FID supported the Laotian government's COIN efforts and provided the Laotian government and the US plausible deniability that armed forces were operating against the Pathet Lao insurgency and North Vietnam's UW support to the Pathet Lao in violation of the 1962 Geneva Neutrality Treaty.

The second case study examines Covert FID through the Phoenix Program in South Vietnam, which occurred between 1967 and 1972, and describes how the US government supported the South Vietnamese government's effort to destroy the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI) consisting of shadow government and underground elements. Since the CIA led this program, it was covert to hide the CS operations from the VCI rather than the actual need for the US or South Vietnamese governments to plausible deny actions.

The third case study analyzes the Covert CT subset of Covert FID, specifically through US support to the Pakistani government's internal CT actions using armed drone strikes within under-governed spaces. Ultimately, Covert FID provides a government plausible deniability that the US is supporting their internal defense, and it provides the United States plausible deniability of operations supporting a government.

Laos

"The largest paramilitary operations ever undertaken by the CIA took place in the small Southeast Asian Kingdom of Laos. For more than 13 years, the Agency directed native forces that fought major North Vietnamese units to a standstill. Although the country eventually fell to the Communists, the CIA remained proud of its accomplishments in Laos."

— William M. Leary

"In early January 1962, I arrived in Vientiane, Laos, for my first assignment with the Central Intelligence Agency. Young case officers like myself, having completed basic training for the Clandestine Service and then paramilitary (PM) instruction, were being sent out in support of President Kennedy's decision to hold the line against communist expansion. Trying to help the Laotians maintain their territorial integrity and their "independent" government was a tall order for a new officer. The demand for quick decision making and constant flexibility to handle the

unexpected in a war zone proved to be excellent preparation for my long career as a case officer in the field.”

— Richard L. Holm

This section analyzes the CIA Covert FID operations in Laos from 1962–1973. The Laos case study provides an exceptional example of a CIA-led, but DoD supported, large-scale Covert FID operations. Although routinely misconstrued as a Covert UW operation by many researchers, as noted in the previous chapter, the CIA, as well as USAID and elements of DoD detailed to the agency, clearly viewed this as a Covert COIN operation (Warner 1995 116). As explained in the introduction, this case study nest under Covert FID—the interagency efforts, led by the CIA, and supported by both DoD, including Army Special Forces, and USAID, focused on supporting the Laotian government by providing training, advising and supporting Laotian tribal elements known as the Hmong, in order to disrupt or defeat the Pathet Lao insurgency. Although the Communist Pathet Lao was the domestic threat to the Laotian government, for the US, North Vietnam’s support to the Pathet Lao was a strategic threat, thus warranting a covert operation in violation of the 1962 Neutrality Treaty. The strategic threat centered on the North Vietnamese UW support provided to the Pathet Lao, in order to use the Pathet Lao to secure sanctuary areas along the Laos-Vietnam border and protect the strategically important Ho Chi Minh trail. The efforts to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and effectively isolate the Viet Cong and regular Army units of the North Vietnamese Army, were never achieved.

The covert nature of this operation was due to the 1962 Geneva Accords, also known as the Neutrality Treaty, which declared the border regions neutral and forbade any conventional military forces or operations in the border regions by any nation. Due to North Vietnam, Laos, and the US signing this Neutrality Treaty, all US operations in this region had to be covert to provide plausible deniability to both the government of the US and Laos. These efforts also faced an

additional domestic threat from a renegade Laotian Army Captain, Kong Le, who had led a failed coup against the Laotian government. Finally, this effort included additional foreign support to the US effort—Thai Special Forces, known as the PARU, who were experts at jungle warfare, and “counterguerrilla tactics” (Holm 1964, 3). This section will summarize US actions in Laos after the 1962 Geneva Accords, when the US Ambassador took exclusive control of the covert aid program and kept control of it until 1973, when the last US advisor vacated Laos. In addition, this section will address the events of covert US military support to CIA actions towards the Royal Lao government that led up to the 1962 Geneva Accords.

Plausible Deniability

This case study also involves a third nation, Thailand, providing the Laotian and US government Covert FID support. In this case, Thai Special Forces, known as the PARU, supported the US and Royal Lao Government (RLG) in the form of advisors that worked for the CIA on the Lao military assistance program. Additionally, the Royal Thai government’s assisted America’s covert aid program to Laos by allowing the United States access to land for air bases and army facilities (Kislenko 2004). The establishment of a covert military recruitment and training program for Thai soldiers to operate in Laos was also important but is a scope too broad for this study.

DoD Support to Covert Operations

1955–1962

The United States became involved in Laos after the French requested assistance in 1945 to reestablish the French colonial empire (Herring 1977, 114). Arthur M. Schlesinger referred to Laos as “a state by diplomatic courtesy,” where the geographically land-locked state served no purpose other than to prevent the spread of Communism through the Viet Minh to Vietnam and Southeast Asia (Schlesinger Jr. 1965, 323). The Viet Minh supported the Pathet Lao as military allies and

served as ideological mentors for their Communist evolution. From 1945–1954, the United States increased its support to the French in military aid with American personnel assigned to a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) through the 1950 signing of the Pentalateral Mutual Defense Assistance Pact (Spector 1983, 116–117; Herring 1979, 20). Within the terms of the December 1950 Pentalateral Defense Pact and a September 1951 US-Lao economic assistance agreement, Eisenhower established covert operations under the name United States Overseas Mission (USOM) (Goldstein 1973, 89).

The 1954 Geneva Accords redrew the borders of Indochina and stated that Laos should be independent and, more importantly, neutral (Vietnam Study Task Force 1971; Conboy 1995, 17). The Geneva settlement may have set political independence for Laos, but it did not protect the government from either the Pathet Lao or North Vietnam from using the Ho Chi Minh Trail. To ensure Laotian independence matched the objectives of US policy in Southeast Asia, and that the neutral government remained a non-Communist buffer state between Thailand and North Vietnam, President Eisenhower pointed out the United States was “not itself [a] party to or bound by the decisions taken by the Conference” (Goldstein 1973, 89). From 1954–1955, USOM became overburdened and needed assistance to support the Laotian internal defense as the French withdrew. Eisenhower made the decision to covertly send more MAAG personnel into Laos (Stevenson 1972, 27–29; Goldstein 1973, 166). However, Article Six of the 1954 Geneva Accord banned the introduction of new personnel into Laos from outside Laotian territory (Randle 1969, 583–584; Committee on Foreign Relations 1967, 50–62). This is important to note because after the 1954 Geneva Convention, Eisenhower was fully aware of the “action in technical violation Geneva Accords” (DoS 1961).

In 1955, the MAAG reorganized into the Program Evaluations Office (PEO) to assist the

USOM, which was the foundation for future covert actions in Laos (Wing, et al. 1964, A10). The PEO covertly filled the role of a MAAG to campaign with the ANL in the south and fought the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh in the north using indigenous or surrogate forces, but maintained an outward civilian appearance so as not to violate the Accord. The indigenous forces were made up of Hmong (also called Mong or Meo), an Asian ethnic group from the mountainous regions of Southeast Asia. The PL's political arm, established in 1956, was known as the Neo Lao Hak Sat ("Lao Patriotic Front" or NLHS) (Fall 1969, 43–44). In 1957, the PEO expanded to train Laotians covertly to combat the Pathet Lao in CIA camps in Thailand and later used the Thai for surrogate forces for Laotian defense (Conboy 1995, 24; Berntsen 2008, 56).

In 1959, US Army Brigadier General John A. Heintges took command of the PEO and expanded support to the ANL to allow the United States a more expanded and direct role in Hmong military training. Using Covert FID, multiple factions of US influence covertly increased the size of the Hmong. The PEO gradually provided training and equipment to the anti-Communist Hmong Tribe and the CIA were providing intelligence and political direction, giving them de facto legitimacy as an FID force due to this support (Wing, et al. 1964, B11–B12, C79–C80). BG Heintges's expansions included the Eastern Construction Company in Laos (ECCOIL) and the deployment in Laos of US Army SF Field Training Teams (FTT) (Blaufarb 1972, 53; Wing, et al. 1964, C9 & C17).

The ECCOIL was a Filipino-run employment agency designed for CIA covert operations to supplement the limited Lao capabilities for logistic support and technical maintenance through operations tied to USOM (Human Relations Area Files 1960, 43). Additionally, the SF advisors conducted live patrols throughout Laos and the Ho Chi Minh Trail (see Figure 4). with the Hmong to shape the environment by covertly increasing the Laotian government's ability of defeating

internal and external threats (Blaufarb 1972, 9). The Ho Chi Minh Trail was a combination of truck routes and paths for foot and bicycle traffic, forming a network of roads built from North Vietnam to South Vietnam through the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia to provide logistical support to the Viet Cong and the NVA during the Vietnam War (Marek 2011).



Figure 4: The Ho Chi Minh Trail (“Vietnam at War”)

This map graphically depicts the Ho Chi Minh Trail, how North Vietnam was using this thoroughfare, and why the United States covertly engaged the Pathet Lao through the Hmong (Herring 2008, 737).

The Laotian Civil War turned violent and forced Kong Le to retreat and give up the capital (Blaufarb 1972, 4). While fighting increased, the PEO started to post American advisors to many of the FAR combat units in addition to the Hmong outfits (Wing, et al. 1964, B16). From their

combat outposts, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the advisors to “participate in combat operations ... should the situation so require” (Wing, et al. 1964, B18–B19). This was particularly detrimental to covert operations because a public acknowledgement from a US representative automatically defaulted all US efforts in Laos as “combat operations” and clearly outside the terms of the December 1950 Pentalateral Defense Pact with the apparent acknowledgement of US involvement in Laos (Castle 1991).

Further addressing this issue, the CIA briefed President Kennedy that by mid-1961, there were “9,000 splendid fighting men as the US-armed and -trained extension of American power along the Ho Chi Minh Trail” (Warner, 2010, 3). As efforts in Laos became more evident, the covert PEO were forced to phase out of covert operations. Eventually these declarations resulted in more low-visibility FID operations that were strictly “undertaken only with the approval of the prime minister” that focused on essentials for sustaining a Lao government (Blaufarb 1972, vi–vii).

Between 1954 and 1962, the United States gave \$290 million in aid to the RLG with its Covert FID and through USOM. Most of the money lined the Communist officials’ pockets and very little made it to the needy Laotians. A whole chapter highlights this waste in *The Ugly American*, a novel whose setting is the fictional Southeast Asian country of Sarkhan (Toye 1968, 117; Burdick and Lederer 1999). Toye’s depiction of the corrupted aid program came from Champassak’s *Storm Over Laos*. Corruption and extortion in the customs, banking, foreign trade, police, and other administrative departments were commonplace. Black-market deals in American aid dollars reached such proportions that the Pathet Lao needed no propaganda to turn the rural population against the townspeople. The Chinese of Hong Kong and Bangkok and a few Lao officials profited from that American aid (Champassak 1961, 64; Branfman 1970).

1962–1973

Before the 1962 Accords, the CIA fully reestablished a low-visibility MAAG to assume the PEO roles (Blaufarb 1972, 3; Goldstein 1973, 239). Ultimately named Operation White Star, the efforts of the advisors from 1959–1962 encompassed multiple operations focused on pushing against the advancing Pathet Lao until the 1962 Geneva Accords (Specialoperation.com 2013). Although the United States was assisting the Hmong with FID, a lot of SOF pulled out of the low-visibility White Star program as the agency transitioned to Covert FID.

When the Geneva Accords were signed, only the United States and the USSR complied by withdrawing troops. The North Vietnamese maintained their military presence to support the Pathet Lao secretly via a UW campaign intent on overthrowing the legitimate Royal Laotian government. Paul Langer and Joseph Zasloff confirmed North Vietnam furnished advisors and military equipment to the Pathet Lao to assist them in military training and political instruction during the compilation of their research by conducting interviews with North Vietnamese prisoners and Pathet Lao defectors (Langer and Zasloff 1970, 62–63).

The Accords called for a coalition government of the Royal Lao, the Communists, and the neutralists. This presented an American policy problem. The need to fight the Pathet Lao, viewed as inimical to US strategic objectives in the region, would violate the Accords. No matter how hard the Americans tried, the Royal Lao military would never be able to effectively combat the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN or North Vietnamese Army [NVA]), who entered Laos in 1963; thus, US involvement increased with more advanced equipment for the Hmong to protect the Ho Chi Minh Trail and support the RLG (Stevens 1993, 54). In 1970, transcripts from highly classified documents, called the Pentagon Papers, appeared in the media (Gaddis 2005, 174). This divulgence undermined the citizens' trust in the US government's role in operations in Laos (Stevenson 1972, 228). After 1970 the pattern of the war in Laos seemed to change once more,

with the emergence of large-scale use of Thai troops as a surrogate force, an intensified bombing program in North Laos, and employment of Hmong forces as indigenous FID force until 1973 (Blaufarb 1972, iii).

The signing of the Paris Peace Accord in February 1973 called for the termination of the US presence in Laos, ended US bombings in the area, and mandated the expulsion of Air America. However, it did not stipulate that North Vietnam needed to remove its forces, so they continued to fund and equip the Pathet Lao. Shortly thereafter, SF advisors completed their assistance mission to the Royal Lao government's defense and returned to America. Hope remained that the new Lao government would allow a small constituent of US advisors, but this was not the case, and America's covert war in Laos ceased. The Royal Lao Government accepted the Pathet Lao into the new Lao coalition government and by 1975, the balance of power in Laos shifted to the Pathet Lao as the United States severed ties in Southeast Asia, and the Hmong were hunted like criminals (Castle 1991, 294).

International Relations Applications

Connected to Vietnam and the American fear of the Domino Theory, Americans felt that if the Communist insurgency succeeded in overthrowing the Laotian government, then South Vietnam, as the linchpin domino, would fall and thus the rest of Southeast Asia. After the 1962 Geneva Accords were signed, Covert FID was used to disrupt the Pathet Lao insurgency supported by North Vietnam, leveraging the anti-Communists Hmong, and ensuring Thailand did not become the first piece to fall within the Domino Theory. The covert nature of US actions maintained Laotian governmental legitimacy by maintaining a degree of plausible deniability when both Laos and the US, and to a lesser extent, Thailand, violated the Geneva Accords.

Case Study Summary

Between 1962 and 1973, the United States used Covert FID to support the Laotian government's efforts against the Pathet Lao insurgency and North Vietnam's UW support to the Pathet Lao. America's Covert FID support disrupted the NVA's use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Covert FID, led by the CIA, augmented by SOF and other DoD assets, provided the US and Laotian governments plausible deniability that military forces were operating in Laos, since this violated the international neutrality agreement signed by Laos, the United States, and North Vietnam in 1962.

Although the United States became involved with Laos after the French requested assistance in 1945 to reestablish the French colonial empire, Covert FID did not fully occur until after the 1962 Geneva Accords when the Royal Lao government allowed the CIA to work with the Hmong (Herring 1977, 114; Blaufarb 1972). This conflict was Covert FID conducted decisively, and in direct support to the Laotian government. Defining this period as anything other than the core operation of FID, with a covert signature, would be a mistake. This effort was clearly Covert FID, aimed at protecting the state and the government by disrupting or defeating the insurgency.

This case study is important because Laos is where SOF and CIA cooperation helped shape future Covert FID operations. Fred Branfman claims that the American military in Laos "devised a pattern of warfare likely to become the model for all future attempts to fight localized guerrilla conflicts" (Basilici and Simmons 2004, 213–214).

Phoenix Program

"If you're this man [South Vietnamese National Police Chief Brig. Gen. Nguyen Ngoc Loan], and you just caught this guy after he killed some of your people [South Vietnamese colonel, his wife and their six children] ... How do you know you wouldn't have pulled that trigger yourself? You have to put yourself in that situation ... It's a war"

— Eddie Adams



Figure 5: South Vietnamese Officer Executes a Viet Cong Prisoner
(E. Adams 1968).

The true strategic value of the Phoenix Program is often overlooked due to the popular (albeit inaccurate) rhetoric that has come to define the effort as a campaign of assassinations and death squads, as portrayed in the infamous photo in Figure 5. The second case study examines how the CIA-led Phoenix Program, a countersubversion effort, nested under Covert FID, supported the South Vietnamese government to target Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI)—key personnel in shadow governments and underground networks—located throughout the rural areas South Vietnam from 1967 to 1972.

Although well known as a covert operation, and described as such in most sources, no factual primary or secondary source reference could be found to verify that an actual covert finding was approved by the POTUS. This is likely because prior to 1974 there was no clear process for quantifying something as a covert activity. After 1974, the US government started implementing a process for covert activities, which is a variation of the existing finding process.

Based on the literary research, South Vietnamese government, military, and select police forces were witting of the Phoenix Program. The “covert” aspects of the effort rested largely on the CIA’s involvement—a CIA cultural idea that all CIA operations are “covert” regardless of a Presidential finding or not. While keeping the operation hidden from the enemy was important, by

definition, this would have been clandestine at best, and in time, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese were aware of the program (Prados 2006, 363-364). There was no logical requirement for plausible deniability for either the US or South Vietnam, but due to the FID-type activities and being labeled covert, this case study was examined.

DoD Support to Covert Operations

In South Vietnam, the rise of a hostile, Communist-based non-state actor called the Viet Cong brought tremendous change to the security situation of the South Vietnamese government, the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN). The insurgency rapidly expanded to help transform apparent regional threats of Communist growth. Despite negative US media publicity about military involvement in Southeast Asia's civil wars, CIA's support for Covert CS efforts seemed necessary due to the perceived threat of the spread of Communism. Specifically, in South Vietnam, the Viet Cong guerrilla movement was underway, had gained the attention of the Kennedy administration, and needed a program to deter the growth of this insurgency and maintain the legitimacy of the sovereign South Vietnamese government (Menzel 2005, 12). This section examines how the United States used Covert FID to support the South Vietnamese government's CS efforts through the Phoenix Program in South Vietnam from 1967–1972. The CIA, with DoD and SOF augmentation, led operations to destroy the Viet Cong shadow government and underground elements subversive acts in South Vietnam.

The South Vietnamese insurgency needed a support mechanism, and the VCI supplied recruits, money, intelligence, and supplies to guerrilla forces as the structure of the Communist resistance (MACV 1970, 2). Former Director of the CIA William Colby described the initial VCI as “native southerners” that “the Communists took north for training in organizing, propaganda, and subversion” (Colby 1970, 723). He also stated that the VCI was an element of North Vietnam

supporters that created shadow governments in all forty-two provinces and 247 South Vietnamese districts to make it impossible for the GVN to protect and provide for its people through subversion (ibid).

With their constant presence, the lower-level supporters to mid-level comrades were in place to assure that the orders from the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) were supported throughout the districts. As the guerrillas kept the GVN focused away from the infrastructure, meetings occurred, cells and committees formed, terrorist and insurgent acts occurred against GVN officials, and the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NLF) flourished where the political and militaristic aspects were equally and dynamically dangerous in different arenas (Andrade 1990, 1–10). As one CIA advisor noted, the VCI was “a shadow government. The GVN may have ruled during the day, but these guys ruled at night” (DeForest and Chanoff 1990, 71). To clarify, the terms *Viet Cong*, *NLF*, and *VCI* are all Vietnamese Communists. However, NLF usually refers to the political hierarchy, while Viet Cong refers to the guerillas themselves, and VCI refers to the political and military leadership of the Viet Cong that promoted subversive acts against the GVN (Thayer 1985, 208).

To affect the infrastructure of the Viet Cong, the CIA sought to persuade the populous through pacification processes. Two apparatuses emerged that led to the development of the Phoenix Program, the Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRUs) and Province Interrogation Centers (PICs) (Valentine 1990, 132). The struggle to win the “hearts and minds” caused the CIA to rename the term “Counter-Terror Team” to PRU because they “became wary of the adverse publicity surrounding the use of the word “terror”” and because the teams often shot first if anticipating problems (Sheehan 1989, 732; McCoy 2006, 63). Renaming PRU teams meant to imply that PRU elements were not to kill the VCI but rather to apprehend cadres and use them for

intelligence purposes (Moyar 1997, 38).

A RAND study describes the PRUs as an “intelligence-driven police force better trained, equipped, and paid than the South Vietnamese National Police, and with a highly specialized mission, to be sure, but a police force nonetheless” (Rosenau and Long 2009, 11). Simply put, the PRUs “were in the business of trying to capture VCI which could be exploited at a later date” (Milberg 1974, 41; Rosenau and Long 2009, 10). By 1967, the US government reorganized the pacification efforts under Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), controlled by the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) that caused all American pacification efforts to integrate and synchronize with military operations. As part of CORDS, the Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation (ICEX) program emerged to create information sharing and centralization between various teams to deter the NLF and VCI (MACV 1967). This is how the US helped the GVN’s CS efforts.

The South Vietnamese version of ICEX, or Vietnamese Chiến dịch Phụng Hoàng, was named after a Vietnamese mythical bird that appeared as a sign of prosperity and luck (Angelfire.com 2014). In 1967, the CIA renamed ICEX to mirror the South Vietnamese Phụng Hoàng. Therefore, the Phoenix Program was a CIA pacification program designed “to attack and destroy the political infrastructure of the Viet Cong” that supported the North Vietnam takeover of South Vietnam during the 1960s (Finlayson 2007, 59). Using the South Vietnamese support of pacification apparatuses, the CIA planned, synchronized, and implemented Phoenix Program operations to support the Republic of Vietnam’s (South Vietnam’s) security during the Vietnam War. Surprisingly, however, SOF enabled the CIA to facilitate neutralization operations between 1965 and 1972 through their operational experience and extensive training (Finlayson 2007, 60).

As SOF advisors integrated themselves within the Phoenix Program, they brought with

them the knowledge of creating a CS-capable force. Fundamentally, the SOF Phoenix advisors enabled the South Vietnamese to build a pacification force capable of finding and deterring VCI and their COSVN sponsors. By 1970, Phoenix Program activities fell under the tutelage of the MACV-SOG's CORDS organization. Sometimes this unit is confused with the Phoenix Program, but it supported more than 700 advisors, whereby most personnel being military officers made up the staff of the District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Centers (DIOCC) (Andrade and Willbanks 2006, 18). Along with the SOF volunteers, sometimes the force contained Montagnards from the Mountain Scouts sections or women in the Police Special Branch (PSB) called "Swans" to assist in locating VCI (Andrade 1990, 46 & 166).

To understand how committed North Vietnam was to the Viet Cong insurgency, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) often backfilled Viet Cong guerrilla formations devastated by combat and pacification actions of SOF. After the Tet Offensive in 1968, and as the war continued, more and more NVA replaced Viet Cong cadres and leadership to continue the insurgency (Thayer 1985, 32–33). However much the NVA backfilled, the Phoenix Program usually faced the guerillas supported by VCI family and friends from the local operational area. In this scenario, the Phoenix Program had a problem of gauging success because of the difficulties in convincing the population to turn against the Viet Cong, or family and friends. In Christian Appy's book, *The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*, an interview with Vincent Okamoto summed up the difficulties with finding the VCI by saying, "the problem was, how do you find the people on the blacklist" (Appy 2003, 361). Even the South Vietnamese reported their local rivals as "VC" to get action against them (MacPherson 1984, 625).

Although the Phoenix Program was mostly clerical through intelligence gathering that was "often accumulated, cross-indexed, properly analyzed, and filed," there was still a pacification

element to the process countering subversive acts (Lewy 1978, 284). When the Phoenix Program's pacification efforts of "penetrations, interrogations, interception of couriers and communications, translation of captured documents, analysis of propaganda writings and broadcasts, and thorough scholarly study and review" were not optimal, the Phoenix Program used PRUs as "action arms" (Colby and Forbath 1978, 266; Colby 1970, 58). PRUs would capture suspected Communists, including VCI, and take them to PICs to gain intelligence on Viet Cong activities (Otterman 2007, 62). The controversial issue was that the methods for the extraction of information often resulted in torture and death (Blakely 2009, 50; Allen and Pilger 2008, 164; Harbury 2005, 97).

What is important to note is that PRUs were largely independent of the overall US and Vietnamese pacification, and anti-VCI structures typically gathered, developed, and exploited their own intelligence (Rosenau and Long 2009, 10–11). To combat the problem of competing with the families and friends of the VCI, the SOF-led PRUs had informants in almost every village from family members and friends of those working with Americans (Moyar 1997, 84). The greatest action of PRUs utilizing the Phoenix Program occurred from 1967–1972, but they continued operations until the end of the war in 1975 (Moyar 1997, 55).

South Vietnam's challenges influenced their international foreign relations with the United States and set the tone for the combined activities of the Phoenix Program to discourage the VCI's subversive acts. One example of CS tactics used by SF Soldiers who were temporarily assigned to the CIA or working in MACV, is when they worked in nonstandard uniforms and civilian clothes, in groups of two or three, in places where the "Geneva Accords restricted the number of regular Soldiers" to turn "deserters into double agents" (Valentine 1990, 34). Ed Landsdale even says the Vietnamese double agents could clandestinely collect information and "could work to induce the rank and file to surrender" (Landsdale 1972, 82–88). When the CIA allowed SOF to operate freely,

it gave the CIA an understanding of the political goals of the VCI and the Viet Cong insurgency. The knowledge gleaned from CS operations conducted by SOF, afforded the GVN plausible deniability of Covert FID TTPs utilized by the Phoenix Program.

When the US advisors allowed the freedom of maneuver for the Vietnamese security forces, it forced the US advisors to accept the South Vietnamese conducting their own version of CS operations and the negativity it contained. William Colby even claimed that the program never sanctioned the “premeditated killing of a civilian in a non-combat situation” (Andrade 1990, 53). However, a multitude of inaccurate reports came from the guesswork of personnel not knowing the facts in the form of “several antiwar journals” (E. S. Martin 1978, 82), especially after transcripts from compiled classified documents, called the Pentagon Papers, appeared in the media (Gaddis 2005, 174). For example, by 1968, it was inaccurately reported, “hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, most of them peasants, who had taken no action against the United States or its Soldiers, had been killed or maimed (Craig and Logevall 2009, 218).

The issue in the media was that some American Soldiers, who later became authors, tended to focus on the negative and extreme circumstances of this program and missed all the other aspects of it. For instance, Daniel Marvin recounts his confrontation with a CIA advisor having knowledge of assassinations in the Phoenix Program: “I’d refused [CIA advisor] Mackem’s CT team entry into An Phy District ... and the whole business of CT teams operating under the auspices of the Phoenix Program. We didn’t need strangers in our midst who would make independent judgments without consulting local authority and who would imprison or assassinate whomever they determined to be VC sympathizers” (Marvin 2006, 259).

Other actions US advisors had to be aware of concerned renditions. Renditions are extraterritorial covert actions to seize individuals wanted for terrorism or insurgent tactics that

threaten both US interests and the foreign state's internal defense. As Mark Lowenthal states, "in some instances, the foreign government in whose territory the rendition occurred was aware of the operation and looked the other way, allowing the rendition to proceed but preserving its own plausible deniability" (Lowenthal 2008, 171). The advisors and South Vietnamese counterparts understood that if they were not faithful in their internal defense, the Viet Cong's subversive acts posed a serious threat to the governmental security. The South Vietnamese tried to address the population's drivers of discontent who enabled insurgents to flourish, and this was partly why the US government had to combat the VCI and their subversive tactics. Our government recognized the seriousness of the situation, understood that their involvement was paramount to South Vietnam's success, and therefore committed the United States to help sustain authenticity through the covert nature of the Phoenix Program (Stewart, Joseph, and Sandler 1995).

International Relations Applications

The American thoughts on the Domino Theory caused US IR practitioners to focus on Vietnam because they felt it was the linchpin in a connective chain throughout Southeast Asia, but President Eisenhower's policies were more supple and vigilant (Bell 2001, 117; Immerman 1990, 9; Smith 2007). President Kennedy viewed Vietnam as a zero-sum game in which there was a loss to Communism and American rhetoric demanded victory (Bell 2001, 275–276; Immerman 1990, 15; Young and Kent 2004, 165; Smith 2007). Contrary to this, North Vietnam played off the vulnerabilities that the American hegemony could not lose to an under-strength peasant insurgency (Record 2002, 157; Neustadt and May 1986, 137; Smith 2007).

This is where the Phoenix Program and the VCI both gained strength. South Vietnam used US-funded incentives in their domestic perception of government stability and intrastate legitimization while the VCI focused the lower and middle class on their living conditions, creating

the discontent that enabled the VCI's legitimacy. To combat the underlying grievances or vulnerabilities of the population, the Phoenix Program's Covert FID practices focused on conditions of the population that hindered the success of the South Vietnamese Government's CS operations. Ultimately, the signature of the Phoenix Program's kinetic operations led to its demise. As the Phoenix Program dwindled, the loss for the United States was becoming evident in Vietnam. The response was ultimately committal of more troops, and eventually came President Nixon's order to withdraw (Bell 2001, 275–276; Landon 1973, 33; Smith 2007).

Case Study Summary

The CIA developed the Phoenix Program fully intending the CORDS program to control it and ultimately handing it over to the South Vietnamese. Instead, it was mainly run under CIA auspices. The greatest problem the Phoenix Program had was that the covert nature of the CIA operations hindered coordination with other military, political, and informational initiatives. Most PRU operations occurred without the knowledge of the district CORDS/Phoenix advisors who coordinated the anti-VCI efforts in the area because of over compartmentalization that sometimes was detrimental to the other pacification objectives within a district or province. Henry Gole summed up the inadequacies of CIA experiences in leading partner forces by saying,

“The Americans were not sufficiently acculturated to supervise responsibly such a sensitive operation, and there was no way they could be sure that the killings and kidnappings were not the settling of personal scores. Whatever success the [Phoenix] program might have enjoyed, political attitudes in the United States after Tet 1968 doomed its continuation” (Gole 1991–92, 102).

Some Phoenix critics portray the program as waywardly ruthless, but the Phoenix Program was far from a total failure and was largely a success for SOF for the betterment of TTPs for future covert operations. Based on this research, the Phoenix Program was covert based on the CIA culture and lead, and there was never a presidential finding to authorize special activities other

than CIA normal intelligence and intelligence-gathering activities (OLRC: Title 50 1952, § 3092). Even though this was not a covert operation, the CIA, with DoD and SOF augmentation, used “remote area operations” to destroy the Viet Cong shadow government and underground elements, as well as thwart the Viet Cong campaign of terror against rural populations in South Vietnam to force local support for the Viet Cong (FM 3-05.202 2007, A-9; FM 31-20-3 1994, 1–19).

Ultimately, the success of the program comes from the CIA’s claim that the Phoenix Program’s integration of SOF and local-level human intelligence gathering afforded them the identity and structure of the VCI in every province (Blakely 2009, 50). The effects of the Phoenix Program allowed for small numbers of SOF to operate under CIA control yet retain a semblance of a chain of command. Overall, between 1967 and 1972, Phoenix Program operatives had “neutralized” between 26,000 and 41,000 NLF operatives, informants, and supporters whereby their actions were “extremely destructive” in disrupting the “invisible Viet Cong empire” (Karnow 1997, 617; DeForest and Chanoff 1990, 71; Colby and Forbath 1978, 272 & 275–276; Blum 2003, 131; Marchetti and Marks 1975, 237; Hersh 2003; McCoy 2006, 68).

Pakistan

“You lobbed missiles across our territory with no advance warning! You humiliated our government! You killed Pakistani intelligence officers.”

— Pakistani official complaining to a US newspaper (McChrystal 2013, 70)

“Despite the clear importance of the strike, it was a reminder that the term ‘surgical strike’ is often poorly used. Even with a sharp scalpel, a surgeon has to break the skin and cut through live tissue. There is a chance for infection. And sutures close a wound only imperfectly until the skin fuses.”

— General Stan McChrystal

After 9/11 and the Afghanistan Taliban government crumbled, many members of the Taliban fled to the ungoverned region of the Afghanistan and Pakistan border where the Pakistani army had little control, but needed help with their CT program against internal threats. Although the Pakistani government supported fighting extremism, in 2004, Pervez Musharraf, the former Pakistani president, wittingly authorized the CIA to begin covert drone strikes within the under-governed Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) against Pakistani Taliban and stated, “in Pakistan, things fall out of the sky all the time” (Mazzetti 2013). This initial effort was covert to give Musharraf plausible deniability with his domestic audiences, but sanctioned and witting.

However, by 2013, a Pakistani court felt the covert US cross-border CT drone strikes were unnecessary and ruled that CIA drone strikes in Pakistan were illegal (Ross 2013). This afforded the opportunity for the US government to shift its plausible deniability operations from sanctioned and witting operations to unsanctioned and possibly unwitting within the Pakistani borders. As far as presidential findings, by 2004, two were already on the books authorizing covert action worldwide. One allowed CIA operations against international terrorist organizations (9/11 Commission 2004, 211–212). The other, signed in 1986 by President Ronald Reagan, authorized action against international narcotics traffickers (Daugherty 2004, 209).

Additionally, concerning covert ground operations, Brigadier General Volney Warner’s published article, made mention of potential sensitivities and possibly Covert FID operations within the AFPAK region. Surprisingly, the unnamed individual that Warner was interviewing for the article stated, “there is an offensive aspect—Covert COIN—reputed to be used successfully in the FATA...It has apparently been practiced with safeguards and checks against becoming another Vietnam-era Operation Phoenix and seems to effectively employ proactive PSYOP and ‘legend building’” (Warner 2010, 24). Finally, the multitude of secondary sources try to describe the covert

nature of the operations in Pakistan, but because of the rhetoric of technological advances, most have incomplete notions of the true nature of Covert FID.⁴

To show how technology incorporates itself into Covert FID, this case study explores the CIA's use of drone strikes to execute Covert CT strikes within under-governed spaces in the Pakistani Tribal areas against extremist leaders. These strikes lend the Pakistani government plausible deniability of these efforts to protect their domestic standing and support, but it mainly gives the POTUS a way to plausibly deny US actions.

This case study will highlight three points. First, that the authorities for drones offer a viable option for Covert FID within ungoverned spaces. Second, that the United States is trying to maintain some plausible deniability about conducting strikes while also providing the Pakistani government plausible deniability that they support this effort in order to retain domestic control. Finally, that there is an ongoing attempt to shift the “drone program” from the CIA to the DoD, providing unique perspectives about issues related to the DoD conducting covert operations.

Authorities for Drones and Ungoverned Spaces

Prior to the 9/11 attacks, in the 1990s, strategists started to bring attention to the fact that weak or poor governance of territory and people within a state's sovereign borders can have “spillover” properties affecting other neighboring states (Atwood 1994; Kaplan 1994; Patrick 2011, 4). The 2008 National Defense Strategy (NDS) said of gaps in governance, “Ungoverned,

⁴ References of sources used to search the covert operations within in Pakistan, refer to the following secondary research documents: Rothstein 2006; Haqqani 2005; Cohen 2004; Cohen 1998; Patrick 2011; Robinson 2013; New America Foundation 2014; Chesney 2012; Pillar 2012; Entous 2010; Bergen and Rowland 2012; Becker and Shane 2012; Pew Research Center 2013; Bergen and Tiedemann 2010; 9/11 Commission 2004; The White House 1981; Mayer 2007; Rigstad 2014; Cole 2012; Singer 2009; Bergen and Braun 2012; Byman 2009; Tammen, Kugler and Lemke 2014; IHRCRC & GJC 2012; Richardson 2006; Hoffman 2004; Savage 2010; Masood and Schmitt 2011; Andrew 1995; McChrystal 2013; JP 3-60 2007; USNIC 2007; Patrick 2011; Zenko 2013; Dozier 2014; Houreld 2014; Bennett 2013; Martin 2014; Miller 2014; CSPAN 2014; Shatzen 2014; Savage 2010; Caldwell and Williams Jr. 2012; Chesney 2012; al-Zayyat 2004; Haniffa 2009; Williams 2010; Lindley-French 2013; Levine and Herridge 2009; Kilcullen and McDonald 2009; al-Zawahiri 2005.

under-governed, mis-governed, and contested areas offer fertile ground for such groups to exploit the gaps in governance capacity of local regimes to undermine local stability and regional security” (DoD 2008, 3). Based on that statement, defense analysts expanded the ungoverned concept to include:

“1) under-governed areas where the state performs some functions, 2) mis-governed areas where it empowers illicit actors, 3) contested areas where non-state actors fill the governance void, and 4) nonphysical, functional havens, such as communications networks, social customs, or legal norms, that terrorists can exploit” (Patrick 2011, 290; Lamb 2008; Rettig and Grespin 2013).

This is important because Pakistan harbors terrorists within the gaps of its governance in territory it claims as sovereign. The fact that terrorist groups are not static in nature identifies the difficulties to locate and neutralize them. They will even enlist themselves into a fight because of territorial objectives like the Pakistani Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM) that “signed bin Laden’s 1998 fatwa against the West, and its members are now an essential part of the al-Qaeda front” (L. Richardson 2006, 83). After September 11, 2001, political engagements forced states to realize that “dealing with terrorist organizations compromises the very nature of the state” (Zartman and Faure 2011).

The complexity of operating within Pakistan’s under-governed areas presented a feasible option for the US government to use UAVs. On August 1, 2001, the National Security Council (NSC) Deputies Committee had “concluded that it was legal for the CIA to kill Bin Ladin, or one of his deputies, with the Predator” (9/11 Commission 2004, 211–212; Mayer 2007). Based on that statement, armed UAV strikes could be labeled as self-defense and would not violate the ban on assassinations detailed within the Executive Order (EO) 12333 (The White House 1981, Part 2.11 & 3.4). Specifically, regarding drones, the National Security Council also directed the CIA to prepare new authorities for approval including the use of lethal covert action via drones in 2001

(Coll 2004, 212–214; Chesney 2012, 560–561). However, this paper only concerns the covert use of drones within the borders of another state. The discussions of the legality of the lethal findings, international law, or the morality of drone warfare are beyond the scope of this paper.

Plausible Deniability

Covert FID as a US CT effort allowed the United States to maintain some plausible deniability that it conducted strikes in Pakistan. Armed UAVs could stay on station longer to provide better intelligence and possibly reduce collateral damage; they can be launched from more accessible areas; and there are no personnel on board, causing less intrusive sovereignty concerns (Chesney 2012, 566–567). Launching from Afghanistan not only offered the United States plausible deniability of drone warfare, but it also offered the Pakistan government plausible deniability that they support this type of external effort to maintain domestic control. Additionally, using a drone strike to address FID covertly might backfire; it may solve a symptom, one person at a time, but it will likely create more problems due to collateral damage.

Drones operate in a remote, autonomous way with the low cost, ease of use, and negligible military casualty rate that make them attractive to politicians. Yet the concern is that decisions for the use of UAVs “has risen dramatically over the past few years and is widely forecasted to grow even more rapidly over the coming decade” (Cole 2012, 3). Simply put, drones are changing the course of conventional warfare in the regard that unmanned systems have new technological capabilities that human-driven aircraft do not have, and drones are therefore shifting the meaning of “go to war” within the nature of warfare (Singer 2009, 326–327).

Arguably, though, the issue with air strikes is that the aftermath is not always covert. Critics have stated that “the danger posed by armed UAVs cannot be separated from the asymmetric manner in which they are presently used and there is presently no international law relating to

asymmetric war, one area where international law is lagging behind technological development” (Birch, Lee, and Pierscionek 2012, 10; Pax Christi—British Section 2013). In the information age, many journalists, NGO and humanitarian workers, medical professionals, and Pakistani governmental officials have access to the Internet and express their perception of reality when noncombatants become casualties (IHRCRC & GJC 2012, 133).

Statistically, the drone campaign began in Pakistan in 2004 where the strikes “primarily kill[ed] low-level militants” (Entous 2010; Bergen and Rowland 2012; Bergen and Braun 2012). However, media reports state that drones account for the deaths of fifty-eight known militant leaders, representing just 2 percent of the total deaths because Al Qaeda is a “nimble, flexible, and adaptive entity” (Hoffman 2004, 549 & 551; Becker and Shane 2012; Pillar 2012; IHRCRC & GJC 2012, 129–130; New America Foundation 2014).

Additionally, Pakistan maintains only an 11 percent favorability rating of the United States because of the drone operations and 68 percent of Pakistanis oppose US drone strikes, but 91 percent feel that their country is heading in the wrong direction with its own internal defense (Pew Research Center 2013). On the issue of plausible deniability, opinions since 2009 are divided on whether the strikes are being conducted with (29 percent) or without (39 percent) the approval of the Pakistani government (Byman 2009; Bergen and Tiedemann 2010; Pew Research Center 2013).

International Relations Applications

Specifically in the case of drones, some diplomats are arguing that the Just War Theory or even the Bush Doctrine applies to the US government when the CIA conducts CT (as a subset of FID) because the intervention will ultimately save lives (Rigstad 2014). Their claim is that it was appropriate to go to war (*jus ad bellum*) after 9/11 because of the open Al Qaeda threats and the

US right for self defense from any further terrorist attacks (9/11 Commission 2004, 211–212; Mayer 2007; The White House 1981, Part 2.11 & 3.4). Additionally, in the post 9/11 environment, while the Bush Doctrine has claims for justifiable drone strikes, the current administration is aligning toward the power transition theory and the domestic and international concerns that politics are addressing (Tammen, Kugler and Lemke 2014).

DoD Support to Covert Operations

Since Pakistan has a functioning government, the US issue was that the Pakistani “army and within the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) have traditionally had a close relationship with the Afghan Taliban. One of the problems with that is that some elements in the Pakistani national security establishment have gotten into the habit over decades of using militant extremists as a surrogate counterweight to Indian regional influence” (Haniffa 2009). Shifting Pakistani norms from focusing on the external state of India and looking internally to deter “the threat of internal collapse and extremist takeover,” Pakistan needed American assistance (Haniffa 2009). To eliminate this enemy, and all other non-state terrorist actors in Pakistan, America provides the funds and equipment for Pakistan to control their domestic issues without occupying territory militarily. Despite this support, and continued US pressure, the Pakistani government has failed to effectively disrupt the Afghani Taliban in ungoverned areas.

Daniel Byman discussed the impossibility of this approach because the Pakistani government conducting raids to seize terrorists in Al Qaeda–controlled areas would probably end in the militants escaping. Byman also argues that a terrorist who has the freedom to operate without the threat of apprehension can plan operations, recruit potential fighters, organize networks, “transform idealistic but incompetent volunteers” through training, and relax to dream up terrorism “spectaculars” like the 9/11 attacks (Byman 2009). With the porous Afghanistan-Pakistan border

today, the United States has even offered up FID forces to fight alongside Pakistani troops, but as David Kilcullen stated, “when we intervene in people’s countries to chase small cells of bad guys, we end up alienating the whole country and turning them against us” (Haniffa 2009).

In a Senate Armed Services Committee on June 2, 2009, General McChrystal responded to a question concerning the Taliban that he felt the resilient Taliban insurgency is increasingly more violent in areas with a lack of governance capacity maintained by their corruption. Terrorists deter development in key areas, partake in narco-terrorism, and slander external state influences that support regional security. The Taliban “led heavy recruitment efforts throughout Pakistan’s madrassas and began to root themselves into the country by dispatching small bands of fighters ... these mobile units pestered NATO units, but, more important, waged blanket assassination campaigns against any Afghans — government officials, civilians, NGO workers — who collaborated with NATO or the Afghan government” (McChrystal 2013, 282 & 289).

General McChrystal also felt that to prevent the reemergence of Al Qaeda, the Taliban needs separation from their logistical support and sanctuaries inside Pakistan, especially within the FATA region (McChrystal 2013, 289 & 328). Using the goals of the US Afghanistan-Pakistan (AFPAK) strategy that only concern Pakistan, General McChrystal shaped a multilateral NATO approach to assist in Pakistani disruption of terrorist networks by degrading their ability to conduct terrorist acts, yet afford the US the opportunity to contribute covertly to Pakistan’s internal defense (Lindley-French 2013, 120–121). Even on December 2, 2009, President Obama stated, “we must deny Al Qaeda a safe haven ... we must reverse the Taliban’s momentum ...” (McChrystal 2013, 359).

Issues with Transfer of Authority from CIA to DOD

Historically, the DoD has used UAS (unarmed drones) to provide tactical Imagery

Intelligence (IMINT) for the Army, Marines, and Navy (Andrew 1995, 523). Specific to JSOC in the AFPAK region, General McChrystal wrote, “of most value was our increasingly sophisticated employment of [the] UAV, with the Predator being the most common version. These remotely piloted aircraft, equipped with video cameras on their underbellies to transmit live feeds back to the monitors in our Joint Operations Center (JOC), allowed us to watch locations or vehicles for extended periods” (McChrystal 2013, 137). General McChrystal was describing a step in the joint targeting cycle, including the processes, responsibilities, and collateral damage estimations intended to reduce the likelihood of civilian casualties within JP 3-60, *Joint Targeting*. DoD uses the doctrinal guidance and fundamental principles in JP 3-60 for targeting across the spectrum of military operations (JP 3-60 2007).

Drones have a major psychological effect on a population. Human rights groups recorded the effects of UAVs where interviewees had “emotional breakdowns, running indoors or hiding when drones appear above, fainting, nightmares and other intrusive thoughts, hyper-startled reactions to loud noises, outbursts of anger or irritability, and loss of appetite and other physical symptoms” (IHRCRC & GJC 2012, 82–83). Recognizing the devastating effects of drone strikes, and how the media plays into their “hearts and minds” campaign, Al Qaeda created a media strategy so that “more than half this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. And that we are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma [community]” (al-Zawahiri 2005).

Moreover, David Kilcullen stated, “[e]very one of these dead noncombatants represents an alienated family, a new desire for revenge, and more recruits for a militant movement that has grown exponentially even as drone strikes have increased” (Kilcullen and McDonald 2009). Notwithstanding, though, Al Qaeda has bad publicity. In 2009, Al Qaeda published its “Guide to

the Laws Regarding Muslim Spies,” where it describes the tumultuous relationship with the CIA drone strikes and that the terrorist group spoke of the drones in fearful terms of the successful US Covert FID efforts in Pakistan (Levine and Herridge 2009; Williams 2010, 879).

Despite the results, the US government’s relationship with Pakistan has been strained since the CIA’s covert drone strikes appeared in the news in 2009. Privately, Pakistani officials admit the covert drone attacks have helped with their internal defense, if they are accurate and do not kill any civilians (Schiffrin 2009). According to the Pakistani military intelligence, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) “remains unhappy that the US has been allowed to hunt independently for members of the Haqqani network ... and the use of drone strikes to degrade the Al Qaeda leadership remains contentious” (Lindley-French 2013, 122–123). Although drone technology has its skeptics, the technological advantage of the military armed drone engagements are the increased ability to “find, fix, and finish” our adversaries while mitigating collateral damage like civilian casualties (Callam 2010).

In 2010, because of the controversy within the media, the UN recommended to the US government to end CIA drone strikes. Philip Alston, the UN special reporter on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, stated the US DoD “may not be perfect, but [has] quite abundant accountability as demonstrated by what happens when a bombing goes wrong in Afghanistan” (Savage 2010). Alston made this statement after a set of drone strikes killed at least twenty-five Pakistani soldiers (Masood and Schmitt 2011).

The issue of transferring the drone program from the CIA to the DoD comes down to “authorities, policies, accountability mechanisms, and oversight. Splitting the drone program between the JSOC and CIA is apparently intended to allow the plausible deniability of CIA strikes” (Zenko 2013). The issue with the plausible deniability is that the CIA cannot confirm or deny

covert activities, and if the DoD acknowledges some of the strikes, then by default, the others will name the covert CIA strikes (Dozier 2014). Any international relation advantage that the United States had in Pakistan became nonexistent with the over-reporting of drone killings from the Pakistani army, ISI, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), and the Taliban (Zenko 2013). For instance, by not acknowledging the strikes within Pakistan, the Pakistani government has possibly taken advantage of the CIA's silence by blaming US drone strikes for civilian casualties caused by their own military airstrikes (Houreld 2014).

US senators are also debating the issue of transferring the drones. Defending the CIA, Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) stated the CIA "exercise[s] patience and discretion specifically to prevent collateral damage" because "the CIA has more experience flying drones" and that she "would really have to be convinced that the military would carry it out that well" (Bennett 2013; Martin 2014; Miller 2014). The issue with this over-reported statement is that CBS News correspondent David Martin stated that transferring the "CIA's stealth RQ-170 drone fleet" would be a wasted effort (Martin 2014). It is because "US officials say Pentagon chiefs defending their drone program in a closed congressional session last week pointed out that the same cadre of Air Force pilots fly both the CIA and the Pentagon drones" (Martin 2014).

Martin, surprisingly, tied this to the statement of James R. Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), who publicly acknowledged the transfer of the CIA drone program to the DoD. He was responding to questions from Senator Nelson in a Senate Committee Armed Services Hearing (CSPAN 2014). Finally, on February 14, 2014, Representative Michael Burgess (R-TX) introduced legislation to eliminate CIA use of drones abroad and transfer that authority solely to the DoD. On his website, he stated, "by giving our intelligence community exclusive authority to do what should be the work of DoD, it compromises CIA's ability to do its core intelligence-

gathering work, and frankly, it oversteps its mission statement by a longshot” (Shatzen 2014).

No matter what happens with the transfer decision, the United States will continue to assist in the AFPAK region, and three things will resonate from UAV programs. 1) Drone strikes are no longer covert and consequently, terrorists use media propaganda against our drone program in their “hearts and minds” strategy (Richardson 2006, 218). 2) Unlike DoD’s Title 10 Authority, if strikes are carried out by the CIA, then they will remain covert and not acknowledged by the US government because of mandates within US Code (OLRC: USC 1874; OLRC: Title 10 1956; OLRC: Title 50 1952). 3) It is not within America’s best interest to highlight ourselves publicly as the main or only entity in Pakistan actively pursuing destabilizing factions, because we are not.

Case Study Summary

Based on the possibility of some sort of repercussion, we can assume that US government leaders will argue that drone strikes targeting destabilizing actors in the Waziristan region of Pakistan help to stabilize Afghanistan if Pakistani forces are unwilling or unable to help in ungoverned spaces (Caldwell and Williams Jr. 2012, 32; Savage 2010). There must be an understanding that the choice for drone strikes originally began because the CIA was able to “project force in locations where it would be far more difficult, if not impossible, to carry out commando-style raids using either CIA officers or proxy forces” (Chesney 2012, 566). Additionally, the US considered drones after the media splash of Pakistani anti-American sentiment and the Pakistani domestic unpopularity of troops operating within Afghanistan that fed the perception of a possibility of US operations within Pakistan.

Other than typical UAV operations, Brigadier General Warner’s unnamed interviewee feels that the US government can use “Covert COIN,” a subset of Covert FID, to deter extremist non-state actors within the FATA region (Warner 2010, 24). Due to its effective use, the American

military has supposedly performed covert operations against extremists in areas with gaps in governance; Bin Laden's former assistant even took notice. Montasser al-Zayyat stated, "Islamists across the globe were adversely affected by the September 11 attacks on the United States ... Bin Laden's desire to take revenge ... has given Americans and other governments the power ..." (al-Zayyat 2004, 96).

Chapter Summary

By the current definitions of FID, the case studies presented were clearly FID encompassing COIN in Laos, CS from the Phoenix Program, and CT in Pakistan. Two case studies were defined covert by the CIA prior to EO 12333 and that is why Laos, and the Phoenix Program did not have presidential findings. Once senior members of the House and Senate chose to receive briefs on covert programs in the mid-1970s, then the current covert action programs and existing finding process started to be implemented (Daugherty 2004, 62).

US Covert FID is possible when the United States secretly employs diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power in support of these objectives to allow for plausible deniability. From 1950 until 1975, Southeast Asia geographically encompassed the first two case studies, while the third occurred inside Pakistan. In all three cases, the CIA led the operations, with support of the DoD—specifically SOF—and used Covert FID as a policy whereby six common things emerged from the case studies.

First, SOF has historically conducted Covert FID with the CIA. Even former CIA operatives have admitted that whenever SOF assumes a key role in covert actions, they are more effective (Callahan 2010, 185; Colby 1963; Castle 1998, 133; Colby and Forbath 1978, 198–199, 245–288; Richard H. Shultz 2000, 335; Hamilton-Merritt 1993, 130–262; Prados 1986, 239–296).

Second, if the US government entities conduct Covert FID correctly, it will not violate the

intrinsic nature to safeguard information about an operation. The findings and general information will be difficult to locate within unclassified sources if it is even accessible. Case in point, the CIA has not released completely redacted versions of Laotian case studies during the Vietnam era because of US government strategic security sensitivities (Ahem Jr. 2006). This is especially true after the US government reclassified and renumbered USC Title 50, Section 413a, then added additional measures toward the protection from unauthorized disclosure of classified information, and put into effect USC Title 50, Section 3093 on April 22, 2014 (Creveld 1997, 3092).

Third, “Covert COIN” efforts using village stability operations (VSO) in the AFPAK region looks a lot like the remote area operations from the Southeast Asia case studies whereby Covert FID tactics used within the Laos and Phoenix Program examples and may be the vehicle for Covert FID in the future (Warner 2010; Eagle 2013). As an example, a SOF element could be infiltrated covertly into ungoverned or under-governed space; link up with indigenous element, such a village; train, supply, and advise the indigenous element to conduct COIN, CT, or CS, as required. Although a simple example, SOF training prepares them for exactly this type of operation, especially the specific training for UW. However, they would take the same SOF skills, and apply them to a covert or clandestine FID effort.

Fourth, IR Theory can help explain rationales of using Covert FID to affect foreign relations to civil-military leaders. The effects of the policies of Containment, the falsely perceived threats of the Domino Theory, and the Bush Doctrine, to name a few, influenced US leaders to authorize intervention with Covert FID.

Fifth, each case study has a specific undertone of cultural hindrances to the employment of SOF with inter-agency bureaucratic stove-piping. For example, in Laos, the CIA wanted to ensure primacy of operations by trying to keep SOF out of Laos (Warner 1995, 191). In Vietnam, the CIA

ran the Phoenix Program and allowed SOF volunteers to operate covertly, under CIA auspices, despite no actual indications of there being was a finding, essentially stirring the debate of whether a covert finding or Title 50 authorities are required. In Pakistan, the CIA supposedly ran their own drone program because of their issues with trusting the DoD and considered the DoD's Covert COIN operations like a dinosaur—being slow to engage and having too large of a footprint to be effective.

Finally, the plausible deniability that comes with Covert FID provides two types of Covert FID: 1) a nation that request US FID support, but with plausible deniability of that support; and 2) US efforts to support a nation without the express permission of that support, thus requiring plausible deniability for the United States of such efforts.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, Till thou applaud the deed.”

—William Shakespeare

Analysis of Covert Foreign Internal Defense

In Shakespeare’s play, *Macbeth*, Macbeth killed his rival Banquo and Lady Macbeth asks him about his plot to kill Duncan. Macbeth’s loyalty in his reply portrays his intent for her to remain unaware of his actions for plausible deniability (Hunter 1811). Like the intent of Macbeth, many POTUS’ since the end of WWII have used covert actions for the advancement of sensitive political efforts. The case studies presented within this paper provided examples of the two ways the United States has historically used Covert FID for plausible deniability. These case studies also have broader lessons for teaching future SOF supporters about Covert FID through the themes of plausible deniability, IR application, and DoD implementation after the establishment of USC and armed UAV authorities. The next application will be to analyze Covert FID and then apply those relevancies to the perspective of doctrine, organization, training, material, leader training, personnel, facilities, and authorities (DOTMLPF-A) for the US government, DoD, and USSOCOM to assess feasibility in USSOCOM executing Covert FID as the lead agent, developing a new policy tool, and creating a SOF operational concept.

Plausible Deniability and Its Political Implications

Politically, plausible deniability can be either good or bad. If good, then the reality is that most Americans will never hear about the operation, but with today’s technological advances, plausible deniability has a downside. In 1999, historian Philip Zelikow addressed the State Department Historical Advisory Committee that the CIA’s refusal to admit the role of covert action concerning topics already in the media limelight “did enormous damage to the credibility of the

Foreign Relations series and of the CIA” (State HAC 1999).

The political model where the US government succeeded and failed with Covert FID was the Laos Covert FID case study. To buffer the Laotian government’s legitimacy against North Vietnamese pressures, the decision of US policy makers to violate the 1962 Geneva Neutrality Act initially supported Covert FID. The decision to proceed with a small-scale proxy war with North Vietnam is a success based on the Laotian government remaining somewhat stable with US support. It is also a success because the actions of the United States, using CIA covert operations bred from SOF, allowed the Laotian government plausible deniability of US actions from their government’s standpoint. Plausible deniability occurred when the Laotian government, aware of US actions, pretended not to know they were occurring. The Laotian government had to take this stance to maintain a credible standing with the international community after announcing neutrality in the Southeast Asian regional conflict.

The downside to US covert activities in Laos was that the international community tended to lump US participation in the Vietnam War as one campaign within Indochina. With this thought, critics, like former South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu, contend that the US president’s credibility was hypocritical because statements and reports made in the media were perceived as inconsistent with supporting Southeast Asian countries. At President Thieu’s resignation in 1975, he accused the United States of betraying all the Southeast Asian countries, stating, “the United States did not keep its word. Is an American’s word reliable these days? The US did not keep its promise to help us fight for freedom and it was in the same fight that the US lost 50,000 of its young men” (Thieu 1975). Using these applications, support of a state by US Covert FID is possible when the United States secretly employs diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power in support of these objectives to allow for

plausible deniability. Coincidentally, French and German governments are operating within the Pakistani borders searching for Al Qaeda leadership using COIN covertly, as a subset of Covert FID, but they are not announcing it for fear of reprisal like the Pakistani anti-American sentiment or domestic unpopularity (Richardson 2006, 227).

Modeling with International Relations Theory

While this work has analyzed insurgency and the use of Covert FID as a useful instrument of future governmental policy legitimization, it has broader lessons for practitioners of IR Theory engaged in foreign policy and educating future SOF Soldiers. Using the case studies to explain this rationale, the different presidential administrations have supported the Laotian, South Vietnamese, and Pakistani governments over the years. During Laos and Vietnam, foreign policy focus was on countering the spread of Communism. This is relevant because it answered why US politicians made dynamic decisions to conduct Covert FID. Additionally, these governments used US-funded incentives, resulting in the domestic perception of government stability and intrastate legitimization while the United States conducted Covert FID. An example of this is how the Phoenix Program's Covert FID practices attacked the underlying grievances, vulnerabilities, or drivers of discontent that enabled the VCI's legitimacy. Any scholar must see past the signature of the kinetic operations of the US-led forces and address the conditions of the population that hinders the state's government to deter insurgent operations to see that it was FID instead of UW.

Overall, Covert FID has a second order effect of acknowledging legitimate authority through security that fosters a better chance for long-term state success. Security and the intent of legitimate authority must be in every action at the onset of support. Manwaring and Prisk even stated, "every action, every operation, every effort to assist a country faced with an insurgency must be taken only after it is deemed a means of assisting the incumbent regime to enhance its

legitimacy” (Manwaring and Prisk 1990, 20–21). This statement is a perfect description of how to employ the intent of creating legitimacy to internal defense by a covert signature. We can glean from these case studies that using military doctrine unites the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of warfare and reflects the rationale for military operations designed from and based on political strategy and policies. Covert FID doctrine can assist IR Theorists and policy makers with a better understanding of how to affect foreign relations through more knowledgeable civil-military practitioners.

The Way Ahead: DoD Covert FID Against the Global Insurgency

By design, the US advisors within these case studies played a significant role in supporting the opportunity to secure their governmental footprint in each region. Similarly, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) has projected a scenario where, by 2030, there will be an increased scarcity of resources, causing a rise in interstate conflict due to developing social tensions and a world influenced by non-state actors (NIC 2012, ii). Using a similar application, the US government published the National Security Strategy (NSS) as a strategic international approach to “disrupt, defeat, and dismantle” non-state actors that politically defy a state’s legitimate authority (White House 2010, 40). Additionally, looking at the comparison of mission statements in Figure 6, USSOCOM is the perfect entity to meet the strategic international approach of the NSS and presidential intent.

USSOCOM's Interoperability

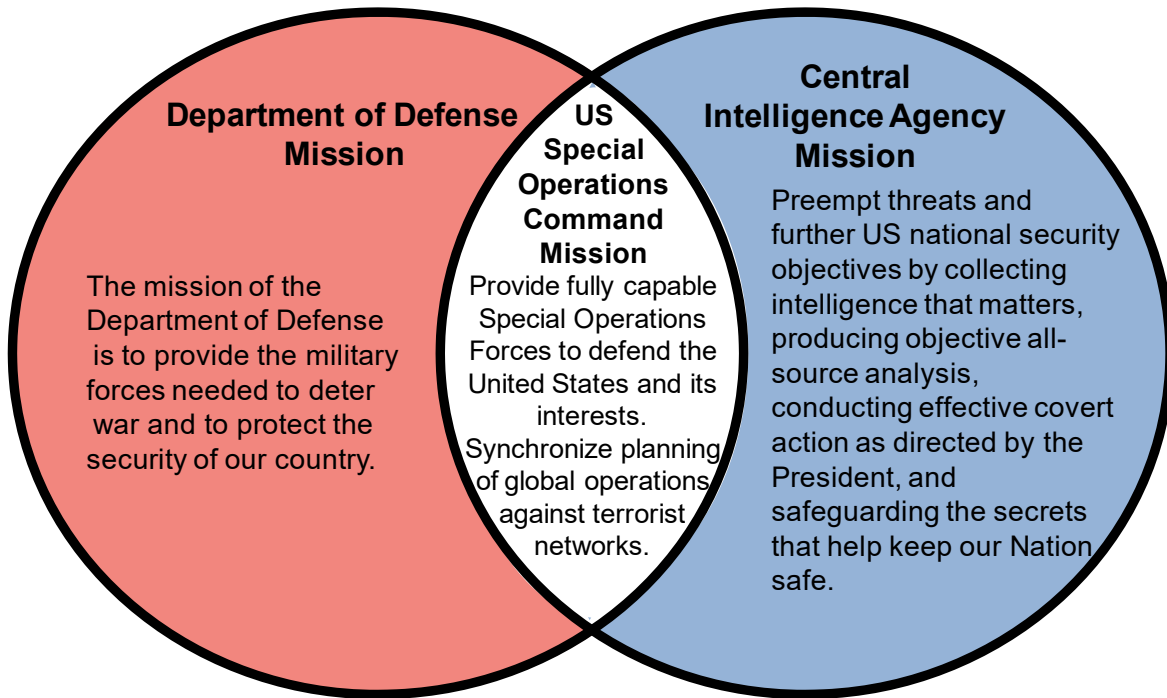


Figure 6: USSOCOM's Interoperability

If USSOCOM conducts Covert FID to defeat networks and build partner capabilities to deter non-state actors from transforming under-governed spaces into safe havens, then USSOCOM can covertly support the state's efforts to quell internal threats, hunt violent extremist organizations and expand its Global SOF Network (DoD 2012, 4; USSOCOM 2012, 2).

The Global SOF Network supports Covert FID because it allows access to a multitude of governments. Over time, that allows for the leveraging of SOF relationships for Covert FID where the host nation government has built up significant trust in their US military partners and may have issues with the idea of working with the agency. The Global SOF Network can also assist USSOCOM Covert FID by positioning SOF near emerging threats for response, deterrence, and to strengthen partnerships. This helps to generate stability while concurrently increasing the state's domestic security capacity (Szayna and Welser 2013, 1). By using Covert FID to counter a state's internal threat, the United States helps keep a state's local and/or regional instability issues from being globalized (McRaven 2013, 4). Covert FID is also a forcing function for cooperation

amongst the internal US agencies and witting states fighting internal threats that fall within US national security objectives (Davis 2012, 5). Therefore, if USSOCOM uses Covert FID to hunt violent extremist organizations in weak or failing states for stabilization, there might be a chance for long-term positive effects of US operations (Rubright 2013, 16).

Applying DOTMLPF-A as a Capability

Prior to the US government authorizing Covert FID operations, the DoD would have to assess if there are areas that need improvement and offer a solution. The DoD addresses capability solutions through doctrine, organization, training, material, leader training, personnel, and facilities (Murphy and Cathers 2009, 216). For this study, “authorities” will be added to DOTMLPF, resulting in DOTMLPF-A, since it is such an important aspect of this discussion (Jones 2014).

Doctrine

Doctrine explains how we operate. Joint or service doctrine does not address Covert FID, but should. Covert FID must be added as a doctrinal concept, which would then form the basis for the rest of DOTMLPF-A. Reviewing Joint FID doctrine, the DoD would need to add a broad concept that Covert FID operations provide governments plausible deniability that the United States supports their efforts to defeat extremists from within their sovereign borders while allowing the United States to plausibly deny any involvement and keep a state’s internal instability issues from globalizing. SOF doctrine should also nest with Joint doctrine and state this author’s definition that Covert FID is participation by agencies of a government to wittingly or unwittingly assist another government, or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security in a manner that conceals the identity of or permits plausible denial to the sponsor and or the supported element (JP

1-02 2013, 61, 288; JP 3-22 2010, ix; JP 3-05 2011, II-11; ADP 3-05 2012, 9).

To continue, Army FID doctrine should reflect that the CIA and SOF conducted Covert FID to combat the Pathet Lao from 1962–1973 and not UW. Covert FID operations in Laos during this period provided the Laotian government plausible deniability that the United States was supporting their efforts to defeat the Pathet Lao. The analysis of SOF involvement in Laos shows that U.S. involvement occurred through calculated FID actions and RAO. That example explains the doctrinal definitions of Covert FID for correct application of past, present, and future Covert FID operations. Nevertheless, the *Unconventional Warfare* manual branded this as UW, and this is a great example of why words matter when Laos is incorrectly stated as doctrinal UW (ATP 3.05.1 2013, 1-4 & C6). Based on the 2013 doctrinal definition standards, labeling this period in Laos as UW is less than optimal, possibly myopic, and not conducive to holistic doctrinal instruction of SOF students.

Additionally, since VSO is not discussed in detail in this paper, there is a high probability that the tactics used might be applicable during a similar covert effort, but Covert FID-COIN endeavors would NOT look like the VSO program in terms of scale, C2, footprint of US support and signature of the US military involvement. Historically, SOF has been practicing the skill of RAO in various forms since the Vietnam era, and RAO was even a doctrinal term accessible for guidance as late as 2007 inside FM 3-05.202. Therefore, add the definition of Remote Area Operations (RAO) to the JP 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense*, manual and tie it to the term Village Stability Operations VSO.

Organization

Organization is how we arrange ourselves to operate. The ability of USSOCOM to operate

in a covert manner in denied areas is an essential tool for the president and secretary of defense to protect our national interests and essential for diplomatic “smart power” as coined by Joseph Nye (Armitage and Nye 2007). Within the case studies, SOF Soldiers who volunteered in these Covert FID operations were fully aware of the legal ramifications of their actions and their Geneva status if detained in a foreign country. Presently, USSOCOM can also conduct Covert FID because Soldiers that volunteer for Covert FID operations retain their Geneva status and that is critical to our success in future conflicts (Wall 2011, 88-89).

Organizationally speaking, the CIA is not designed to sustain large-scale operations. Although Laos is a great example of a large-scale operation, the CIA was not fit to handle that needed heavy use of SOF. The use of DoD injects began to create a huge footprint that the CIA did not want (Warner 1995, 247-249). The 9/11 Commission even recommended shifting militaristic operations, including clandestine or covert operations, from the CIA to the DoD under USSOCOM and having the “CIA experts” integrated into the “military’s training, exercises, and planning” for a unity of effort. Intrinsically, because of the CIA’s unsatisfactory unilateral results in the current operating environment, the 9/11 Commission felt the military was better suited to run covert operations (Gross 2009, 15–16; 9/11 Commission 2004, 415–416; Best Jr. and Feickert 2009, 3).

Operating covertly may offer flexibility, but it intrinsically costs more in logistics, complexity, and risk. Covert FID is a whole of government effort where the strategic considerations and holistic approach requires the combined actions of the United States and interagency efforts for the proper the application of Covert FID. Given that, the DoD and SOF have shown the ability to coordinate interagency efforts, especially when the interagency supports it wholeheartedly. Interagency efforts fall apart when one or more agencies are not fully engaged

or supportive of the efforts.

Additionally, because these case studies show that covert operations have SOF elements working alongside or subordinate to the CIA, it seems to create unnecessary stress on the command and control of the military personnel. To combat this, DoD uses a hierarchy structure—the chain of command—to assist commanders in accomplishing their assigned mission while caring for personnel and property in their charge, and therefore, this is another reason why the president has USSOCOM at his disposal to covertly combat insurgencies (DoD 2012, 6).

Training

Training explains how we learn the doctrine and the way we operate. In training for Covert FID, the efficacy for SOF the knowledge of how an insurgency, or resistance force, fights an oppressive power is the same knowledge used to counter those activities, especially after a successful regime change or altering of a regime by influence. In all the case studies discussed herein, the CIA had a smaller footprint to include single operators, but all three had dynamics such that the CIA needed SOF personnel to support them for successful operations because of their training. For instance, in 1969, the Army trained future Phoenix Program advisors before they left the United States (CORDS 1970, 7). The fifteen-week course included 180 hours of essential instruction in the Vietnamese language to increase communication, and refresher courses were available (Herrington 1982, 11–14).

Presently, the DoD dictates that SOF will develop and employ Soldiers with the “aptitude for working among diverse populations” by preparing them to work with “host nation security forces, host nation governments, interagency, international government organizations, and nongovernmental organizations” as part of a “larger joint, interagency and, frequently, multinational effort” (TP 525-8-5 2014, 14 & 17). USSOCOM recognizes the need for this and

injects students into training environments of political instability characterized by armed conflict that forces Soldiers to exercise both individual and collective problem solving. Real-world training makes students assess the combat effectiveness of their partner forces to train them in basic individual and collective tasks while remaining responsive to asymmetrical challenges whereby less than half successfully complete training (USASOC 2009). Students' proficiency in foreign language helps them focus their combined multinational and interagency-integrated operations to stimulate their partner force capacity as force multipliers, especially if the actions are covert or clandestine in nature (USAREC 2014).

If the DoD assigns advisors to a specialized unit where Covert FID may occur, the advisors should receive preassignment training. Training should focus on language proficiency, cultural sensitivity, intelligence management, small-unit tactics, staff planning, and integrated collective training through Live Environment Training (LET) (USASOC 2012, 20). The reason for this is that the Law of War has a bearing on legal and humanitarian grounds whereby the host nation could view the unexpected collateral damage from covert operations as indiscriminate attacks or acts of terror (Hunker 2013, 156). Since USSOCOM conducts extensive training, the various operators can not only implement the seven phases of US-sponsored insurgency, but can also develop a covert strategy to counter an insurgency through doctrine and operational techniques that support the Geographic Combatant Commander's campaign plan and the intent of the President of the United States.

Material

Material is how we equip our forces to operate effectively. Since WWII, SOF has a heritage of tactically assisting other states facing internal threats and successfully managing employment

with DoD internal support. Tactical SOF employment is designed around decentralized teams with specialized training that execute missions with more efficiency, precision, and a smaller signature than conventional forces (USSOCOM 2012, 6). As the former USSOCOM Commander Admiral Eric Olson stated, “the operational effectiveness of our deployed forces cannot be, and never [has] been, achieved without being enabled by our joint service partners. The support...contribute[d] to SOF ha[s] substantially increased our capabilities and effectiveness throughout the world” (Naylor 2009).

Although the DoD can execute Covert FID operations internally for a little cost, just a little interagency collaboration creates long-term sustainability in almost any environment to “execute whole of government solutions for the full range of contingencies” (Ulin 2010). SOF’s covert and operational capabilities afford USSOCOM the reach back to units with specialized equipment, specialized techniques, and access to nonstandard fire support assets, including specialized aviation assets (TP 525-8-5 2014, 34). Additionally, for an economic stance, “in comparison with new weapons or reconstruction funding, interagency teams cost next to nothing,” but that still means that budget reductions affect SOF operational effectiveness (Simeone 2014; Lamb and Munsing 2011, 58).

Leader Training (and Education)

Leadership and education are how we prepare our leaders to operate through professional development. As General Donn Starry stated concerning international relations and military intervention, “while any set of principles of war adopted by a nation has application across the entire spectrum of warfare, it must be understood that the principles are interdependent and interrelated. No single principle can be blindly adhered to or observed to the exclusion of others, and none can assure victory in battle without reinforcement from one or more of the others” (Starry

1991). When US policy makers authorize Covert FID, diplomats must have the confidence that SOF leaders have aligned the intent of the White House with the kinetic military actions and nonkinetic governmental policies through their professional development.

Since SOF can execute surgical strike activities “in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover or damage designated targets,” then how could they not “influence threats to shape and influence an operational environment or influence selected target audiences in support of larger strategic interests” (TP 525-8-5 2014, 32). SOF leaders strive to understand strategic policy and command and staff responsibilities through continued education of different graduate, interagency, and joint professional military education programs. An example of the education SOF leaders strives to attain is provided at the National Defense University campus at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The Joint Special Operations Master of Arts (JSOMA) program at the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) is offered to selected officers, warrant officers, and NCOs of SOF to educate leaders in combating terrorism and irregular warfare at the strategic level (JSOMA 2014).

Outside the schoolhouse and looking at our operational footprint, USASOC needs more leaders that can articulate when and where Covert FID could be a viable option. USASOC leaders are force providers. These leaders are primarily at the GCC and Theater Special Operational Commands (TSOC) since they are the operational headquarters that must sell warplans and contingency plans for different theaters. USSOCOM needs to make sure they maintain viable forces that can be assigned to joint HQ, either the GCC, TSOCs, or Joint Task Forces (JTF) and can execute Covert FID within the authorities and constraints defined by a covert action.

Personnel

Personnel is the availability of qualified people. Two things are instrumental for DoD

covert operations in personnel. First, USSOCOM needs a personnel management system that rewards long-term engagement in a singular specific job; a system where individuals can operate covertly in an environment where biometrics and global connectivity make it extremely difficult to remain anonymous, as required for covert operations. Second, individuals that spend their career conducting clandestine and covert operations, or held separate from the general SOF force, must stay viable for these types of missions and Special Mission Unit personnel management would become the norm.

Facilities

Facilities are real property that supports our forces. Covert FID does not always marry facilities to successful outcomes, but it assists when the state allows geostrategic installations. Facilities would need to provide a location that allows US forces to operate in a country and maintain their plausible deniability. For an example of location, look at the Laos case study where the “Agency raced to try to encircle the Plain of Jars with new guerrilla bases” (Ahem Jr. 2006, 60). To assist location access if setting up physical structures would be a problem, or if the mission dictates effects-based operations, a consideration for placement and access from appropriate levels of capabilities and interagency collaboration might complement intelligence operations (Repass 2003). Additionally, journalists have also depicted that USSOCOM’s access and placement used collaborative efforts “from a number of players” and programs like “Tagging, Tracking, and Locating” to form the “the stuff of which military novels are written” (60 Minutes 2008; Weinberger 2008; Richardson 2007).

Authorities

Even though, U.S. Code, specifically Title 50 and Title 10 governs CIA and DoD authorities, there seems to be an organizational dichotomy in government whereby the CIA only

executes Covert FID, and the DoD only does traditional military operations. This is because of statutes dictated within the National Security Act of 1947 gave the CIA a charter for covert actions and arguable historical traditions created that have declared the CIA is the best qualified to manage covert actions. It is also due to the DoD's lack of supporting apparatus and not statutory limitations because DoD lacks the oversight architecture that the CIA has established with the Intel Oversight Committee. Would it not be better oversight if the House Armed Service Oversight Committee oversees a covert effort vice the Intel Oversight Committee? That is what occurs when covert operations are funneled into Title 50 verses Title 10 lanes, and it makes a difference. The question that the Congress needs to ask is what experience is incumbent on those committees to understand campaign level efforts or have findings under specific Authorities (Grdovic 2014)?

If working with the CIA, DoD will conduct Covert FID as a covert action when there is a covert finding (OLRC: Title 50 1952, §3091–3092). If the DoD is conducting Covert FID to offer covert support to a state's internal threat for plausible deniability, then it is a covert operation (OLRC: Title 10 1956, §167 (J) (10)). Therefore, politically and statutorily speaking, the CIA is not the only entity that conducts Covert FID and the only concerns of USSOCOM should be to find out how DoD can get the same authorities afforded to the CIA that allows them to have an element that strictly operates covertly.

A covert finding, alternatively called a presidential finding, is required for the CIA to do anything other than intelligence collection and analyzing data overseas. Partaking in any operations, training, sustainment, or anything deemed within the purview of Title 50, requires a notification to congressional intelligence committees for a finding. Additionally, authorities to operate need to reside at the GCC level—where USSOCOM is a GCC equivalent, called a Functional Combatant Command (FCC)—because currently, USASOC has no inherent

authorities. The DoD uses USASOC as a force provider and all authorities come through the JTF HQs.

Summary

The two concepts of plausible deniability provide two approaches to Covert FID. Military efforts can assist in the improvement of the security environment by increasing the capability or capacity of military and/or law enforcement to deter the nascent stages of an insurgency. Through the combination of military interventions and political actions to help an allied government, Covert FID provides policy makers a strategic model for future military application and American foreign relations when HN governments are weak and broken, but need to maintain a strong sense of governance.

DoD can conduct Covert FID if given the same type of authorities bestowed on the CIA, but to the benefit of larger scale operations. If the US government allows DoD to conduct Covert FID operations on a regular basis, a consideration would be for USSOCOM to allow operators to act as a smaller element for quicker reactions to emerging threats. Ultimately, as Figure 7 depicts, the dichotomy of the US government choosing which entity to use for Covert FID boils down to three things, 1) footprint or size, 2) reaction time or agility of the force, 3) and the capabilities using DOTMLPF-A.

US Government Covert FID Choices

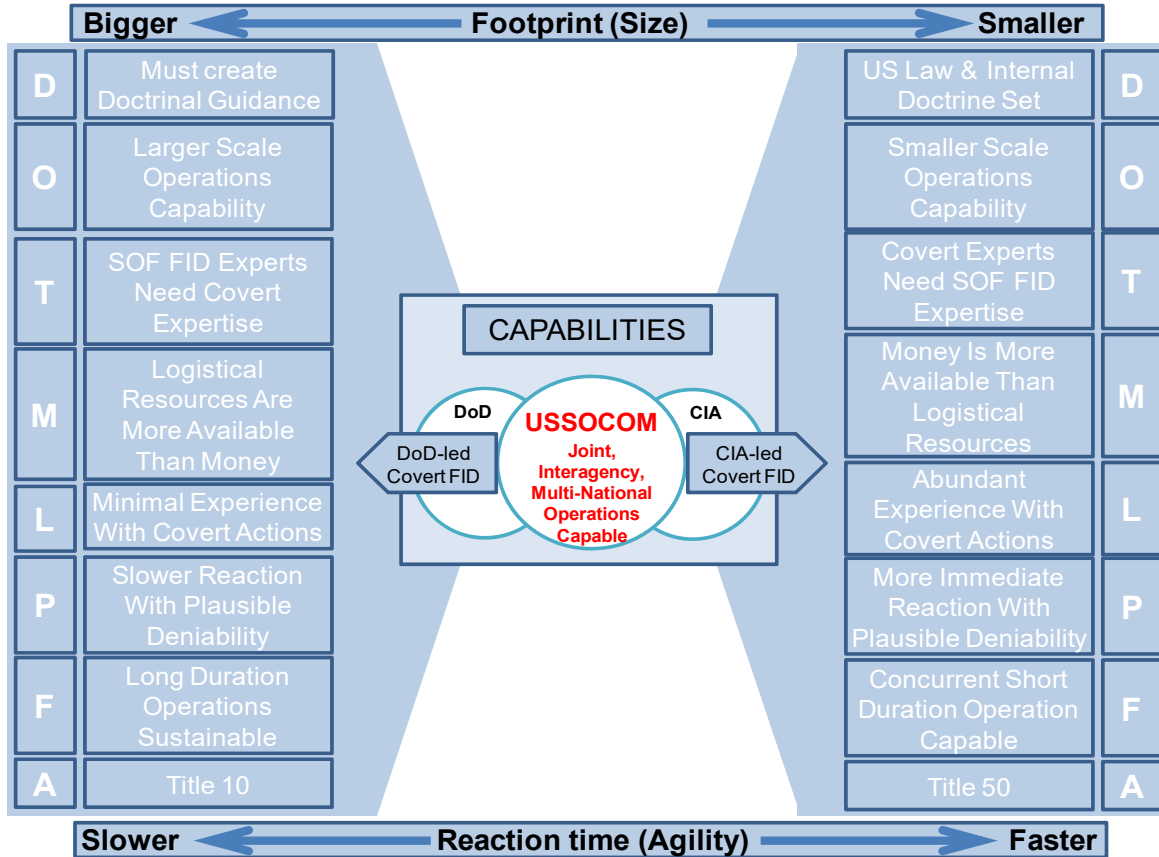


Figure 7: US Government Covert FID Choices

This brings to light that USSOCOM is a capable element to conduct Covert FID with some tweaking. It also highlights that the CIA is not the only entity that conducts Covert FID. Due to the unique nature of Joint Special Operations, Covert FID is our share of the task.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Covert actions should be consistent with publicly defined US foreign policy goals. Because covert operations are secret by definition, they are of course not openly debated or publicly approved. So long as the policies which they further are known, and so long as they are conducted in accordance with law, covert operations are acceptable.”

—Executive Summary (US Congress 1989, 16)

Conclusion

Based on the case studies and analysis, DoD SOF-led Covert FID is a feasible policy option and supports ARSOF 2022 and SOCOM 2020 in three ways. First, the DoD has the capability to conduct Covert FID when assisted by other governmental organizations. Second, the DoD has the authority to conduct Covert FID under USC Title 10, section 168 (J) (10), within the best interest of the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense. Finally, the intractable political consensus of the Department of State (DoS), CIA, and DoD must be intrinsically understood that DoD Covert FID is a set of operations for the betterment of the United States and other sovereign states.

If, however, these three case studies are less than optimal models to help an allied government, then we need to adjust our teachings and apply accurate research for future military application within the framework of our warfighting functions and US foreign relations. Ultimately, the goal of incorporating Covert FID is to increase operational effectiveness of the host nation’s internal defense by enabling the state’s efforts to defeat an “internal threat,” while also providing it plausible deniability of US support — either wittingly or unwittingly. Finally, a twenty-three-year veteran case officer and three-time chief of station, Gary Berntsen, stated, “the DoD is authorized to conduct covert action in support of armed conflict” (Berntsen 2008, 114). USSOCOM can execute Covert FID as a tool for combating insurgencies, terrorism, subversion, and lawlessness. Even though this paper focused on COIN, CT, and CS, the same or similar

capabilities would reside in helping host nations combat lawlessness. In these cases, SOF could provide covert PSYOP and other Special Operations support. For these reasons, USSOCOM is a viable option to conduct Covert FID and it is our share of the task in international political security concerns when delegated.

Recommendations

Despite the historical examples used for this thesis, and the use of US military forces to support these efforts, US military doctrine still does not show representation of Covert FID. This paper addressed principles for Covert FID that can provide a baseline to drive doctrinal development for the DoD and future policy legitimization for foreign relations and IR Theory practitioners. The combined actions of US and interagency efforts demonstrate that the proper application of Covert FID requires the DoD and SOF to execute Covert FID from the perspective of capabilities. Since there is a capability for USSOCOM to conduct Covert FID operations with SOF personnel or drones, the DoD must consider if any shortfalls in capabilities exist. For instance, concerning drones, to obtain the full support of the Executive and the Legislative branches, the DoD, specifically USSOCOM, must show it is competent to execute Covert FID through all mechanisms required for covert action, from gaining authorities to operating covertly. Additionally, the Pentagon must “certify” that it has matched the CIA’s capabilities and targeting methodology before it is allowed to proceed. Specifically, SOF would have to be “certified” that it matched the CIA’s covert capabilities.

Recommended Areas for Further Research

To assist in research, future analysis could ask how Covert FID codifies foreign relations for both military and political interventions. For military interventions, research could analyze how long-term Covert FID operations in denied areas occur if that borderline-failed state cannot fully

operate within areas of its own sovereign borders, or how the Covert FID Special Warfare doctrine can provide guidance to train, advise, and assist friendly state governments build their indigenous warfighting capacity. Politically, how can the US government use economic policies for Covert FID by the incorporation of military doctrine, and how can the injection of cyber-warfare offer a viable option for Covert FID? Another question would be how Special Warfare Command builds an organization that can simultaneously execute Covert FID and Overt FID within its subordinate elements. Finally, applying the applications of this research, policy makers, ambassadors, and military commanders have a new tool for USSOCOM's share of the task to combat non-state actors that threaten US interests.

ACRONYMS

ADP.....	Army Doctrine Publications
AFO.....	Advanced Force Operations
AFP.....	Air Force Publication
ANL (or FAR).....	“Armée Nationale Laotienne” – Lao National Army / Royal Lao Army
AO.....	Area of Operations
ARSOF.....	Army Special Operations Forces
ARVN.....	Army of the Republic of Vietnam (South)
CIA.....	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN.....	Counterinsurgency
CORDS.....	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
DIOCC.....	District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Centers
DoD.....	Department of Defense
DoS.....	Department of State
DOTD.....	Director of Training and Doctrine
DOTMLPF-A.....	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leader training, Personnel, Facilities, and Authorities
DRV.....	Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North)
ECCOIL.....	Eastern Construction Company in Laos
FATA.....	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FID.....	Foreign Internal Defense
FM.....	Field Manual
FTT.....	Field Training Team
GCC.....	Geographic Combatant Commanders
GVN.....	Government of Vietnam (Siagon)
HCMT.....	Ho Chi Minh Trail
HN.....	Host Nation
HUMINT.....	Human Intelligence
IDAD.....	Internal Defense and Development
IR.....	International Relations
JCET.....	Joint Combined Exercises for Training
JOC.....	Joint Operations Center
JP.....	Joint Publication
JSOF.....	Joint Special Operations Forces
JSROI.....	Joint Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration of Forces
JTF.....	Joint Task Forces
LET.....	Live Environment Training
MAAG.....	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MACV.....	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
NATO.....	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIC.....	National Intelligence Council
NLF.....	National Liberation Front (North)
NLHS.....	Neo Lao Hak Sat / “Lao Patriotic Front”
NSS.....	National Security Strategy
NVA.....	North Vietnamese Army

OPE..... Operational Preparation of the Environment
 PAVN..... People’s Army of Vietnam (North)
 PEO..... Program Evaluations Office
 PL..... Pathet Lao / “Land of Lao”
 PLAF..... People’s Liberation Armed Forces (South)
 PRC..... People’s Republic of China
 RAO..... Remote Area Operations
 RLG..... Royal Lao Government
 RVNAF..... Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (South)
 SF..... Special Forces
 SFG..... Special Forces Group
 SO..... Special Operations
 SOF..... Special Operations Forces
 SOG..... Special Operational Groups
 TCO..... Transnational Criminal Organizations
 TSOC..... Theater Special Operations Command
 UN..... United Nations
 US..... United States
 UAS..... Unmanned Aerial Systems
 UAV..... Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
 USAJFKSWCS..... US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
 USAREC..... United States Army Recruiting Command
 USASFC..... United States Army Special Forces Command
 USASOC..... United States Army Special Operations Command
 USC..... United States Code / Code of Laws of the United States of America / §
 USG..... United States Government
 USOM..... United States Overseas Mission
 USSOCOM..... United States Special Operations Command
 USSOF..... United States Special Operations Forces
 USSR..... Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
 UW..... Unconventional Warfare
 VC..... Vietnamese Communists / Viet Cong
 VCI..... Viet Cong Infrastructure
 Viet Minh..... League for the Independence of Vietnam
 VSO..... Village Stability Operations

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