

U.S. Involvement in Small Wars: *A Cold War Focus*

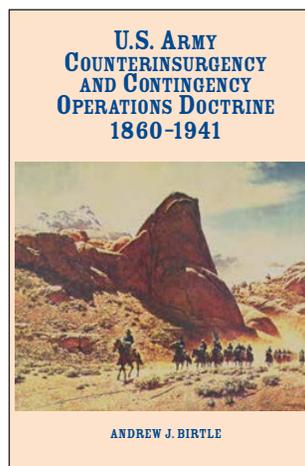
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Small wars have been called several names in the late 20th and early 21st century, including military operations other than war (MOOTW) and operations other than war (OOTW). For purposes of this article, the term represents military operations short of large-scale force-on-force hostilities (such as World Wars I and II), ranging from guarding American interests and citizens in foreign lands to humanitarian operations to foreign internal defense to small-scale military interventions.

From the latter part of the 18th and throughout the 19th century, with four exceptions (War of 1812, Mexican American War 1846-48, American Civil War 1861-65, and Spanish-American War 1898), the U.S. military — particularly the U.S. Army — found itself acting more as a constabulary force than a regular fighting Army: protecting wagon trains, conducting small unit tactics against Native Americans until approximately the 1890s. The same can be said of much of the first three decades of the 20th century (except WWI - 1917-1918), only with the opponents now being indigenous peoples of Central and South America, the Caribbean, and the Southwest Pacific.

In his book *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1860–1941*, Dr. Andrew J. Birtle examines the American Civil War, Indian Wars Campaigns, Cuba and the Philippines, China and the Philippines, Vera Cruz, and the Mexican Punitive Expedition. He does exceptionally well describing how throughout history America’s standing military has been principally organized to fight and win the nation’s large-scale wars, yet most operational missions are small-scale contingencies. Birtle points out small-scale contingencies are volatile and complex and often require much more than just “warfighting” skills in their execution. He goes into great detail relating how when confronted with OOTW the U.S. Army has adapted its existing warfighting doctrine (written or unwritten) to fit the contingency.¹ Void of any political message, Birtle concludes that while each “small war” may be different, there are also similarities (i.e., knowing the culture and identifying and accounting for the second and third level effects of how military operations will affect the population).

The point here is two-fold. First, America’s military generally trains for “worst case” conventional operations but is most frequently actually committed to small war operations. Second, all too often ambiguous policy decisions — or the absence of clear and concrete policy guidance — have left the military to figure out an operational campaign plan to execute what they interpret as the National Command Authority’s intent. The consequences are often unsatisfactory and can be a disaster. These two findings apply equally to the U.S. throughout the period of the Cold War.



The Cold War

At the conclusion of World War II, the new menace of communism threatened America's potential for expansion of its interests and values, past merely economics. The specter of widespread communism threatened not just capitalism but also America's political ideology, that of democracy and the ability of a nation — any nation — to enjoy democratic rule vice a totalitarian regime (i.e., influences from the Soviet Union and later East Germany, Cuba, and China). From the start of the Cold War circa 1946, American presidents beginning with Harry Truman instituted containment policies to check the spread of communism, first in Europe and then Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Central and South America. The Truman Doctrine issued in 1947 promised U.S. support to "any nation who was anti-communist or under siege from a communist nation. The support could be military, economic, and/or political assistance."² Chief among the contributions of Truman's doctrine was publicly expressing U.S. determination to take action to stop the spread of communism using all elements of national power: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME).³

The Eisenhower administration went a bit further and ratified several bilateral and multilateral treaties focused on encircling the Soviet Union (USSR) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). These arrangements included the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).⁴ Additional bilateral defense or security treaties with Japan, South Korea, the Republic of China, and the Philippines highlighted the effort. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was the most prominent advocate of global containment, and he traveled the world tirelessly to ensure its success. In 1954, the United States took a strong stand in favor of Chinese nationalists when the PRC bombarded Taiwan's island strongholds. In 1955, assistance began to flow to the new nation of South Vietnam, which was created after the withdrawal of France from Indochina. In 1958, the United States again rattled the saber to protect the Chinese nationalists' offshore islands.⁵

Cold War Case Study #1: U.S. Troops to Beirut — 1958

An early small war involvement of U.S. troops in the Cold War occurred in 1958 in Lebanon. Lebanon's Christian president Camille Chamoun requested assistance from President Eisenhower as his government was under siege from a pan-Arab movement led by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, an ally to the Soviet Union.⁶

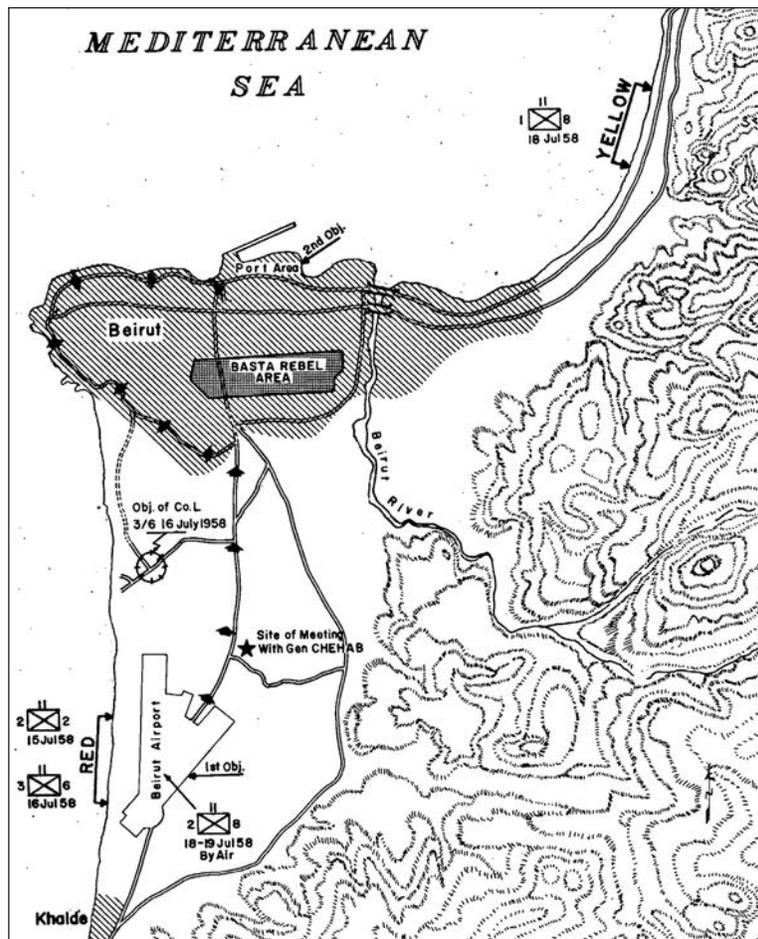
After the Suez Crisis of 1956, during which Israel, Great Britain, and France invaded Egypt to protect their interests in the Suez Canal, Nasser instituted a communist/socialist regime in Egypt and formed the United Arab Republic. Anger at Lebanon's refusal to sever ties with Great Britain and France led to unrest among Lebanon's Muslim population and threatened to destroy the Lebanese government.

As tensions heightened and there was no resolution via either bilateral or United Nations (UN) diplomatic actions, Eisenhower intervened with a military force of approximately 14,000 service members (8,509 Army and 5,670 Marine Corps personnel). The mission of the task force was to occupy and secure Beirut International Airport a few miles south of the city and then secure the port of Beirut and approaches to the city.

The U.S. task force deployed from July to October 1958 and departed only after a new government was installed and tensions diminished.⁷ On the diplomatic front, author Zina Hemady provides a short but informative synopsis of the situation:

Eisenhower sent Deputy Undersecretary of State Robert Murphy to Beirut. While his initial mission was to address the tensions between the military and the U.S. Embassy officials, which turned out to have been defused, Murphy quickly turned his attention to the Lebanese situation. After shuttling back and forth between the different parties, the emissary determined that the country's internal strife was a local issue which should be handled as such. He gave the rebel leaders assurances that the U.S. military's presence was not intended to keep Chamoun in power which promptly defused the situation and reduced attacks against the Americans. Moreover, Murphy openly declared his support for immediate presidential elections, a call which was surprisingly heeded by Chamoun without resistance.⁸

The Lebanon campaign can be likened to that of a United Nations Chapter VII mission. In essence, the job of the intervening force is to separate the belligerents and stabilize the situation until a diplomatic solution can be reached, which was exactly the outcome in Lebanon.⁹ Further research suggests President Eisenhower's decision to intervene in Lebanon was not only a military success but did not cause any credibility issues for the U.S. on the world stage.¹⁰



Map 1 – Marine Landings and Objectives, 15-19 July 1958
(Marines in Lebanon, 1958, Marine Corps Historical Pamphlet)

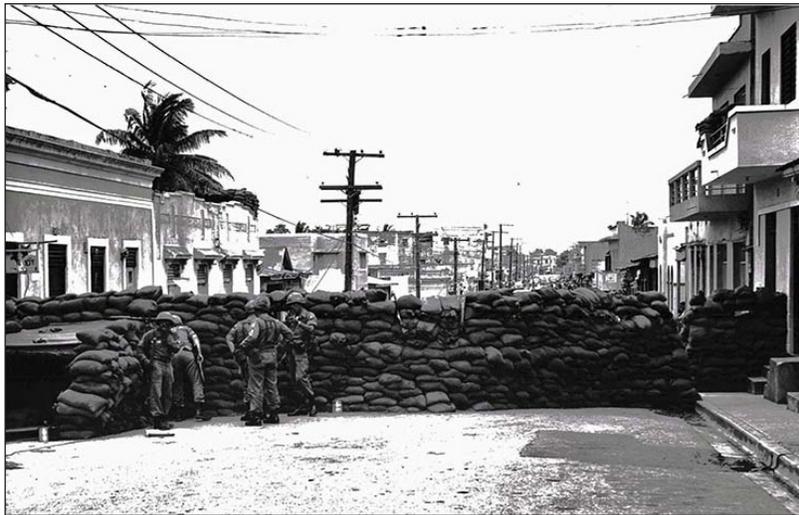
Cold War Case Study #2: Troops Deploy to the Dominican Republic — 1965

A few years after the intervention in Lebanon, at virtually the same time as U.S. was widening its involvement in Vietnam, another suspected Cold War communist threat was playing out closer to home in the Dominican Republic. Political upheaval had gripped the Dominican Republic since 1961 when long-time dictator Rafael Trujillo was assassinated. Although a brutal dictator, his strong anti-communist stance put him in good stead with Washington. His death led to a more reformist government headed by Juan Bosch, who was elected president in 1962. The Bosch regime was short lived, however, as his policies ran afoul of the Dominican military and he was deposed in 1963. For the next two years, chaos reigned in the Dominican Republic as multiple entities vied for political power.

By 1965, forces demanding the reinstatement of Bosch began attacks against the military-controlled government. In the U.S. government, fear spread that “another Cuba” was in the making in the Dominican Republic; in fact, many officials strongly suspected that Cuban leader Fidel Castro was behind the violence. On April 28, more than 22,000 U.S. troops, supported by forces provided by some of the member states of the Organization of American States (a United Nations-like institution for the Western Hemisphere, dominated by the United States) landed in the Dominican Republic. Over the next few weeks, they brought an end to the fighting and helped install a conservative, non-military government.¹¹

Although the military operation in the Dominican Republic was concluded successfully, the Johnson administration lost some credibility domestically and internationally by intervening in the Dominican Republic’s internal affairs. His publicly reported reason had been to protect American lives, but further research suggests otherwise.

However, there is no doubt that the real reason for the invasion was to prevent another Cuba. “Having seen Eisenhower criticized for ‘losing’ Cuba and Kennedy humiliated by the Bay of Pigs failure, Johnson was determined that no similar disaster would befall him: There would be no ‘second Cuba.’” Johnson also confronted



**Soldiers stand behind a barricade in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.
(U.S. Army photo)**

managing the growing U.S. intervention in Vietnam, another battleground of the Cold War. Johnson realized that American credibility was on the line. If he could not demonstrate U.S. resolve to curtail communist expansion of “the American Lake,” how would be the result in Vietnam?”¹²

The point is that as communism was on the rise from the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea, but it was also closer to home in Cuba. The Johnson administration was determined to ensure America, as the lead democratic nation, would assist nations attempting to ward off communist influence, even at the expense of criticism from critics both in Latin America and the United States. However, Johnson’s assumptions about Castro’s Cuban involvement in the Dominican Republic’s internal affairs proved false.

Johnson’s public explanation for sending the Marines into Santo Domingo was to rescue Americans endangered by civil war conditions in the Dominican Republic. But his main motivation, the tapes and transcripts confirm, was to prevent a Communist takeover. Basing his decision largely on assertions by the CIA and others in the U.S. government that Cuba’s Fidel Castro had been behind the recent uprising, Johnson confided to his national security advisor, “I sure don’t want to wake up ... and find out Castro’s in charge.”¹³

Those intelligence estimates, “along with other information Johnson received during the crisis, turned out to be erroneous — a possibility LBJ himself worried about at the time.”¹⁴

An excerpt from History.com summarizes the political capital paid by the Johnson administration for invading the Dominican Republic:

Many Latin American governments and private individuals and organizations condemned the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic as a return to the “gunboat diplomacy” of the early-20th century, when U.S. Marines invaded and occupied a number of Latin American nations on the slightest pretexts. In the United States, politicians and citizens who were already skeptical of Johnson’s policy in Vietnam heaped scorn on Johnson’s statements about the “communist danger” in the Dominican Republic. Such criticism would become more and more familiar to the Johnson administration as the U.S. became more deeply involved in the war in Vietnam.¹⁵

Cold War Case Study #3: U.S. Troop Intervention in Vietnam

It was during the Kennedy administration that U.S. communist containment policy changed dramatically from being more covert to overt in nature. In his inaugural speech on 20 January 1961, President Kennedy stated: “Let every nation know, whether it wish us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and success of liberty. This much we pledge, and more...”¹⁶

Although suffering its setbacks (i.e., the Bay of Pigs disaster), the Kennedy administration was more willing than those before him to directly challenge communist incursions rather than just with economic or other material

support. In fact, during the Kennedy administration there was a marked increase in the support of South Vietnamese efforts to stem the tide of communist incursion. For example, in May 1961 JFK authorized sending 500 Special Forces troops and military advisers to assist the government of South Vietnam. They joined 700 Americans already sent by the Eisenhower administration. In February 1962, the president sent an additional 12,000 military advisers to support the South Vietnamese army. By early November 1963, the number of U.S. military advisers had reached 16,000.¹⁷ Kennedy further stated in an interview:

In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisers, but they have to win it — the people of Vietnam against the Communists... But I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw. That would be a great mistake... [The United States] made this effort to defend Europe. Now Europe is quite secure. We also have to participate — we may not like it — in the defense of Asia.¹⁸

In the final weeks of his life, JFK wrestled with the need to decide the future of the United States' commitment in Vietnam — and very likely had not made a final decision before his death.¹⁹

America's involvement in the Vietnam War is by far one of the most written about controversial conflicts in American history. From the end of World War II and America's support for the French return to its former colony, to escalation of assistance to the fledgling South Vietnamese government, to our direct involvement in Vietnam and our less than honorable retreat, there were innumerable strategic miscues that haunted the U.S. before, during, and after the conflict.

The marked increase of American involvement in Vietnam began during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations and culminated in the Johnson and Nixon administrations. First providing additional advisors and support troops in the 1950s during the Eisenhower administration, advisor support progressively increased in the early 1960s during the Kennedy administration and then ended in the full-fledged implementation of combat troops in 1965, which lasted until the fall of the South Vietnamese government in April 1975.

Given America's stance on communist containment, it is not hard to figure out the importance at which several American administrations placed a premium on support for South Vietnam. Michael Lind's book *Vietnam, The Necessary War* provides excellent commentary of the trials and tribulations of America's involvement in Vietnam from the Eisenhower to the Nixon administrations. Further, he provides readers with well-thought-out alternative strategies of those used in the conflict, both from foreign policy and military viewpoints.



**Special Forces Soldiers conduct a medical visit to a Montagnard hamlet in Vietnam.
(U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971 by COL Francis J. Kelly)**

While the list of major issues that hindered U.S. efforts in Vietnam is too lengthy to do any real justice to in this article, two of the most significant were the amount of “blood and treasure” spent on the conflict and the time spent. Lind contends that the period from the initial incursion of major troop units in 1965 to 1968 “destroyed public support for an open ended commitment in the defense of the noncommunist states in Indochina, while the additional costs of the prolonged withdrawal between 1968 and 1973 endangered public support for the Cold War on any front.”²⁰ The importance of the real estate in Indochina, as perceived inside the beltway, was not at all understood by many rank and file Americans. Thus, as the war dragged on with no end in sight, it should be of no surprise that domestic support declined precipitously.

According to Lind, there were at least two causal points that did the most damage to the American effort. One was the Kennedy administration’s support of the Diem coup in 1963, after which there was non-stop political turmoil in Saigon. The second was Johnson’s desire for a speedy solution, which he attempted via GEN William Westmoreland’s plan for a “massive high-tech war of attrition against the Hanoi-controlled insurgency in South Vietnam.”²¹ Lind suggests that a U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) officer should have been chosen over GEN Westmoreland due to the USMC’s experience with counterinsurgencies, reaching back to the beginning of the 20th century.²² Indeed, that experience had been refined to the point the USMC had published its own doctrine: “Small Wars Manual, United States Marine Corps 1940.” Lind believes and argues that, through experience, the USMC learned from and codified its experience, whereas he believes that the U.S. Army disregarded past experiences in counter-insurgency in favor of a focus on large-scale operations.

In 1968, when GEN Creighton Abrams replaced GEN Westmoreland, he changed the emphasis from large-scale operations and “body counts” to smaller-scale “focused” operations and broader population protection, wherein more effort was placed on training the South Vietnamese village/hamlet regional and popular forces. These changes seemed to promise great dividends as they paved the way for increased assistance from U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that helped increase farming productivity, the major source of jobs in South Vietnam. Increased agricultural productivity resulted in the rice crop yield in South Vietnam growing from less than five million tons in 1967 to a self-sustaining crop of more than six million tons in 1972.²³

Unfortunately, this was a case of “too little too late.” Perhaps if Johnson had directed a population-centric strategy earlier, the outcome in Vietnam may have been quite different. But by the time Richard Nixon came to the presidency in 1969 on his promise of “Peace with Honor,” the situation in Southeast Asia was in a downward spiral. Domestic support of U.S. Cold War foreign policy was in a shambles, the U.S. domestic political situation was in dire straits (fractious partisanship, massive anti-war protests, and race riots), and the U.S. Army in Vietnam was disintegrating through acts of indiscipline and the destruction of its NCO Corps. The final straw for South Vietnam came when, despite being reelected overwhelmingly in 1972, President Nixon was forced to resign in 1974 amid the Watergate scandal.

In a nutshell, America’s involvement in the Vietnam War serves as an excellent example of “how not to do it.” From the Eisenhower through the Nixon administrations, policy decisions on foreign policy, military strategy, and ending our involvement were nothing less than an unmitigated disaster. After the war’s end in 1975, it took many years — some would say decades — for the U.S. military to regain its military bearing as a profession, for foreign policy to regain at least a modicum of respectability, and to reestablish domestic confidence in the government.

Cold War Case Study #4: U.S. Troops deploy to Grenada²⁴

The political situation in Grenada had been a U.S. concern since the late 1970s as several leftist governments were in place, first that of Maurice Bishop and then after his assassination in 1983 that of Bernard Coard. Both were Marxists with ties to Cuba. As the situation worsened, President Ronald Reagan, citing as justification the need to protect American citizens on the island, sent approximately 2,000 U.S. troops to stabilize the situation. Resistance to the American military incursion came from not only the Grenadian military but also from Cuban troops ostensibly sent to rehabilitate the island’s airport.²⁵

The operation was short, 25-29 October 1983, but at its conclusion nearly 6,000 U.S. troops were in Grenada. Of that number, 20 were killed and more than 100 wounded. Enemy casualties included more than 60 Grenadian and Cuban troops killed. Politically, the Coard government collapsed and was replaced by one acceptable to the United States.²⁶



Rangers with the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment are briefed on plans for a night patrol during Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada. (Photo by SGT Michael Bogdanowicz)

Although militarily a success and domestically President Reagan was congratulated for the timely rescue of American medical students on the island, the operation was not without its critics.²⁷ Robert Longley's December 2018 article states:

While the invasion enjoyed broad support from the American public, mainly due to the successful and timely rescue of the medical students, it was not without its critics. On 2 November 1983, the United Nations General Assembly, by a vote of 108 to 9, declared the military action "a flagrant violation of international law." In addition, several American politicians criticized the invasion as a rash and dangerous overreaction by President Reagan to the deadly bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon that had killed over 240 U.S. troops just two days earlier.²⁸

Conclusion

In rank order of most successful to least successful of the Cold War small war case studies, President Eisenhower's incursion into Lebanon stands out as being the most successful and least damaging. The operation was in answer to Lebanon's Christian president Camille Chamoun's request for assistance, so the decision was acceptable to the host nation leadership and also to significant elements of its general population. The operation was of short duration, and the prime directive was to keep the belligerents separated while a diplomatic solution settled the matter at least for the near term. In addition, there was little loss of life on the part of American forces.

The next most successful case study was Operation Urgent Fury and the invasion of Grenada in 1983. While President Reagan garnered both accolades and criticism, research suggests the operation was a military success, and more importantly, the U.S. military had finally found its stride again after a decade of separation from the Vietnam War. In addition, the criticism he received did not seem to damage his reputation or U.S. foreign policy. In point of fact, before the end of the 1980s, Reagan received more than his share of accolades for the demise of the Soviet Union beginning in 1989.

President Johnson's invasion of the Dominican Republic ranks next as we move into the least successful of the case studies. Although the Dominican Republic operation was of short duration, it was premised on flawed assumptions. Intelligence sources led the president to believe Cuban infiltrators were at the bottom of the civil war in

the island nation. As a result, Johnson sent both U.S. Marines and 82nd Airborne Division troops to stabilize the situation. While the operation was a military success and law and order was restored, the political backlash from the news media was intense and would carry over with a vengeance in Vietnam.

Without doubt, of these Cold War small wars the most damaging to U.S. foreign policy credibility both at home and abroad and damage to the military was the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The Kennedy to Nixon presidencies caused undeniable damage to international credibility and domestic confidence (not to mention the damage done to the U.S. military, particularly the U.S. Army as an institution) by their wrongful policy decisions. It took until the 1980s and the presidency of Ronald Reagan before any improvement was noticeable on foreign policy credibility and repair to the military.

As most of these case studies demonstrated, flawed foreign policy decisions — coupled with ambiguous directions to the military — frequently spelled disaster for U.S. foreign policy credibility, a loss of confidence in the National Command Authority, and damage to our military's reputation, which in at least one case — Vietnam — took decades to recover from.

If American government and academic leaders haven't learned these lessons from America's involvement in Cold War small wars, their efforts in the 21st century risk being equally as uncertain and ineffective.

Notes

¹ Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1860 – 1941* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2001), 271.

² The Cold War Experience.weebly.com, "The Cold War, Containment, and the Truman Doctrine," accessed 25 April 2019 from <https://thecoldwarexperience.weebly.com/containment--the-truman-doctrine.html>.

³ Ibid. For a detailed examination of the first military intervention under the Truman Doctrine, see Paul T. Calbos, "Cold War Conflict: American Intervention in Greece," accessed 16 July 2019 from <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a274662.pdf>.

⁴ Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations, accessed from <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/cento>; <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/seato>.

⁵ Department of State, United States of America, Office of the Historian, "Foreign Policy under President Eisenhower," accessed 25 April 2019 from <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/eisenhower>.

⁶ Jack Shulimson, "Marines in Lebanon, 1958," Marine Corps Historical Reference Pamphlet, Historical Branch, G-3 Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., accessed 7 April 2019 from https://archive.org/stream/MarinesInLebanon1958/MarinesInLebanon1958_djvu.txt.

⁷ Global Security.org, "Operation Blue Bat," accessed 20 April 2019 from https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/blue_bat.htm.

⁸ Zina Hemady, "Operation Blue Bat: The 1958 U.S. Invasion of Lebanon," *Photorientalist*, accessed 2 March 2019, <http://www.photorientalist.org/exhibitions/operation-blue-bat-the-1958-u-s-invasion-of-lebanon/article/>; for other diplomatic insights, see also "The 1958 U.S. Marine Invasion of Lebanon – It Was No Day at the Beach," Association for Diplomatic Studies & Training, accessed 27 June 2019, <https://adst.org/2013/07/the-1958-u-s-marine-invasion-of-lebanon-it-was-no-day-at-the-beach/>.

⁹ UN.org, "Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression," accessed 8 May 2019 from <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-vii/>.

¹⁰ Shulimson, "Marines in Lebanon," 36.

¹¹ History.com, "U.S. Troops Land in the Dominican Republic," November 13, 2009, accessed 13 April 2019 from <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/u-s-troops-land-in-the-dominican-republic>.

¹² Salvador E. Gomez, "The U.S. Invasion of the Dominican Republic: 1965," *Sincronia* (Spring 1997).

¹³ David Coleman ed., "Lyndon Johnson and the Dominican Intervention, 1965," *National Security Archive*, 28 April 2015, accessed 21 April 2019 from <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB513/>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ History.com, "U.S. Troops Land in Dominican Republic."

¹⁶ Ian Howarth, "Kennedy and U.S. Foreign Policy during the Cold War," imowarth.wordpress.com, accessed from <https://imowarth.wordpress.com/2013/07/14/kennedy-and-us-foreign-policy-during-the-cold-war/>.

¹⁷ JFK Library, "Cold War, Vietnam," accessed 25 April 2019 from <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/the-cold-war>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Michael Lind, *Vietnam, The Necessary War* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 258.

²¹ Ibid, 258.

²² Ibid, 259.

²³ Orrin Schwab, *A Clash of Cultures, Civil Military Relations During the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 117-118.

²⁴ For more coverage of the background, planning, and execution of Operation Urgent Fury see "Operation Urgent Fury: Grenada" by Ronald H. Cole, Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997, accessed 24 June 2019 from https://history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/resmat/cold_war/urgfury.pdf.

²⁵ History.com, "United States Invades Grenada," 13 November 2009, accessed 20 April 2019 from <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/united-states-invades-grenada>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The operation was deemed militarily a success since all the objectives were accomplished; there were, however, numerous criticisms focused on individual service and joint shortcomings during the execution.

²⁸ Robert Longley, "Grenada Invasion: History and Significance," Thoughtco.com, accessed 8 May 2019 from <https://www.thoughtco.com/grenada-invasion-4571025>.

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LTC (Retired) James O. Kievit was commissioned an Engineer officer from the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, NY, in 1972. He served in a variety of combat engineer leadership, command, and staff assignments in Germany and the continental United States. He also served as an instructor of the History of the Military Art at USMA, as director of Support Force Requirements' Analyses with the U.S. Army's Center for Army Analysis, and as a future warfare strategic analyst with the U.S. Army's Strategic Studies Institute. While on active duty, he earned both a Master of Science in Engineering (construction management) and an Arts Master in military history from the University of Michigan, and a Master of Military Art and Science from the U.S. Army's School of Advanced Military Studies. LTC Kievit retired in August 1996. From February 1997 until August 2017, he served as Professor of National Security Leadership at the U.S. Army War College's Center for Strategic Leadership, where he worked strategic wargame activities; offered elective courses examining Military Urban Operations and historical U.S. Military Governance operations; and facilitated academic, interagency, joint military and Army seminars and workshops on topics relevant to national security, landpower, and military leadership and its development.