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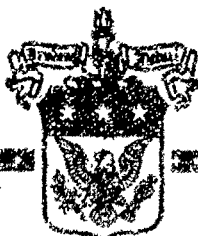
THE EL SALVADORAN CONFLICT: A PROGRESS REPORT

BY

COLONEL ANTHONY GIUSTI

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

THE EL SALVADORAN CONFLICT: A PROGRESS REPORT

An Individual Study Project
Intended for Publication

by

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
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The El Salvadoran Conflict: A Progress Report

"Throughout history, military organizations have attempted to learn from experience. For the most part, however, they have tended to extract from their experiences as well as the experiences of others only what supported their preconceived notions." 1.

INTRODUCTION

Presently, the American involvement in El Salvador cannot be termed a success or failure. There have been both positive gains and setbacks. Some policies have been successful and others not. However, given that the United States will continue on occasion to decide to be involved in these types of wars, the El Salvadoran conflict does provide us with a real opportunity to analyze both the successes and failures of our policies in dealing with the counterinsurgency problem. Hopefully, this analysis will prevent us from simply "supporting our preconceived notions". For, as the eminent historian Dr. Russell F. Weigley recently stated at a lecture at the United States Army War College, "We have never really done well in limited wars". 2.

The intent of this paper is to define some of the more prominent issues that fostered the insurgency. It will also explain the factions involved, outline government actions and relate the results to date with a view toward examining the progress made against the insurgents since the United States began helping the government of El Salvador. This

analysis is written by a military man with a military viewpoint. However, its intent is to examine the overall American involvement and the interagency coordination within the executive branch so necessary to achieve success.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND/ISSUES

To begin our examination, it is helpful to study the political issues involved by reviewing some of the history of El Salvador. The coffee - planting oligarchy gained control of El Salvador during the period 1880-1912. They did this by essentially abolishing the Indians' communal lands to establish their own vast plantations. They kept wages low, expanded their coffee trade, enacted vagrancy laws and used the military as an enforcer to keep the campesinos in line thus furthering their own interests. Politics were mixed and ranged from repressive to conciliatory depending on who was in office. At one point, a system was even worked out to enable the president to select his successor. The election that followed had all the appearances of a democratic election but was really carefully controlled by the oligarchy.

The National Guard was established in 1912 to keep the poor in line. The few rich controlled the many poor by direct application of military power. The economic plight of the poor worsened each year. As a result, many incidents occurred that were put down with violence.

In 1932 a key incident took place. It was a rebellion known as the "Matanza" or Massacre. Although the

death toll was and continues to be exaggerated, the event was key to the political formation of modern El Salvador.³ During the early part of the century, perhaps inspired by the Mexican Revolution, seasonal coffee workers and intellectuals, some of which were Communist led, begin to join together and demand their rights. Various labor organizations and the political left were also beginning to move closer together in El Salvador. In 1931, against this background a civilian from the upper class, Don Arturo Araujo, was elected President in what was touted as a fair democratic election. His election was ratified by the legislature and the electorate was initially pleased because it appeared that democracy had finally replaced the constant military coups that for years had determined governments in the country.

The good feeling did not last for long, however. All sides were soon dissatisfied by the new government. The political right did not receive its share of the spoils. The left, even after exerting great pressure, did not receive the reforms it sought. Further, the impact of the Great Depression had made the poor economic situation in El Salvador even worse. Coffee prices fell which led to further wage cuts for the workers bringing even more misery to the poor. General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez, the vice president, overthrew President Araujo and became President. While all sides initially lauded the coup, the new government did not bring any relief to the country.⁴

Instead it supported the oligarchy and tightened the repressive political and economic measures of the right. Predictably, violence broke out. The Matanza was not a national event. It took place only in the Western coffee growing area of the country but, it has had a lasting effect that far outweighed the loss of life and damage it caused.

Careful research indicates that only 100 military and civilians were killed by the Communist led rebels during the actual revolt.⁵ In fact, it was an event that was used by both sides for their own purposes. Most of the 10,000 who lost their lives were killed by the government after the actual rebellion during the repression that followed.

Many right leaning Salvadorans to this day firmly believe that the majority were killed by the Communist forces. There are still widespread stories of rape, looting and murder. These stories provide rationale for the use of excess force to prevent any such thing from happening again. Further, they exacerbate the racial problems that previously existed. In fact, the government tried and executed numerous leaders, including Agustin Farabundo Marti. They also executed without trial thousands of Indians, some guilty and some not guilty.

For their own political reasons, the Communists insist that 30,000 died. The myth lives on! The Matanza (Massacre) provides strong rationale for the use of harsh methods by the government to prevent future events of a similar nature.

Today's rebels, the FMLN, took Farabundo Marti's name. Probably the most significant results of the Matanza, however, were the bonding of the oligarchy and the military and the strong polarization of the right and the left.

From the time of the takeover by General Martinez until 1979, the military provided the president and many of the other governmental positions while the oligarchy provided the economic ministers to watch over the business affairs of the country. Thus, the coffee, sugar, cotton and manufacturing business elites remained in control of the economy. They worked with the military to control the country in a partnership that provided them with the best of everything. However, it kept the great majority of the country poor. The political system of the country was designed to vastly favor the "haves" over the "have nots". Out of this one sided political system grew a substantial polarization between the economically strong military and oligarchy on the right and the disenfranchised liberal poor demanding reforms on the left.

While this rather brief explanation does not take into account the various divisions among the oligarchy and the poor within their own camps, it does demonstrate the gulf between the two views. Through the years, the Communists were able to make ample use of these differences for their own purposes. The differences were significant politically, socially and economically and involved the military and the whole of Salvadoran society.

EL SALVADORAN SOCIAL REALITIES

Before continuing with an explanation of the political background involved in the conflict in El Salvador, let us consider for a moment some of the other factors: social, economic and military that have helped to shape it. One factor worthy of note is the consistent violence that underlies the political scene. Whether it be the right wing death squad or a rebel assassination, it is a constant in El Salvador's political life. Generally, many social factors contribute to what is often called the psychology of violence in El Salvador. The use of personal weapons, racism, machismo, marianismo, lack of family cohesion, lack of a reliable judicial system and chronic problems in health and education all add to an explosive situation.

Family vendettas and personal grudges settled by violence are common. Most people carry a weapon of some kind whether it be a machete in the case of a poor campesino or a handgun in the case of a wealthy member of the elite. It has been said that while Salvadorans have the reputation for being the most productive people in Central America, they also have the reputation for being the most violent.⁶ While a number of the numerous murders committed each year are politically motivated, many are nothing more than reflections of social problems already out of control - robbery, family arguments, greed and opportunism brought out by extreme poverty.

Racism runs deep in El Salvador. It has historical

roots that run back to the 16th century. Many of the poor are the same Indians and Mestizos (mixed bloods) who lost their lands to the predominately white coffee growers mentioned earlier. The descendants of these Indians were the bulk of the rebels led by the Communists during the Matanza. Racial suspicion is a destabilizing factor between the poor Indians and the rich upper echelons of Salvadoran society. Many of the wealthy consider the Indians as lazy individuals who do nothing for themselves or Salvadoran society and therefore do not deserve to share in its bounty. The poor can see the great gulf between themselves and the rich and want their needs met.

Machismo has an adverse effect on almost every Salvadoran male no matter what his class. It is a legacy of Spanish colonial times that values individualism and also an exaggerated sense of honor that requires a man to be much more than he is. It influences every aspect of his life. He is expected to be brave to a fault, outgoing, free with his money, and above all sexually active. Disputes will usually be settled with violence because of his misdirected sense of honor. Common law marriage is frequent. When the job runs out or he gets bored, he moves on to a new location where he sets up a new arrangement with a new wife or "live in". He is generally not held responsible for the family. Machismo does not levy a responsibility for children either. While not all families in El Salvador behave like this, there are enough to make it a significant problem. It does not

take much imagination to realize what this does to the fabric of the family. As marriages break up, child support is not enforced by the courts thus creating more poverty. This phenomena is not restricted to the poor. It extends to the middle and upper classes as well. It eats at the very core of the country.

A problem very much akin to machismo is marianismo. This phenomena is named for the Blessed Virgin Mary. In essence, it places all women on a false pedestal. It holds that all women are virtuous and perfect mother figures that love unconditionally. They can, therefore, tolerate all kinds of immature and even childlike actions performed by men in the name of their manhood. As Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith state in their article, "The Transformation of Modern Latin America, 1880's - 1980's",

"The typical female image thus becomes one of saintliness and sadness, often identified with the rituals of mourning: a wistful figure, clad in black and draped with mantilla, kneeling before the altar and praying for the redemption of the sinful males within her sheltered world".7.

Neither of these extremes is real of course but both have had an effect in El Salvador. Further, together they have worked to reenforce each other and confuse the relationships between men and women. Women have by custom been confined to the family sphere. Within it, they have often been very powerful. Poor women have often been heads of the household and have had to make all of the decisions for the family because there was no man present. Upper class women have often reigned as powerful matriarchs over all

matters internal to the family.

Protection of basic human rights requires a judicial system that works. According to a State Department bulletin published in November 1988 and titled, "El Salvador : The Battle For Democracy",

"The Salvadoran judicial system,... is characterized by poorly paid and trained court officers and judges subject to intimidation and bribery, as well as by inadequate material and personnel resources." 8.

While the article goes on to state that the Salvadoran government has taken some positive steps, it points out that much is left to do. Further, it will take time to train the, " attorneys, magistrates, prosecutors, court officers, and enforcement officials". It will also require time, "to overcome the instinctive distrust of state institutions bred by El Salvador's history of class division and to dissipate the passions of the past decade of violence".9.

Chronic problems in health and education also serve to destabilize the country and add to the differences between the haves and the have nots. El Salvador suffers from all the problems that would be expected in a country in which only 40 percent of the population has access to piped water and 20 percent to the sewage system. Some of the people suffer from malnutrition, gastrointestinal problems, parasites and other diseases linked to poverty and a lack of medical support. In 1965, of 650 doctors in country, only 209 were working full time.10. Many are involved in other pursuits such as politics. In 1989 the infant mortality rate

in El Salvador was 62 deaths per 1,000 live births as compared to the United States with 9 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹¹ As for education, a 1970 survey indicated that 50 percent of agricultural workers had never attended schools and 33 percent of those that had, only reached the second grade.¹² Later surveys are not much better. The country has failed to provide the bare minimum of services to the poor. Various church groups, especially the Catholic Church and the International Red Cross, in extending medical relief to the poor in remote areas, have been accused by the government (sometimes correctly) of aiding the guerrillas. Whether they aid the guerrillas or not is not really important to many of the poor, these charitable groups are helping them. Government persecution of these organizations in the past has just confused many of the poor who only see the good that they have done. The whole concept of Liberation Theology grew out of the determined response of some members of the Catholic Church to the wretched state of the poor around them and the need for social justice.

Social issues not only lead to further violence in El Salvador, but they point out in vivid, unambiguous detail how little the country has done for its people in the past. Recent initiatives have given some hope, but the vast majority of people are at a lower standard of living now than they were fifteen years ago. As Father Ronald Potter, a Maryknoll Priest serving in El Salvador has stated, "... the real problem is not Communist insurgency, but the absence of

social reform in a country where most of the people are landless and unemployed".13.

Economically, the once promising outlook has dimmed. In the 1970's, El Salvador's economy was considered by many to be the most dynamic and strongest in Central America. During the 20 years preceding the start of the present insurgency, the economy did grow and was fairly stable. However, this was misleading. Two facts about the population of over 5.1 million serve to illustrate the point. El Salvador has the highest population density of any country on the American mainland. This reality combined with the shift from rural to urban living compounds the problem severely, especially when one considers that the country is slightly smaller than the state of Massachusetts. Historically, the solution has been to export people - in excess of 500,000 Salvadorans live in the United States. Before the Soccer War with Honduras in 1969, 300,000 of the poor had settled on small farms across the border in that country because there was no land available in El Salvador. At the conclusion of the war, El Salvador had to take back thousands of these refugees. This, in turn, exacerbated one of the principal economic problems of El Salvador - inequitable distribution of land. In 1961, the oligarchy had 0.4 percent of the farms yet controlled 35 percent of the land. In contrast, the 185,000 farms of the poor controlled less than 17 percent of the land. The top 5 percent of the people earned 40 percent of the national income. The lowest

20 percent of the people earned 2 percent of the national income.¹⁴ With a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of only 4.1 billion there is not that much available for use anyway.

Inequitable land and wealth distribution are only two of El Salvador's economic problems. They have an external debt of over 1.8 billion and the annual inflation rate in 1989 was 20 percent. Unemployment remains at 30 percent with underemployment even higher especially in the rural agricultural areas. Coffee production which accounts for 21 percent of the GDP and 60 percent of export earnings, retains its role as leader of the coffee, cotton, sugar and shrimp export oriented economy. However, debt service payments take over 30 percent of annual export earnings.¹⁵ Additionally, the economy which is highly dependent on exports, has recently been hurt by droughts, natural disasters and a sharp drop in world commodity prices for coffee, sugar and cotton. Industry, on the other hand, could provide some relief, but it only accounts for 15 percent of the GDP. Further, as Alistar White reports,

"The expansion of industry has occurred without any corresponding increase in the numbers of workers employed, because the plants operate with the most modern imported machinery and use few workers." ¹⁶.

If one adds to all of these problems ten years of guerrilla attacks that have caused billions of dollars of damage to the economic infrastructure, the immensity of the overall problem becomes apparent. The contrasts between the rich and poor are blatantly obvious to everyone. The support

for the insurgency in El Salvador has deep roots in the perception of inequality in the economic system. The differences in lifestyles constantly serve to remind the poor just how bad off they really are. The guerrilla forces have continued to capitalize on the economic disparities and have used government inability to make any dramatic changes as a powerful attraction to their cause.

THE EL SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES

The military has also been a factor in causing the insurgency. As was mentioned earlier, they aligned with the oligarchy many years ago. Until recently, their policy had been to support the oligarchy thus insuring that the economic policies of the wealthy would be implemented. This support included the use of military power if necessary. On occasion, it even included the use of right wing death squads. Both the military and the oligarchy regarded rapid change with caution and concern. Stability was good for business and needed to be maintained. The military shared power with the rich and thereby gained a key role in the government of El Salvador. This is not the same type of professional Army that we are accustomed to in the United States. According to one American officer, in 1979 the Army was "a militia of 11,000 that had no mission." Another U.S. officer stated that the Salvadoran Army spent its time, "sitting in garrison abusing civilians".¹⁷ Further, if one believes the information in the article by Joel Millman, the Army of El Salvador is truly, "A Force Unto Itself".¹⁸

Although it has grown and modernized to a force of 57,000, it is still on the "take". The means are merely more sophisticated. According to Millman, the network of patronage and corruption has grown over half a century to a point where there is a real possibility of systemic corruption throughout the entire force. Whether it be the filling of re-enlistment slots with "Plazas ficticias" or "ghost soldiers" and diverting the funds to the brigade slush fund; abusing recruits by "descuentos obligatorios" or "mandatory deductions" for items such as boot polish, toothpaste, oil, sneakers, blue jeans, the barracks television or brigade T-shirts and diverting the funds to the brigade slush fund; or hiring out soldiers to guard coffee plantations, factories or bus lines; the control of the brigade slush funds becomes very lucrative. Further, according to Millman, the military has moved from these relatively small time ventures to the ownership of a fishing fleet on the Pacific coast and a social security fund called the Social Provision Institute of the Armed Forces (IPSFA). There are even plans for an IPSFA insurance company and for a new Bank of the Armed Forces. Is some of what Millman charges simply business as usual for the Armed Forces and long since fixed by reforms? Is the rest legitimate business or planning for the future? Is the military really dedicated to winning the war as quickly as possible and returning to a peacetime footing with a reduced force? These are questions that beg to be answered.

To understand how the Salvadorian military operates, a few cultural differences are worth mentioning. The first of these is the "tanda" system of promotion. Once a class or tanda is commissioned from the Escuela Militar Capitan General Gerardo Barrios, the Salvadoran Military Academy, it moves upward through the ranks together. The group advances at intervals together regardless of competence. An officer is secure through the rank of colonel, after which he may depart, with his tanda, into honorable retirement. What this process has created over the years, starting with the rigorous pressure of the Military Academy, is a system that is extremely loyal to its tanda or academy class. They are taught to view the civilian world as decadent and corrupt. After graduation, tandas pushed their most capable officers not only toward powerful brigade commands but, through the 1970's, even to the Presidency of the country. Thus, as the political process matured in El Salvador, it has sometimes been difficult for the military to understand their subordinate role to civilian authority.

A sidelight to the Salvadoran officers preoccupation with politics is his leadership style. He, for the most part, does not concern himself with the lot of the average soldier. In the past he has undervalued training and has been cavalier toward combat operations. Further, the noncommissioned officer concept is alien to the Salvadoran military tradition, as it is to the rest of Latin America.¹⁹ The military consists of the commissioned

officer elite above and the short service peasant conscripts below. There is little room for NCO leaders in between. When the platoon leader is gone, there is no platoon. Again, as in all of Salvadoran society, there are the haves and the have nots. Part of the problem in working toward solutions of the insurgency in El Salvador has been the military's way of doing business that has been ingrained over the years. Their own internal value system, their use of the "death squads" and their elitism have all contributed to the polarization of the country and the destabilization of the political process.

FACTIONS INVOLVED - POLITICAL PROCESS AND CONFLICT

Most analysis of the significant factions involved in the conflict include the guerrillas, the Catholic Church, the government and the U.S. Embassy. While they are all involved without a doubt, there are numerous factions within each that have their own reasons and motivations for their own particular actions. They run the political spectrum from far left, thru the center to far right. This papers limited scope does not permit a detailed explanation of each faction but their existence must be acknowledged if only to keep us from trying to oversimplify the problems involved. Further, it can provide a sense of how these problems have developed over time.

While most of the guerrilla groups were founded in the 1950 to 1980 timeframe, the original Communist Party dates from 1925. There are numerous ideologies involved; the fine

points of which, as mentioned, lie beyond the scope of this paper. It should simply be noted that the guerrillas also have a divergence of opinion on how to solve the many problems facing El Salvador. The groups comprising the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), which is the overall umbrella organization for the five member groups, are the Revolutionary Army of the People (ERP), the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC), the National Forces of Armed Resistance (FARN), the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), and the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCES). In discussing the guerrillas, we will discuss three topics: who brought them together, who supplies them and what their strategy has been.

In December of 1979, Fidel Castro sponsored a meeting of the various groups in Cuba that brought three of them together- FARN, FPL and PCES. The ERP joined in 1980. It is believed that Castro also provided training, weapons and set up supply lines at the same time.

Some of the major supply lines involve air and ground routes through Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega has admitted being heavily involved with Cuba in the supply of military weapons. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has also been implicated.²¹

The insurgents strategy has many variations but two main themes. They attempt to cause political havoc by attacking highly visible economic targets and they attempt to destroy American support for the government through an

active disinformation campaign targeted at the American Congress and the American people. They have identified Washington as their "center of gravity". They understand that if Washington loses patience and withdraws support one of two things could happen. First, the government would have to negotiate with them and they would gain the power they hadn't won on the battlefield or at the ballot box. The second possibility is that with the loss of U.S. aid government programs would be weakened. The moderates would then be forced out and the repressive right would take power. Human rights violations would surge. This would further polarize the population behind the guerrillas. The guerrillas would make significant gains either way. Because of the numerous social, economic and political problems mentioned earlier, the strategy has appeared to work thus far.

The role of the Church in El Salvador is a complicated one. When we speak of the Church, what we mean is the Roman Catholic Church. More recently, many other churches and religious aid groups have also become involved. The Catholic Church traditionally worked with both sides, served their spiritual needs and tried to remain outside of politics. Traditionally, because they favored the spiritual over the material, many people assumed that they favored the party in power. Further, their preaching emphasized not worrying about the present life on earth but rather eternal life in heaven which tended to help keep the campesinos in line.

However, as time passed, three general groups of political thought developed within the Church in response to the events taking place around them. The more traditional stayed out of politics and continued to serve the spiritual needs of the people. A small minority became polarized to the cause of the guerrillas, following what is known as the doctrine of Liberation Theology. This group became active supporters of the guerrilla movement. A third group was more moderate. It tried to point out the wrongs on both sides, while emphasizing the many social evils so visible in El Salvador's society. It called for social justice. It soon became apparent that the Church, so highly visible and prominent as it had become in all of Latin America, could be used or misused by all sides in the conflict.

Considering all of this and the fact that a great majority of the higher institutions of learning in El Salvador are Church sponsored, rightist death squad activity should have been expected. Some radical and some not so radical members of the Church "intelligentsia" were killed by government "death squads". Maryknoll nuns were murdered. It really did not matter who killed whom because the government was always the prime suspect. When the large crowd that was gathered for the funeral of murdered Archbishop Oscar Romero was fired on by government security forces in 1980, it became a catalyst to draw support for the guerrillas. Finally, in 1983, the Pope in response to the many questions from all sides made the Church's position

clear:

"The authority, unity and independence of the Church was threatened by those who sought to subordinate it to unacceptable ideological commitments and the temporary goals of political movements." 22.

From that point, the Church's criticism of the government has been more moderate. It has openly rejected the contention that the guerrillas represent the majority of Salvadorans, openly disagreed with Catholic revolutionaries that this is a "just" revolution and moved away from revolutionary dominated human rights groups. Despite these actions, the insurgents were still being helped because for the first time they received support from a small number of Church members. Additionally, political pressure to cut off U.S. aid has been put on the U.S. Congress by other religious groups such as the National Council of Churches, the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the American Friends Service Committee.

In the case of the government of El Salvador, the proper word might really be factions since there have been so many different governments in the last 100 years. Understanding the relationship between the oligarchy and the military is key. Since the Matanza in 1932, the military working with the oligarchy has controlled the government. In the early 1980's, a new junta replaced the original junta of October 1979. It consisted of Jose Napoleon Duarte and a number of Christian Democrats who formed a partnership with the military with the objective of democratic reform. The junta was quickly attacked from both the left and the right.

The left felt that the reforms were not sufficient or quick enough. The right saw the reforms as threatening to governmental control. The new government was faced with increased polarization as both extremes hardened their positions. The democratic center was not a large force in Salvadoran political life. The government could not control terrorism by either leftist or rightist death squads. A quick end to the coalition was the popular prediction. This prediction was proven false even in the face of the FMLN "final offensive" in 1981. The junta held and defeated the powerful guerrilla offensive. Further, they also defeated a rightist coup attempt.

The transition from the junta to Alvaro Magana's provisional presidency in 1982 was supported by the military. Further, the military also backed the constitution of 1983 even though it subjected them to the authority of the president, a civilian commander in chief, for the first time. Subsequent elections have affirmed the commitment to a democratic form of government. Especially noteworthy was the recent transfer of political power from the Christian Democrats to the National Republican Alliance of President Alfredo Cristiani.

There are a number of political parties in El Salvador. The four principal ones are the National Republican Alliance (ARENA), the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), the National Conciliation Party (PCN) and the Democratic Convergence (CD). The latter grouping is a coalition composed of the

Social Democratic Party (PSD), the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) and the Popular Social Christian Movement (MPSC). ARENA, the more conservative right wing party, controls 53.8 percent of the Legislative Assembly. The PDC, a more liberal left leaning party, controls 36.5 percent. The rest control less than 5 percent each. Fortunately, some of the more moderate members of each of the largest parties help to form the political center. Even though it is growing, it remains relatively small. Although the CD maintains ties with the FMLN, it has been legally allowed to organize and work for its objectives.

The judicial portion of the government, as discussed earlier, still requires some time to build a credible system that will insure human rights for all.

The U.S. Embassy is also a faction to consider. While it does not have as long a history as the other factions involved, it is the first line representative of the United States Government in El Salvador. As the first line representative of the United States, it has had a significant responsibility for the recommendation and implementation of United States policy toward El Salvador. The ambassador is the individual appointed by the President as head of the embassy and leader of the United States Country Team organization. This team contains representatives from numerous governmental organizations - the principal ones being the Departments of State and Defense. Among its' functions are to advise the ambassador,

provide information both to him and to their parent organizations in Washington and to implement program objectives in accordance with United States policy toward El Salvador. Policy includes a full range of actions since our involvement is not only a military one. Actions include the integration and coordination of military means with the political, social, economic, psychological and diplomatic efforts to defeat the insurgency and help El Salvador rebuild a stable and secure nation. It is not just a question of security but includes a myriad of developmental issues that require a unified vision, detailed and coordinated planning, adequate and consistent financing and coordinated execution. Coordination and synchronization of this process through the tool of the Country Team is difficult at best because of the diversity of its' membership and the philosophies of the various organizations the members represent. The organizational difficulties and the problems they cause will be discussed later in this paper. On the positive side, some movement has been made toward democratization of the government, reduction in human rights abuses and the financing of counterinsurgency and recovery efforts within the country. On the negative side the constant negotiation of financial aid by the U.S. Congress, has sometimes prevented development of long range policies in dealing with the issues.

GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AND RESULTS

It is difficult to determine what governmental

counterinsurgency programs have accomplished. There have been numerous changes in government and many attempts at political reform. The military seems to have placed its support directly behind the democratic process, whether this is mere political expediency or real remains to be seen. The political center continues to grow in size enabling more conciliation and compromise. With this growth, more diversity in political parties has been allowed. More moderate viewpoints are surfacing. The Army has learned to fight main force units successfully. It has developed some successful tactics. But, as demonstrated by the last guerrilla offensive, it created tremendous collateral damage with the liberal use of firepower. The number of murders by death squads both right and left has diminished even considering the recent murders of the Jesuits. According to a recent bulletin from the U.S. Department of State:

"U.S. Embassy statistical indicators, based on news accounts of violence and other public sources, confirm that murders of apparently political motivation have declined dramatically over the last eight years, from a high of 750 deaths a month in 1980 to 23 a month in 1987." 23.

While even one politically motivated death per month, or year for that matter is too many according to American standards, it does show an improvement based on El Salvador's past history. However, although improving, human rights violations still are a fact of life in El Salvador. The economic situation, however, has not shown any improvement. In fact, it has become much worse. A combination of ten years of guerrilla attacks on the

economic base of the country, natural disasters and the drop in world commodity prices have really taken a toll on the economy. The external debt remains in excess of \$1.8 billion and capital flight remains a problem.

This quick summary indicates that although some improvements have been made much still remains to be accomplished. Some might argue that this review of the facts is too sketchy. They might point out that much more has been done to win popular support and eliminate the insurgency. While more exhaustive detail could be provided on both sides of the question, the fact remains that since 1980, U.S. commitments alone have exceeded \$2.1 billion.²⁴ How has the government of El Salvador spent these resources? More importantly, how have we, the United States, seen fit to help guide them in their quest for peace?

The National Campaign Plan for Reconstruction, devised largely by the American military and sold to the Government of El Salvador in 1983, represented the first ambitious attempt at winning popular support. While conceptually a breakthrough, the plan was not successful for a number of reasons.²⁵ Most important, it did not receive adequate U.S. support. It could only be implemented in two of fourteen Departments because of the limited funds available and in those Departments it was underfinanced. Since it was concentrated in only two Departments, the guerrillas simply moved from one Department to another if the pressure became too severe. Later, when the military left, the guerrillas

returned and undid what had been accomplished. The political climate during the early years of the Reagan administration simply did not favor congressional support for defending El Salvador. Furthermore, while the military of El Salvador gave the plan support, there were coordination problems within both the military and the government.

The Plan had four basic priorities: 1.) agrarian reform, 2.) increased employment, 3.) restoration of vital services, and 4.) humanitarian assistance. While the priorities were correct and based in part on the U.S. Army's Internal Defense and Development Doctrine, the Plan's initial promise was never realized.

Despite progress toward democratization, as recent events have demonstrated, the Salvadoran government remains largely unable to neutralize the FMLN. They are still a force that can mount an offensive. They are planning for a protracted struggle. The government has not won over the complete support of the people. The economy remains in dire straits. Slow progress on judicial reform has hampered complete human rights reform. Cooperation between the military and the civilian government remains weak. According to Dr. Gabriel Marcella, a Latin American expert at the U.S. Army War College,

"Potentially troublesome in the longer term is the balance in civil-military relations once the fighting is over. Internal war has greatly expanded the military's reach in society. The expansion of the armed forces from 12,000 in 1980 to 53,000 in 1988 and their professionalization have given them great resources and enhanced their political stature relative to civilian institutions. The requirement to

reduce the size of the military and to fully subordinate it to civilian authority once the insurgency is defeated will be a challenge to the democratic idea." 26.

The most serious question facing the United States commitment in El Salvador presently is the question of prosecution of the Army officers and soldiers accused of murdering the Jesuit priests. If the military stops this prosecution from happening, as it has in every case in the past, the U.S. Congress very probably will cut off all financial aid. The message to El Salvador is clear: prosecute this case and control the death squads. This is the only way to obtain continued financing from the U.S. government and begin the process of ending the insurgency.

FUTURE INVOLVEMENTS

What is the message to the United States? Why is it so important? What can our involvement in El Salvador teach us about future involvements?

Since World War II the number of large wars has been small; however, the number of small wars or insurgencies has been large. Furthermore, given the recent events in Eastern Europe, the probability of a mid to high intensity conflict or large war has lessened considerably. It seems logical, therefore, that the most likely type of conflict will continue to be the small or low intensity conflict. However, according to Dr. Weigley, "We have never really done well in limited wars". A close analysis of most recent insurgencies indicates that this can be applied to them as well. If we are to continue to be involved in these interventions and

they will be the most common type of conflict, we need to identify the problem areas and fix them. A number of authors have identified and listed in great detail a number of lessons and recommendations that need to be considered.²⁷. However, one issue is key. It is coordination within the myriad of governmental agencies involved in providing counterinsurgency support to a host nation. It basically involves interagency coordination within the executive branch. We can focus on many issues, but this is the primary one that we can control. To quote an often overused phrase, "We need to get our act together". The lack of coordination between the Department of Defense and the Department of State has been identified. It will not go away. It will continue to thwart our policies not only in Central America but throughout the entire world. It must be fixed. As Ambassador Thomas Pickering has stated,

"I would say, first, that in the failure of the United States effectively to study, assess, write histories about, and reach conclusions on these types of wars we are condemned to refight and rediscover them.

Secondly, it's very important when we deal with this kind of a conflict that we deal with it on a coordinated basis" ²⁸.

If the Ambassador is to be in charge of the country team, he must be conversant with the military element of power as well as all of the other elements of power. Conversely, every organization represented on the team, especially members of our armed forces, must understand how the Department of State functions. They must know its philosophical outlook, and how it can be used as a positive

projection of American interests in the foreign policy arena.

Historically, from a soldiers viewpoint, the Department of State uses the military element of power as a last resort only after everything else has failed. In doing so, it acts as if nothing else remains to be done and often appears to wash its hands of the problems involved. Also, one can often detect a sense of failure. It is almost as if, "We have done all we can do, now lets see what the military can do?". The military, for its part, often thinks, "Now that these guys are out of the way, maybe we can get something substantial accomplished".

It is obvious that each line of thinking reduced to its simplest terms is fallacious, if not almost destructive to the whole nation building process. If one believes that this polarization of attitudes exists within the executive branch to any degree, it becomes easier to explain the many obvious mistakes, miscommunications and policy miscues that are often brought to light by an ever alert free press. Admittedly, State and Defense are not the only organizations involved. There are a number of other governmental organizations, all with their own agendas, who are also members of the country team. While each reports back through their own system in stovepipe fashion to their own agency in Washington, complicating the process even further, their involvement in the overall problem lies outside the purview of this paper. However, attempts to find ways to

begin to fix the coordination problems between State and Defense are within the purview of this paper. We, as a country, really do not want to continue to depend solely on the personalities of our Ambassadors and our military representatives for foreign policy success. The stakes are simply too high.

The military is clearly subordinate to the State Department. However, both must understand how the other works. Both must possess more than just a rudimentary knowledge of the other's operational philosophy. Further, they must be coordinated. State clearly must provide policy guidance and detailed plans for the employment of all elements of national power including the military element. When provided with a plan or guidance, Defense must have an understanding of how to implement that plan or guidance. They must permanently lose their "bull in a china shop, we are only here to fight" image.

Currently, neither Department demonstrates much evidence of institutional effort to change. For example, at the U.S. Army War College, the Army's highest level of education for officers, there are no courses in the core curriculum that teach future Chiefs of Military Missions how the Department of State really operates, its philosophy or even how it looks at the world. Further, what has the Department of State done to help educate its leaders in the application of the military element of power? Thus, at a time when the whole world is beginning to realize that the

real threat to America is the low intensity or regional conflict, both of the most potent players in America's foreign policy arena have not yet decided to maximize their potential.

In summary, El Salvador can teach us many lessons. They cover the gamut of what the country can do for itself to what advice and aid the United States can give to it. However, one factor clearly overshadows all others. In order to ensure that America's foreign policy objectives have an even chance of implementation, all the elements of power must be used to their best advantage. In order to use them to their best advantage, the government must be organized and coordinated. If the United States of America is to continue as a first rate power in an era of limited resources, it must have first rate performance from all National assets.

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