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Just a hired gun

Criticizing a soldier's well-meant paean to his craft is risky, but it should be said, nevertheless, that Maj. Robert B. Adolph Jr. is in over his head in defending the role of the U.S. military in the Third World ("Rambos we are not," Op-Ed, Aug. 17.)

Adolph is naive in saying that he is on "the cutting edge of democracy" in U.S. client states. The civilian governments of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, for example, function only at the pleasure of their armies, and extensive human rights violations in these countries are well-documented. Adolph may feel good about a military dentist filling a few teeth in a Honduran backwater, but is he equally sanguine about the prostitution and spread of AIDS that surrounds U.S. bases in Honduras?

Adolph's Low Intensity Conflict is the preferred response to guerilla movements, which naturally arise in poor countries where rich oligarchs exploit labor and land for the benefit of the developed world. The

U.S. enjoys many partnerships with such de-nationalized elites, and Major Adolph's training of indigenous forces serves only to protect those partnerships.

No one expects Adolph to defend or justify himself. Lt. William Calley and the Geneva Convention notwithstanding, the soldier, within very broad limits, signs away personal responsibility for his actions. All he need do is ask "Who?" whenever the president says "Shoot!"

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