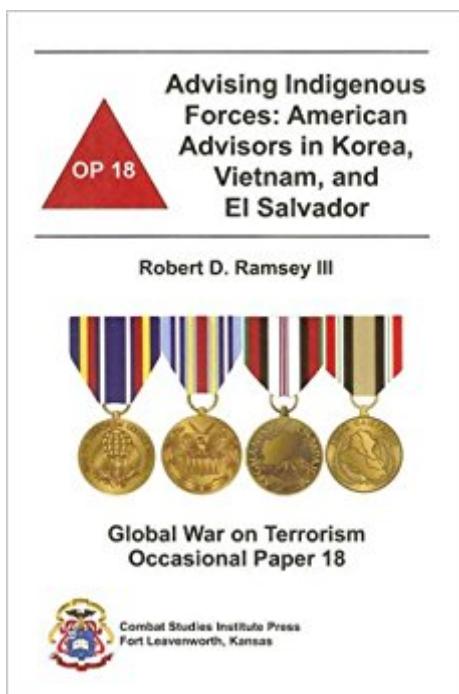


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# Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors In Korea, Vietnam, And El Salvador (Global War On Terrorism Occasional Paper)



## Synopsis

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Significantly reduced list price while supplies last The Army has recently embarked on massive advisory missions with foreign militaries in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere around the globe. We are simultaneously engaged in a huge effort to learn how to conduct those missions for which we do not consistently prepare. Mr. Robert Ramsey's historical study examines three cases where the US Army has performed this same mission in the last half of the 20th century. In Korea during the 1950s, in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, and in El Salvador in the 1980s the Army was tasked to build and advise host nation armies during a time of war. The author makes several key arguments about the lessons the Army thought it learned at the time. Among the key points Mr. Ramsey makes are the need for US advisors to have extensive language and cultural training, the lesser importance for them of technical and tactical skills training, and the need to adapt US organizational concepts, training techniques, and tactics to local conditions. Accordingly, he also notes the great importance of the host nation's leadership buying into and actively supporting the development of a performance-based selection, training, and promotion system. To its credit, the institutional Army learned these hard lessons, from successes and failures, during and after each of the cases examined in this study. However, they were often forgotten as the Army prepared for the next major conventional conflict. Related products:U.S. Army Campaigns of the Vietnam War: Buying Time, 1965-1966 is available here:

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## **Customer Reviews**

Robert D. Ramsey III retired from the US Army in 1993 after 24 years of service as an Infantry officer that included tours in Vietnam, Korea, and the Sinai. He earned an M.A. in history from Rice University. Mr. Ramsey taught military history 3 years at the United States Military Academy and 6 years at the US Army Command and General Staff College.

I can really speak only about the chapter covering our efforts in advising the El Salvadorean Armed Forces (ESAF) during the civil war there. I was a participant in those efforts in the last seven months of the war and the first five months of the peace. The trouble with understanding that war was that it was constantly evolving. The USMILGROUP Commander at that time, COL Mark Hamilton (now MG, Retired), once told us that one can speak authoritatively only about the time they spent in country and the part of the war they participated in. My part was serving as the senior advisor to the National Training Center (CEMFA) just outside of La Union. Located in the eastern corner of the country where the borders of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras come together, it was a constant hot spot throughout the war. The only problem I have with this book is that it gives the false impression we performed miracles with only 55 US advisors. This is very misleading. There was no legislation that dictated that we could only use 55 advisors. This was an informal agreement between the Reagan White House and the Democratically controlled and very hostile Congress that was looking for any excuse to cut aid and let the country fall to the Communist FMLN. In actuality, we were augmented by numerous other advisors and support personnel who were never counted against the 55. These included:- US Army Advisors to the logistics, ordnance, administrative and medical departments of the ESAF.- The US Air Force advisors and US Army mechanics that worked with the Salvadorean Air Force in operating and maintaining a fleet of aircraft that included A-37

attack-bombers, AC-47 gunships, UH-1H and UH-1M helicopters.- We also had a very robust joint intelligence gathering organization that performed everything from analysis of documents and interrogation reports to signals intercept.- The large Military Attache section assigned to the US Embassy that was not included in the MILGROUP totals.- The thirty-some helicopter crews and support personnel who provided the advisors invaluable transportation and resupply runs with their three UH-1Hs.- The Special Forces A-Teams and US Navy Seal Teams from Panama that formed the MTTs that were TDY for 60 and 90 day tours to assist our efforts.- The US Navy advisors and mechanics that supported the ESAF's riverine and sea interdiction efforts.- The Psyop advisor augmented by Psyop, Civil Affairs and Medical Civic Action teams that were in country for 30 and 60 day TDYs.- The Corps of Engineers that oversaw the many force protection and security contruction projects. This team also supervised US Army engineers, USN Seabees and civilian contractors that worked on these projects while on 30, 60 and 90 day TDYs.- The CIA and their covert contractors.In 1991, Senator Ted Kennedy demanded an accounting of all US personnel assigned to El Salvador. I have a copy of the white paper prepared by the MILGROUP and presented to his staff that listed almost 550 US military personnel in country in 1991 and listed their duties and responsibilities. Fortunately, the Tail Hook Scandal and the Clarence Thomas nomination took his attention away from us and the information, as far as I know, was never acted on.In addition, the ESAF was further assisted by advisors from Argentina (until 1983), whom they had respect for and had strong military ties with and Israel, who provided quite a bit of military aid and assistance. I never found out whether we were indirectly funding those efforts.So, while just 55 US Soldiers and Marines provided direct advisory support to combat operations, it took another 500 or so US military personnel providing critical advice and support to key elements of the ESAF that made them a more professional military. We 55 could not possibly have accomplished what we did without all these other advisory and support efforts. As one of the 55, I firmly believe they deserve the recognition for this.Our legacy is two fold. We trained the good, the bad and the ugly and turned them into a professional army by the time the war ended in 1992. This was not a perfect army, but a far better one than what they started off with in 1979. Though initially considered mutually exclusive, the advisors took on the task of monitoring human rights violations in addition to their duties as advisors and tried to put a stop to these violations; violations, I might add, that were committed by both sides.However, as in previous wars that involved the US advising indigenous armies, we did not learn from those efforts. The lessons of Vietnam were forgotten, mis-applied or ignored during our fight in El Salvador, and our efforts in El Salvador seemed to have been lost to an Army that is presently trying to find an effective way to advise the armies of Iraq and Afghanistan. MG Hamilton

later served in Somalia where he applied some of the lessons he learned in El Salvador. He came very close to winning the support of the Somali clans to include the one belonging to General Adid. However, his efforts were curtailed when the U.N. assumed control of the humanitarian effort there, and the rest is history. The greatest honor bestowed on the Americans that served in that war was not from the beneficiaries of our efforts, but from the opposition. When the Bush Administration announced in 1992 their intention of drawing down US military personnel in country, only the FMLN objected. Their reasons? We were the only honest people left in that country that they could trust.

Good

Very informative book

A Look at FIDRamsey book "Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador" observes the Foreign Internal Defense (FID) lessons learned by the United States Army in their advising capacity in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador. Among the key points are the need for advisors to have extensive language and cultural training and technical and tactical skills training, although the latter ranks less in importance than the former. Additionally, a successful mission requires that the host nation actively support performance based selection, training, and promotion.

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