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SWORD PAPER

STRATEGIC COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

EL SALVADOR

FEBRUARY 4, 1988

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This Technical Report was prepared under the provisions of Amendment #1 to Task Order 723 and Task Order 823, Low Intensity Conflict Cell Support. These Task Orders are in accordance with the provisions of Contract No. DABT60-86-C-1360. The report was prepared by Dr. Max G. Manwaring and Mr. Courtney Prisk, both of the BDM Management Services Company (BDMMSC), for the Small Wars Operational Requirements Division, J-5, USSOUTHCOM, Republic of Panama. The sources for the assessment were current available unclassified reports and literature, taped interviews conducted by Dr. Manwaring in El Salvador and in-country data collected during visits with personnel from the MILGROUP, brigade level staffs, the El Salvadoran general staff, and the U.S. Embassy. All transcriptions and translations were accomplished by Allison E. Letzer. The views represented in the report are those of the author and do not represent the official views of the Department of Defense or the Department of State.

PREFACE

El Salvador is a crucial player in Central American affairs and in the persistent menace of small wars and low intensity conflict in the Third World. This developing country's eight year struggle against Marxist-Leninist oriented insurgents makes it pivotal in understanding the "LIC" phenomenon and in implementing effective measures against organized terrorists. This, in turn, is crucial to the accomplishment of the national security strategy of the United States.

As a result of their efforts in developing the general lessons learned from the conflict in El Salvador, the BDM support team has done a superb job in providing an objective-oriented and threat-based appraisal of the late 1987 situation. Their effort focuses on the strategic level of concern, and draws on concepts developed from the analyses of 63 other "small wars" fought since the end of World War II. The authors contend the insurgency in El Salvador is far from resolved.

The problems which confront El Salvador pose a continuing challenge to United States security interests in Central America and to the concept of democracy. "North American" difficulties in dealing with the realities of modern conflicts too often stem from a lack of strategic thinking as it pertains to "LIC". Generally, this assessment contributes to the argument that even though actions at the tactical and operational levels may have been successful, a war can be lost at the strategic level. This assessment contributes to the understanding needed to formulate and implement effective military-political efforts in an area of great importance.

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EL SALVADOR ASSESSMENT

This assessment report is a snapshot of the conflict in El Salvador at the end 1987. The methodology used was drawn from the dimensions postulated in the report Model for the Analysis of Insurgencies developed for the Small Wars Operations Research Directorate (SWORD), U.S. Southern Command.

The assessment is objective oriented and threat based. It focuses on the strategic and operational levels of concern. The primary assumption is that a country can execute all actions at the tactical level with general success, but still lose a given conflict -- or only achieves stalemate -- if strategic and operational issues are not adequately addressed.

The purpose of this effort is to provide a doctrinal foundation which will:

1. Balance the total national self-interest approach to United States security with the human rights approach;
2. Require a holistic appreciation of low intensity conflict situations -- thereby facilitating an integrated approach to their solutions; and,
3. Support the development of on-the-ground measures of effectiveness for low intensity conflict efforts.

There is no intention of producing an exhaustive list of things to do and not do. The idea here is to provide general conceptual framework and guidelines for staffs and leaders to peruse and elaborate.

OBJECTIVES

General United States policy objectives for low intensity conflict situations are to:*

1. Take measures to strengthen an ally by systematically employing the full range of political, economic, informational, and military instruments of power;
2. Work to ameliorate the underlying causes of instability and conflict by pursuing foreign assistance, trade, and investment programs that promote economic development and the growth of democratic social and political orders;

* National Security Strategy of the United States, January, 1987.

3. Promote and advance human rights; and,

4. Take steps to discourage Soviet and other state sponsored adventurism.

Accomplishment of these objectives will help assure the survival of the United States as a free and independent nation. Moreover, securing these goals will help to ensure a stable and secure world, free of major threats to United States' interests.

THE THREAT IN EL SALVADOR

Objective.

The primary objective of the Marxist-Lenist oriented Salvadoran insurgents is to bring down the incumbent government and replace it with one which would "see us take power" in order to "make the profound changes needed in our society."* This objective has been stated repeatedly over the past several years.

At the Strategic Level.

The current insurgency in El Salvador began in the early 1970's. Since the beginning of the insurgency the guerrilla strategy, to accomplish the objective of total restructuring of the government, has been altered from time to time in recognition of changing political-military conditions.

The first insurgent strategy was implemented well before 1979. It was organizational in an attempt to:

1. Develop cadres of future leaders. This was done within at least five major but disunified organizations.

2. Politicize and organize the "masses". (See Chart of Insurgent Organizations, pages 4 and 5, for organizational names).

* Joaquín Villalobos, "El Estado Actual de la Guerra y sus Perspectivas," ECA, Estudios Centroamericanos, (#449, marzo 1986), pp. 169-204. Also see: "The Role of Unity in the Revolutionary War: An Interview with Juan Chacón," in Marlene Dixon and Suzanne Jonas (eds), Revolution and Intervention in Central America, (San Francisco, CA: Synthesis Publication, 1983), pp. 40-46.

3. Begin the unification of the various "democratic" elements with the purpose of creating a more effective element in prosecuting the Revolution. This has not been totally successful in the military sense but because of the personal intercession of Fidel Castro in late 1979, the unity of the insurgent groups has improved.

The second insurgent strategy, politically oriented, dating from late 1979, was to attack the incumbent government indirectly through:

1. A political-psychological campaign to discredit the regime and claim the "right" to govern in the name of political, social, and economic justice; and, directly through:

2. A limited but "final" offensive against the armed forces designed to eliminate the only institution which could protect the government. This "final" offensive was by all accounts a major miscalculation by the insurgents. The insurgent leadership buoyed by the guerrilla successes in Nicaragua and armed with more than 600 tons of weapons and ammunition from Cuba, attempted to duplicate the insurrectionist model used in Nicaragua. The "final" offensive although bold, overestimated the degree of popular support and underestimated the ability of the Salvadoran forces.

The failure of the "final" offensive and the political-psychological strategy forced a reassessment by the insurgent leadership. Adopting a more military orientation, the decision was made that "there was only one road to victory: that of armed struggle and the use of the people's methods of combat." This strategy remained in effect until mid-1984. During this time:

1. The FMLN rationalized the failure of the "final" offensive by renaming it as the beginnings of the "general" offensive..

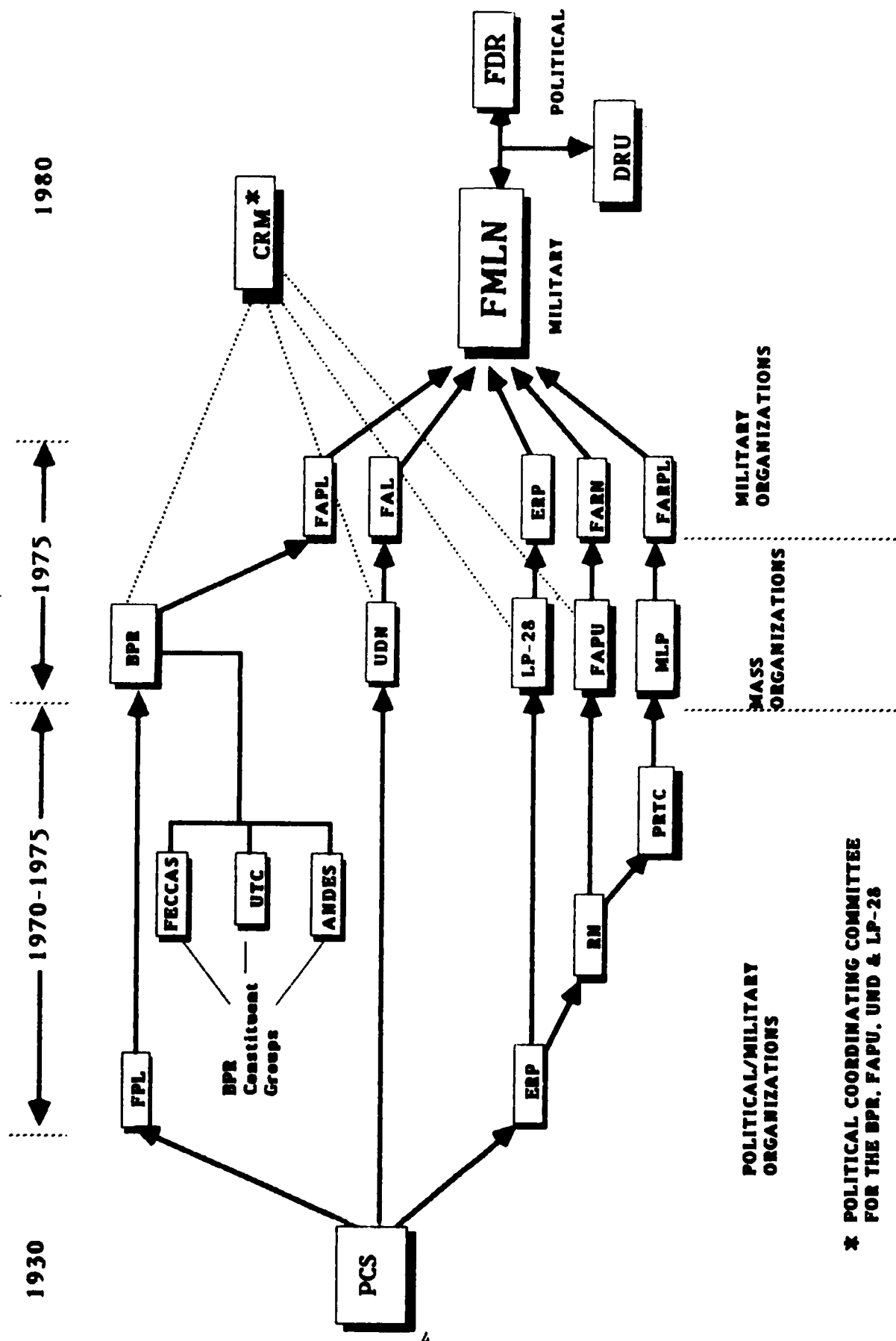
2. Insurgents retired to the countryside and began to mount major, conventional-type attacks on the Salvadoran military.

3. Insurgent organizations began to control large portions of the national territory.

4. FDR/FMLN was recognized by France and Mexico.

However, in this conventional-type war of attrition, the government forces had more manpower, more success in recruiting manpower, and -- with the help of the United States -- more resources than the insurgents. With those advantages and

INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONS



INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONS

PCS -	PARTIDO COMUNISTA DE EL SALVADOR (SALVADORAN COMMUNIST PARTY)	LP-28 -	LIGAS POPULARES - 28 DE FEBRERO (POPULAR LEAGUES - 28TH OF FEBRUARY)
FPL -	FUERZAS POPULARES DE LIBERACION (POPULAR LIBERATION FORCES)	FAPU -	FRENTE DE ACCION POPULAR UNIFICADO (UNITED PEOPLE'S ACTION FRONT)
ERP -	EJERCITO REVOLUCIONARIO DEL PUEBLO (PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY ARMY)	MLP -	MOVIMIENTO DE LIBERACION POPULAR (POPULAR LIBERATION MOVEMENT)
FEDCAS -	FEDERACION CRISTIANA DE CAMPESINOS SALVADORENOS (CHRISTIAN FEDERATION OF SALVADORAN CAMPESINOS)	FAPL -	FUERZAS ARMADAS POPULARES DE LIBERACION (POPULAR ARMED FORCES OF LIBERATION)
UTC -	UNION DE TRABAJADORES DEL CAMPO (UNION OF RURAL WORKERS)	FAL -	FUERZAS ARMADAS DE LIBERACION (ARMED FORCES OF LIBERATION)
ANDES -	ASOCIACION NACIONAL DE EDUCADORES SALVADORENOS (NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SALVADORAN EDUCATORS)	FARPL -	FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIAS POPULARES DE LIBERACION (POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF LIBERATION)
RN -	RESISTENCIA NACIONAL (NATIONAL RESISTENCE)	FARN -	FUERZAS ARMADAS DE RESISTENCIA NACIONAL (ARMED FORCES OF NATIONAL RESISTENCE)
PRTC -	PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO DE TRABAJADORES CENTROAMERICANOS (CENTRAL AMERICAN WORKERS' REVOLUTIONARY PARTY)	CRM -	COORDINACION REVOLUCIONARIA DE MASAS (REVOLUTIONARY COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE MASAS)
BPR -	BLOQUE POPULAR REVOLUCIONARIO (POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC)	FMLN -	FRENTE FARABUNDO MARTI DE LIBERACION NACIONAL (FARABUNDO MARTI NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT)
UDM -	UNION DEMOCRATICA NACIONAL (NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC UNION)	FDR -	FRENTE DEMOCRATICO REVOLUCIONARIO (DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONARY FRONT)
		DRU -	DIRECCION REVOLUCIONARIA UNIFICADA (UNIFIED REVOLUTIONARY DIRECTORATE)

significant economic and political reforms, the regular Salvadoran military establishment began to reverse the tide of the conflict.

By the end of 1984, while maintaining the militarily dominated strategy, it appears that the insurgent leadership had agreed that there had been another shift in the primary centers of gravity. The shift was from the enemy military force to the source of that force's military power and to the external support for the government's economic reform efforts -- the aid provided by the United States.

The strategy has, thus, become one of increased sabotage and terrorism, taking a rather low profile militarily, negotiating, and waiting for the predicted time when the United State will become almost completely disinterested in the Salvadoran conflict. As example at the strategic level the guerrillas have been and can be anticipated to continue to focus on:

1. Attacks on legitimacy by attempting to reduce the sources of government funding -- exports and U.S. aid,

2. War of information -- attacks, activities and actions aimed at discrediting the government internationally; events and spectacles staged and aimed at the media, especially during key U.S. political events (elections, congressional votes, etc.). A particular target of the insurgents has become and will remain in the U.S. Congress over the next two years as the power of one U.S. administration wanes and the next consolidates.

3. Intimidation -- aimed at proving the government cannot protect its people.

4. Fight Fight, Talk Talk -- gain maximum from negotiations without reducing insurgent military capabilities. Given the primarily military strategy orientation and the ascendent power of the FMLN over the FDR, the insurgent can be predicted to continue to use negotiations only for the purposes of appearing legitimate and to gain time. There is no evidence that the FMLN will drop its demand for a parallel military structure and little evidence that they will reintegrate into the democratic process.

At the Operational Level.

The insurgents currently are in the phase of the strategic defensive. Doctrinally, in their terms, defense is only a "short-term" situation in which preparations are made for a new offensive. It appears that the U.S. and Salvadoran governments have concluded that the insurgents have been substantially weakened militarily and politically as a result of the number of

insurgent casualties, and defections coming about as a result of the various reform programs and ESAF military successes. Both governments seem to be concentrating on what can be done, without directly or indirectly using the ESAF military, to strengthen the political situation. The concomitant result, for whatever reasons, is that the Salvadoran armed forces have failed to follow-through, to exploit, or to gain the initiative in the military situation. Thus, the insurgents have been able to:

1. Recuperate, physically.
2. Replenish their logistical resources (the estimate is that 20% has come from internal sources and 80% from external sources).*
3. Continue to develop cadre to train units to refine logistical routes and procedures and to consolidate control over U.N. refugee camps and border sanctuaries.
4. Resume psychological and organizational efforts with the "masses". This was done not only in the countryside, but also in San Salvador itself. Emphasis has been on traditional allies such as labor unions and student organizations. This offensive has stressed:
 - a. The corruption of civil and military functionaries.
 - b. The inability of incumbent government to provide real reform. E.G., they point out that agrarian reform has not been implemented and is a failure; they portray banking reform as a joke benefiting only the government; export reforms are irrelevant; and that elections have been fraudulent.
 - c. The inability of government and military to maintain continuous control of the national territory; and that civil action to repair facilities are successful only when the local populace has insurgent blessings.
 - d. The inability of government and military to protect the people and the economy.

In sum, during this "waiting period", the insurgents have used internal and external aid and sanctuaries to:

1. Prepare for a military offensive at a later date.

* Dr. Guillermo M. Ungo, President FDR, interview in Panama City, RP, 11 December 1987 by Max G. Manwaring

2. Continue the unifying and organizational effort at all levels.

3. Renew the war of information and the war over who are the "rightful" heirs of government.

Tactically.

The insurgents have broken down into small units with political, psychological, and military objectives. Examples of these objectives are:

1. Continue assassinations, kidnappings, and general terrorism on a carefully measured scale, designed to constantly harass and intimidate the population and the government. This is aimed at lessening the regime credibility in terms of ability to govern and protect the citizenry and thus to attack the legitimacy of the government..

2. Continue attacks on transportation and communications nets, and other economic targets in order to:

a. Further reduce government credibility and legitimacy.

b. Continue to sabotage government attempts to do anything which might improve the the internal economy and the economic aspect of government legitimacy.

c. Provide insurgents the freedom of movement and the security necessary to do what they want to do on the local, national, and international levels.

3. Mount spectacular attacks, such as that at El Paraíso on 31 March 1987, which are designed to give the impression that the insurgents still have good and relatively large military formations; and, that the insurgents are still determined to "win" militarily.

Near to Midterm Conclusions.

In the near to midterm, it appears that the insurgents will continue their "Defensive" strategy. In doing so, they will wait out:

1. U.S. elections, out of which they expect less militant policies and less commitment to sustain the government in El Salvador.*

* Dr. Guillermo Ungo, President FDR, interview in Panama City, R. P., 11 December 1987 by Max G. Manwaring.

2. Salvadoran elections, which they expect to be won by the right-wing ARENA party. The insurgents view these people as "lackies" of the oligarchy and believe that they will try to take the country back to the status quo ante. Insurgents will then open a major campaign to present themselves as the only possibly legitimate governors.

3. The results of the Central American "Peace Process" out of which they expect to gain diplomatically what they have not been able to attain militarily or probably could not attain at the polls -- a significant role in the governmental decision-making process. Again the military organizational dominance of the FMLN/FDR is seen as directly impacting the ability to achieve any meaningful compromise ** in negotiations. Predicated on past and current statements by the controlling comandantes, the strategy and tactics of the insurgents will stress using the negotiations to buy time and to gain concessions.

Once any one or all of the above things take place, the insurgents can open a campaign to present themselves as true patriots -- willing and able to save the country. At the same time, they can continue to demoralize the armed forces and their outside supporters.

In the long-term, simply put, the insurgents expect to win and not by operating through the parameters of the democratic process. To quote Joaquín Villalobos, "Our people and their vanguard are determined to win and WE WILL WIN."

** North American readers should note that there is no word in the Spanish Language having the same meaning or connotation as the English word compromise.

THREAT-OBJECTIVE ORIENTATION

The threat in El Salvador is multifaceted. In addition to the "Guerrilla War", there may be as many as five other wars on-going. This reaffirms the idea of a multi-front or multi-dimensional conflict. As a result, "it would not be realistic to reduce several centers of gravity to one."* As a consequence:

1. The war against social, economic, and political injustice is fundamental in this type of small war. Here the center of gravity is the perception of poverty, lack of upward social mobility, and disenfranchisement; thus, the "War for Legitimacy".

2. In any kind of war, success is likely to be directly related to the ability of the parties to the conflict to organize, determine, and articulate appropriate terms and diplomacy for the effective conduct of the struggle. Here the center of gravity would be the legal, cultural, and bureaucratic obstacles to control direction of war. Thus, the "War to Unify the Effort".

3. Another war that is likely to have to be fought simultaneously with other counterinsurgency related wars is that designed to keep an important ally in the struggle. As a result, appropriate political, economic, and military aid provided over the duration of the "prolonged" conflict is vital. Thus, in the "War to Maintain External Support" the traditional center of gravity lies in the "community of interest" of the coalition partners. A "Propaganda War" or "War of Information" becomes an important component in this war.

4. A "War to Reduce the Levels of Outside Aid to the Enemy" is another part of this complex whole. Simply to strike at supply routes is not to strike at a center of gravity. The point here is that the center of gravity in this context of the war is not the assistance itself, or the routes that assistance might take to get to a battlefield. Rather, the center of gravity is the source of whatever support that might be provided.

5. Finally, a major objective of a counterinsurgency effort has got to be the elimination or neutralization of the insurgent leadership and supporting organization. This is the

* Carl von Clausewitz, On War, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 597.

"War Against Subversion". The key here is that as long as the organization and leadership exist to pursue an insurgency, it will continue in one form or another.

Based on the threat and United States objectives for El Salvador, the above dimensions require primary attention and are the factors used in the assessment.

THE PRIMARY DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFLICT

THE GUERRILLA WAR.

Experience indicates that military success is dependent upon highly mobile and well trained, disciplined, equipped, and motivated troops. The traditional norms and existing mobility assets of an insurgent-targeted country's armed forces usually fall short of these requirements. If they were completely adequate, the insurgency would probably be under control and virtually no threat. A foreign power can help change the situation, but ultimately -- in a nationalistic milieu -- the targeted country must strengthen itself. As a consequence, this factor emphasizes building and equipping a relatively small military force structure capable of getting to and beating an illusive and dedicated enemy.

This capability, then, can be defined by three conditional measures:

1. Understanding of the phenomenon. Study of the fundamental nature of conflict has always been recognized as being an important step towards the understanding of conventional war, and it is no less relevant to subversion and insurgency. This is something that concerns all senior civilian and military decision-makers. It involves gaining a knowledge of the nature of insurgency -- with particular reference to the way in which force can be employed to achieve political ends, and the way in which political considerations affect the use of force. It appears that President Duarte, his principal military advisors, and his major commanders understand the phenomenon very well. From a strictly military perspective, there are aspects of the counterinsurgency such as saturation ambushes and constant interdiction of enemy routes which could produce additional contact and disruption of the insurgents. However, while the Salvadoran military could increase these type of efforts, the failure to do so reflects, in part an understanding of the political nature of the counterinsurgency phenomenon. As a result, they have been able to use their forces for political and psychological purposes as well as to achieve military objectives.

2. Training and motivation. This requires a well-disciplined, highly professional, and well-motivated security force capable of rapid and decisive actions designed to achieve political and psychological as well as military objectives. That is to say, training must be far more than technically proficient. It must also establish a belief in the justness of the cause, a confidence in ultimate victory, and a willingness to accept hardship in the pursuit of that end. All this is no easy set of tasks, but it appears that the Salvadoran armed forces have gone a long way toward achieving these goals. Clearly, there is still much to be done, including actions in the area of weak personnel system accountability, training and retention and in the area of the ability to sustain forces in the field. For example changes in recruiting and retainability are required if motivation and training are to improve. Accountability for recruits (for training efficiency as well as counter intelligence reasons) and rewards for successful completion of training and reenlistments are areas where substantial improvement is possible. Nevertheless, credit must be given where it is deserved, the ESAF has made major strides in this area.

3. Mobility. The best informed, the best trained, and the most highly motivated military force cannot be effective if unable to get to its targets. Thus, a counterinsurgency strategy must provide appropriate material support in sufficient amounts. The insurgent military centers of gravity are normally not easily accessible. The military force given the mission to destroy them must have the assets necessary to get virtually anywhere. Virtually every senior officer in the Salvadoran armed forces would argue for more and better mobility assets. The inability to mass forces or to rapidly exploit insurgent vulnerabilities are systemic problems related to the lack of mobility. This remains the weakest link in Salvadoran capability to defeat the insurgents militarily.

The civil-military leadership in El Salvador understand that an insurgency is fought on diverse fronts, and that soldiers and officers have to do more than shoot people in order to win the long-term struggle. Thus, they took the necessary time and resources to change a "Praetorian Guard", accustomed to abusing its authority, into a more professional organization that can engage the enemy force without alienating the general citizenry. This is a significant reform with positive implications. Nevertheless, even though the Salvadoran security forces "can go anywhere they want to in the country", they have not been able to defeat the insurgency. At the same time, the insurgents have not won the war either. Neither side has won; neither side has lost.

UNIFYING THE EFFORT.

The next dimension postulated here concerns the necessary organization that must be established and empowered to effectively pursue the struggle. In essence, this factor comprises the classical principals of unity of command and objective. Putting this concept into effect would help ensure that all efforts are concentrated on the ultimate goal -- victory.

In this case, there are two obvious measures:

1. Organization at the highest level. War of any kind demands an organization at the highest level that can organize, coordinate, and set the necessary political-military objectives for the struggle. Without such an organization, authority is fragmented and there is no unity of effort to resolve the myriad problems endemic to violent conflict. In El Salvador this organization resides in the office of the Presidency. It also requires a responsible and responsive structure throughout the government down to the level of the district and towns. While the national capability to unify the efforts exists, there is evidence that the subordinate organizations, particularly outside of the military, are not responsive to the government nor responsible enough to ensure continued unity of effort. Even within the armed forces, the apparent willingness of the national command to allow the Air Force and some of the Brigade and DM commanders to operate somewhat autonomously fragments the unity of effort. This component has improved significantly over the course of the conflict, but is still an area which requires substantial improvement.

2. Objectives. As fundamental as unity of command might be, the ultimate objective is equally important. Success in war is directly related to the ability to determine and articulate appropriate objectives for the conduct of the conflict. The Salvadoran government has generated a national plan (Unidos para Reconstruir) which is designed to combine political, economic, social, and military objectives for the counterinsurgency. There is growing evidence that supports the military argument that they are doing more than their part in the effort, but that the civilian side has not taken its responsibilities seriously. There is evidence that some government controlled civilian organizations are openly undermining the government effort.

The Salvadoran government appears to have organized to the degree necessary for survival and perhaps even for moderate success, but not to the extent required to win. The President and the Ministry of Defense cannot do everything. There is no civil-military organization at sufficiently high level with the authority necessary to coordinate and effect a winning set of strategic military-political objectives.

THE WAR FOR LEGITIMACY.

An essential error of many governments fighting insurgencies is the failure to realize that the central goal of the insurgent is to destroy its moral basis to govern. This type of challenge is rooted in the concept that the incumbent governmental system is not doing what is right for the people, and that the insurgents' political philosophy and leadership will.

There are several conditional measures of a regime's ability to sustain itself in the face of an insurgent challenge to its legitimacy. In El Salvador, it appears that "moral legitimacy" is best explained by three indicators.

1. Free and fair elections. The fostering of free and fair elections within a society unfamiliar with the ideas of democracy, and under the stress of attempting to fight an ongoing insurgency, is not easy. But, through participation in the political process, it is perceived that the individual can influence the redress of inequities and grievances. This is extremely important. In El Salvador, the successful implementation of elections in 1982, 1984, and 1985 were heralded as significant historical events, and the elements that have ensured the continued viability of the incumbent government. While at the present time this measure of legitimacy is positive, there are significant concerns about the upcoming elections. The ability of the El Salvadoran government to sustain and to maintain the sense of hope through participation will be tested over the next two years.

2. Government ability to extract resources from the entire society. The legitimacy of a regime is often measured by its ability to extract revenues, gain voluntary services, and to fill the ranks of its armed forces from all sectors of society. The inability to accomplish these things without resorting to coercion is considered a sign that the people do not support the government. In this context the government of El Salvador has to face obstacles from both the extreme left and right. Every reform has met tremendous resistance. Of interesting note, the governments' ability to solicit outside support to overcome these problems, is somehow transferred into a positive sign of legitimacy. The Salvadoran government has managed to do this to an acceptable extent over the past several years. It is the potential for governmental success in this area which has made it the focus of the insurgent attempts to attack external funding and to increase the levels of intimidating violence.

As a government moves away from coercion and attempts to govern through increased internal and external cooperation, the measure of legitimacy becomes how well the government is able to provide basic services and protection for its people. Thus, an

insurgent enemy which deliberately attacks governmental competence by destroying power lines, transportation means, and other basic services, strikes at a very strategic point. Consensus is that the Salvadoran government is hard pressed in this regard and is only holding its own. The new civilian directed Municipalities in Action (Municipios en Accion) plan is now being put forth as the plan to supplant the Unidos Para Reconstruir. It will succeed only if the civil-military relationships improve and the administration of the plan is closely controlled and implemented without internal government opposition or obstacles. This will be a test for the military and new Salvadoran administration. In this context, time and continued U.S. military and economic support is critical.

3. Perceived level of government corruption. It is necessary that the extraction of resources from a society and providing public services not be perceived as either arbitrary or contrary to the public good. What the culture considers fair is the critical factor here. The insurgents have targeted the Salvadoran government -- particularly departmental level and national level civilian functionaries -- as NOT providing services in accordance with the general public good. Consensus is that while President Duarte is personally unsullied, his administration is not and there remains a concern that political functionaries do not have a sense of working for a government or a country, but only to better themselves. Again, the insurgents are striking at a very vulnerable center of gravity. Clearly part of the problem is rooted in attempting to create a new structure and ethic by using the old guard. The ability of the Salvadoran government to continue to clean-house will be one of the severest tests over the next five years.

In sum, the thrust of the insurgent's revolutionary program has centered around the redress of real as well as perceived grievances and deprivations. Government counterinsurgency planners understood this, and did not respond only to enemy military forces. They centered significant efforts around basic land, banking, and export reforms -- and the establishment of the foundations of participatory democracy. Two important areas remain essentially unaddressed -- the level of government corruption, and the ability to protect people and improve services. The willingness of the government now, and especially after the next elections, to aggressively move to hold all levels of government accountable to improve services and to prosecute corruption will be critical. Failure to do so, will make legitimacy once again the Achilles heel of the government. The insurgent strategy for the future is based on the belief that the government will be unable to decisively and effectively improve services to and protection of the people, or to bring the corruption under control.*

* Dr. Guillermo Ungo, President FDR, interview in Panama City, R. P., December 11, 1987 by Max G. Manwaring.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

All support to a targeted government must be consistent to be really effective. Experience clearly indicates that when military, economic, or political aid is withdrawn by an outside power at any time during a conflict, or when any of these types of support are provided inconsistently, the possibilities for success are minimal. Conversely, when aid is provided consistently, over the long-term, chances for success in a counterinsurgency situation are considerably enhanced.

The principal components of this dimension of insurgency war would include:

1. Consistency. Consistency of effort is clearly important in any kind of campaign. El Salvador has enjoyed relatively large amounts of U.S. military, economic, and political support over the course of the war. The Carter administration initiated aid against the insurgency and the Reagan administration has continued and increased that help. Yet, senior civilian and military officials -- to a man -- state that while U.S. aid has been essential to Salvadoran survival, it has been inconsistent. There have been times "when we did not know when the next shipment of ammunition would be arriving" is but one example of the problem. As a result, long-term planning has been ineffective if not impossible. In this context, less money provided consistently in a planned manner would have provided more than has been achieved in El Salvador. The inability to plan for and the inconsistency in receipt of U.S. support makes this a negative component.

2. Length and amount of commitment. If a counterinsurgency is to be successful, the campaign must be based on a determination to beat a subversive movement which is clearly committed to a long-term struggle to take control of a country. These facts must be made clear. Moreover, the country, such as the United States, providing counterinsurgency aid must make plain that it is committed for the duration, and, given the incumbent government continues to demonstrate and strive to establish or maintain systems compatible with the providers values and interests, that it will withdraw its support only when the incumbent government is strong enough to ensure ultimate success. To do otherwise simply invites defeat. El Salvador is eight years into what could prove to be a twelve to fifteen year conflict. Even should peace be achieved earlier, continued significant U.S. assistance will be required to assure consolidation of self-sustaining democracy and economic growth. Despite the current firm commitment, the historical wavering of commitment and the possibility of the

lessening of future U.S. support, with a new U.S. Administration, makes this component neutral as an indicator of success.

3. Military aid. External military force should not be applied ad hoc in response to either political or military failure, or in an attempt to "try something that might work." If military force must be inserted into a nationalistic milieu, it should be done overwhelmingly at the outset and withdrawn as soon as possible. Even so, experience indicates that the best possible use of "foreign" military personnel in a Third World conflict is one variation or another on the "train the trainer" role. In these terms, the U.S. effort in El Salvador has been exemplary.

Seven years of considerable effort and the investment of large amounts of U.S. resources -- though still small in comparison to current outlays in the Middle East or previous expenditures in Southeast Asia -- have thus far precluded an insurgent takeover in El Salvador. But, it has only been enough to prevent failure -- not enough to resolve the economic, social, and military problems that are the sources of instability and conflict.

An important element in achieving the results desired in external support to an embattled government is the "War of Information" or the "Propaganda War." President Duarte admits that: "Overall, we were being crushed under the avalanche of international press coverage. We had been totally unprepared for it. If there had been some structure to handle the press, some capacity to investigate charges and demonstrate what was true or false, we might have done better. Mixed together were lies and truths, omissions and exaggerations. The government became isolated."* In making this statement, President Duarte reaffirms the need for a coordination organization that can deal with the insurgency problem, and the importance of the informational aspects of insurgency war. Over the past three years, the Salvadoran government has been able to develop an organization with some capability to deal with the international press. However, the democratic assumption of the neutrality of the press proves to be one of the major stumbling blocks in this war. The international propaganda war, waged by the FMLN/FDR, is anything but neutral. Evidence shows that events are staged for the specific purpose of producing proof that the situation is wrong or that the government is out of control. The target of the insurgent media events is the U.S. Congress and polity. For the embattled government, the same tactics or strategy, to specifically target Congress and stage events to attempt to sway

* José Napoleón Duarte, Duarte: My Story, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons), 1986. (President of El Salvador, 1984 to Present.

support, would be unacceptable. As progress during the conflict indicates, the Salvadoran government has had some success, under hostile and highly visible conditions, to prove its case through long term programs and reforms. However, these activities are hardly as news worthy as the insurgent spectacles. Even with the improved organization and capabilities, as President Duarte's comments implies, the difficulties in successfully waging the war of information is one of the fundamental reasons why U.S. support has been inconsistent and at times inadequate.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR THE INSURGENCY.

Outside aid is as important to an insurgent organization as it is to a targeted government. The objective for the government here is to isolate the guerrillas politically, psychologically, and militarily from their primary sources of support -- whoever and wherever they may be. This type of conflict is not necessarily localized within the borders of a threatened country. In any case, the center of gravity is the HUB of all power and movement on which everything depends -- not specific terrain; not supply routes; not individual convoys. If it becomes known that a government and its primary ally are willing to settle for at most the tactical option along and within legal frontiers, the enemy has nothing to lose strategically and everything to gain by his efforts.

This factor is explained and measured to a large extent by the following two variables:

1. The need to isolate insurgents from their sources of support. Once an insurgent organization is firmly established within a society, it is not enough for a government to foster the military capability to "close with and destroy the enemy;" it is not enough to work for reform and to reinforce legitimacy; it is not enough to organize for the conflict; and, it is not enough to attain large quantities of outside aid. The insurgents must be isolated from their sources of physical and psychological strength. This is not the case in El Salvador, where the insurgents are almost completely free to move about the country, and to and from neighboring countries. At the same time, either through intimidation or cooperation, they have been able to extract money, food or other resources from the general population with relative ease. There are some regions of the country, where individual commanders have registered notable success in isolating the guerrillas and interdicting supplies. These same areas also appear to have placed a higher priority in developing, training, and supporting effective civil defense units. But aside from various ad hoc attempts to interdict the flow of supplies to the insurgents, the issue has not been seriously addressed in the overall Salvadoran conflict.

2. The strategic importance of sanctuaries. In this case, suffice it to say that an insurgent organization can exist as long as it has access to rest, recuperation, resupply, etc. The insurgent leader, Joaquín Villalobos is succinct: "To say that the zone bordering Honduras (the 'bolsones') has no strategic importance is absurd."* Again, this problem has never been seriously addressed in the Salvadoran counterinsurgency effort. The safe havens, the insurgents find in Nicaragua, the United Nations refugee camps and the bolsones -- for the leadership, propaganda, training and resupply -- has provided a sustainment base which, for the Salvadoran conflict, is analogous to the importance of Laos and the Ho Chi Mihn trail to the sustainment of the insurgency and the eventual outcome in Vietnam. Soviet/Cuban/Nicaraguan/Surrogate adventurism in El Salvador especially in support of the sanctuaries has not been effectively discouraged.

To ignore this aspect of revolutionary war as too difficult and too dangerous in its internal and external political-military ramifications is simply to deny the principal of the strategic offensive. Moreover, Clausewitz reminds us that if your opponent is prepared to extend himself to the utmost to achieve his objectives, you have no choice but to try to do the same. Neither the United States nor the Salvadoran governments have come to grips with the external sources of insurgent support which provide the physical strength and psychological balance to conduct a "prolonged people's war."

THE WAR AGAINST SUBVERSION.

It must be remembered that it is men and women who lead, plan, execute, and support any given conflict. As a consequence, a major concern must be individuals. Leadership and public opinion are particularly important. They are of even greater importance in "revolutionary war." If appropriate intelligence apparatus and psychological operations/public diplomacy are not being used to neutralize subversives and their internal and external sanctuaries, logic and experience show that the conflict will continue indefinitely. Thus, leadership is a major center of gravity that requires greater consideration and the highest priority in the present and in future counterinsurgency efforts.

* Joaquín Villalobos, "El Estado Actual de la Guerra y sus Perspectivas," ECA, Estudios Centroamericanos, (#449, marzo 1986), pp. 105.

90 89 88

EL SALVADOR MAP OF BOLSONES

0 10 20 30 Kilometers
0 10 20 30 Miles

GUATEMALA

HONDURAS

NICARAGUA

CHALATENANGO

SANTA ANA

CABAÑAS

CUSCATLAN

SAN SALVADOR

SONSONATE

SAN VICENTE

LA LIBERTAD

USulután

MORAZAN

SAN MIGUEL

LA UNION

LA PAZ

El Salvador

International boundary

Department boundary

National capital

Department capital

Bolsones

The principal components of this dimension of insurgency war are:

1. The necessary intelligence organization and effort. If subversion is the main threat in an insurgency, it follows that intelligence is of primary importance. It must be the aim of the government to develop the fullest details of the entire revolutionary movement with a view to neutralizing it. This capability involves active support of intelligence operations as a dominant element of both strategy and tactics. It requires the establishment of national and tactical user level intelligence capabilities that include the collection, fusion, and analysis of all sources of information. It requires national control over a single network which is focused on production and rapid dissemination of intelligence. Furthermore, it demands an effective interrogation capability at the operational level to take full advantage of human intelligence sources. The capabilities outlined above are not expensive in dollar terms. But, in the Salvadoran context, they require rethinking of priorities; allocating of trained collection and interrogation personnel; increased intelligence communication resources down to the "user" or collector (company) level; more priority and reliance on human intelligence rather than technological hardware below District and Brigade level, and real-time intelligence fusion, dissemination and exploitation capabilities at the Brigade/Battalion level. In building the intelligence capability serious attention is also required to developing counterintelligence measures. Operations security is lacking in El Salvador; some experienced intelligence analysts believe that almost all of the government military operations are compromised before they begin.

2. The necessary psychological/public diplomacy organization and effort. A major by-product of developing the fullest details of the insurgent organization is an understanding of strengths and weaknesses. Clearly, this information can be exploited in an effort to discredit, neutralize, and eventually eliminate the subversive movement. This can be done on the battlefield, throughout the country, and internationally. As a result, it requires the establishment of international, national, regional, and tactical capabilities that include utilization of all elements of the media. Moreover, it requires a first-rate public relations effort at all levels. Again, in the Salvadoran context, these actions require the rethinking and reallocation of priorities and resources. While some significant progress has been made in increasing the PSYOP and public diplomacy capabilities, there is not a coordinated program and plan to wage this aspect of the war. Conversely, there is ample evidence that the insurgents have developed a strong and increasingly successful program. In El Salvador, this component of the war against subversion is understood in the rhetorical sense. But that rhetorical

understanding has not been translated into an effective operational program. Even though there has been an increased effort to develop a more coordinated civil-military operations program -- including civil defense, civic action, troop information and national plans -- operationally this component has not been adequately pursued and is one of the more significant failures.

3. Neutralize the Insurgent Leadership. The primary objective of a counterinsurgency effort has got to be the neutralization or elimination of the insurgent leadership and supporting organization. Successfully attacking -- physically or psychologically -- the leadership results in elimination of centralized direction and control, fragmentation of the organizational infrastructure, and the ultimate destruction of the entire organization. This is the one way that the fundamental insurgent equation can be altered. The key point is that as long as the leadership exists to pursue an insurgency, it will continue in one form or another. In the final analysis of a counterinsurgency campaign, the proper measures of success are those that relate to disruption or threat to insurgent organization. In El Salvador, the insurgent leadership and organization remains relatively unchallenged. There is, as example, no nationwide campaign to "bring in" Villalobos. It is difficult to even find pictures of him. Obviously leadership will be replaced, but if Villalobos was eliminated or neutralized, he, as an individual which represents sustainment and longevity of effort, could not be replaced. This component of the counter subversion dimension cannot be classified as anything but a failure. If the Salvadoran government is going to win the war, the "vanguard of the proletariat" must become the next primary center of gravity.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The conflict in El Salvador has reached a stalemate. The summary graphic, page 24, indicates the results of the assessment. In this situation, in which neither side can win, time favors the insurgents. But the government of El Salvador, with the support of the United States, can regain the initiative. To do so, there must be a continual cognizance of the multi centers of gravity.

1. Militarily, the government must continue to sustain the progress achieved to date and strive to increase indigenous and rapid reaction mobility capabilities.

2. Legitimacy is still fragile. While the government has been extremely successful in enhancing and protecting this core center-of-gravity, the test of strength will be the next set of election. The newborn democratic system will not survive a sliding back to the practices of the pre-1979 coup. If the

democratic reforms do not go forward, but instead stay stagnant or start to slide backwards, this dimension will become once again the Achilles' heel of the conflict.

3. Unity of effort is lacking in the sense of total government commitment. The El Salvadoran government must develop a national wide program which includes responsive and responsible subordinate elements of all levels. This is particularly true for the civilian ministries. This is a center-of-gravity which can assist in regaining the initiative.

4. External support for the Salvadoran government is inconsistent but, overall, successful. There are numerous statutory road blocks to establishing a long range commitment on the part of the United States. Support of allied democratic governments should be first a definitive policy statement, which once adopted must be supported by specific congressional actions. This will require changes in funding authority and other actions, and is an absolute requirement if the U.S. is to ever become a predictable ally.

5. Limiting external support for the insurgents has not been effectively pursued. Continued failure in this aspect of the overall conflict will allow the war to continue indefinitely. United States actions to impede Nicaragua's and the Soviet block's support of the Salvadoran insurgents has been only partially effective. Until the United States and El Salvador seriously engage this problem continued failure in this dimension can be predicted.

6. The war against subversion is considered a failure. The increases in the ability to gather sophisticated intelligence have been significant over the past four years. The ability to process or fuse that intelligence in a time frame which allows for timely exploitation has not similarly increased. Emphasis on gathering, processing and fusion of HUMINT intelligence needs to be provided at the battalion and brigade levels, to effectively allow this component to be used as a true force multiplier. In the components of Public Diplomacy and Insurgent Leadership, the Salvadoran government has not seriously addressed the means of gaining the initiative. It is in this dimension that the El Salvadoran government has the best opportunity to bring the overall conflict out of stalemate.

SUMMARY
EL SALVADOR COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

DIMENSIONS OF INSURGENT WAR	PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS	SUBJECTIVE ESTIMATE OF PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS			SUBJECTIVE ESTIMATE OF DIMENSION	
		SUCCESS	NEUTRAL	FAILURE	SUCCESS	FAILURE
MILITARY	UNDERSTANDING	X				
	TRAINING AND MOTIVATION	X			X	
	MOBILITY		0			
LEGITIMACY	ELECTIONS	X				
	RESOURCES		0		X	
	CORRUPTION			X		
UNITY OF EFFORT	ORGANIZATION		0			X
	OBJECTIVES			X		
EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT	CONSISTENCY			X		
	COMMITMENT		0		X	
	MILITARY AID	X				
LIMITING EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR INSURGENTS	ISOLATION			X		X
	SANCTUARIES			X		
COUNTER SUBVERSION	INTELLIGENCE		0			
	PUBLIC DIPLOMACY			X		
	INSURGENT LEADERSHIP			X		X
OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE WAR					STALEMATE	0

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE VARIOUS COMPONENTS OF THE WAR

1. The "Guerrilla War."

a. El Salvador

(1) Continue to develop and include in training programs the justness of the democratic cause, the obligations of authority, and the concepts of the role of the military in protection of the people and the governmental system.

(2) Work to increase mobility from indigenous as well as from external sources. At the same time, begin to develop enhanced means to maintain those assets once operational.

b. United States

(1) Take immediate steps to learn the lessons of the Salvadoran conflict, and make this experience and knowledge available to individual officers and NCOs in the U.S. armed forces who have not had experience in "Low Intensity Conflict." PEP-type programs and appropriate follow-on assignments for MILGP personnel would be important first steps in that direction.

(2) Take immediate steps to exploit the Salvadoran experience for the benefit of U.S. doctrine and training. Increase priority and the resource allocations supporting training, and combat and material development for this type of conflict. Research projects through the war colleges, and the various branch and service schools could provide and lead to improved joint and individual service "LIC" doctrine.

(3) Support Salvadoran attempts to acquire more mobility through military assistance and other programs designed to strengthen allies.

2. The "War for Legitimacy."

a. El Salvador

(1) Continue to encourage, expand and protect free participation of the people in the political process. Provide a program for national support, protection and encouragement of local elections and activities.

(2) Increase and improve Civil Defense organizations throughout the country in order to create a true

force multiplier more capable of protecting individuals and infrastructure. Training and leadership assets -- more than money -- are required in this effort.

(3) Work to reduce corruption in the civil and military bureaucracies. Education, professionalization, discipline, salary increases, and an inculcation of the concept of the public trust would be beginning points in dealing with this problem.

b. United States

(1) Continue to encourage and support the democratic process in El Salvador at all levels.

(2) Support the development of viable Civil Defense units throughout El Salvador through appropriate civil-military programs.

(3) Provide resources to assist in the implementation of the stalled Agrarian Reform program and encourage necessary additional reforms through the same means used to instill the importance of "Human Rights."

(4) Create a "Support Net for Democracy" as proposed by General Fred F. Woerner. This may require a modified "Marshall Plan" concept, which includes, as examples, long term economic development programming, and funding exceptions to import laws, training and education of administrators and technicians.

3. The "War to Unify the Effort".

a. El Salvador

(1) Develop an organization at the highest civil-military level with the necessary authority to coordinate and pursue the counterinsurgency campaign.

(2) Work to implement civil as well as military aspects of the National Plan at all levels.

b. United States

(1) Encourage the establishment of a National Security body with adequate authority to deal with the dynamic nature of insurgency. This applies on two levels: in El Salvador, and the United States.

(2) Develop a modified "Marshall Plan" to assist the implementation of the Salvadoran National Plan using the full range of programs and instruments available. This will

require new and more complete training programs for nonmilitary administrators and technicians and new funding legislation. This could be accomplished within the framework of the Kissinger Report.

4. The "War to Maintain External Support".

a. El Salvador

(1) Continue to encourage consistency and commitment from the U.S. and other democracies in the world. The creation of a permanent and quality Public Relations effort in the United States and in Western Europe would be a beginning step.

(2) Continue to take advantage of U.S. military aid and programs that enhance the professionalization, training, and general effectiveness of the Salvadoran armed forces and National Security forces.

(3) Solicit training and professional development exchange programs in other democracies.

b. United States

(1) Develop a coherent, rational, timely, and systematic process designed specifically to strengthen an ally threatened by insurgency war.

(2) Attack the root causes of instability and conflict, rather than awaiting a crisis, by pursuing foreign assistance, trade, and investment programs that promote economic development and growth of democratic social and political institutions.

(3) Provide financial aid or grants to Salvadoran students in professional civil and military schools in the U.S. and other democracies to foster development and training of civilian civil service administrators..

(4) Develop specific funding capabilities which can be used in those instances where the U.S. interests dictate support for government facing an insurgency. This will provide the mechanism for long term commitment and consistency of support.

5. The "War to Reduce Levels of Outside Aid to the Enemy."

a. El Salvador

(1) Population controls -- within the democratic context -- would be the first place to begin the isolation of the insurgents. Internally this can be assisted by increased

incentives for and use of civil defense units. Then, serious efforts to control international borders, waterways, and refugee movements would be a next step.

(2) Bolsones, El Salvador should bury national bias, pride or rhetoric and resolve the border question with Honduras. Taking a strategic view, even if El Salvador must accept perceived unfavorable terms in the resolution of the borders, the net gain in resolving that issue with concomitant ability to move in and control the border on both sides will greatly reduce the negative impact of the sanctuaries and significantly increase the chances to regain the initiative and to successfully terminate the war.

(3) Political-Diplomatic efforts at the international level are required to begin the process of reducing outside aid to the insurgents. By itself, El Salvador has very little, if any, international clout. This will have to be accomplished with the strong support from as many other democracies as possible.

b. United States

(1) Actively support Salvadoran initiatives in the process of reducing outside aid to insurgents. Further, provide public relations expertise through various programs designed to aid an embattled ally.

(2) Take unilateral steps to discourage Soviet/surrogate and other state sponsored adventurism in El Salvador.

(3) Take combined or unilateral actions to neutralize the use of United Nations Refugee Camps as sanctuaries for the FMLN.

(4) Actively encourage and assist both parties in resolving the Honduran-Salvadoran border issues which currently allows the Bolsones to be effective sanctuaries for the insurgents.

4. The "War Against Subversion."

a. El Salvador

(1) Take steps to allocate resources for intelligence organizations and operations down to the "user" levels (battalion and brigade).

(2) Place immediate emphasis on procedures and methods to exploit the great amount of human intelligence that is not yet being used.

(3) Develop PSYOP and intelligence interrogation experts and intelligence analysts at all levels. Develop better procedures for integrating the PSYOP plans into all aspects of the national plans.

(4) Take steps to allocate resources for psychological operations and public diplomacy at all levels -- to include the international.

(5) Exploit public relations expertise in the private sector to improve image at all levels.

(6) Specifically target insurgent leadership and organizational structure for intelligence, psychological, and military operations.

b. United States

(1) Support Salvadoran initiatives with training and other resources using the full range of political, economic, informational, and military instruments.

(2) Improve intelligence exchange arrangements with all the countries in the Caribbean Basin.

(3) Actively support public diplomacy and informational activities internationally, as part of the support package for democracy and as part of the modified "Marshall Plan" for El Salvador and Central America.