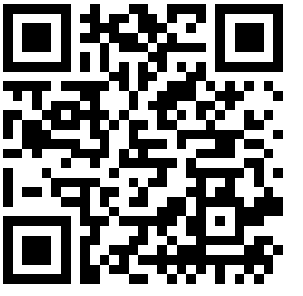

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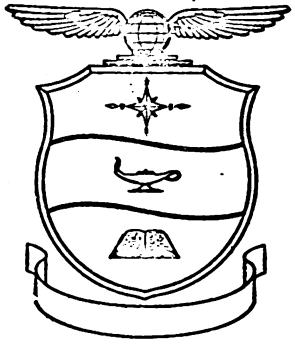
THE EMPLOYMENT OF AIRPOWER IN THE GREEK GUERRILLA WAR, 1947-1949

by

Concepts Division

DECEMBER 1964



AEROSPACE STUDIES INSTITUTE
Air University
Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

THE EMPLOYMENT OF AIRPOWER IN THE GREEK GUERRILLA WAR, 1947-1949

by

Lieutenant Colonels M. A. Campbell,
E. W. Downs, and L. V. Schuetta

Concepts Division
Aerospace Studies Institute
Air University

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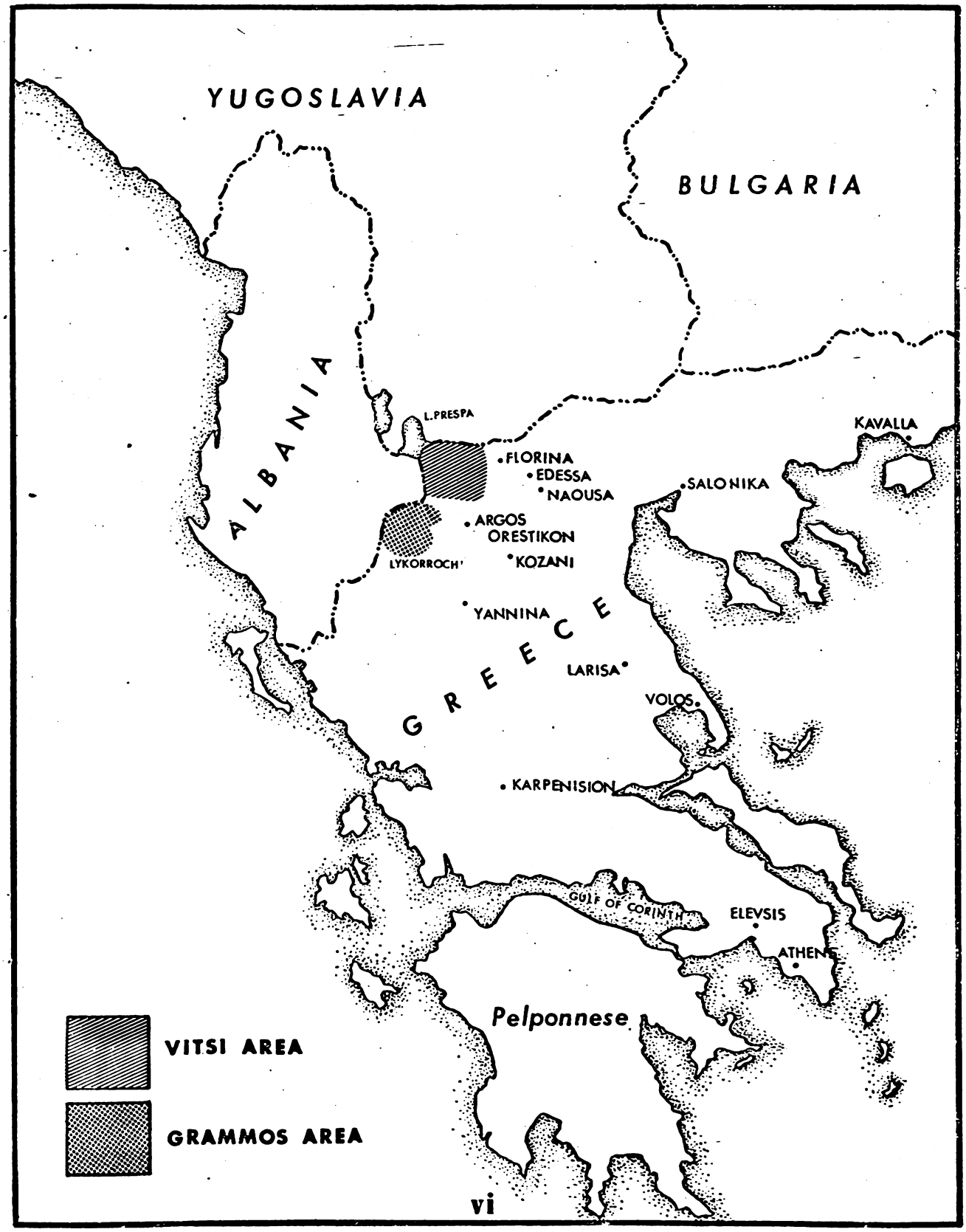
PREFACE

This study has been prepared at the Aerospace Studies Institute (ASI) as part of the continuing program to examine the role of airpower in guerrilla warfare. Several of these airpower studies* have emphasized the application of airpower under different circumstances in several areas of the world. In Greece the battles were primarily land operations against guerrillas (often called bandits) in the mountainous areas. Infantrymen bore the brunt of the fight for two long years while the aerial units were being readied for action.

The last two chapters of this study describe the aerial phase. Prior to this, the narrative analyzes the conflict, the opposing forces, and the nature of the land engagements. Had more trained pilots and a sufficient number of aircraft been available, the Royal Hellenic Air Force (RHAF) could have assumed a more active role earlier than 1949. The contributions of Greek airpower are the main emphasis in this review of the Greek Guerrilla War, 1947-1949.

*See Appendix 1 for the listing of other airpower studies.

The authors used documentary material from the Federal Records Center in Alexandria, Virginia, the Air University Library, and the USAF Historical Division Archives of the Aerospace Studies Institute. Other material came from books and articles written by participants in the Greek Guerrilla War.



Chapter 1

THE STRUGGLE

Background

In the postwar years, as the United States withdrew her armed forces from Europe and other battle-scarred areas in the world and as the western democracies licked their wartime wounds, an expansionist Soviet communism acting almost like a cancer fastened itself in many areas without causing undue alarm. It was not until this malignant growth pushed out to swallow Greece that democracies endeavored to isolate clearly the growth and stamp it out.[1]

At liberation in 1944, Greece contained rival groups that had been originally organized to battle the Axis "aggressor." They opposed each other in a deadly power

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[1]Col. J. C. Murray, "The Anti-Bandit War," Marine Corps Gazette, XXXVIII (January 1954), pp. 14-15. Col. Murray had firsthand information of the Greek operations. In 1949, he was a member of the American Military Mission to Greece. Earlier, he had served as battalion commander in World War II and as a member of the planning staff, United Nations Command, in the Far East during Korean operations. When he wrote this series of articles (January - May 1954, in Marine Corps Gazette), he was serving as Chief of the Policy Analysis Division of HQMC.

struggle for the next five years. Two of these groups that emerged as the German war machine collapsed were the National Republican Greek League (EDES) and the communist-led National Liberation Front, operating through its National People's Liberation Army (ELAS). In February 1945, when the Varkiza Agreement was signed, ELAS, which had been greatly strengthened by leading the resistance forces against the occupying powers, acknowledged defeat in its drive to seize control of Greece.

The Varkiza Agreement, negotiated between the British and the National Liberation Front, called for the breakup of the ELAS and an end to the civil war. The Communist Party, however, did not abandon the power struggle. Forced to surrender its arms, the ELAS gave up only 40,000 largely unserviceable weapons, caching away the better weapons for the next round of the fight. Subsequently, most of the ELAS members returned to their homes, but about 4,000 of them preferred sanctuary with satellite neighbors across the frontier. Perhaps 4,000, as potential nuclei for future bands, found the mountains more to their liking. These hard-core communists or

lawless men did not expect benefit from the partial amnesty feature in the Varkiza Pact.[2]

In the interim, until a stable Greek government could be established, the British troops occupied and tried to rebuild many areas of the nation. Gradually, in the rehabilitation of the country, these troops accepted more and more responsibility for keeping the peace while the Monarchists and the Republicans struggled for power. In the midst of the factional fighting and political instability, the communists attempted to discredit the existing government.[3] This was in preparation for their unsuccessful effort to establish a satellite recognized "Government of Free Greece" or to link portions of Greece like Macedonia, Epirus, or Thrace with Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria, respectively.

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[2]Ibid., p. 16. See also Frank Smothers, William Hardy McNeill, and Elizabeth Darbishire McNeill, Report on the Greeks (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1948), pp. 151-153.

[3]Ibid., pp. 155-157. When queried by visiting Americans at their mountain villages in Thessaly, guerrillas stated that Rightist terror including violence against themselves or their families, had driven them into the hills. Although most said they were not communists, two captains and some others admitted to being communists.

The communists and perhaps other political groups may have thought the British troops would leave Greece after the plebiscite on the King's return. The Varkiza Agreement, however, did not promise that the British troops would be withdrawn; and, as the British remained in the country, the communist leaders became unwilling to delay their activity any longer. Seriously resumed after the election, guerrilla activity increased greatly after the September arrival of King George II.[4]

Guerrilla Activity

The guerrillas generally followed a uniform pattern of activity. First, they murdered isolated officials, usually from the small villages.[5] Next, they publicized these murders and also frequent beatings, emphatically

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[4]Murray, "The Anti-Bandit War," op. cit., p. 16.

[5]Those who performed the assassinations of the local "Monarchofascists," as the guerrillas labeled the loyal politicians and royalists, operated under secret orders. One order of 30 August 1947, for example, stated that two "guerrilla bands" were to be organized, were to be supplied with "light rifles, light machine-guns, pistols, and revolvers," and were to "infiltrate into villages, small towns, and cities (whether under the enemy's control or not) and carry out their orders strictly and promptly." Order is quoted in F. A. Voight, The Greek Sedition (London: Hollis and Carter, 1949), pp. 179-180.

describing their drastic action so as to discourage the citizenry from seeking assistance from other officials.[6] As these activities gradually increased in scope and as attacks on small patrols and posts weakened the Greek forces, the Gendarmerie decreased the number of patrols in order to increase its strength at local headquarters. This led to bandit raids on the unprotected small villages where the guerrillas sought food, seized women and children as hostages, and improved their own security. With this increased strength, the guerrillas attacked the larger Gendarmerie units that averaged 30 to 40 men, causing the units to protect only the larger towns in the troubled areas. Unable to cope with the attacks, the Gendarmerie had to let the Army handle the problem.[7]

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[6]"The primary purpose of the massacres is the extermination of the elite. Their secondary purpose is economic. It is not the fighting so much as the massacres which are emptying the villages, leaving the fields desolate, and creating a vast multitude of refugees who, themselves completely destitute, are so heavy a financial burden on the impoverished State." Voight, The Greek Sedition, p. 168. See ibid., pp. 165-193 for examples of guerrilla massacres and abductions which the author emphasized were performed in order to destroy the ruling class.

[7]In April 1947, the Greek General Staff announced the beginning of a "major operation" against the guerrilla concentrations in the southern Pindus Mountains. L. S.

Greek Army Problems

The Army was ill-prepared for the task it faced. Since World War II, the British had been equipping and training a new Greek Army, working toward an effective force of 100,000 men by 1948. The orderly progress from a small, weak postwar army of about 2,800 officers and men to the 1948 level was interrupted, however, by this bandit war in 1947. The government decided to increase the Army strength to 120,000 and to shorten the training program. Subsequently, in early 1948, the government added another 12,000 and, in April, decided to augment the force with 15,000 more in order to permit the training of replacements for casualties.[8] By the end of the year, the Army numbered 147,000 men, organized into eight divisions plus ordnance, special commando, and reconnaissance units.

Men alone were insufficient; the Army needed effective leaders, and few of the prewar professional officers

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Stavrianos, Greece! American Dilemma and Opportunity (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. 187.

Guerrillas were frequently called bandits in Greece.

[8]Murray, "The Anti-Bandit War," op. cit. (January 1954), p. 21. See also his article, op. cit. (March 1954), p. 53.

were available. A large number of the best Army officers had become casualties in World War II, and many others had become tainted with communism. The remaining officers who had been separated from their profession and the responsibilities of command for several years needed time to weld together their burgeoning military organization. Lacking were a strong "will to win" and "will to fight"; each blow from the communist-inspired guerrilla forces appeared to develop greater frustration and futility. Moreover, the difference between communism and democracy was cloudy at best. It was difficult to recognize that guerrillas who once fought for Greece and freedom now served the Soviet Union and slavery.[9]

Greek Air Force Problems

The Greek Army received little benefit from its aerial units at first. An aerial defense was unnecessary and a true aerial war did not exist. The World War II experience of Greek aviation could not have helped in the guerrilla war. Between 1941 and 1945, the Greek

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[9] Ibid. (February 1954), p. 53 and (March 1954) p. 54.

aviators, having escaped from the Nazi legions devouring their homeland, went to Egypt where they were organized into a Hellenic Bomber Squadron and employed as part of the Royal Air Force primarily in Mediterranean Sea patrols.

The Greek Air Force remained under operational control of the RAF until late 1946 at which time the air units were returned to Greek authorities so they could be organized to fight the guerrillas. In its reorganization, the Greek Air Force found it possessed about 58 obsolete aircraft and perhaps 290 wartime trained pilots. The government urgently sought additional airplanes, placing an order with Great Britain for 250 war surplus aircraft. The British rushed the planes to Greece, and all were delivered by the summer of 1947. These aircraft included Wellington bombers, Spitfire fighters, C-47 transports, and liaison aircraft. The buildup to the summer of 1947 gave the Royal Hellenic Air Force (RHAF) about 5,000 men of whom 400 were flying personnel.[10]

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[10]Ibid. (May 1954), p. 53. U. S. Air Force Group, Greece, "USAFGG History," undated manuscript of 215 pages, filed with doc. 314.7 Military Histories (USAF Sec.) USMAG, May 4, 1951, in Federal Records Center, NARS, Alexandria, Virginia. See ibid., p. 98, the mission of USAFGG was to advise RHAF on procurement and delivery of materiel to Greece, air installations, and operational matters.

U. S. Assistance

The events in the year 1947 indicated the great assistance that the democracies, especially the United States, were to render in defeating the guerrillas. On 24 January, the Greeks attempted to set their own house in order by establishing a coalition cabinet. Just about a month later, the British notified the United States that it could no longer provide financial and economic assistance to Greece. This word caused the United States to send an economic mission to Greece to investigate the needs both for waging a war against the guerrillas and rebuilding the nation. The findings of this mission led the U. S. Congress to approve legislation, called Public Law 75, which included authority to dispatch a limited number of American military advisers to assist the Greeks. About a month after President Truman signed Public Law 75 on 22 May, American authorities approved an Agreement on Aid to Greece which incorporated the provisions of Public Law 75.[11]

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[11]Stavrianos, op. cit., pp. 186-188. Comment on Public Law 75 can be found in USAFGG, op. cit., pp. 5-13.

Guerrilla War, 1947-1948

Even though the prospects of American aid boosted the morale of the Greek Army, the loyal soldiers demonstrated little ability against the guerrillas in 1947. This is not surprising because the Army could not be built overnight, especially while combating increased guerrilla activity. It was necessary to train and to equip the newly activated units and still continue to restore facilities and reestablish services damaged in the World War II days or later in guerrilla forays.

The next year was much the same. On the one hand, the Greek communist rebels intensified their widespread terrorism; and, on the other, the Greek Army became better equipped to hit the guerrillas.[12] In March 1948, the Greek Air Force attacked two guerrilla landing strips discovered at the junction of the Albanian, Yugoslav, and Greek borders. Two months later the Greek Second Division, supported by planes and artillery, moved into western Macedonia intent upon hitting and surrounding the chief

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[12]Peter Paret and John W. Shy, Guerrillas in the 1960's (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962), p. 34.

concentration area of guerrillas in the Grammos Mountain area before the bandit troops could flee into Albania.[13]

This particular engagement, while not satisfactorily executed, does illustrate two things. The Army units were under strict orders from the government to avoid international incidents and the possibility of shelling or bombing foreign territory. All major operations, including plane or artillery, for example, had to halt five miles short of Greece's northern boundaries. The other point, not related but a more optimistic turn, concerned the effectiveness of the National Army. For a long time, the Army units necessarily had to protect areas menaced by guerrilla bands. In part, their burden was lightened with the establishment of the National Defense Corps battalions and by the issuance of rifles to men in certain villages to protect roads and the gathering of the annual harvest. But too often throughout the year, the Greek Army with its unsatisfactory planning, inept staff work, and uncoordinated efforts did not have

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[13] The New York Times, January 30, 1948, p. 6; ibid., March 18, 1948, p. 22; ibid., May 10, 1948, p. 12; ibid., June 18, 1948, p. 10.

its troops in strength where the guerrillas massed an attack.[14]

Papagos and Victory

Conditions were much better for the Greek government in 1949. By the middle of 1948, all of the 1948 American Mission funds were obligated and also several million dollars of the 1949 funds. Six months later, substantial shipments of American military supplies were reaching the Greek operations. The Greek Army began real improvement when General Alexander Papagos came out of retirement to take the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Greek forces. He accepted the task with the understanding that he would have the power to direct operations and decide on problems of military organization and officer assignments. This afforded him the opportunity to exert a strong influence on the conduct of military operations. His experience and influence was necessary at this time to exploit fully the many favorable factors, such as U. S. Military Assistance, the rift between Tito and the Cominform, and the

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[14] Ibid., June 20, 1948, p. 1. See also Murray, op. cit. (April 1954), p. 57.

better understanding within Greece of the true nature of the guerrilla war. By removing ineffective and unsuitable officers, General Papagos restored army discipline so that he could order the Greek forces into military operations depriving the guerrillas of the initiative in battle. Under Papagos, the Army sprang into action and afforded no respite to the enemy. While there were no significant increases in manpower or equipment and no miracles in American-directed training, the Army performed well simply because it was made to do what it was capable of doing. This much and no more was essential to gain the victory. Seven months after General Papagos took charge, the war came to an end.[15]

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[15]Murray, op. cit. (March 1954), p. 57. Robert E. Osgood in Limited War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) emphasized the importance of American intervention in the Greek civil war. He wrote, "It was, above all, America's dispatch of military advisers, its reorganization of the Greek army, its donation of enormous military supplies, its granting of economic aid, and even its intervention in internal political affairs that kept this key position on the southern flank of Europe out of Russian control." Ibid., pp. 143-144. See also The New York Times, June 20, 1948, p. 48.

Chapter 2

GUERRILLA STRATEGY AND ORGANIZATION

Guerrilla Advantages

In 1946, as the guerrilla attacks became more severe, the Greek communist party (the KKE) possessed certain advantages which helped to create more instability and insecurity in Greece. All of these must be kept in mind when examining the organizational structure under which the guerrillas waged war. First, since the Varkiza Pact recognized the KKE as a legal party, the Greek communist agents were able to propagandize and agitate through their own press. In addition, their agents had carefully concealed large quantities of weapons in the mountains and as many as 4,000 of the most trusted fighters remained in mountain hide-outs. Cadres of the communists also had wartime guerrilla experience during the German occupation of Greece; these people could now fight the Greek nationals. Finally, the communist guerrillas had support from two significant although different groups. One was the active support of the three neighboring nations--Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia--and the other was the

moral support of many rather naive idealists in the West. The latter considered the communist-led movement in Greece as the one most genuinely expressing the people's democratic aspirations.[16]

The guerrilla attacks, reinforced by these numerous advantages, were most damaging to the hastily assembled law-abiding elements directed against the bandits. In their attacks, the guerrillas moved swiftly, selected and concentrated strength against targets over which they had temporarily achieved absolute superiority.[17] While at first they operated in highly mobile bands numbering up to 50 or more persons, in the summer of 1948 they organized themselves into much larger units. In the Grammos area, for example, one division had three brigades, equipped with rifles and some automatic weapons collected from many national wartime supplies.[18] In

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[16]D. G. Kousoulos, "The Guerrilla War the Communists Lost," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, LXXXIX (May 1963), p. 67.

[17]Ibid., p. 71.

[18]Goumas, a young vigorous guerrilla of twenty-five years, told the three American investigators of Twentieth Century Fund that his forces obtained arms and supplies from battles and raids. For his full comment on this, see Appendix 2.

part, the explanation for this shift in type of organization can be explained by reviewing the manpower resources and citing the growing numerical strength of the guerrillas.

Manpower Resources

Three kinds of personnel constituted the manpower resources for the guerrillas--the active rebel fighters or bandits in Greece, the collaborators within the country and the reserves outside the national boundaries. The first group was the immediate combat strength of the so-called "Democratic Army." The collaborators, however numerous, furnished intelligence, security, and administrative services to the bands. Outside Greece those who aided the guerrilla cause included wounded fighters, recruits in training, and personnel for training and logistics. Still others who assisted were many hundreds of Yugoslavs, Albanians, and Bulgarians who labored for the guerrillas within their own countries.[19]

In 1946 the rebel strength was estimated to be 2,500 fighters. By January 1947 it totaled 8,000; by

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[19]Murray, op. cit. (January 1954), p. 18. The Twentieth Century Fund investigators believed that the real movement began in Greece. See Appendix 2 for the statement of the investigators.

April it was 14,250; and in November 1947 there were 18,000 rebel soldiers. This number continued to rise until a peak of 26,000 was reached and then it apparently was stabilized between 20,000 and 25,000. Perhaps ten to fifteen percent were veteran communist party militants; fifty percent may have been forcibly recruited and the rest joined for a variety of reasons.[20]

The very nature of the collaborator and his work has prevented an assessment of his strength. During the war, some of these people were ferreted out; evidence indicates that they were most numerous. In 1949 a defeated 3,600 guerrilla force in the Peloponnese, for example, contained 1,600 collaborators. Probably their ratio to guerrillas was even higher in areas near the northern frontiers which the bandits often controlled.[21]

During the war, the Greek rebel strength in the Russian satellite countries seemed to be strong enough

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[20]See Appendix 2 for a listing of these reasons.

[21]Murray, op. cit. (January 1954), p. 19. The guerrillas readily admitted that they seized food from collaborators, but they also raided army and gendarme stores. Voluntary contributions of food and clothes were sometimes packaged for them in friendly cities like Volos. Smothers, McNeill, and McNeill, op. cit., p. 159.

for real concern to the Greek Army. Albania was reported to have 4,500 combat effectives and 6,500 noneffectives including older men and women, wounded fighters, and children. Bulgaria had 2,000 to 2,500 effectives and 2,500 noneffectives while Yugoslavia contained 4,000 combat effectives and perhaps 10,000 noneffectives. In July 1949, however, when Tito closed the Greek-Yugoslav border his 4,000 combat effectives were shut off from the more numerous guerrillas in central Greece. This action also deprived the Bulgarian guerrillas and the 2,500 guerrillas in East Macedonia and Thrace from the protected east-west route north of the frontier.[22]

Guerrilla Organization

Throughout the war the "Democratic Army" was almost entirely light infantry. The guerrillas did have a "cavalry brigade," and some antiaircraft and field artillery, but the artillery had little value because the guns and ammunition could not be concentrated for maximum employment.[23]

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[22]Murray, op. cit. (January 1954), p. 19.
[23]Ibid. (February 1954), p. 53.

The normal military services for the "Democratic Army" were usually established beyond the frontier where they were safe from the Greek Army actions. These services included such essentials as forwarding points for supplies, training centers, transient camps, and hospitals.[24]

In 1947, as their strength grew, the guerrillas grouped the loosely organized bands of 50 men or more into companies and battalions. The next year they formed the battalions into brigades numbering 600 to 800 men and in May 1948 there were eight divisions controlling 23 brigades, 42 battalions, and 43 companies of various sorts.[25]

Organizing the light infantry into divisions did not provide for a force of combined arms. Because supporting arms were not added, the available forces were simply consolidated into larger formations. By

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[24] Ibid., p. 51 and (January 1954) p. 18.

[25] Col. Theodossios Papathanasiades, "The Bandits' Last Stand in Greece," Military Review, XXX (February 1951), p. 22. This colonel was Chief of the Greek General Staff Operations Office at the time the article was written. During the German occupation of Greece he was active in a National Resistance Organization. In the Greek Guerrilla War he fought against the guerrillas, holding positions as Chief of Operations Section of a Corps and Army.

this technique the guerrilla lost some of his peculiar advantages such as superior mobility, great flexibility, and infiltration tactics. In the 1949 campaign this guerrilla reorganization aided materially the more numerous government forces who could fight more effectively with the conventional infantry, artillery, and aerial forces.[26]

Numerically, the "Democratic Army" was organized into:[27]

Active bands in Greece	----------	18,000
Guerrillas in Satellites	----------	10,000
Collaborators	----------	?
Satellite personnel	----------	?
		28,000

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[26]Murray, op. cit. (February 1954), p. 53.
[27]Ibid. (January 1954), p. 23.

Chapter 3

GREEK ARMY STRATEGY AND ORGANIZATION

Greek Army Strategy

It was after the Truman Doctrine became effective, and American advisers with supplies were at hand, that the Greek Army began to reorganize itself and reshape its strategy and tactics. Eventually, the General Staff established a strategy of staggered expansion of control.[28] At this time, however, selective recruitment of ideologically reliable youth was abandoned in favor of induction for all eligibles. Those of questionable loyalty were placed in nonsensitive positions or isolated for intensive democratic indoctrination. The Greek General Staff doubled the size of the Army and trained special commando units in unconventional warfare. The Army leaders effectively used the experience they had gained to revise their tactics of "static defense" and to work out a new plan to stamp out the guerrillas.[29] These tasks were not easily accomplished because, for

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[28]See Appendix 2 for the steps of this strategy.
[29]Kousoulas, op. cit., p. 69.

the most part, the military organization followed the conventional pattern.

Infantry, artillery, armored reconnaissance, tanks, and combat engineers constituted the combat arms of the Army. At first, the infantry divisions did not have organic supporting arms but when these were needed, the general staff directorates attached the appropriate supporting units to the requesting corps or divisions. The Army was composed of three field and four mountain divisions; the former had motorized transport for war on the plains and the latter used only animal transport in the highlands. Normally, each of the three field divisions had a strength of 10,000 men, giving them 2,000 more men than each of the mountain divisions possessed.[30]

Greek Military Forces

The government employed six different types of infantry. In addition to the field and mountain divisions, the fighting force included commando infantry, the National Defense Corps--later designated as the light infantry--

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[30]Murray, op. cit. (February 1954), p. 53.

armed civilian components, and the Gendarmerie. Each of these was organized to meet a particular need. In the crucial early days of warring against the guerrillas, the British Military Mission that trained much of the Greek Army had organized commandos to speed training and to furnish small units tailored to battle the guerrillas. It soon developed that the best fighters were in these commando units. Of course, they were given better equipment, training, pay, and living conditions; but the real source of their esprit de corps was an active military role and numerous military victories. In Greece the commandos were actually heavily armed, highly mobile, and very effective. Probably they were used longer in the campaigns than they should have been. They were not the best suited for sustained operations; they depended more on external administrative services, and their effectiveness, in part, was possible only at the expense of the standard infantry units.[31]

Quite different organizations were the National Defense Corps (NDC) or light infantry and the Gendarmerie.

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[31] Ibid., pp. 53-54.

The NDC battalions came principally from the older classes of reservists and these forces were used to furnish static defenses for towns, lines of communications, and vital installations. As these NDC units became operational and as the Army units took on more active tasks, the NDC accepted local offensive missions with subsequent redesignation as light infantry battalions. Initially, the Gendarmerie had tried to put down the guerrilla activity and its failure to do so led the Army to the task. The Gendarmerie, however, continued to assist in military operations, using specially equipped mobile patrols to flush out guerrillas from areas just behind Army operations. Upon completion of this mission, they reverted to their normal police work.[32]

The strength of the government forces was as follows:[33]

Greek National Army	-------	150,000
National Defense Corps	-------	50,000
Gendarmerie	-------	25,000
Civil Police	-------	7,500
		232,500

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[32] Ibid., pp. 54-55.
[33] Murray, op. cit. (January 1954), p. 23.

Chapter 4

FIGHTING THE WAR

Geography of Greece

When the ELAS increased their warlike activity in the middle of 1945, the guerrillas were aware that two factors favored their type of operation. One was the instability of the government at a time when rival factions vied for control. A stable government was essential for postwar reconstruction and the military forces were weak.[34] While the government's unstable condition could perhaps be classified as temporary, another factor--the geography of the country--then favoring the guerrillas has consistently encouraged disunity or rebellion in Greece.[35] Geographers of Greece have always emphasized: (1) a northern frontier

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[34]As late as 1947 this instability in government still caused anxiety on all sides. See Appendix 2 for comment.

[35]As large in size as New York or Illinois, the Greek nation "extends down into the Mediterranean much like a bony hand. Much of its surface consists of barren mountains, with more level and more fertile stretches along the seashores. The sea deeply indents the land and partly submerged mountains make innumerable islands." Smothers, McNeill, and McNeill, op. cit., p. 212.

difficult to defend, (2) mountains tailor-made for centers of guerrilla activity, and (3) the sea waterways which were customarily the highways of transportation and commerce. Only the waterways aided the loyalists.

Defense of the frontier was almost impossible for even a powerful Greek army. Stretching for 700 miles from the Adriatic to the Turkish border, the mountains could have swallowed up the eight wartime divisions of the Greek Army if it had chosen to disperse along that frontier. The average divisional frontage would have been nearly 100 miles through a maze of mountains. In the east the Greek frontier has no depth. Only a few miles from the frontier is the seacoast. In this area only one road and one railroad, both vulnerable to attack, were the means of lateral communications.[36]

Mountains like the Pindus that extend southeastward from the Albanian border 160 miles to the Gulf of Corinth can be reached only by mule or on foot. It was nearly impossible for motorized military units to operate in this area and for generations bandits have used certain

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[36]Murray, op. cit. (April 1954), pp. 53-54.

of these areas for operating bases and sanctuaries. This mountain range, varying in width from 40 to 60 miles and rising in height to a maximum of 7,500 feet, made a nearly solid barrier to east-west communications between the Albanian border and the Gulf of Corinth. Ground movement then, in the Pindus, was limited to a few deep narrow valleys. The mountains became an asset of great value to the guerrillas.[37]

1947 and 1948 Efforts

Keeping the geography in mind, the Army began its first major campaign in April 1947 by attacking in central Greece close to the Gulf of Corinth. Its leaders intended to sweep gradually northward to the border, destroying the guerrilla units on the way. Guerrillas not killed would be forced across the frontier and the border would be sealed against reinfiltration. As the fighting progressed, the Army commanders tried to isolate, surround, and annihilate the guerrillas; but a few months of action revealed that this campaign had

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[37] Ibid., p. 54.

failed. Plagued with poor timing and bad coordination with rather timid movements, the Army was not able to match the progressively stronger guerrilla forces and was forced to cancel its winter campaign.[38]

Before beginning its new clearing campaign in April of 1948, the Greek Army reorganized. The task of providing static defense for the towns became the mission of the National Defense Corps thus freeing more troops for the major clearing operation. Once again the preliminary phase to kill guerrillas or drive them northward began in central Greece. But progress was slow and the enemy units consistently escaped from the planned encirclements. By 29 June the Army forces had driven back the guerrillas to their strongholds in the Grammos area which formed a defensible front. For two and one-half months, an enemy force of less than 15,000 guerrillas defended themselves against the Army of 50,000 troops. Eventually the GNA crashed through the front, but the guerrillas successfully withdrew into Albania only to reappear later in the Vitsi area to the

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[38] Ibid., p. 57.

northeast. Meanwhile, the Army was forced to shift its forces in order to mop up its own rear areas because the guerrillas had slipped through the Army lines and resumed operations in south and central Greece, especially in the Peloponnese. The Army was successful in its efforts to end the war against the bandits in 1948.[39]

Several factors favored the National Army as the campaign began in 1949. By this time the U. S. military advisers had retrained and reequipped the Army troops so that they could fight a more aggressive, mobile war, making maximum use of the available airpower for close support operations. Leadership of the armed forces was improved when General Papagos became Commander-in-Chief. On the political front, Tito's split with the Cominform resulted in the sealing of the Yugoslav frontier, a task the Army had not been able to accomplish.[40]

1949 Plans and Actions

From the experience gained and lessons learned in 1948, the Greek General Staff developed plans for a

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[39]Murray, op. cit. (January 1954), p. 18. See also Stavrianos, op. cit., pp. 190-191.

[40]Murray, op. cit. (March 1954), pp. 52, 55-57.

major effort in 1949. The National Defense Corps battalions took over the security of towns and villages and released the Greek National Army of 147,000 to execute mobile operations. Generally, the government forces hoped to contain the guerrillas along the northern frontier with minimum forces and, at the same time, complete the campaign in four phases. First, they planned to clear out the Peloponnese and second, central Greece. Their third task was to reduce the strongly fortified areas of Vitsi and Grammos, close by the Yugoslav and Albanian frontiers, and their last work was to locate and defeat the few remaining guerrilla bands in Greece.[41]

In the spring and early summer of 1949, the Greek National Army completed the first two phases of the campaign. Troops arrested all known communist sympathizers and suspected informers within the designated areas, and advanced with vigorous and bold columns on a broad front and in considerable depth. They pursued the enemy so relentlessly by day and night that the

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[41]Papathanasiades, op. cit., pp. 23-31. This account is used for the next four paragraphs.

guerrillas were unable to resupply themselves from the hidden supply bases in the mountains. By late July 1949, the Greek armed forces were ready to begin Operation TORCH, the task of destroying the bandit fortified positions in the Vitsi and Grammos areas. It was a twofold plan--to destroy the Vitsi position enclosing the bandit headquarters and to capture the Grammos.

The guerrillas in the Vitsi area, estimated at 7,500, expected an attack from government forces during the summer months. They had fortified this mountainous area of 375 square miles, mining and covering all possible avenues of approach from within Greece by machine gun, mortar, and artillery fires. But also believing there would be attacks on the Grammos area, the guerrillas did not know which would occur first. To confuse the guerrilla forces, the Greek Army created a diversion in the Grammos area by launching air attacks, artillery bombardment, and limited small-scale local ground attacks. Being fooled by these limited attacks and much movement of motor vehicles in the rear of the Grammos area, the guerrillas were not ready for the main government thrust into the Vitsi area during the period 10 to 14 August.

In about 72 hours, the national troops overran the guerrilla positions. About 5,000 of the guerrillas in these strongholds hastily and successfully retreated. The charging government forces were unable to cut off escape routes. Leaving about 1,000 of their number dead and 500 or more as prisoners, the guerrillas escaped into Albania via the Lake Prespa area.

The enthusiastic Greek forces made short work of the Grammos enemy forces. The improved mobility of the National Army divisions became apparent after this third phase began in late August. In five days the troops, exploiting tactical surprise to the fullest, occupied the 200 square mile section of the Grammos Mountain area, a region more rugged than the Vitsi. All of the guerrilla defenses in the northern area collapsed on the night of 27 - 28 August, and the bandits withdrew hastily to the south leaving behind large quantities of equipment. Other guerrillas holding open the route to Albania received ground and air attacks from the nationals on 29 and 30 August. Late on 30 August the national forces completely occupied the Grammos area. Thus the principal phases of the 1949 campaign ended. On an average, the Greek forces

had used more than ten soldiers and airmen for every single guerrilla it had fought in Greece.

Navy/Air Force Participation

While the Greek campaigns were mainly infantry and artillery battles, the naval and air units provided aid. At the beginning the Navy was better prepared than either the Army or Air Force. Unlike them, it had been able to withdraw most of its forces when Greece fell to the Germans. When the Navy returned to Greece with the exile government it had a good nucleus of officers and ratings, and the British loaned Greece enough ships to meet its requirements later. Because of the few roads and mountainous areas in Greece, the sea was especially important for transportation and communications during the war against the guerrillas. Aerial operations were not so successful at first. The development of the Royal Hellenic Air Force lagged behind that of the Army and the Navy. By the end of the war aerial units were equipped and trained sufficiently to be of significant assistance.[42]

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[42]Murray, op. cit. (May 1954), pp. 56-57.

Chapter 5

WAR IN THE AIR

Buildup

Only after a buildup of airplanes and trained crews could the Royal Hellenic Air Force (RHAF) fulfill its essential role in the war against the guerrillas. Unfortunately, Greece did not possess the technical or industrial capacity to establish and maintain a highly qualified Air Force, so development and training of aerial units proceeded slowly. Worse still, even the developing of the new RHAF did not have a high priority.[43] In the spring of 1947, shortly after the Aid to Greece Agreement was signed by U. S. and Greek representatives, and especially after the arrival in Greece of Brigadier General William A. Matheny, USAF, with his small staff of officers and airmen in February 1948, the United States began to plan for the logistic buildup of the RHAF.[44] As part of this work, the USAF arranged to fly

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[43]Murray, op. cit. (May 1954), p. 54.

[44]For comment on American organizations in Athens see Appendix 2.

C-47- and AT-6-type aircraft to Greece from the USAFE command in Germany. At about this same time, the Spitfires and other war-surplus British aircraft were arriving from the United Kingdom. By early 1948, many of these planes were operational.[45]

For the time, the responsibility for training and organizing the RHAF remained British. The task was great because aggressive leadership within the RHAF developed very slowly. The fact that Greece was more agrarian than industrialized meant that the technicians for aircraft could not be drawn from the almost nonexistent industrial areas. These had to be trained from recruits who often did not possess the necessary aptitude.[46]

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[45]USAFE, Historical Data Headquarters United States Air Forces in Europe, 1 January - 30 June 1950, I (November 1950), pp. 307-351. Murray, op. cit. (May 1954), p. 53.

[46]"On 28 January /1948/ the /British/ Air Ministry stated that certain reports from Athens announcing the postponement of the 'projected withdrawals from Greece of British Royal Air Force Squadrons' were misleading. . . . The only RAF units in Greece comprise a communications flight of six aircraft and a training mission to the RHAF--It had been hoped to reduce the communication flight, but continued commitments will not allow the reductions." Quoted in Royal United Service Institution Journal, XCIII (1948), p. 328. See also Murray, op. cit. (May 1954), pp. 53-55.

In Greece, the aircraft available for combat were not the most satisfactory for this kind of bandit war. For example, despite its later successes, the Spitfire possessed relatively short-range, limited space for ammunition and great vulnerability to ground fire. By contrast, the C-47 transports handled the logistic mission in an excellent manner. The RHAF modified these transports so they could carry 250- and 500-pound bombs on racks beneath the fuselage, but the experiment did not prove to be very practical. The American advisers questioned the accuracy of this type of bombing. The single-engine AT-6 became the eyes of the RHAF, handling the mission of aerial reconnaissance by locating and observing the guerrilla movements.[47]

Aerial Procedures and Techniques

The aerial units employed two types of air operations: one to isolate the battlefield[48] and the other to directly

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[47]Murray, op. cit. (May 1954), pp. 53-56. See also USAFGG, op. cit., pp. 52-53, 102.

[48]Since all Greece was the battlefield, the objective was actually to destroy all guerrilla forces. Murray, op. cit., (May 1954), p. 53.

support the ground troops. Three techniques were used for the former; pre-planned strikes on targets located by aerial photography or intelligence, armed reconnaissance when it was known that profitable targets or large enemy formations might be in a given area, and use of reconnaissance aircraft to locate targets and direct strike aircraft to these targets. These independent air attacks were made at troops on march and at fixed targets, such as bandit headquarters, supply camps, and fortified positions. They were limited by the availability of aircraft, pilots, and the difficulty of target identification.

Many occasions arose when the RHAF could employ its aircraft in direct support of ground troops.[49] This became even more significant because the GNA had only a limited number of artillery pieces and mortar and operated in mountainous areas where artillery could not be employed effectively. "Flying artillery" often became the only

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[49] Ibid., p. 54. Murray explained, "Direct support took many forms. It included common liaison, tactical reconnaissance, air observation, air spot for artillery, aerial photography, aerial resupply, the dropping of propaganda leaflets, and the attack of targets in conjunction with the ground forces. The last named was, of course, the most important."

solution for the moving targets which guerrillas often presented.

Deficiencies in air-ground communications hampered the air effort. Vehicle-mounted radios were of limited value in the mountainous regions. Mule pack radios, capable of contacting support aircraft, were in short supply and were not employed at the assault level but rather at brigade and division headquarters. It was not until late 1948 that mule pack air support signal units were more widely distributed and even this was on a limited basis and was inadequate. Unfortunately, commanders failed to understand fully the capabilities of the aerial weapon. The inexperience of the units reconstituted after World War II and the lack of opportunity for realistic maneuvers, involving both ground and air units, retarded this development of effective air-ground procedures.[50]

The difficulty of target identification was a major factor in the air operations. The guerrilla commanders

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[50] Ibid., pp. 54-56. See also The New York Times, August 1, 1948, p. 4.

prided themselves on their ability to hide their "dispo
tion, strength, composition of units, and intentions by
frequent movement and implanted rumors."[51] The employm
of better methods of target identification and more eff
tive communications improved the air-ground effort in t
war against the guerrillas.

1948-1949 Air Actions

By the early part of 1948, the combat units of the
RHAF were organized to support the ground operations.
each of three strategically located permanent bases,[52]
the RHAF stationed one fighter squadron and a reconnais
sance flight.[53] The aircraft, then, flying from the
three different fields, provided air coverage over Gree

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[51]Quoted from Lt. Col. Anastase Balcos, "Guerrilla
Warfare," Military Review, XXXVII (March 1958), p. 52.
Article is based on the personal experiences of the aut
who was a member of the Greek guerrilla forces under th
Axis occupation and later a battalion commander (1948-1
of the Greek National Army when it fought the communist
guerrilla units. Ibid., p. 50.

[52]The bases were at Salonika for air operations ov
northeastern Greece, at Larise for central Greece and a
Eleusis for southern Greece. See Section II on operati
in Chapter III of USAFCG, op. cit., pp. 98-119.

[53]Each of the three fighter squadrons had 20 Spitf
IX aircraft and each reconnaissance flight had four Har
aircraft. USAFCG, op. cit., p. 98.

On the bases, however, the runways were barely adequate and strong crosswinds frequently delayed or even canceled air operations. Aircraft engaged in liaison and medical evacuation utilized dry weather airstrips.[54]

By mid-March 1948, the Greek Air Force units were in operation. The RHAF carefully monitored a landing strip built by bandits in the Lake Prespa area at the junction of the Albanian, Yugoslav, and Greek borders and once bombed the strip. In addition, the Greek airmen dug personnel trenches and dispersed their aircraft, but the guerrillas never resorted to aerial attacks.[55]

In April and May 1948, the Greek Air Force supported the Greek Army units in their first major offensive in the Roumeli area. For a long time, the Roumeli region had been occupied by about 3,000 guerrillas who had been

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[54]There were two transportation squadrons, one with 12 Anson I aircraft and the other with 20 Dakota (C-47) aircraft. In addition, the flying training school at Tatoi was equipped with 23 Harvard IIA, 8 Tiger Moth, 3 Oxford and 1 Spitfire IX aircraft. The flying refresher flight at Elevsis had 9 Spitfire IX, 17 Spitfire V, 7 Oxford and 1 Harvard IIA aircraft. In the RHAF Aircraft Storage Pool were more than 30 aircraft, including several L-5 airplanes. Ibid., pp. 98-100.

[55]Ibid., p. 99.

terrorizing the inhabitants and disrupting the main communications routes between central and northern Greece. In April, as the result of combined planning by the Greek authorities and the American and British missions, a force estimated at 30,000 closed in on the bandits from three main points. This force had the support of the RHAF. Around the twentieth of April, weather conditions became favorable for air operations, at which time Spitfires and Harvards flew in support of ground operations. In May 1948, while supporting the land operations, the Greek pilots flew 641 sorties, of which 370 were armed, offensive sorties.[56]

In addition, there were other types of air activity. C-47 aircraft flew more than 22 supply-drop missions, that included food and medical supplies, and one leaflet-drop mission. The AT-6 aircraft also flew reconnaissance sorties. By June, the press revealed that the enemy had suffered continuous air attacks and that heavy air support had aided the Army in its advance into the Grammos area.

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[56] Ibid., pp. 38, 99-100. Spitfires flew all of the offensive sorties. One Spitfire was destroyed and ten damaged.

The increased air activity indicated that the RHAF was finally able to support the effort against the guerrillas.[57]

The major effort of the RHAF, however, supported the Greek National Army. Spitfires played an important role and made extensive use of rockets, bombs, machine guns, and cannon. Harvards flew many reconnaissance sorties, and C-47's were used to drop food and medical supplies. Many times, observers in Harvards spotted the guerrilla bands maneuvering below and dropped 20-pound fragmentation bombs. If the size of the target warranted, the reconnaissance pilot radioed for Spitfire assistance; and stronger aerial attacks would be launched. Because of its small size, the RHAF was unable to furnish complete support for all ground units simultaneously. In order to provide the maximum assistance, the RHAF worked under a priority procedure, controlled at Corps Headquarters, which allocated the available aircraft for specific operations.[58]

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[57] Ibid., p. 99. The New York Times, June 20, 1948, p. 48.

[58] USAFGG, op. cit., p. 39. Murray, op. cit. (May 1954), pp. 55-56.

In June, the RHAF tried to help the Army smash the enemy front in the Grammos area. On 17 June, the Greek Army massed five divisions for the largest offensive to date against guerrilla formations, dumps, and installations in the Grammos Mountains. When the action began, three RHAF squadrons and four flights supported the GNA. One squadron of Spitfires was based at Yannina and another at Kozani. Each of these fields also had a flight of four Harvards and a few communications aircraft. A flight of Harvards and Austers was also located at Argos Orestikon for artillery reconnaissance. A flight of Oxfords was based at Sedes for photo reconnaissance, and a squadron of Dakotas based at Elevsis supported the airlift requirements.[59] Under the fighter aircraft and artillery umbrella, the Army forces moved along a 40-mile front near the Albanian border. The fighter planes proved to be effective. On the left flank, for example, they showered rockets and bombs on the guerrilla deputy commander's headquarters on Mount Grammos. Planes with rockets and

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[59]This Army attack was known as Operation CROWN. USAFGG, op. cit., p. 39.

bombs, making 24 sorties, attacked positions at Lykorrochi on the Grammos heights. Thus, artillery with continual tactical support from RHAF Spitfires, some of which carried fragmentation bombs, some rockets, and the rest cannon or machine guns, aided Greek units.[60] One of the units being supported was the 15th Division, whose troops climbed the rebel-held heights to cut off or capture the rebel fanatics in western Macedonia.[61] This particular attack was the twelfth sizable operation since early in 1948. But, by the end of the month, the Greek Army knew that the offensive was not as successful as hoped. The majority of the guerrillas escaped and fled in small bands toward the Albanian border.

Even the government's second phase attack, launched in August against the inaccessible rebel strongholds in the Grammos Massif, failed to complete the mission of capturing the guerrilla forces. Handicapped by the mountainous terrain that provided invaluable camouflage against aerial assault and by heavy casualties from the

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[60] The New York Times, June 19, 1948, p. 2; ibid., June 20, 1948, pp. 1, 49.

[61] Ibid., June 20, 1948, p. 49. The division's war song, roughly translated, meant "Hit the breeze, traitors."

fields of "schuh" (or nonferrous) mines, national forces were unable to surround and take the guerrillas. Though beaten again at the front, the enemy eluded capture, dispersed, and retreated into Albania.[62] The RHAF flew a total of 3,474 sorties during this operation with a daily average of 52.6 sorties. The monthly sortie rate reached a peak in August when 1,570 sorties were flown, considerably more than the 641 sorties flown in May. Spitfires played the principal role and accounted for most of the offensive sorties.[63]

In the fall of 1948 and throughout the winter, the RHAF continued the buildup of aerial units. In early September, aircraft supported a GNA operation in the Vitsi area. Launched on the sixth of September, one GNA division effectively reduced a force of 1,500 guerrillas in 11 days. The effective tactical support by the RHAF contributed to the success of the operation.[64]

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[62] Ibid., August 1, 1948, IV, p. 4.

[63] USAFCG, op. cit., p. 40. In this operation 23 Spitfires were hit by light antiaircraft (A/A) fire, one of which crashed in flames into the target area, killing the pilot. See also ibid., p. 102.

[64] In this Vitsi campaign the formations of Spitfires were especially successful in divebombing or strafing

Because of the weather in the late fall and winter the RHAF was primarily engaged in close support of small units and small operations. Harvard aircraft making observation flights to locate guerrilla concentrations were successful many times. The RHAF then directed air attacks to these targets.[65]

Winter conditions for the next few months reduced combat activity. In November, while undergoing a redisposition and reorganization program, the GNA continued its offensive against the guerrilla in the Vitsi area and the RHAF flew a limited number of reconnaissance missions; but, because of bad weather, the pilots flew few offensive sorties. When weather permitted, they made harassing attacks against guerrilla positions and guerrilla-held villages. This pattern of

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organized or camouflaged guerrilla positions located by GNA troops who alerted the pilots by smoke shells or sent radio messages through the Air Support Signal Units. USAFGG, op. cit., pp. 41, 103.

[65]USAFGG, op. cit., p. 43. The GNA 2nd Division started an offensive on 10 October, supported by Spitfires employing rockets, bombs, machine guns and cannon. Excellent communications were maintained between air and ground units throughout the attack enabling the ground units to achieve its planned objective.

air activity continued throughout the winter and spring. Even though bad weather caused a reduction in flying, the RHAF continued supporting the GNA by seeking out guerrilla forces and performing air strikes against many villages and outposts under attack by the guerrillas.[66] On 22 December, the guerrillas attacked the village of Edessa where Spitfires successfully defeated the guerrilla forces, killing 157 guerrillas and permitting GNA troops to capture 50 others in the encounter. The RHAF continued to strike the guerrillas until the night of 24 December, at which time the guerrillas began a fan-like retreat in the direction of the Albanian and Yugoslav borders. Separating into bands of 50 men, the guerrillas were pursued by the GNA effectively supported by the RHAF using air support signal units during the pursuit.[67] On 12 February, two guerrilla divisions with five brigades (4,000 men) launched an attack on Florina. RHAF aircraft, dispatched to the battle area, attacked

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[66] Ibid., pp. 41-46, 50-59, 106-109.

[67] Ibid., p. 46. The large number of casualties was a true indication of the first major success of the GNA in repulsing strong guerrilla attacks on towns and villages.

large groups of guerrillas in the ravines west of Florina. A count of casualties revealed that more than 900 guerrillas had been killed or captured; the Air Force was credited with the overwhelming majority of the casualties sustained by the enemy.[68]

During the spring and early summer the RHAF continued to harass the guerrillas. Aerial units bombed and strafed guerrilla bands whenever and wherever they could be found. Supporting several operations, the RHAF maintained continuous pressure on the guerrillas.[69]

Combat Improvements

Throughout the 1948 campaigns and in the winter operations, the United States and British military advisers studied the effectiveness of the Greek combat aircraft.[70] They, as well as the RHAF, recognized the

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[68] Ibid., p. 55. The GNA lost 44 killed and 220 wounded.

[69] Ibid., p. 59. Food, supply and mail drops were made to GNA troops in snow-bound and isolated areas.

[70] During the 1948 campaigns, the RHAF combat aircraft flew 8,907 sorties while transport aircraft flew 9,891 flights. In the same period 10 pilots and 2 observers were killed with the wounded numbering 25 pilots and 6 observers. Royal Service Institution Journal, XCIV (1949), p. 322.

need for an aircraft capable of carrying heavier bomb loads. In March 1949, their studies and further, more intensive investigations led to the June decision to obtain at least 40 SB2C-5 Helldiver aircraft from the U. S. Navy for use in the bandit war. By great effort, the aircraft were in place to fly their first operational mission on 24 August.[71]

Another tactic for improving the combat aircraft effectiveness was the use of napalm. After careful study, the Operations Division, JUSMAPG, believed it was highly desirable for the RHAF to use napalm against enemy targets. The United States provided a six-man team to train the RHAF in the "proper handling and effective use" of the weapon with the standard Spitfire, and work began in May 1948. Many problems arose and lack of complete cooperation from RHAF officials magnified the difficulties. Proper tanks were not available, so MATS planes finally

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[71]Murray, op. cit. (May 1954), p. 55, and USAFGG, op. cit., pp. 98-119. The U. S. Air Force F-47 aircraft was also considered because it could carry the desired bomb load, but cost factors and availability favored the Helldiver. See also The New York Times, August 18, 1948, p. 9, for earlier comments on this.

flew some from Germany. This limited supply--all that was available in Europe--was insufficient. The stateside price was too high so the Greeks volunteered to build the tanks. The necessary material for the tank construction had to come from the United States, and more time was lost. The first successful test of a napalm tank on a Spitfire occurred in mid-September 1948. Some RHAF pilots objected to carrying this type of ordnance, and many Greeks opposed the use of it at first. Although limited use of napalm began in the summer of 1948, it was not until late 1948 that it began to supplement other types of ordnance.[72]

Before the SB2C-5 with napalm became available in the last days of the war, the older planes flew the air support role. In early June 1949, for example, the rebel forces burned the village of Naousa and killed many of its inhabitants. After three days of this burning and looting, the guerrillas carried off 300 civilian hostages.

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[72]Major Nelson H. Russell, Ordnance Aviation Section, JUSMAPG to Chief, Air Section, January 18, 1949, in file 471 Ammunition (Napalm), FRC, NARS, GSA. Gen. Matheny, Chief, Air Section JUSMAPG, was most interested in the availability and use of napalm. See his notes of weekly staff meeting, June 28, 1948. Staff Minutes - 1948 in file 050, FRC, NARS, GSA.

As part of the pursuing government force, the GAF aircraft roared over the Vermion Mountains northwest of Salonika "gunning" and "dive bombing" a broken line of retreating guerrillas. The retreating rebel columns suffered heavily from the nationalist aerial attacks and were forced to release the hostages.[73]

Final Campaign

By August, the Greek General Staff authorized a series of strong attacks against communist fortified positions on the northern slopes of the Grammos Mountains near the Albanian frontier. The staff plan was to seize and hold the main passes into Albania by which, in 1948, the defeated communist forces had escaped from these mountains. The Greek Army then hoped to seal the border and prevent the reentry of the guerrillas after the area had been cleared.[74] In August 1949, about 5,000 rebel troops were engaged and enclosed temporarily in a triangle of about 250 square miles with its base on the Albanian

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[73]The New York Times, January 18, 1949, p. 10.

[74]The Times (London), August 8, 1949, p. 3; ibid., August 12, 1949, p. 4. See also Papathanasiades, op. cit., pp. 22-31.

frontier. The Greek Army attacked with six divisions of infantry, a commando division, armor, and aircraft on the hypotenuse of the triangle.

The Grammos Mountains harbored many guerrillas. The GNA made a concentrated drive to clear the sectors. During the first week in August, RHAF pilots directed most of their air attacks against strong points of guerrilla resistance. They delivered the largest single air strike of the week on 5 August. Waves of 10 to 14 aircraft gave close support to GNA assaults on guerrilla positions. From 10-16 August, the RHAF shattered all previous records of sorties flown and ammunition expended against the guerrillas in their Vitsi stronghold. On 10 August, these pilots flew 169 sorties in 14 hours; and on the next day, more than 150 sorties were flown. They averaged 126 sorties daily during the first five days of the offensive; and by 10 August, they had helped to end all organized resistance in the Vitsi area.[75]

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[75]USAFGG, op. cit., pp. 69-70. Napalm bombs were dropped on 5 August and, according to prisoner interrogations, "they proved especially effective and terrifying." Papathanasiades, op. cit., p. 26, has described the effects on the guerrillas. See Appendix 2 for this account.

While the Vitsi operation was in progress; General Van Fleet, Chief of the American Military Mission, announced that "Helldiver" American dive bombers would soon be at the disposal of the RHAF. The U. S. Navy was rushing them to Greece by aircraft carrier, readying them on the way. Each aircraft was capable of delivering two tons of bombs at pinpoint targets, such as the scattered mountain fortifications, and was equipped for rocket, cannon, and small arms fire. For several weeks previously, Greek airmen had been learning to fly two of these aircraft that had been brought in for training purposes.[76]

On 24 August, the second major phase of the August offensive began with a Greek First Army Corps attack on the last rebel strongholds in the Grammos Mountains. Again, the communist forces held a triangular area with its base on the Albanian frontier. Its perimeter on the Greek side measured about 40 miles. Most of the area consisted of heavily wooded, precipitous mountains--many more than a mile high. About 5,000 rebels were

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[76]The Times (London), August 11, 1949, p. 3.

reported to be in the fortifications although others who had escaped from the Vitsi Mountains into Albania might be on their way to reinforce the Grammos bases. The greatest artillery concentration ever massed by the Greeks shelled the guerrilla-infested areas, and the Air Force attacked the rebel positions with rocket-firing Spitfires. In addition, eighteen of the new "Helldiver" bombers dropped incendiaries on the rebel positions high on the Tsarno Ridge.[77]

On the second day of the battle, the Helldivers flew in three waves of nine aircraft each. Each formation attacked strongly prepared guerrilla positions, often beyond the reach of the commandos or even the artillery fire. The Grammos offensive, including ground and air attack, continued until 30 August. In 826 sorties, the RHAF dropped 288 tons of bombs, expended 1,935 rockets and made 114 napalm strikes. The Grammos operation ended the last major guerrilla resistance in Greece.[78]

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[77] Ibid., August 26, 1949, p. 3.

[78] USAFGG, op. cit., pp. 71-73. Papathanasiades, op. cit., p. 31, summarized the effects of the Grammos battle. See Appendix 2.

Chapter 6

RHAF ACCOMPLISHMENT

In the spring of 1949, Great Britain had made an estimate of the Greek situation. In reviewing aerial operations, the British indicated that the Greeks had failed to use their superiority in the air. This was true, especially for the period to 1949, but the statement deserves some explanation and should describe the problems encountered in the slow and difficult buildup of the RHAF The scarcity of trained pilots and maintenance men handicapped the aerial arm for many months. The shortage of equipment and facilities made more difficult the task of building an Air Force. It was not until April and May 1948, that the aerial units became operational and supported the ground troops in a limited manner. The lack of aggressive RHAF leadership, the communist infiltration into loyalist units, the limited suitability of aircraft, the absence of effective techniques for both training and operation, and a limited comprehension of the capabilities of close support aircraft had mitigated against getting maximum return from the air effort in the early phases of the struggle.

There were steady improvements in operations from May 1948 to August 1949 although many problems required solution. Control of the air was never a question since no enemy aircraft was encountered. The RHAF attacked ground targets independently or with ground units. While independent attacks assisted the overall effort, the direct support of ground troops could have been employed more advantageously. Lack of effective communications between ground units and aircraft hampered the effort, thus making target identification more difficult. Poor coordination between air and ground units was evident when air attacks on guerrilla positions were requested too far in advance of the government troops. This permitted the guerrillas to move into a relatively sheltered, close range position to meet the assault by the ground troops. As both ground and air commanders gained in experience, ground unit support became better.

In the latter phase of the conflict, air reconnaissance was effectively used to locate guerrillas in their mountain hide-outs and attack them with 20-pound fragmentation bombs. This proved to be a successful technique. Spitfires, in spite of their limited capability, made air

strikes on supply dumps, enemy fortifications, and enemy strongholds to assist the ground troops in their struggle. In 1949, the Air Force, at last reasonably well-equipped and trained, demonstrated its power in the last big campaign of the war. Using the American SB2-C (Helldiver) to supplement the Spitfire in the final phase of the ground war enabled the RHAF to furnish sufficient support to the land forces. Proper techniques with adequate equipment demonstrated how effective airpower can be in an operation of this type. Starting with almost nothing, the RHAF had developed to a point that it could contribute immeasurably to the overall effort. An example was the use of aircraft to locate and destroy enemy facilities and formations in the rough mountainous terrain. The close support given to the ground troops on preplanned operations, and the aerial assistance furnished isolated villages and troops under attack, decisively affected the outcome of the war.

The appointment of General Papagos as Commander-in-Chief of the Greek Forces was a turning point in the battle against the guerrillas. A competent leader, he was able to consolidate and coordinate the army and air effort.

The government benefited, too, when Tito split with the Cominform and stopped the traffic over his border into Greece. The guerrillas, thus, were deprived of a source of supplies, both materiel and manpower. By this time, the RHAF was also employing air surveillance at the frontier. These efforts contributed immeasurably to the defeat of the rebels.

Any accomplishment must be evaluated in terms of its cost in manpower and materiel. Less than 7,500 men were utilized in the air effort. The cost of the air operation was probably less than 10 percent of the cost of the ground operation. The return was certainly great. The importance of air support became apparent in the last weeks of the Greek guerrilla war. The GNA had only a limited number of artillery and mortars to support the infantry advance in a mountainous area. In this situation the guerrillas could successfully employ their "hit-and-run tactics," i.e., until they encountered the more mobile, speedy aerial weapons of the RHAF. These weapons proved to be decisive in the final campaigns of this war.

Appendix 1

List of Guerrilla Warfare Airpower Studies

1. BIBLIOGRAPHY (Annotated), INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY, June 1962

2. INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY, ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY, December 1962

3. THE ROLE OF AIRPOWER IN GUERRILLA WARFARE (WORLD WAR II), December 1962

4. THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF AIRPOWER IN THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY (1948-1960), May 1963

5. GUERRILLA WARFARE AND AIRPOWER IN KOREA, 1950-53, January 1964

Appendix 2

Explanatory Notes

Reference Footnote 18--GUERRILLA GOUMAS' COMMENT ON ARMS PROCUREMENT:

> Arms and ammunition come from three sources, . . . from battle, from raids by our special units on gendarmes and army detachments, and finally, from raids on civilians in the villages who have been armed by the government and from regular Rightist bands. Generally speaking, our guns are all English, German and Italian. English rifles we get mostly from the army and gendarmes. German and Italian guns are seized by us from Rightist bands and armed civilians--the same guns ELAS gave up after the Varkiza agreement.
>
> The armed civilians are the easiest pickings for light weapons and ammunitions, because they don't have much heart in their roles and don't know how to fight. . . . All you have to do is to go and take their guns away from them. Furthermore, when we capture such armed civilians and find there is nothing serious against them, we send them away and tell them they can return the favor by slipping us ammunition from time to time. In their thanks for good treatment, quite a number comply.

Quoted in Smothers, McNeill, and McNeill, op cit., pp. 157-158.

Reference Footnote 19--ORIGIN OF THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT IN GREECE:

> Undoubtedly, Leftist guerrillas have received assistance, material, and moral, from across the frontiers of neighboring Balkan states. Some of the partisan warriors are Greeks who fled across

the frontier and then returned. Evidence seems clear that some received training while abroad, notable at Bulkes in Yugoslavia. A United Nations mission has investigated the border situation and has reported its findings, based on weeks of testimony. Our team does not purport to have detailed information of its own on the extent of illegal aid received from the Slavic states. Aside from the question of the extent of supplies, harbor or training, the fact that the extreme Left in Greece possesses friends near at hand constitutes, in itself, moral support which, from the beginning, has made armed revolt more probable--just as support from Britain and the United States accounts for the fact that the Right is able to take the measures it has chosen against its opposition. The aid which the government receives from abroad is open, legal, wholesale; that which Leftist guerrillas receive is clandestine, illegal, difficult to appraise with accuracy, but none the less significant.

Nevertheless, at the time covered by this report, the revolt is essentially civil. The guerrillas are Greek--including the minority of Slavo-Macedonians among them. Communists in reliable liaison with Moscow head the movement. But they would have had no revolt to head, and the "northern neighbors" would have had no upheaval to assist, had not thousands of desperate Greeks fled to the mountains, ready to sell their lives as dearly as possible, and had not many times their number sympathized with them.

Smothers, McNeill, and McNeill, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

Reference Footnote 20--RECRUITMENT OF GUERRILLAS:

Many factors have contributed to winning the guerrillas new recruits. They include,

prominently, the extreme economic want in Greece. They include the propinquity of many mountain boys to veterans in the hills, long acquaintance or kinship with them, and various appeals or pressures by the veterans. Forced recruitment has frequently been charged and it doubtless occurs--although the dividing lines between sentiment, appeal, persuasion, threat, and force are very difficult to unravel; and such guerrillas as went to the mountains against their will would make the most unreliable of warriors. But whatever the contributing factors--including deep poverty--Rightist terror has been the primary recruiting agent for the bands of the Left. A notable upsurge in recruitment was credibly reported in the countryside to members of this team after Zemas mass arrests and deportations without trial in March 1947.

Ibid., p. 153. See also Murray, op. cit. (January 1954), p. 18.

Reference Footnote 28--GENERAL STAFF STRATEGY OF STAGGERED EXPANSION OF CONTROL:

The strategy of staggered expansion of control was a system that was a partial reversal of guerrilla tactics. It included twelve steps: (a) selection of target area; (b) concentration of regular and special anti-guerrilla forces; (c) relentless eradication of the underground apparatus used by the guerrillas for information, recruitment and supplies; (d) launching of a sustained series of offensive operations from the periphery toward the center of the communist stronghold; (e) establishment of several successive lines of defense designed to cut off all possible routes of escape; (f) extermination or capture of the guerrilla force in the area; (g) mop-up operations by auxiliary forces; (h) establishment of local units of

static self-defense; (i) extension of permanent government control and authority over cleared area; (j) measures to prevent re-infiltration of the area by guerrillas from other regions; (k) selection of another suitable area to repeat the process in no man's land; and (l) special operations to join the two cleared areas and proceed further.

Kousoulas, op. cit., p. 69.

Reference Footnote 34--EVIDENCE OF INSTABILITY OF GREEK GOVERNMENT:

> Royalists feared Communists; those affiliated with the Left feared the royalist-controlled government and its forces; those in the Center feared both extremes. Peasants feared guerrilla bands on the one hand, and gendarmes, army and police on the other. Most Greeks feared possible aggression by the Slavic neighbors to the north; nearly all but Communists feared Russia. Not only Communists but many moderate Greeks feared the exercise of British or American power in ways which might aid the factions they opposed and the possible consequences of interventions, such as a war which would further devastate the country. Underlying all were poverty and economic insecurity, which led to fear of unemployment in the cities and under nutrition for nearly all.

Quotation is from Smothers, McNeill, and McNeill, op. cit., p. 212.

Reference Footnote 44--AMERICAN ORGANIZATION FOR GREEK AID:

> The United States Army Group Greece (USAGG) was organized in Washington on 14 April 1947. With a strength of less than 50 officers,

enlisted men and civilians at first, it operated under the direction of the Chief of the American Mission for Aid to Greece. Its basic mission was to determine the supplies and equipment required by the Greek National Army, the Gendarmerie and the Royal Hellenic Air Force (RHAF) and to procure the required items from American and British sources. In mid-November, the Department of the Army announced that USAGG would be increased by 170 officers and men to advise the Greek National Army. By a directive the JCS established on 31 December 1947 the Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group (JUSMAPG). It was organized into three sections, Air, Army and Navy. The United States Air Force Group, Greece (USAFGG), was established 1 November 1948 as an operating agency of Headquarters USAF to advise the RHAF on procurement and delivery to Greece, air installations, and operational matters.

(See pp. 5-25 of USAFGG, op. cit , that has sections of Chapter I on Law 75, USAFGG and JUSMAPG.)

Reference Footnote 75--EFFECTS OF BOMBING IN VITSI STRONGHOLD, AUGUST 1949:

In their hasty and disorderly withdrawal from the Vitsi area, the guerrillas abandoned all of their heavy equipment and supplies. The following equipment was captured: 43 artillery pieces; 1 75-mm AT gun; 2 AA guns; 115 mortars; 232 German light machine guns; 68 British light machine guns; 96 heavy machine guns; 25 AA machine guns; 3,392 rifles; 142 bazookas; 1,650 mines; 49 cases of artillery shells; and 7,500 artillery shells. Intelligence reported that, of the six guerrilla brigades originally in the Vitsi area, the 103d, in the southwest part thereof, was the only unit to withdraw into Albania with most of its

equipment and personnel. The 14th, 105th, and Officer School Brigades were reported as having lost 50 percent of their strength. Guerrilla casualties reported for this Operation, from 10 August to 15 August, were 997 killed; 509 captured; and 133 surrendered. The Greek National Army casualties included 229 killed; 116 wounded; and 3 missing. In addition, the Greek National Army found the bodies of 20 Albanian soldiers and captured 7 others.

Reference Footnote 78--SURPRISE A FACTOR IN FINAL GRAMMOS BATTLE:

Strategic surprise was not possible in the Grammos. At this time, the Grammos was the only bandit stronghold left in Greece. Complete tactical surprise was achieved, however, as to the time and the direction of the main attack. The use of "soft-spot" tactics indicated that the enemy's left or northern flank, resting on the Albanian border, was extremely weak. Furthermore, the bandits did not expect the Grammos attack so soon. The guerrillas who escaped from the Vitsi area to the Grammos had not yet been fully reorganized when the attack was begun. The "A" Corps Commander kept his reserves close to the operation, and when the breakthrough occurred, there was no time lost in passing to the exploitation phase of the campaign. Once the rear of the enemy's position was reached, organized defensive areas quickly collapsed.

Appendix 3

Types of Aircraft Employed

Bombers

Dakota - RAF name for the American-made DC-3 or C-47 twin-engine plane. It was able to carry 5,500 pounds up to 1,500 miles. Some of these planes were supplied by the British and some by the United States. Since more bombers were needed, the RHAF modified some of the planes, using them to haul 250- and 500-pound bombs.

Helldiver - Called the SB2C-5 by the U. S. Navy, the Helldiver in an earlier model was a U. S. Navy dive-bomber in World War II, especially in the Pacific areas. Its armament consisted of six 50-caliber machine guns or two 50-caliber machine guns and two 20-mm cannons. With two wing-mounted 20-mm cannons, the Helldiver was most effective as a strafing vehicle. It was able to carry 3,000-pound bombs up to 1,000 miles. It entered the Greek civil war in the last few days of August 1949.

Spitfire - One of the most famous RAF fighters of World War II, the Spitfire with the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine had a speed up to 400 MPH and a range of 480

miles. In Greece, it was usually employed in a fighter-bomber role, carrying eight 60-pound rockets, two to four 20-mm cannons, and one 500-pound or eight 20-pound bombs.

Wellington - In the early days of World War II this Vickers-Armstrong built twin-engine aircraft was the principal bomber of the RAF. Then it was most effective against specific targets rather than in area bombing. It was found to be inoperable in Greece and was subsequently grounded.

Fighters

Harvard - This RAF version of the American-made AT-6 North American advanced trainer had been modified to carry eight 20-pound fragmentation bombs and was armed with one 7.9-mm machine gun. It could fly at 208 MPH and had an 850-mile range.

Spitfire - See above.

Liaison

Auster - This standard British light aircraft cruised at 100 knots and a range of about 200 nautical miles.

With no wind, it could clear a 50-foot obstacle at 675 feet from start of takeoff roll.

Pioneer - A RAF light airplane that cruised at speeds up to 130 knots and had a range of 260 nautical miles. With no wind, it could clear a 50-foot obstacle at 600 feet from start of takeoff roll.

Tiger Moth - This primary trainer, called De Havilland PT-24, had speeds up to 107 miles per hour and a range of 270 miles. It was powered by a 4-cylinder 140-HP engine.

Photographic Reconnaissance

Oxford - This RAF navigation and radio trainer was a twin-engine monoplane, powered by the nine-cycle, air-cooled WASP, produced by Pratt and Whitney. Holding a crew of three, it had a maximum speed of 175 knots and could climb to 10,000 feet in six minutes. In Greece, it was used for aerial reconnaissance.

Transport

Anson - This versatile twin-engine transport was used by the British in World War II as a flying classroom, personnel carrier, and general reconnaissance vehicle. Built principally of plywood and fabric the Anson had

speed up to 170 MPH. It was armed with one 303 fixed-nose Lewis machine gun and had the capability of carrying sixteen 25-pound bombs. In Greece it was used primarily as a transport.

Dakota (C-47) - See above.

Pembrooke - This was a small RAF twin-engine utility aircraft. It could be modified for photographic reconnaissance.

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A. M. Heath, London agent for the book, The Greek Sedition, by F. A. Voight

Henry Regnery Company, publisher of the book, Greece: American Dilemma and Opportunity, by L. S. Stavrianos.

The Twentieth Century Foundation, publisher of the book, Report on the Greeks, by Frank Smothers, William Hardy McNeill, and Elizabeth Darbishire McNeill.

United States Army Command and General Staff College, publisher of Military Review articles:

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