

Farming out covert operations

Many people were greatly surprised, during the Iran-gate scandals, to learn that some of America's allies were supporting covert operations in various parts of the world. Israel's involvement in Iran and Central America, or Saudi dealings with Iran, raised eyebrows and produced red faces.

Such activities by U.S. allies have been going on for decades, right under the noses of the unseeing media. Washington's subcontracting of covert operations is a fascinating story and, as is now evident, a well co-ordinated, worldwide program.

(1) Saudi Arabia has long served as a major funder of anti-communist forces around the world. Saudi money has gone to Jonas Savimbi's UNITA guerrilla army fighting the communist regime in Angola. In Mozambique, anti-communist RENAMO forces are also said to receive money from Saudi Arabia, as well as from South Africa and Portugal.

Saudi oil dollars help sustain Eritrean and Oromo guerrilla groups battling Ethiopia's Marxist regime. The lion's share of Saudi aid, however, still goes to sustain the Afghan *mujahedin*. Other Arab Gulf states also help by providing cash, weapons and personnel.

There is also strong evidence to suggest that Saudi money has gone to the anti-communist Contra forces in Central America. Here, the Saudis appear to have been joined by the Vatican. During the Ambrosiano bank scandal in Italy, it was revealed that the Vatican had set up a number of Panamanian dummy companies that were used to fund various anti-communist movements and leaders in Central America. Bravo for the Pope.

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(2) Egypt has long supplied arms to UNITA and the Afghan freedom fighters. The Egyptians reverse engineered many Soviet weapons and now happily turn them out without paying royalties to the glowering Russians. Considerable numbers of Egyptian volunteers, technicians and medical personnel now serve in the Afghan resistance.

(3) Morocco's role as an American surrogate is little known, but intriguing. Back in the early 1970s, Moroccan troops entered Zaire's rebellious province of Shaba (formerly Katanga) and helped drive out Cuban-led Marxist rebels. The role of King Hassan in protecting mineral-rich Zaire, called by Gen. Savimbi, "Africa's most important nation," is little appreciated in the West.

Morocco also helps UNITA and perhaps RENAMO. When Cuban troops first landed in Angola, Henry Kissinger was going to send Moroccan troops to drive them out — until the U.S. Congress got an attack of cold feet.

(4) Pakistan performs a vitally important but discreet mission for western security by protecting the vulnerable Arab oil-producing Gulf states. Some 40,000 tough Pakistani troops are stationed in Saudi Arabia and along the

Gulf. Their orders are to protect the shaky oil kingdoms from internal unrest, including their own armed forces, and from outside attack.

I believe Pakistan has secret agreements with the U.S. to airlift many more troops into Saudi Arabia in the event of a crisis. Pakistan, as well, is the main backer of the Afghan resistance.

(5) Israel supplies South Africa, now boycotted by almost everyone, with an estimated \$800 million annually in military equipment. Some is of U.S. origin and, I suspect, goes to South Africa with Washington's blessings. Israel also provides arms and technology to other nations, like Taiwan, the Philippines under Marcos, Honduras and Guatemala, with whom Washington does not want to be seen dealing.

(6) South Africa, in turn, supplies arms and money to UNITA, RENAMO and, reportedly, arms alone to Somalia, Iraq and Iran. Some Israeli-made arms may be shipped to South Africa and then on to Iraq.

There is nothing nefarious about such dealings. It is well and proper that pro-western nations help in supporting anti-communist forces that, in many cases, directly threaten their security. The Soviets use Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Cuba and their satellites for similar missions.

We can expect to see more of this subcontracting. The U.S. Congress has now so paralyzed American foreign policy by its dithering, leaks, timidity and crass pandering to domestic special interests that future presidents will have to farm out foreign covert operations.

After Iran-gate, though, I'm not sure many U.S. allies will want to co-operate.