



Scenes from an Unfinished War: Low-Intensity Conflict in Korea, 1966-1969

Daniel P. Bolger, Combat Studies Institute

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Low-intensity conflict (LIC) often has been viewed as the wrong kind of warfare for the American military, dating back to the war in Vietnam and extending to the present conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. From the American perspective, LIC occurs when the U.S. military must seek limited aims with a relatively modest number of available regular forces, as opposed to the larger commitments that bring into play the full panoply of advanced technology and massive commitments of troops. Yet despite the conventional view, U.S. forces have achieved success in LIC, albeit "under the radar" and with credit largely assigned to allied forces, in a number of counterinsurgency wars in the 1960s. "Scenes from an Unfinished War: Low-Intensity Conflict in Korea, 1966-1969" focuses on what the author calls the Second Korean conflict, which flared up in November 1966 and sputtered to an ill-defined halt more than three years later. During that time, North Korean special operations teams had challenged the U.S. and its South Korean allies in every category of low-intensity conflict - small-scale skirmishes along the Demilitarized Zone between the two Koreas, spectacular terrorist strikes, attempts to foment a viable insurgency in the South, and even the seizure of the USS Pueblo - and failed. This book offers a case study in how an operational-level commander, General Charles H. Bonesteel III, met the challenge of LIC. He and his Korean subordinates crafted a series of shrewd, pragmatic measures that defanged North Korea's aggressive campaign. According to the convincing argument made by "Scenes from an Unfinished War", because the U.S. successfully fought the "wrong kind" of war, it likely blocked another kind of wrong war - a land war in Asia. The Second Korean Conflict serves as a corrective to assumptions about the American military's abilities to formulate and execute a winning counterinsurgency strategy. Originally published in 1991. 180 pages. maps. ill.

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