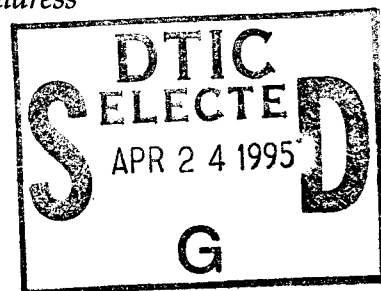


RAND

*The Effectiveness of U.S.
Training Efforts in
Internal Defense and Development*

The Cases of El Salvador and Honduras

Michael Childress



National Defense Research Institute

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Preface

RAND conducted the project "The Effectiveness of U.S. Military Training Activities in Promoting Internal Defense and Development in the Third World" to assess the effectiveness of programs to train U.S. military students in foreign internal defense (FID) and foreign military personnel in internal defense and development (IDAD), to examine the benefits that the United States derives from these programs, and to consider how future efforts can be improved and strengthened.

The first phase of the project and a Note summarizing its results were completed in January 1992 and published as N-3634-USDP, *International Military Student Training: Beyond Tactics* (March 1992) by Jennifer Morrison Taw and William H. McCoy. It surveyed current U.S. international military student (IMS) training in internal defense and development as well as the training of the U.S. military in FID and related areas. The Note also examined the broader social, political, and military issues related to U.S. FID/IDAD training and made some preliminary recommendations regarding U.S. FID/IDAD training.

Three reports present the results of six comparative case studies prepared for the second phase of the project, in which the effectiveness of U.S. military training of international military students is examined. These regional case studies examine whether U.S. training provided to foreign military students promotes human rights, professionalism, democratic values, national development and appropriate civil-military relations, as well as meeting the general goals of the IMET program. This report focuses on El Salvador and Honduras. It is current as of spring 1993. Two other studies have focused on Thailand and the Philippines, and on Liberia and Senegal.

This research was sponsored by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD SO/LIC) within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. It was carried out under the auspices of the International Security and Defense Policy Center within RAND's National Defense Research Institute (NDRI), a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the defense agencies.

Contents

Preface	iii
Figures	vii
Tables	ix
Summary	xi
Acknowledgments	xix
Acronyms and Abbreviations	xxi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Research Approach	5
Outline	6
2. UNDERSTANDING INTERNAL DEFENSE AND DEVELOPMENT	7
IDAD: A Definition	7
IDAD in the Central American Context	8
The Appropriateness and Adequacy of Training IDAD Skills	10
Nation-Building—Internal or Infrastructure Development	10
Internal Defense	12
Other Mitigating Factors	13
3. EL SALVADOR	18
Policy Goals and Program Objectives	18
Developing an Effective Counterinsurgent Military Force	18
Developing Professional Military Establishments	19
Training Efforts	20
Magnitude of the U.S. Training Effort	21
Internal Defense—COIN Training	24
Internal Development	26
The Mixed Success of U.S. Training	27
Internal Defense: Increased Technical and Tactical Proficiency	28
Technical and Tactical Problem Areas	30
Internal Development—Social and Economic	33
Internal Development—Political	34
Summary	42
4. HONDURAS	44
Policy Goals and Program Objectives	44
Developing an Effective Counterinsurgent Military Force	44
Developing Professional Military Establishments	45
Training Efforts	48
Magnitude of the U.S. Training Effort	48
Internal Development	52

The Mixed Success of U.S. Training	53
Internal Defense: Technical and Tactical Proficiency	53
Internal Development—Social and Economic	54
Internal Development—Political	56
Summary	60
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	63
Obstacles to Ascertaining Effectiveness	63
Internal Defense	65
Internal Development	66
Future Directions and Potential Improvements	68
Improve Civil-Military Relations	68
Beware of Nation-Builders	69
Develop More-Capable Judicial Systems	69
Be More Sensitive to Indigenous Training Needs	70
Strive for Self-Sufficiency	70
Use More In-Country Training Teams	71
Appendix	
A. IDAD IN EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS: THE PURVIEW OF THE ARMY	73
B. FMS- AND IMET-FUNDED COURSES ATTENDED BY ESAF AND HOAF MEMBERS AND TAKEN AT SELECTED U.S. AIR FORCE SCHOOLS	78
Bibliography	81

Figures

3.1. Salvadoran Soldiers Trained in CONUS Through IMET as a Percentage of Total ESAF	22
3.2. IDAD-Related Courses Attended by ESAF Members at U.S. Army Schools as a Percentage of Total Courses	24
4.1. Honduran Soldiers Trained in CONUS Through IMET as a Percentage of Total HOAF	49
4.2. IDAD-Related Courses Attended by HOAF Members as a Percentage of Total Courses	51
A.1. Breakdown of El Salvadoran Armed Forces by Service from 1980 to 1990	74
A.2. Breakdown of Honduran Armed Forces by Service from 1980 to 1990	74
A.3. NAVSCIATTS Enrollment Relative to the Total Salvadoran Navy Population	75
A.4. NAVSCIATTS Enrollment Relative to the Total Honduran Navy Population	75
A.5. IAAFA Enrollment Relative to the Total Salvadoran Air Force Population	76
A.6. IAAFA Enrollment Relative to the Total Honduran Air Force Population	76

Tables

3.1. IMET-Funded Courses Attended by ESAF Members at U.S. Army Schools from 1988 to 1993	23
3.2. Selected Social and Economic Indicators for El Salvador	35
3.3. Selected Statistics from the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador for November and December 1991	38
4.1. IMET-Funded Courses Attended by HOAF Members at U.S. Army Schools from 1988 to 1993	50
4.2. Selected Social and Economic Indicators for Honduras	56
B.1. Expanded IMET Initiative Courses from 1980 to 1993	79
B.2. The Twenty Most Frequently Attended Courses at IAAFA from 1983 to 1989	79

Summary

Even though East-West relations have been transformed over the past few years, there is no shortage of threats to peace and stability facing developing countries. It is these threats, which include international terrorism, illegal drug production and movement, and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, that accentuate the importance of internal defense and development (IDAD) for the developing world. As a result, the U.S. military's objective of training foreign militaries to increase their proficiency, including training in skills that can be used for internal defense and development, is especially important in the current and future strategic environment.

The purpose of this research effort is to evaluate U.S. military training and advisory programs for teaching internal defense and development skills to the militaries of El Salvador and Honduras. By evaluating these training efforts, we can make general observations, perhaps applicable to other developing countries, on the effectiveness of the programs and potential improvements to the training efforts.

El Salvador and Honduras were selected as two of the six case studies for this research effort because these countries have been the principal regional players in the U.S. military's most significant counterinsurgency since the Vietnam War. As the major supplier of equipment and training during the 1980s, the United States orchestrated an unprecedented expansion of their military establishments.

IDAD: A Definition

One of the main responsibilities of governments in developing countries is to formulate, articulate, and execute their own IDAD strategies, and it is believed that these countries can achieve a measure of political stability through the successful implementation of their IDAD programs. The role of the United States is to provide equipment and training that support the host government's IDAD strategy. *Internal defense and development* is defined as

the full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and to protect itself from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. The strategy focuses on *building* viable political, economic, military and social institutions that respond to the needs of society. Its fundamental goal is to prevent insurgency by forestalling and defeating the threat insurgent

organizations pose and by working to correct conditions that prompt violence. The government mobilizes the population to participate in IDAD efforts. *Thus, IDAD is ideally a preemptive strategy against insurgency; however, if an insurgency develops, it is a strategy for counterinsurgency activities* [italics mine].¹

IDAD in the Central American Context

While some Third World governments enjoy the luxury of fashioning and executing their IDAD strategies as preemptive attempts to clear dangerously flammable political and/or social "tinder" before a "flash point" is reached, this was not the case in Central America during the 1980s. The tinderbox had already ignited, and a pall of insurgency and instability hung over the region. As a result, the conclusions and recommendations from the Kissinger Commission, which can be viewed to a large extent as a road map for achieving internal defense and development for the countries in Central America, emphasized the steps necessary to regain stability. Because the sources of regional instability were viewed by the commission as the externally supported insurgency and the socioeconomic conditions that initially gave birth to it, U.S. training efforts emphasized counterinsurgency (COIN) and nation-building strategies.

This is not to suggest that the United States always orients the majority of its training to support a Third World government's IDAD plan by focusing mainly on counterinsurgency techniques. Indeed, U.S. training should ideally be designed to provide nation-building skills so that counterinsurgency techniques are unnecessary. However, in many respects, El Salvador and Honduras represent unique cases because there were active insurgencies in both countries during the 1980s. In the current and future climate of relative peace and quiescence, in which the militaries are beginning to demobilize and the rebels are beginning to become reassimilated into society, the focus of U.S. training will assuredly shift to reflect the changing strategic environment. This means, of course, that the focus will be increasingly on internal development activities designed to preempt the reemergence of an active insurgency.

Internal Defense. Besides the strict elements of counterinsurgency, many elements are associated with internal defense, such as peacekeeping and police

¹Headquarters, Departments of the Army and the Air Force, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (U.S. GPO), FM 100-20/AFP 3-20, December 5, 1990, pp. 2-7. *Internal defense* is "the full range of measures taken by a government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency." *Internal development* is defined as the "actions taken by a nation to promote its growth by building viable institutions (political, military, economic, and social) that respond to the needs of its society." See Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, Joint Publication 1-02, December 1, 1989.

activities. However, since there were active insurgencies in these countries, most U.S. training was devoted to COIN. As a result, training the El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) and Honduran Armed Forces (HOAF) in skills for internal defense has been expressed principally as counterinsurgency training. In fact, achieving internal defense (i.e., peace and stability) was viewed by the Kissinger Commission as a necessary condition before internal development could take place.

Internal Development. Since the focus is on building viable institutions that respond to the needs of society, the United States attempts to impart IDAD skills that can be used by Third World countries to achieve internal development. For example, teaching an engineering unit methods for constructing roads and bridges can lead to improvements in the country's physical infrastructure (i.e., perhaps facilitating economic development); instructing a medical unit in ways to administer basic preventive medical care can improve the health of the country's citizens (i.e., social development); and training in basic soldiering skills can increase the combat effectiveness of the country's armed forces (i.e., military development). Moreover, given the multidimensional nature of insurgency and counterinsurgency, there is a requirement that the military behave in a professional manner; this requirement means, at least to the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), that the military accepts democratically elected civilian authority, respects international standards of human rights, and does not engage in corrupt practices. This emphasis on human rights, democracy, and the elimination of corruption has important implications for nation-building and internal development in El Salvador and Honduras, and represents an important attempt to foster democracy (i.e., political development). Although these facets of internal development have only recently gained renewed emphasis in the Expanded International Military Education and Training (IMET-E) program, they have long been viewed as the *sine qua non* for stability in El Salvador and Honduras, if for no other reason than that the counterinsurgency required improvements in these areas if it was to be effective.

Policy Goals and Program Objectives

The United States has had similar policy goals for El Salvador and Honduras since the early 1980s, despite the important differences in their strategic circumstances. The overall foreign policy goals for these countries are to (1) combat, deter, and/or defeat the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) insurgent threat in El Salvador and any burgeoning insurgent threat in Honduras; (2) deter, and, if necessary, defeat the Nicaraguans (i.e., Sandinistas) in a potential conflict with Honduras; (3) strengthen democratic principles,

institutions, and structures; and (4) achieve broad-based socioeconomic development. The achievement of these policy goals would ensure that El Salvador and Honduras enjoyed internal defense and development. They are to be accomplished through the successful implementation of various programs that fall into two broad categories:

- Developing effective counterinsurgent military forces
- Developing professional military establishments.

El Salvador

The United States has attempted to transform the El Salvadoran Armed Forces since the early 1980s. However, that transformation, which was facilitated by \$4.5 billion in economic and military assistance, has been only partially successful in creating a military that possesses and implements the skills necessary to achieve internal defense and development.

There is no question that U.S. training and equipment have created a more capable counterinsurgent military. Without U.S. training and equipment, the government of El Salvador would have likely been deposed by the FMLN.² Nevertheless, while the ESAF is more capable than it was in 1979, it still suffers from some shortcomings. For example, even though most combat units in the ESAF are capable of implementing U.S. training in tactics and doctrine, these tactics are not always implemented by the ESAF. After 10 years of U.S. involvement, the ESAF only reluctantly engages the FMLN using the kind of tactics that U.S. advisers have urged.

The ESAF is also more adept at the "hard" elements of counterinsurgency (e.g., combat operations) than the "soft" elements (e.g., civic action). However, this is only partially the fault of U.S. trainers and advisers. It is true that civic action, or nation-building types of skills, has played a secondary role in the U.S. training hierarchy, but the United States has little leverage over the main reasons the ESAF has had problems with the soft elements. Many reasons have been cited: insufficient resources to simultaneously secure large areas and engage in internal development activities; lack of ESAF emphasis on civil defense; and an overly

²In fall 1980, the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU) announced the founding of the FMLN, made up of the Popular Liberation Forces—Farabundo Marti, the People's Revolutionary Army, the Armed Forces for National Liberation, and the Armed Forces of the National Resistance. This group eventually fielded around 12,000 fighters, but estimates in the early 1990s place its strength at 6,000 to 7,000 combatants.

narrow attitude among ESAF officers about the nature of guerrilla warfare (i.e., a military focus instead of a political one).

The United States has also achieved a large measure of success in fostering the development of a stable democracy in El Salvador, but it is unclear whether U.S. training can take the credit. On the one hand, human-rights abuses are down and the ESAF appears to support the democratically elected civilian authority. On the other hand, many experts, including the United Nations Truth Commission, agree that the ESAF still wields considerable influence behind the scenes. For instance, any attempt by the civilian government to wrest power, resources, or influence from the ESAF is met with resistance—usually successful resistance. Also, the judicial system is generally considered dysfunctional since military officers are rarely prosecuted. Such dysfunction is evidenced by the fact that only two ESAF officers have ever been convicted in a murder investigation despite the ESAF's alleged widespread involvement in many politically motivated executions and disappearances.

It would almost seem that the authors of the IMET-E program had El Salvador in mind when the program was initiated. Attempting to train for human rights, civil-military relations, and the tenets of democracy will be especially difficult for the United States and crucial for the Salvadorans as the U.S. presence evaporates. Moreover, the ESAF does use its nation-building skills to aggrandize political and economic power. Unfortunately, a fundamental problem, at least according to officials at USSOUTHCOM and in the military advisory group (MILGP) in El Salvador, is that there is a dearth of qualified civilians in the government of El Salvador (GOES) to train.

Honduras

Since Honduras did not experience an insurgent threat as did El Salvador, most U.S. training was conducted with the conventional Sandinista military threat in mind. Nevertheless, while the threat looming over Honduras in the early 1980s was less ominous than El Salvador's, instability still threatened the region. As a result, by the early 1980s, U.S. officials were concerned about the FMLN moving freely between the Salvadoran-Honduran border and the possibility of a Cuban-Nicaraguan-supported insurgency in Honduras. Consequently, the United States provided ample COIN training for internal defense, mostly in the form of joint exercises, and there is every indication that the training was adequate, since the Honduran Armed Forces were able to quell the largest insurgency in the country with little difficulty.

But, whereas the United States had created a more capable military establishment, some believe that the Honduran military had become more reliant, not more self-sufficient, during the 1980s. Large quantities of hardware were sent to Honduras, and the HOAF have had a difficult time providing the necessary maintenance and logistics support for that equipment. However, it appears as if the HOAF is slowly achieving self-sufficiency with their new Army Technical School, which will teach logistics and maintenance.

Developing a professional military has proven to be just as challenging in Honduras as in El Salvador. This difficulty can be attributed in large measure to the HOAF's traditionally prominent role in the country's politics, its endemic corruption, and its history of human-rights abuses. Even if U.S. training can alter belief systems, it cannot alter the systemic or structural factors within the society that the student must return to; those factors are what really determine the individual's behavior. For example, officials in the United States Embassy in Honduras expressed exasperation over their attempts to weed out corruption in the HOAF. Several officials cited examples of attempts to get HOAF officers to bring alleged human-rights abusers to trial or to stop HOAF officers from engaging in illegal business activities, but they have been stymied by the institutional, cultural, and monetary forces that shape such behavior. According to one State Department official in Honduras, "the police and army are like businesses or enterprises. As such, they represent important 'rice bowls.' So why should the army give up its rice bowl?" It would appear that U.S. training can have little influence if the institutional or social incentive structure is working against the training goals.³

Indeed, most of the high-level civilian officials in the Callejas government have been educated in the most prestigious American universities, which implies, of course, that these officials have spent several years in the United States, have strong English-language skills, and were integrated into American society. Yet, these officials are considered to be extremely corrupt. Officials in the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, for example, observed that many of the high-level civilian officials in the Honduran government regularly enrich themselves directly from the public coffers or indirectly as a result of their positions of authority. Many of these officials have reportedly purchased large real-estate holdings in the United States that would be unaffordable with their state salaries.

³According to one U.S. official, "political behavior [and the lack of] 'professionalism,' respect for human rights and civilian authority in Honduras have strong cultural roots. The United States can only expect to change things at the margin." This indicates that officials in the Embassy think that changes can be achieved, but only minor ones. Fundamental changes cannot be imposed by the United States unless the Hondurans are willing recipients. Interview, U.S. Embassy, Honduras, March 1992.

Nevertheless, to quote the U.S. Ambassador to Honduras, "there are pockets of opportunity out there." This is where the IMET-E program can play an important role. The MILGP in Honduras has already begun to implement the program through its funding of the Honduran National Defense College. Through this institutional arrangement, military and civilian leaders are brought together, in some cases for the first time, for a nine-month period to learn about resource management and the democratic perspective on civil-military relations.

Future Directions and Potential Improvements

The peace in Central America presents many challenges. First, the Salvadoran and Honduran Armed Forces must be demobilized. In the context of the peace accords, the Salvadorans are scheduled to cut their force structure by half, but the Honduran military is resisting efforts to cut its budget. In both cases, these militaries are trying to define their postwar missions. Second, as part of their postwar missions, both militaries are planning to engage in significant civic-action projects. Since the Salvadoran infrastructure will be the target of substantial reconstruction efforts, the Salvadoran army has already been coordinating with the Interior Ministry to define the ESAF role. Third, democratic elections are scheduled for 1993 in Honduras and 1994 in El Salvador. As a result, postwar military professionalism will become especially important. In this context, what role can the United States play in training these militaries?

As a first step toward the development of a healthy civil-military relationship, the United States should continue its support for the Honduran National Defense College and provide the necessary funding under the IMET-E program to seed the development of a similar institution in El Salvador.

One of the principal reasons for the IMET-E program—the potential problem associated with providing nation-building skills to the military—is particularly relevant in El Salvador, but some members of the U.S. Military Advisory Group in El Salvador dispute the contention that the ESAF translates its nation-building skills into political power. They argue, for example, that "the Corps of Engineers doesn't threaten political stability in the United States, so it's ludicrous to believe that the ESAF's nation-building does so in El Salvador." However, this analogy is not appropriate. The MILGP needs to be aware of the potentially deleterious effects associated with the ESAF's nation-building skills, and to fashion training programs accordingly. Conversely, the U.S. in-country team in Honduras is more sensitized to these concerns.

Regarding the development of more-capable judicial systems, it is doubtful that the United States can transform the judicial systems, given the institutional

strength and ethos of the *tanda* and *promoción*. Nevertheless, while only the Salvadorans and Hondurans can actually reform themselves, the United States can help make their judicial systems more technically capable, which is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for establishing a viable judiciary. The U.S. MILGP in Honduras, for example, has arranged for a three-person "legal MTT [Mobile Training Team]" to train personnel from the Honduran military judiciary. Efforts such as these should be continued.

The United States military training establishment needs to be more sensitive to the host-nation training needs of Third World militaries. In the course of this research, the author commonly heard laments that the United States frequently teaches skills and ideas that are of little use to the Salvadoran or Honduran soldier. The idea is to teach U.S. doctrine to Third World officers for greater understanding and interoperability between the military establishments. However, much of U.S. doctrine is simply not applicable within the Third World context.

The United States should also help the Salvadoran and Honduran militaries become more self-sufficient. Both militaries depend heavily on the United States for logistics and maintenance support. Therefore, U.S. training should be focused increasingly on these technical requirements.

Finally, in an environment of scarce resources, it is obviously important to spend every IMET dollar wisely. One way to increase the effect of every IMET dollar is to spend these resources increasingly on Mobile Training Teams and less frequently on stateside training. Doing so might not be possible for some skills, but it should be possible for most training requirements. For the same amount of money, more soldiers can be trained through in-country training teams than with stateside instruction.

Acknowledgments

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance received in the course of the research. He would like to particularly thank the individuals in the U.S. Embassies and military advisory groups (MILGPs) in El Salvador and Honduras who patiently explained the nature of U.S. training efforts in these countries. Also, the author would have never produced this document without the careful and meticulous critiques of colleagues Jennifer Taw, Bruce Hoffman, Benjamin Schwarz, and LTC C. Neil Fulcher—not to mention the careful editing of Marian Branch. The author, of course, is solely responsible for the content of this report.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFSAT	Air Force Security Assistance Training Group
AID	Agency for International Development
AIFLD	American Institute for Free Labor Development
ARENA	<i>Alianza Republicana Nacionalista</i> (National Republican Alliance)
CEMFA	National Training Center (El Salvador)
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
CIDH	Interamerican Human Rights Court
CINC	Commander in chief
CLIC	Center for Low Intensity Conflict
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CONUS	Continental United States
CREMS	Regional Center for Military Training and Security
DNI	Honduran National Department of Investigation
DNUH	National United Directorate of the Honduran Revolutionary Movement
DRU	Unified Revolutionary Directorate
ESAF	El Salvadoran Armed Forces
FID	Foreign internal defense
FMF	Foreign Military Financing (U.S.)
FMLH	Morazanista Front for the Liberation of Honduras
FMLN	Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FPR	People's Revolutionary Forces
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
FUSEP	Honduran Public Security Forces
GAO	General Accounting Office (U.S.)
GOES	Government of El Salvador
HOAF	Honduran Armed Forces
IAAFA	Inter-American Air Forces Academy
IDAD	Internal defense and development
IMET	International Military Education and Training program
IMET-E	Expanded IMET
IMS	International military student
IP	Informational Program
IPSFA	Social Provision Institute of the Armed Forces (El Salvador)
MCA	Military civic action

MILGP	Military advisory group
MPL	Popular Liberation Movement
MPL-C	Popular Liberation Movement— <i>Cinchoneros</i>
MTT	Mobile Training Team
NAVSCIATTS	U.S. Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School
NCO	Noncommissioned officer
NCP	National Campaign Plan
NDC	Honduran National Defense College
OAS	Organization of American States
OCS	Officers Candidate School
OJT	On-the-job training
ONUSAL	United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador
OPATT	Operations, Plans, and Training Team
PDC	Christian Democratic Party
PRTC	Revolutionary Central American Workers Party
PSYOPS	Psychological Operations
SOA	School of the Americas
TAFT	Technical Assistance Field Team
TAT	Technical Assistance Team
UES	University of El Salvador
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission on Refugees
USSOUTHCOM	United States Southern Command

1. Introduction

Background

Even though East-West relations have been transformed over the last few years, there is no shortage of threats to peace and stability facing Third World countries. It is these threats, which include international terrorism, illegal drug production and movement, and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, that accentuate the importance of Third World internal defense and development (IDAD) for the United States.¹ Moreover, it is likely that as U.S. force structures and budgets decline the U.S. military will not be performing some functions in the Third World. As a result, the U.S. military's objective of training foreign militaries to increase their proficiency and self-sufficiency, including training in skills that can be used for internal defense and development, is especially important.

The purpose of this research effort is to evaluate U.S. military training and advisory programs for teaching internal defense and development skills to the militaries of El Salvador and Honduras. By evaluating these training efforts, we can make general observations, perhaps applicable to other Third World countries, on the effectiveness of the programs and potential improvements to the training efforts.

¹Briefing, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Conference on Security Assistance Training Program Management Review, March 31–April 3, 1992, Panama City, Panama. Note, however, that there is a wide spectrum of views on the relevance of the Third World to U.S. national interests. Those who believe that the Third World is relevant to U.S. interests cite its prevalent instability and frequent interstate warfare. These factors can disrupt raw-material supplies (e.g., oil) and/or lead to overt military aggression against the United States (e.g., using weapons of mass destruction). See Steven R. David, "Why the Third World Matters," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Summer 1989, pp. 50–85, and "Why the Third World Still Matters," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Winter 1992/93, pp. 127–159. Others have argued that the importance of the Third World to U.S. interests is only tangential. See, for instance, Stephen Van Evera, "The United States and the Third World: When to Intervene?" in Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber, and Donald Rothchild, eds., *Eagle in a New World: American Grand Strategy in the Post-Cold War Era*, New York: HarperCollins, 1992; Robert H. Johnson, "Exaggerating America's Stakes in Third World Conflicts," *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Winter 1984/85, pp. 32–68; Jerome Slater, "Dominos in Central America: Will They Fall? Does It Matter?" *International Security*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Fall 1987, pp. 105–134; Stephen Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn't: America's Grand Strategy After the Cold War," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, June 1990, pp. 1–51; and David Hendrickson, "The Renovation of American Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 48–63.

El Salvador and Honduras were selected as two of the six case studies² for this research effort because these countries have been the principal regional powers in the U.S. military's most significant counterinsurgent action since the Vietnam War.³ As the major supplier of equipment and training during the 1980s,⁴ the United States orchestrated an unprecedented expansion of their military establishments.⁵ The impetus behind this buildup was the perception that important U.S. interests were threatened by the tumultuous events in Central America in the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁶ Key events include the overthrow of the Somoza regime⁷ in 1979 by the Cuban-supported Sandinista National

²The other case studies are *Thailand and the Philippines: Case Studies in U.S. IMET Training and Its Role in Internal Defense and Development* by Jennifer Morrison Taw, RAND, MR-159-USDP, 1994; and *Liberia and Senegal: Case Studies in U.S. IMET Training and Its Role in Internal Defense and Development* by William H. McCoy, Jr., RAND, N-3637-USDP, 1994.

³The two largest Central American recipients of U.S. foreign aid during the 1980s are El Salvador and Honduras. See General Accounting Office (GAO), *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance in the 1980s*, Washington, D.C.: GAO/NSIAD-89-170, July 1989. El Salvador received about \$5.8 billion (constant 1990 dollars) in foreign aid (\$4.7 billion) and trade credits (\$1.1 billion) from 1980 to 1990. See Congressional Research Service, *El Salvador, 1979-1989: A Briefing Book on U.S. Aid and the Situation in El Salvador*, Washington, D.C., April 28, 1989. However, this distribution between military and economic aid is open to debate. For example, some congressmen have asserted that the administration tried to categorize some military aid as economic aid. See U.S. Congress, *U.S. Aid to El Salvador: An Evaluation of the Past, A Proposal for the Future*, A Report to the Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), February 1985. This report finds that instead of a distribution that is one-third military and two-thirds economic, it is arguably more accurate to characterize it as two-thirds military and one-third economic.

⁴From 1983 to 1987, the U.S. accounted for 90 percent of El Salvador's arms imports and about 70 percent of Honduras's. See Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*, Washington, D.C., various years.

⁵The El Salvadoran Armed Forces increased by 300 percent, from around 14,000 personnel in 1979 to a peak of about 55,000 in 1989. The increase in the size of the Honduran Armed Forces, from 14,000 in 1980 to almost 22,000 in 1987, was a less dramatic 57 percent, but still a significant increase. El Salvador experienced over a fivefold increase in the number of maneuver battalions from 1980 to 1990. It had eight maneuver battalions in 1980 (3 infantry, 1 artillery, 1 cavalry, 1 airborne, and 2 ranger), and 44 in 1990 (32 infantry, 4 artillery, 2 mechanized cavalry, 5 rapid reaction, and 1 airborne). Honduras doubled its force structure during the same period, from an army of about 10 maneuver battalions to around 20. See International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1980-1981 and 1989-1990*, London: Brassey's.

⁶For a discussion of U.S. interests in the region see Samuel Huntington, "America's Changing Strategic Interests," *Survival*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 1991, pp. 3-17. Huntington discusses three categories of interests: (1) *general* (i.e., promoting human rights, democracy, market economies, economic development, and preventing aggression, political instability, and weapons proliferation); (2) *competitive* (i.e., support for anti-communist regimes); and (3) *concrete* (i.e., raw-material suppliers, markets for U.S. goods, U.S. investments, and geopolitical, historical, and symbolic ties). The Kissinger Commission justified U.S. involvement in Central America in terms of U.S. strategic and moral interests by using much the same language. See National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, *Report*, Washington, D.C., 1984, p. 37. Also, the U.S. Southern Command cites many of these reasons for U.S. interests in the region (e.g., achieving regional security and stability; establishing, nurturing, and fostering democratic development; preventing drug production and movement; maintaining U.S. prestige, resources, sea lines of communication, basing and access; and preventing the introduction of weapons of mass destruction), in USSOUTHCOM, "Southern Theater Strategy," briefing delivered at the FY93 USSOUTHCOM Joint Security Assistance Training Program Review, Panama City, Panama, April 1992.

⁷The psychological impact of "losing" Nicaragua made a serious impression on U.S. policymakers given the historical ties between the United States and the Somoza regime; see James Theberge, "The Collapse of the Somoza Regime," in Daniel Pipes and Adam Garfinkle, eds., *Friendly Tyrants: An American Dilemma*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991. The United States created the Nicaraguan National Guard in 1927 as an internal security force, and the first Nicaraguan chief of the

Liberation Front (FSLN) and subsequent Cuban and FSLN support for the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN)⁸ in El Salvador.

Despite the fact that this revolutionary activity was taking place within a context of regional economic deterioration, intensifying poverty, and social unrest, the intellectual framework that informed U.S. foreign policy during this period⁹ and the precarious position of the El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) vis-à-vis the rebels¹⁰ almost required the United States to initially adopt a military response. It did so by supporting the anti-Sandinista forces (the Democratic National Resistance, or contras), establishing a regional counterinsurgency base in Honduras, increasing intelligence activities in the region, and fashioning military establishments in El Salvador and Honduras that were capable of meeting the threat posed by the Sandinista regime and the FMLN. Ultimately, U.S. activities in the region were guided by three documents that provided a comprehensive framework for U.S. policy by intertwining the political, economic, and military

National Guard (and the father of two sons who would follow as chiefs or presidents) was Anastasio Somoza Garcia. See Richard Millett, *Guardians of the Dynasty*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977; and Caesar Sereseres, "U.S. Military Aid, Authoritarian Rule, and Military Politics in Central America," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2, February 1979, pp. 329–333.

⁸In fall 1980, the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU) announced the founding of the FMLN, made up of the Popular Liberation Forces—Farabundo Marti, the People's Revolutionary Army, the Armed Forces for National Liberation, and the Armed Forces of the National Resistance. This group eventually fielded around 12,000 fighters, but estimates in the early 1990s place its strength at 6,000 to 7,000 combatants.

⁹President Jimmy Carter eventually viewed the Sandinista regime as a threat to U.S. interests, but his administration's hesitation on this issue was indicative of the dilemma it faced between standing behind its human-rights policy and having to support a repressive regime to protect U.S. interests. In many ways, however, the Reagan foreign policy rhetoric, if not its actions, was fashioned in direct response to the Carter emphasis on human rights. See Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary*, Vol. 68, No. 5, November 1979, pp. 34–45; the text of the statement on conventional arms transfer policy issued by President Carter on May 19, 1977, in Graham Kearns, *Arms for the Poor*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980; and Ronald Reagan, "Announcement Concerning a Presidential Directive on United States Conventional Arms Transfer Policy," *Public Papers of the President*, July 9, 1981; David Carleton and Michael Stohl, "The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan," *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1985, pp. 205–229; and "U.S. Foreign Assistance Policy and the Redemocratization of Latin America," in George A. Lopez and Michael Stohl, eds., *Liberalization and Redemocratization in Latin America*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1987, pp. 231–262. In many respects, President Reagan's policies marked a return to *realpolitik* and viewed conflicts in the Third World through the prism of U.S.–Soviet relations. For a history of various attempts to grapple with the competing themes of moralism and *realpolitik* in U.S. foreign policy, see Pipes and Garfinkle, eds., *Friendly Tyrants*, 1991.

¹⁰According to General Jaime Abdul Gutierrez, who was a member of the civil-military junta that took control of the Salvadoran government after deposing General Romero in October 1979, "there were three fundamental, grave deficiencies in the [El Salvadoran] armed forces: (1) a total lack of equipment; (2) lack of training; and (3) mostly it was not being prepared to confront the type of problems we were facing at the time. We also lacked an adequate intelligence system, and overall, we were not prepared to deal with a revolutionary war, which was ideological to begin with . . . we did not have the ability to command a small unit. . . . We did not have anyone prepared to train small unit commanders," in Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, eds., *El Salvador at War—An Oral History*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1988, p. 60.

tools of statecraft: the Woerner Report, the National Campaign Plan (NCP), and the Kissinger Commission Report.¹¹

The Woerner Report was crafted in 1981, at the beginning of U.S. involvement, and focused primarily on the steps necessary to transform the ESAF into an effective fighting force.¹² The Woerner team found a military establishment in El Salvador that was in desperate need of remediation. One American officer with long experience in El Salvador characterized the ESAF in 1979 as "a militia of 11,000 that had no mission," while another American recalled that during that period the Salvadoran army spent its time "sitting in garrison abusing civilians."¹³ The ESAF had limited ground, air, and sea capabilities and were considered by most American military experts to be inadequately equipped and trained.¹⁴ According to U.S. officials, the "ESAF were a static, defensive force, trained and equipped toward internal security functions but not for military operations."¹⁵ It was felt that, if these deficiencies were not rectified, an FMLN victory was probable; so the Woerner Report recommended a huge expansion of the ESAF force structure, the modernization of its equipment, and a refashioning of its battlefield tactics.¹⁶

For a counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy to be effective, it must incorporate the "hard" elements of combat operations, such as site security, intelligence, and logistics, as well as the "soft" elements of civil affairs and psychological operations,¹⁷ but the Woerner report did not offer a detailed plan on the so-called soft elements.¹⁸ Rather, the focus of the Woerner Report was on fashioning the ESAF into an effective fighting force. Accordingly, it was principally concerned with the necessary steps to adequately equip and train the ESAF for combat operations. The National Campaign Plan (NCP) in 1983, however, did articulate a strategy to win the hearts and minds of the Salvadoran populace. The focus of the National Campaign Plan was to incorporate the soft elements of COIN to

¹¹See Lt. Col. A. J. Bacevich, Lt. Col. James Hallums, Lt. Col. Richard White, and Lt. Col. Thomas Young, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, for the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Washington, D.C.: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1988. This report is also known as the *Colonels' Report*.

¹²The Woerner Report is officially entitled *Report of the El Salvador Military Strategy Assistance Team*. On the importance of the Woerner Report and the way in which it fashioned subsequent U.S. policies toward the conflict, see Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 1988, pp. 110-116.

¹³*Colonels' Report*, 1988, p. 24.

¹⁴Some prominent members of the Salvadoran military shared this assessment. See interview with General Jaime Abdul Gutierrez in Manwaring and Prisk, *El Salvador at War*, 1988, p. 60.

¹⁵*El Salvador: Military Assistance Has Helped Counter but Not Overcome the Insurgency*, Washington, D.C.: GAO, GAO/NSIAD-91-166, April 1991, p. 13.

¹⁶*Colonels' Report*, 1988, p. 21.

¹⁷Michael A. Sheehan employs this terminology in "Comparative Counterinsurgency Strategies: Guatemala and El Salvador," *Conflict*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1989, pp. 127-154.

¹⁸To secure the cooperation of the ESAF, General Woerner was specifically directed not to examine these so-called soft elements.

complement the hard elements. It called, therefore, for a large dose of civic action in areas that were to be cleared of the FMLN.

The Woerner Report and NCP focused solely on El Salvador, but the Kissinger Commission report synthesized their findings to a large extent and applied them generally to the Central American region.¹⁹ The Kissinger Commission, for its part, recognized that poverty and repression in the region had created the "tinder," but that Soviets, Cubans, and Nicaraguans were attempting to exploit the situation by supporting insurgencies in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Given the multiple causes for the regional turmoil, any solution would require a multidimensional approach. Accordingly, the Kissinger Commission established six U.S. foreign policy goals for solving the region's problems: (1) stabilization of the economy; (2) growth of the economy; (3) broadening of the benefits of economic growth; (4) promotion of democracy and respect for human rights; (5) assurance of security through coordinated military and civil action; and (6) achievement of a diplomatic settlement.²⁰ As we shall see in Section 2, these six goals mesh tightly with the definition of *internal defense and development*.

Research Approach

A comparative case-study research method is used to assess the effectiveness of U.S. military training in El Salvador and Honduras. This analytical strategy aims to obtain generalized findings from unique historical cases by using a common set of structured questions to focus on certain aspects of the case.²¹

Some experts on El Salvador and Honduras might object to this juxtaposition, citing the important differences in their respective national experiences, but these differences are what create the opportunity to isolate the antecedent factors that affect outcomes and to identify the causal patterns associated with those outcomes. For example, if the United States experiences greater success in one of the countries, then it is possible to explain the variation in outcomes by identifying the differing circumstances that appear to account for the variation. Likewise, if the United States is equally successful or unsuccessful in both countries, then we can, it is hoped, identify the similarities between the cases that account for those outcomes.

¹⁹The National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, *Report* (Kissinger Commission Report), Washington, D.C., 1984.

²⁰Congressional Research Service, *El Salvador, 1979-1989*, 1989, pp. 1-2.

²¹See Alexander L. George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," in Paul Gordon Lauren, ed., *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, New York: Free Press, 1979.

Through this approach we hope to derive lessons learned and/or insights gained from the U.S. training efforts in El Salvador and Honduras. A *lesson learned* in this case means that a generalizable finding can be derived that can be applied to the future, and an *insight gained* suggests that the finding cannot be generalized but is nevertheless intrinsically interesting and important for understanding the case from which it comes.²²

An extensive literature review was performed, and numerous interviews were conducted with individuals from the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Defense Security Assistance Agency, U.S. Army, Defense Intelligence Agency, and Central American experts at various universities in the United States. The interviews were conducted in Washington D.C., Panama, El Salvador, and Honduras; several telephone interviews also were conducted.

Outline

This report is divided into five sections: Section 2 defines *internal defense and development* and discusses some of the issues surrounding it; Section 3 begins the case studies with El Salvador, followed by Section 4 with Honduras; Section 5 offers conclusions and recommendations. There are also two appendixes. Appendix A illustrates the important roles played by the Salvadoran and Honduran armies; Appendix B provides information on training efforts by the U.S. Air Force.

²²See Jay Luvaas, "Lessons and Lessons Learned: A Historical Perspective," in Robert Harkavy and Stephanie G. Neuman, eds., *The Lessons of Recent Wars in the Third World*, Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1985.

2. Understanding Internal Defense and Development

IDAD: A Definition

One of the main responsibilities of Third World governments is to formulate, articulate, and execute their own IDAD strategy, and it is believed that such countries can achieve a measure of political stability through successful IDAD implementation.¹ The role of the United States is to provide equipment and training that supports the host government's IDAD strategy.² *Internal defense and development* is defined as

the full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and to protect itself from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. The strategy focuses on *building* viable political, economic, military and social institutions that respond to the needs of society. Its fundamental goal is to prevent insurgency by forestalling and defeating the threat insurgent organizations pose and by working to correct conditions that prompt violence. The government mobilizes the population to participate in IDAD efforts. *Thus, IDAD is ideally a preemptive strategy against insurgency; however, if an insurgency develops, it is a strategy for counterinsurgency activities* [italics mine].³

¹There is a distinction between *internal defense* and *foreign internal defense* (FID): *Foreign internal defense* is defined as "participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken *by another government* [italics mine] to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency." Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, December 1, 1989, p. 150.

²The definitions, functions, and principles associated with internal defense and development are sufficiently broad to accommodate a wide spectrum of training activities. It should be no surprise, then, that U.S. military training of foreign military personnel in the context of IDAD, like security assistance training in general, is funded and undertaken through a variety of means, including the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, Foreign Military Financing (FMF), the Informational Program (IP), deployed advisers and trainers, and joint exercises. Most of these programs fall under the rubric of security assistance. *Security assistance* is defined in DoD, *Department of Defense Dictionary*, 1989, p. 327, as "groups of programs . . . by which the United States provides defense articles, military training, and other defense-related services, by grant, loan, credit, or cash sales, in furtherance of national policies and objectives." See Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management, *The Management of Security Assistance*, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, 1988; Lieutenant Colonel Thomas E. Mitchell, "Fighting at the Lower End: Applying Operational Art to Security Assistance," Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, monograph, May 9, 1990, pp. 11-30; GAO, *U.S. Security and Military Assistance: Programs and Related Activities—An Update*, Washington, D.C.: GAO, GAO/NSIAD-85-158, September 30, 1985. For a history of these programs in the context of U.S. foreign policy goals, see Richard F. Grimmett, "The Role of Security Assistance in Historical Perspective," in Ernest Graves and Steven A. Hildreth, eds., *U.S. Security Assistance: The Political Process*, Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1985.

³Headquarters, Departments of the Army and the Air Force, *Military Operations In Low Intensity Conflict*, Washington, D.C.: FM 100-20/AFP 3-20, December 5, 1990, pp. 2-7. *Internal defense* is "the full range of measures taken by a government to free and protect its society from subversion,

IDAD in the Central American Context

While some Third World governments enjoy the luxury of fashioning and executing their IDAD strategies as preemptory attempts to clear dangerously "flammable tinder" before a "flash point" is reached,⁴ this was not the case in Central American during the 1980s. The tinderbox had already ignited, and insurgency and instability hung over the region like a pall of smoke. As a result, the conclusions and recommendations from the Kissinger Commission, which can be viewed to a large extent as a road map for achieving internal defense and development for the countries in Central America, emphasized the steps necessary to regain stability. Because the sources of regional instability were viewed by the commission as the externally supported insurgency and the socioeconomic conditions that initially gave birth to it, U.S. training efforts emphasized counterinsurgent and nation-building strategies.

This is not to suggest that the United States always orients most of its training to support a Third World government's IDAD plan by focusing mainly on counterinsurgency techniques. Indeed, U.S. training should ideally be designed to provide nation-building skills so that counterinsurgency techniques are unnecessary. However, in many respects, El Salvador and Honduras represent unique cases because there were active insurgencies in both countries during the 1980s. In the current and future climates of relative peace and quiescence, where the militaries are beginning to demobilize and the rebels are beginning to be reassimilated into society, the focus of U.S. training will assuredly shift to reflect the changing statesystematically engage in human- course, that the focus will be increasingly on internal development activities designed to preempt the reemergence of an active insurgency.

Internal Defense. Many elements, such as peacekeeping and police activities, are associated with internal defense besides the strict elements of counterinsurgency. However, since insurgencies were active in these countries, most U.S. training was devoted to COIN.⁵ As a result, training the ESAF and HOAF in skills for internal defense has been expressed principally as

lawlessness, and insurgency." *Internal development* is defined as the "actions taken by a nation to promote its growth by building viable institutions (political, military, economic, and social) that respond to the needs of its society." See U.S. Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Dictionary*, 1989.

⁴Note that a fundamental problem facing the United States in this context is that many Third World countries do not have an IDAD strategy.

⁵As previously indicated, COIN can be dichotomized into its "hard" and "soft" elements, with the hard elements being the traditional combat or warfighting activities, and the soft elements being the activities generally associated with nation-building. In this discussion of internal defense, I am referring to the hard elements of COIN. In the following discussion of internal development, I am referring generally to the soft elements of COIN.

counterinsurgency training. In fact, achieving internal defense (i.e., peace and stability) was viewed by the Kissinger Commission as a necessary condition before internal development could take place.⁶

Internal Development. Since the focus is on building sustainable institutions that respond to the needs of society, the United States attempts to impart IDAD skills that can be used by Third World countries to achieve internal development. For example, teaching an engineering unit methods for constructing roads and bridges can lead to improvements in the country's economic infrastructure (i.e., economic development); instructing a medical unit in ways to administer basic preventive medical care can improve the health of the country's citizens (i.e., social development); and training basic soldiering skills can increase the combat effectiveness of the country's armed forces (i.e., military development). Moreover, to successfully counter an insurgency, it is believed that a military must behave in a *professional manner*, which means, at least to the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), that the military accepts democratically elected civilian authority, respects international standards of human rights, and does not engage in corrupt practices.⁷ This emphasis on human rights, democracy, and the elimination of corruption has important implications for nation-building and internal development in El Salvador and Honduras, and represents an important attempt to foster democracy (i.e., political development).⁸ Although these facets of internal development have only recently regained a renewed emphasis in the Expanded IMET (IMET-E) program, they have long been viewed as the *sine qua non* for stability in El Salvador and Honduras, if for no other reason than that the counterinsurgency required improvements in these areas if it was to be effective.

⁶The commission recognized the intertwined nature of the region's economic, political, social, and military problems. However, they note that "unless the externally-supported insurgencies are checked and the violence curbed, progress on those other fronts (i.e., economic, political, and social) will be elusive and would be fragile." See Kissinger Commission Report, January 1984, p. 4.

⁷This definition was provided in briefings presented at the Security Assistance Training Program Management Review, Panama City, Panama, March-April 1992. This definition is consistent with other definitions found in the literature. For example, Janowitz's definition of *professionalism* involves the elements of technical expertise, corporate loyalty, and self-regulation, but it really centers on the attributes of the attitudes and behavior of the officer corps. See Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, New York: Free Press, 1960.

⁸Teaching human rights, democratic values, and respect for civilian control over the military to international military students gained new emphasis in 1991 with the IMET-E. However, teaching respect for human rights to members of Third World militaries did not begin in 1991. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 was amended by Congress in 1978 to incorporate the goal of teaching human rights in the IMET program. IMET was to be used, in part, to increase "the awareness of foreign nationals participating in [IMET] activities of basic issues involving internationally recognized human rights," in *U.S. Code*, Chapter 5, Section 543 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended by the Internal Security Assistance Act of 1978 (22 U.S.C. 2347b).

The Appropriateness and Adequacy of Training IDAD Skills

Nation-Building—Internal or Infrastructure Development

The issue of whether Third World militaries can adequately perform as nation-building entities has engendered much debate. A rich body of academic literature centers on the role of the military as a "nation-builder." For instance, some scholars have stressed certain constructive qualities of the armed forces, and have viewed the process of military involvement beyond purely military matters as primarily, or at least potentially, a positive contribution to "nation-building." Others have tended to view such intervention as a persistent malady working against the country's economic, political, and social well-being.⁹

⁹There are really four different perspectives on this issue: (1) the military as nation-builders; (2) the military as conservative or reactionary; (3) the military as both; and (4) the military as indistinguishable from civilian regimes. The proponents of the first perspective point out that the Third World militaries generally possess characteristics that place them in a unique position to act as modernizers. The military is, for example, often the most modernized and institutionally developed organization in the country, rationally oriented, technologically capable, and socialized in the norms of modernity and development. The armed forces are also seen as comprising individuals who are generally better educated than the wider society, and in possession of more expertise and organizational abilities than other institutions in developing societies. See, for example, John Johnson, ed., *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962, and essays therein by Lucian Pye ("Armies in the Process of Political Modernization") and Edward Shils ("The Military in the Political Development of New States"); and Henry Bienen, *The Military and Modernization*, Chicago, Ill.: Aldine-Atherton, 1971, and "Armed Forces and National Modernization," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, October 1983, pp. 1-16. However, there are those who see the military as reactionary or conservative and assert that the military has its own corporate interests, which it generally acts to protect and consolidate with little regard for the interests of the wider society. It is frequently charged that U.S. military equipment and training have served to increase the conservative or reactionary tendencies of the military, particularly in Latin America. Some have argued that, in particular, U.S.-supplied counterinsurgency equipment and training are typically used by the military against its civilian population. These arguments can be found in Samuel Edward Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*, New York: Praeger Publishing, 1962; Eric Nordlinger, "Soldiers in Mufti: The Impact of Military Rule Upon Economic and Social Change in Non-Western States," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, December 1970, pp. 1130-1148, and *Soldiers and Politics: Military Coups and Governments*, New York: Prentice Hall, 1977; and John Samuel Fitch, "The Political Impact of U.S. Military Aid to Latin America," in Edwin Lieuwen, ed., *Arms and Politics in Latin America*, New York: Praeger Publishing, 1960, p. 362. A third perspective seeks to synthesize these two approaches by asserting that, in poor countries, the military generally acts as a progressive and modernizing force; but, in more economically developed countries, the military tends to be more conservative and reactionary. This perspective paints the Third World military as a more dynamic player in its country's politics, able to change its role in society in response to changes in the political landscape as a chameleon changes its colors in response to a changing foliage. See Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968. Finally, inspired by the debate between these three schools, various empiricists have attempted to ascertain whether the military generally acts as a nation-builder in Third World countries. Most of these studies have concluded that there is no general pattern to the behavior of Third World militaries; they are generally neither progressive nor reactionary. See Robert Jackman, "Politicians in Uniform: Military Governments and Social Change in the Third World," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 70, December 1976, pp. 1096-1097. Also see R. D. McKinlay and A. S. Cohan, "A Comparative Analysis of the Political and Economic Performance of Military and Civilian Regimes: A Cross-National Aggregate Study," *Comparative Politics*, October 1975.

The latter perspective seems to be the prevalent viewpoint in the U.S. Congress. It is believed that these nation-building skills can be used by the armed forces of Third World countries to compete with the civilian sector in projects designed for social and economic development and to potentially acquire political power through them.¹⁰ Also, questions have recently been raised over the effectiveness of the International Military Education and Training¹¹ program for training international military students to respect human rights.¹² Indeed, the Expanded IMET program was inaugurated in 1991 as a result of some of these concerns.¹³

¹⁰Many Central American experts believe that, by modernizing the militaries in Central America, the United States may also have increased the military's power to the detriment of civilian governments. See GAO, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance*, 1989, pp. 25-26; and Tina Rosenberg, "Beyond Elections," *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 84, Fall 1991, pp. 72-91.

¹¹IMET is a component program of the United States Security Assistance Program and provides military education and training for about 5,000 students annually in over 2,000 courses at approximately 150 U.S. military schools. Since 1950, over 500,000 international military students have been trained through IMET and its predecessor programs. Section 543 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, identifies three purposes of the IMET program: (1) to encourage effective, mutually beneficial relations and increased understanding between the United States and foreign countries in furtherance of the goals of international peace and security; (2) to improve the ability of participating foreign countries to utilize their resources, including defense articles and defense services obtained by them from the United States, with maximum effectiveness, thereby contributing to greater self-reliance by such countries; and (3) to increase the awareness of nationals of foreign countries participating in such activities of basic issues involving internationally recognized human rights. A recent GAO report, *Security Assistance: Observations on the International Military Education and Training Program*, Washington, D.C.: GAO, GAO/NSIAD-90-215BR, June 1990, finds the IMET program valuable in that it (1) enhances military-to-military relations, (2) provides reciprocal training for U.S. personnel, (3) promotes democratization, (4) provides weapon system sales for U.S. industry, (5) improves the professionalism of the recipient nation's military, and (6) enhances understanding of U.S. doctrine and technology. Nevertheless, some have questioned these alleged benefits, particularly regarding efforts to instill respect for human rights. See Defense Security Assistance Agency and Department of State, *The United States International Military Education and Training Program*, A Report Submitted to the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, February 1990, p. 2. For general information on the IMET program, see GAO, *Security Assistance*, 1990.

¹²For example, the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations called for a comprehensive study on the IMET program by pointing out that the United States has been training hundreds of soldiers from countries with deplorable human-rights records: 4,000 officers were trained from Nicaragua under Somoza, 4,000 from Ethiopia, 9,000 from Brazil, 7,000 from Chile, 6,000 from Argentina, 3,000 from Guatemala, and 2,000 from El Salvador before U.S. assistance was cut off to those countries in the 1970s because of the military abuses of human rights and interference in civilian, constitutional government. See U.S. Senate, *Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriation Bill*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1990, p. 162.

¹³The IMET-E program was designed to specifically include "members of national legislatures and their staffs; and that the military training known as 'Nation Building' (training of militaries in the construction of public works and other social and economic development activities, i.e., 'civic action') be offered exclusively to those countries lacking in civilian agencies capable of undertaking such tasks, and at the request of freely-elected democratic governments." In *The Congressional Record*, Vol. 137, No. 9, January 14, 1991, pp. S847-S852; *The Congressional Record*, Vol. 137, No. 77, May 21, 1991, pp. S6257-S6259. For additional information on the IMET-E program, see "The Development of the Expanded IMET Initiative," *The DISAM Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1991, pp. 94-98; Defense Security Assistance Agency, *Expanded IMET Initiative, Handbook*, Washington, D.C., 1992.

Internal Defense

Many have asserted that the skills and equipment applicable to internal defense are usually used for internal control and political repression.¹⁴ Making such a connection typically has the effect of alienating the people from the government, not securing their allegiance to it. Indeed, at the core of President Carter's much-applauded and much-maligned attempt to infuse human-rights considerations into U.S. foreign policy was an implicit assumption of a connection between military assistance and the incidence of political repression. Nearly 20 countries in the Third World experienced either cuts or outright termination of U.S. military assistance during the Carter presidency because of their human-rights violations.¹⁵ The belief in the connection between arms, training, and repression is further evidenced by the decision to establish stringent prohibitions on the transfer of police equipment and training to repressive governments.¹⁶ However, despite the clamor over the potentially deleterious institutional effects of U.S. Security Assistance on the political development of Third World countries, the empirical evidence has been far from conclusive. In fact, many of these studies have concluded that U.S. military training and equipment have little or no effect, negative or otherwise, on the institutional behavior of Latin American militaries.¹⁷

¹⁴The following is a partial list of criticism: Michael Klare, *Supplying Repression: U.S. Support for Authoritarian Regimes Abroad*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1977, and "Militarism: The Issues Today," in Asbjorn Eide and Marek Thee, eds., *Problems of Contemporary Militarism*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980, pp. 36-46; Marek Thee, "Militarism and Militarization in Contemporary International Relations," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1977, pp. 296-309; Asbjorn Eide, "The Transfer of Arms to Third World Countries and Their Internal Uses," *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1976, pp. 307-325; Raimo Vayrynen, "Economic and Political Consequences of Arms Transfers to the Third World," *Alternatives*, Vol. 6, No. 1, March 1980, pp. 131-155; Asbjorn Eide and Marek Thee, *Problems of Contemporary Militarism*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980; Michael Randle, "Militarism and Repression," *Alternatives*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Summer 1981, pp. 61-144; Richard Falk, "Militarization and Human Rights in the Third World," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1977, p. 221; Edward N. Muller, "Dependent Economic Development, Aid Dependence of the United States, and Democratic Breakdown in the Third World," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 29, 1985, pp. 445-469.

¹⁵Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy*, Lanham, Md.: Hamilton Press, 1986, p. 44.

¹⁶Lars Schoultz has pointed out that, in the 1960s and 1970s, the presumption that equipment and training transfers create and maintain repressive governments grew out of the observation that, at least in Latin America, some of the most repressive governments in the region were also the largest recipients of U.S. military assistance—although he appears to find the empirical evidence on the issue mixed. Refer to Lars Schoultz, *Human Rights and United States Policy Toward Latin America*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 211-266.

¹⁷Refer to Charles Wolf, Jr., "The Political Effects of Military Programs: Some Indications from Latin America," *Orbis*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1965, pp. 877-885; and Philippe Schmitter, "Foreign Military Assistance, National Military Spending, and Military Rule in Latin America, 1945-61, 1962-70," in Philippe C. Schmitter, ed., *Military Rule in Latin America: Function, Consequences, and Perspectives*, Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1973, pp. 130-147; and John M. Baines, "U.S. Military Assistance to Latin America: An Assessment," *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 4, November 1972, pp. 476-478, 485.

Other Mitigating Factors

As the United States has attempted to train the skills applicable to internal defense and development, it has faced three fundamental questions. First, can the United States effect basic attitudinal and behavioral change in the *individual* soldier who receives the training?¹⁸ Second, assuming the individual soldier internalizes the lessons on "professionalism," can this individual-level metamorphosis be translated into a wider *institutional* transformation?¹⁹ Third,

¹⁸The question of whether U.S.-sponsored training can transform the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of soldiers in Third World militaries is fundamentally important, because disagreements over the fundamental causes of human behavior lie at the core of psychology's paradigms. Several arguments have been advanced that challenge the assumption that behavioral and attitudinal changes can be achieved through U.S. training. It is perhaps optimistic to believe that individual attitudes and behaviors are so malleable that they can be systematically altered in the face of previous socialization and individual experiences. It is questionable whether previous socialization can be altered after a 6-hour or a 5-day class, which is the length of the program of instruction for the two versions of the IMET-E program being developed by the Naval Justice School. In fact, without detailed opinion data, it is impossible to scientifically assess this issue. But a few attempts have been made to obtain opinion data from Latin American military officers. See John Samuel Fitch, *The Military Coup d'État as a Political Process: Ecuador, 1948-1966*, Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977; and William R. Salisbury, "Special Career Experiences and Role Definitions Among Peruvian Officers," M.A. thesis, Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida, 1977. These studies have generally found that attitudes and behavior are less a function of U.S. training than a perception of the military's ability, relative to the civilian ability, to solve the country's problems; see Fitch, "The Political Impact of U.S. Military Aid," 1979, p. 368. To be sure, this perceived capability can be affected by U.S. training, especially if the U.S. training is making the military more capable. Nevertheless, by and large, these perceptions seem to be shaped by the ongoing record of success and failure of civilian and military governments. Apart from the effect of classroom instruction, it has been asserted that, since the international military student is living in the United States, he is somewhat enmeshed in, or at least exposed to, the American political and popular cultures, which place a premium on respect for human rights; see Richard Ericson, Deputy Director, Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, Department of State, in testimony before the Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, *Foreign Assistance Legislation for Fiscal Year 1979*, Part 9, Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1978, pp. 455-456. However, it is questionable whether the values of American culture can be internalized through an extended stay in the United States. In short, whether one can truly adopt U.S. values "through osmosis"—the fundamental premise of the Informational Program is that one can—has been challenged, albeit indirectly, by sociologists and social psychologists doing research on race relations in the United States; see Yehuda Amir, "Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations," *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 71, May 1969, pp. 319-342.

¹⁹John Samuel Fitch distinguishes between institutional and individual effects in "The Political Impact of U.S. Military Aid," 1979, pp. 360-386. It has been asserted that human rights and civil-military relations are not taught to a sufficient number of Third World soldiers to effect institutional changes. It has been alleged, for example, that IMET and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) training is mostly technical and narrowly military in content, and that only a small percentage of trainees are enrolled in courses "with any direct relations to politico-military questions or human rights issues." See John Samuel Fitch, "Human Rights and the U.S. Military Training Program: Alternatives for Latin America," *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 3, Fall 1981, p. 67. Fitch maintains that, in the early 1980s, about 70 percent of IMET trainees were enrolled in purely military courses, such as infantry tactics or gunnery school, and perhaps another 5 to 10 percent were in courses concerned with military training and management techniques, with only a very small fraction having any direct relationship to civil-military or human-rights issues. Such courses are consistent with the type of training given to members of the ESAF and HOAF, at least during the initial years of the conflict—the reason being, obviously, the immediacy of the war. However, the level of human-rights training has increased dramatically at the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA). In 1981, only about 25 percent of the classes offered at the SOA had some presentation and discussion of human-rights issues (Fitch, "Human Rights," 1981, p. 69); but, in 1992, every course offered at SOA included instruction in human-rights issues, even such seemingly "pristine" technical courses as "Night Vision Goggle Qualification," "Aircraft Power Train Repairer Course," and other technically oriented courses (see U.S. Army School of the Americas, *Course Catalog*, Ft. Benning, Ga., 1992). Other institutional barriers also have been thwarting U.S. attempts to transform the military establishments

given the multitude of exogenous factors that affect democratic political development and structurally induced political repression,²⁰ can the military play an instrumental role in effecting change on a *societal* level?

For instance, the extent of political repression in the world has given birth to a substantial body of literature that seeks to understand its causes and consequences, particularly for Third World countries. A wide variety of factors seems to determine whether a state systematically engages in politically repressive actions. These factors could be so deterministic that the question of whether training the soldiers of Third World militaries is sufficient to mitigate the effect of other factors, particularly if the other factors orient the state toward engaging in human-rights abuses, is moot.²¹

of Third World countries. In El Salvador there is the *tanda* system and, in Honduras, the *promoción* system. Under these institutional structures, officers are promoted *en masse*, regardless of merit. Merit does enter into the equation, however, when commands or assignments are determined within the *tanda*. For example, the top officers within the *tanda* receive the most prestigious commands, such as the top combat units, whereas the least competent officers obtain the least desirable commands, such as the military prisons. Nevertheless, the bonds are so strong within the *tanda* that the officers close their ranks and protect even the most incompetent and corrupt members of their *tanda*. It has been asserted that this institutionalized military culture exercises such tremendous influence over the behavior of the individual soldiers that it obviates U.S. military training. The *Colonels' Report*, 1988, pp. 26–27, claims that “the proponents of American methods must choose between being ostracized and giving in to those demanding adherence to Salvadoran military traditions. Thus, officers who acquire the right skills and values at Fort Benning or the Regional Military Training Center revert to the old way of doing things with disturbing frequency once back in El Salvador.”

²⁰Edward N. Muller and Erich Weede discuss the distinction between *structural* and *behavioral* repression in “Cross-National Variation in Political Violence: A Rational Action Approach,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1990, p. 633. *Structural repression* refers to repression that is systemic in nature. For example, while both dictatorships and democracies are capable of exercising political repression, a dictatorship does not have the same sort of structural elements that a democracy has (e.g., the franchise to vote, an independent judiciary, freedom of expression) to allow individuals to pursue their political interests free from the threat of negative sanctions. Consequently, a structurally repressive regime can exert repression by closing off avenues of individual and/or group political expression and not necessarily employ an overt repressive act, such as an arrest. *Behavioral repression*, on the other hand, refers to the specific overt negative sanctions that most of us think of when we think of human-rights abuses. Negative sanctions are typically shorter-term measures and are utilized by democracies as well as dictatorships; they include such events as politically motivated arrests and other limitations on individual freedom.

²¹Some argue that military regimes seem to be particularly disposed toward politically repressive acts—that the more the regime is controlled by the military, the greater the likelihood is that it will be a repressive regime (see Falk, “Militarization,” 1977; Randle, “Militarism and Repression,” 1982). Others have been concerned more generally with the characteristics of the regime by arguing that human rights are primarily, if not exclusively, respected solely by states grounded in a liberal tradition, as opposed to a communitarian one. See R. E. Howard and J. Donnelly, “Human Dignity, Human Rights, and Political Regimes,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 2, 1986, pp. 801–818. Other research indicates that there is a linkage between the level of economic development and political repression in a society. It is intuitively plausible that, with a higher level of economic development, less repression will be required by the elites because the population will be more satisfied. Also, some empirical research indicates that countries with higher levels of economic development have more equitable distributions of this wealth, thereby allowing more wealth to be distributed to the masses. But others have questioned the importance of economic development as a causal factor. Refer to E. Zimmermann, “Macro-comparative Research on Political Protest,” in Ted Gurr, ed., *Handbook of Political Conflict: Theory and Research*, New York: Free Press, 1980, pp. 167–237; D. L. Banks, “Patterns of Oppression: A Statistical Analysis of Human Rights,” *American Statistical Association: Proceedings of the Social Statistics Section*, Vol. 62, 1985, pp. 154–163; Neil J. Mitchell and James M. McCormick, “Economic and Political Explanations of Human Rights Violations,” *World Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1988, pp. 476–498; Ernest A. Duff, John F. McCamant, and Wiltraud Q. Morales, *Violence and Repression in Latin America: A Quantitative and Historical Analysis*, New York:

The United States has long held that it is essential for Third World militaries to respect democratic norms and values, and this is reflected, obviously, in the range of programs created to accomplish this objective. It is believed that security assistance, which includes training, helps create "democracy and political reform, justice and respect for human rights, and an environment conducive to representative government."²² Indeed, as evidence to substantiate these claims, U.S. experience in Latin America is held as the exemplar where, it is alleged, in "the past 14 years, such policies have been instrumental in creating an atmosphere in which dictators have been replaced by elected governments in nearly all Latin American countries."²³

It is questionable, however, whether training the soldiers of the ESAF and HOAF can play an important role in developing democratic political systems, given the diverse factors that contribute to democratic development.²⁴ It is quite possible that other historical, economic, social, and political factors are much more

Free Press, 1976, pp. 58-59; and Miles Wolpin, "State Terrorism and Repression in the Third World," in M. Stohl and G. A. Lopez, eds., *Government Violence and Repression: An Agenda for Research*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1986. On a related note, there appears to be a relationship between the rate of economic growth and the likelihood of repression. It is hypothesized that, as the rate of economic growth increases, it simultaneously unleashes social forces demanding social change, which can in turn lead to a higher likelihood of repression. Such repression is motivated by the state's supposed desire to stymie political participation unleashed by the development process. See M. D. Ward, *The Political Economy of Distribution: Equality Versus Inequality*, New York: Elsevier North-Holland, 1978. Another related theory has to do with economic equality. It is hypothesized that the greater the level of economic inequality is, the higher are the odds of political repression. Much has been written about how the state can be used by elites as a coercive vehicle to either maintain a maldistribution of resources or to create one (R. E. Howard and J. Donnelly, "Introduction" to their *International Handbook of Human Rights*, New York: Greenwood, 1987). The principal problem, obviously, is that economic inequality can lead to civil strife when the controlling elites are unwilling to relinquish their wealth (T. R. Gurr, "The Political Origins of State Violence and Terror: A Theoretical Analysis," in Stohl and Lopez, *Government Violence and Repression*, 1986, pp. 45-71), as is illustrated in El Salvador, where perhaps the major cause of the insurgency and subsequent repression has been the maldistribution of the country's wealth (i.e., land). Some empirical evidence seems to confirm this hypothesis, but others have disputed the significance of this relationship. See Conway W. Henderson, "Conditions Affecting the Use of Political Repression," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, No. 1, March 1991, pp. 120-142; Muller, "Dependent Economic Development," 1985; Duff, McCamant, and Morales, *Violence and Repression*, 1976. It is also likely that the higher the degree of threat (real or perceived) is to the regime, the greater is the chance it will use repression. If a regime is under intense threat, from either an external or internal source, it seems intuitively plausible that it will use repression more readily than it otherwise would when faced with challenges to its authority.

²²Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, January, 1991, pp. 6-7. The Reagan Administration's perspective on the impact of U.S. Security Assistance training and equipment on Third World countries was in direct contrast to the Carter Administration's perspective. President Carter asserted that the United States should not be simultaneously the world's largest exporter of democratic ideas and of modern weaponry. To Carter, these acts were inconsistent, because the weapons were frequently used as tools of repression. The Reagan Administration, on the other hand, did not see them as inconsistent acts, since the weapons could be used to defeat totalitarian forces, which are inherently more repressive than authoritarian or democratic forces. See "Introduction: Background" of this report.

²³Cheney, *Annual Report*, 1991, p. 11.

²⁴For an overview of these factors, see Graham T. Allison, Jr., and Robert P. Beschel, Jr., "Can the United States Promote Democracy?" *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 107, No. 1, Spring 1992, pp. 81-98, and Samuel P. Huntington, "How Countries Democratize," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 6, Winter 1991-92, pp. 579-616.

important in democratic development and thereby overwhelm the effect of military training.²⁵ The same holds true for persuading militaries to disengage from politics.²⁶ It would appear that if the economic, social, and cultural factors do not oblige, then U.S. training might be unsuccessful.²⁷

The following case studies on El Salvador and Honduras are presented in light of these issues. These case studies have been used to examine the effect of U.S.

²⁵As one author (Ernest W. Lefever, "Arms Transfers, Military Training, and Domestic Politics" in Stephanie G. Neuman and Robert E. Harkavy, eds., *Arms Transfers in the Modern World*, New York: Praeger Publishing, 1979, p. 279) puts it, "the impact of the U.S. military-aid program on internal developments is severely limited because political decisions are largely determined by domestic social, economic, cultural, religious, ethnic, and military factors."

²⁶Some relatively recent headway has been made in identifying the antecedent factors to the military's withdrawal from politics, and it is both distressing and encouraging for those who seek, through systematic training efforts, to persuade the military not to engage in politics. There appear to be several exogenous factors that have little to do with U.S. military training that explain the military's withdrawal from politics. For example, the principal finding from one analysis of 71 case studies is that long-term military disengagement in a Third World country is the function of a social revolution. In short, it requires a social transformation or revolutionary change, in which the military is placed under the control of civilian authority and its role in society is systematically redefined. This suggests that societal and structural variables are more important in determining the behavior of the military than are organizational or voluntary ones. This conclusion, obviously, does not bode well for the success of U.S. training efforts designed to convince Third World militaries to remove themselves willingly from the political arena. See Talukder Maniruzzaman, *Military Withdrawal from Politics: A Comparative Study*, Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishing, 1987. Another analysis finds that long-term withdrawal from politics is more likely when (1) the military has been "rewarded" by the civilian regime with a larger budget share; (2) internal strife is at a minimum; (3) the economy exhibits "reasonable" growth; and (4) the military has trust in the competence of the civilians. These are circumstances that are, to a large extent, unaffected by U.S. training programs. It becomes problematic, then, to persuade the military institution that it should not engage in politics by enrolling them in a 6-hour, 5-day, or even 1-year training program if the other exogenously determined circumstances are propelling the military toward intervention. See Claude E. Welch, Jr., *No Farewell to Arms: Military Disengagement from Politics in Africa and Latin America*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987.

²⁷There are, for instance, several theories that relate economic factors to democratization. Many have asserted that economic development is a critical variable for achieving democratic development. A cursory examination of the economic and democratic data seem to substantiate this relationship. It is believed that an affluent society is a more literate and educated society, which is beneficial to democratic development. It is also asserted that the complexity of societal development that is associated with economically developed states makes it virtually impossible for a centralized authority to control it—thereby necessitating a decentralized, or democratic, system of government. See Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 53, 1959, p. 75; James S. Coleman, "Conclusion," in Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman, eds., *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960, p. 538; and Samuel P. Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 99, No. 2, Summer 1984, p. 199. However, the experiences of the southern cone states of Latin America call this supposed relationship into question. Instead of becoming more democratic as they developed, these countries became more authoritarian. See Guillermo A. O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, Institute for International Studies, 1973. Others have stressed the importance of societal factors by pointing out that a differentiated social structure is essential. Ethnic, religious, occupational, and social groups are believed to "provide the basis for the limitation of state power, hence for the control of the state by society, and hence for democratic political institutions as the most effective means of exercising that control. Societies that lack autonomous intermediate groups are, on the other hand, much more likely to be dominated by a centralized power apparatus" (Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" 1984, pp. 202–203). Still other scholars have pointed out that a country's political culture is the instrumental factor. See Sidney Verba, "Comparative Political Culture," in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., *Political Culture and Political Development*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 513.

military training of IDAD skills on their military establishments. Also, to assess the potential for the Expanded IMET program, each country's political-military situation is taken into consideration.

3. El Salvador

Policy Goals and Program Objectives

The United States' policy goals for El Salvador since the early 1980s have been to (1) combat, deter, and/or defeat the FMLN insurgent threat; (2) strengthen democratic principles, institutions, and structures; and (3) achieve broad-based socioeconomic development.¹ The achievement of these policy goals would ensure that El Salvador enjoys internal defense and development; the goals are to be accomplished through the successful implementation of various programs that fall into two broad categories:²

- Developing effective counterinsurgent military forces
- Developing professional military establishments.

Developing an Effective Counterinsurgent Military Force

The FMLN appeared to be on the road to victory in the early 1980s, as evidenced by its apparent freedom to operate openly in many parts of the country, especially at night.³ However, its freedom had more to do with the incompetence of the ESAF than with the competence of the FMLN. Although there is no question that the FMLN was a formidable opponent, the ESAF seemingly lacked the basic military skills necessary to implement a successful counterinsurgency strategy.⁴ According to Col. John Waghelstein, the military advisory group (MILGP) commander in El Salvador from 1982 to 1984,

the army still adhered to a conventional approach to dealing with the armed guerrillas. Ponderous multibattalion operations of short duration had become the standard activity of the El Salvadoran Armed Forces.

¹These goals are derived from the Kissinger Commission Report.

²The training objectives are listed in U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Presentation for Security Assistance Programs*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, various years; and the 2-year training plans for various years developed by the MILGP in each country.

³According to one account, El Salvador's "press-gang" conscription system means that regular foot soldiers are reluctant to take soldiering too seriously. The officers realize this when making operational demands on their troops. As a result, night patrols are rare, and the stationing of permanent guards on bridges and power substations calls for much persuasion. See "Stalemate on All Fronts," *Latin America Weekly Report*, February 25, 1983, p. 8.

⁴See the Woerner Report, *Report of the El Salvador Military Strategy Assistance Team*; Bacevich et al., 1988 (the *Colonels' Report*); and John Waghelstein, *El Salvador: Observations and Experiences in Counterinsurgency*, Carlisle Barracks, Penn.: U.S. Army War College, 1985.

Night patrolling was the rare exception and most commanders considered the company (100–200) as the smallest unit capable of independent operations. More importantly, there was no real connection between intelligence, combat operations, civic action, psychological operations protecting the economic infrastructure and winning the support of the population. The problem facing the MILGP was how to convert this conventionally oriented Army into an effective COIN force.⁵

Moreover, not only did the ESAF seem bereft of basic warfighting skills, it also suffered from a lack of strategic direction. The ESAF, in short, appeared as a rudderless ship being thrown about by the tumultuous sea of domestic upheaval. The United States, therefore, had to devote considerable attention and resources to the ESAF if it was going to achieve a measure of internal defense.

Developing Professional Military Establishments

A *professional military* is one that respects internationally recognized standards for human rights, defers to democratically elected civilian authority, and does not systematically engage in corrupt practices. However, these were formidable objectives, given the long history of repression, involvement in politics, and level of corruption found in the ESAF.

History of Repression. It is clear that the United States faced formidable obstacles to achieving these objectives. The ESAF, for example, has a long history of engaging in politically repressive actions. For example, according to one estimate, over 10,000 politically motivated murders were committed in 1981 by the Salvadoran military and the death squads linked to it.⁶ However, this is obviously an issue of contention, since it is often difficult to identify the responsible perpetrators as well as their motivation (e.g., was the murder politically motivated?). It is illustrated by the differing estimates of civilian deaths attributable to political violence for 1981 provided by the U.S. State Department (5,331), *Socorro Juridico Cristiano* (13,353), and the nongovernmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (16,276).⁷ The guerrillas are also responsible for politically motivated killings; however, much of the blame has been directed at the military.⁸

⁵See Waghelstein, *El Salvador: Observations*, 1985, p. 49.

⁶See Benjamin C. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, R-4042-USDP, 1992, p. 23.

⁷Congressional Research Service, *El Salvador, 1979–1989: A Briefing Book on U.S. Aid and the Situation in El Salvador*, 1989, p. 81.

⁸In 1983, two Catholic Church-based monitoring organizations, *Socorro Juridico Cristiano* and *Oficina de Tutela Legal*, adamantly maintained, despite government claims to the contrary, that no improvement in human rights had taken place; these organizations attributed most of the violations to the military; see "Death Rate on the Increase Again," *Latin America Weekly Report*, January 7, 1983,

History of Political Involvement. If the United States faced problems in improving the dreadful human-rights situation, it faced overwhelming difficulty in getting the military establishments to abstain from politics and to persuade them to accept democratically elected civilian authority. El Salvador has a long history of military involvement in politics and no liberal democratic tradition. For example, in 1982 the Salvadoran military had been continuously in power since 1932—a 50-year reign giving the ESAF the ignoble distinction of being the longest-serving military establishment in Latin America. Obviously, it would not be easy for the United States to transform a traditionally autocratic, military-controlled country into a liberal democracy.

Culture of Corruption. Much has been written about the apparently systemic corruption in the ESAF. It is commonly asserted that officers exploit their positions by leasing troops as laborers, providing guards to local plantation owners, siphoning off the base's payroll, and using food budgets as personal expense accounts, all in order to enrich themselves.⁹ These allegations are denied by the ESAF's defenders or, in some cases, are explained in terms of a commander's wider altruistic motives. For example, the "ghost soldier"¹⁰ phenomenon was explained by one U.S. military officer with experience in El Salvador as a necessary practice to generate adequate funds to provide for the troops.¹¹

Training Efforts

Despite the many obstacles that have been presented in El Salvador, the United States has devoted substantial resources to develop an effective counterinsurgent military force that behaves in a professional manner. Since the early 1980s,¹² the

p. 2. The army was allegedly responsible for 1,200 of the 1,960 dead in the first four months of 1983, according to *Socorro*; see "Civilian Deaths Running at 500 per Month," *Central America Report*, May 27, 1983, p. 154. Also, the archbishop said that the government was killing civilians, not insurgents, and condemned the violence on both sides; see "Rising Military and Civilian Losses," *Central America Report*, August 26, 1983, p. 257. Many civilians were killed in 1983, and most are attributing the killings to the "security forces"; see "Intervention, the U.S.'s 1984 Solution?" *Central America Report*, December 16, 1983, p. 389.

⁹Joel Millman, "El Salvador's Army: A Force unto Itself," *New York Times Magazine*, December 10, 1989, p. 95.

¹⁰The "ghost soldier" phenomenon is the practice of providing names of soldiers who do not actually exist in the unit. Funds are provided for these ghost soldiers and are siphoned off by the unit commanders to use at their discretion.

¹¹Interview in the U.S. Embassy, El Salvador, April 1992. It was asserted that these funds are typically used to build "day rooms" or other facilities used by soldiers for rest and relaxation, not for the personal financial aggrandizement of the unit commander. However, many dispute this claim.

¹²The focus is on the Salvadoran army instead of its navy and air force, because (1) El Salvador's IDAD efforts are *overwhelmingly* army operations; (2) the size of the Salvadoran army dwarfs the size of the navy and air force; and (3) relatively few seamen and airmen attended the U.S. Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) or the Inter-American Air Forces Academy (IAAFA). Refer to Appendix A.

United States has attempted to literally transform the ESAF by deliberately providing substantial training in skills applicable to IDAD. U.S. military personnel have worked in the ESAF headquarters as well as in the field to provide guidance on strategy, doctrine, and support functions. The form of this instruction has ranged from basic soldiering skills to more specialized training in maintenance and logistics. In fact, at least one U.S. adviser has been stationed at each Salvadoran brigade since the mid-1980s as part of the 55-man advisory team.¹³

Magnitude of the U.S. Training Effort

To achieve the United States' foreign policy goals, substantial economic and military aid has been expended. Over \$1 billion in military aid has been provided to the ESAF since 1980.¹⁴ In terms of actual training expenditures, El Salvador has received more IMET resources than any other Third World country, and only two other Third World countries have had more students trained through IMET since 1980.¹⁵ Moreover, even though the size of the ESAF increased enormously over the decade, the percentage of Salvadoran soldiers trained in the continental United States (CONUS) through the IMET program as a percentage of the total ESAF has generally been slightly above both the Latin American and Third World averages (see Figure 3.1).¹⁶

¹³This team is referred to as the Operations, Plans, and Training Team (OPATT). Most of the 55 trainers are combat and intelligence specialists, with one specializing in psychological operations (PSYOPS), two for civil defense, and one for combined civil-military actions. See Michael Sheehan, "Comparative Counterinsurgency Strategies: Guatemala and El Salvador," *Conflict*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1989, p. 139. Although the OPATT was established in 1983, the typical number of U.S. trainers from 1981 until the OPATT was created was about 55. Congress used this typical number to establish the 55-man OPATT limit. The number of U.S. personnel in-country has usually been much greater than 55. Indeed, a 1990 GAO report noted that "an average of 86 other U.S. military personnel in El Salvador, who are not counted against the limit of 55, work as medical and temporary trainers or as members of the MILGROUP and sections supporting the security assistance program, the Defense Attaché Office and other Embassy offices, and the U.S. Embassy marine guard detachment." See General Accounting Office, *El Salvador: Extent of U.S. Military Personnel in Country*, Washington, D.C.: GAO, GAO/NSIAD-90-227FS, July 1990, p. 1.

¹⁴Approximately \$780 million (constant 1991 dollars) of this is Foreign Military Sales (FMS); this would rank El Salvador as eleventh on the list of top FMS recipients among Third World countries.

¹⁵El Salvador has received \$31 million (constant 1991 dollars) in IMET since 1980. In terms of the total number of students trained, 6,139 were trained through IMET and its predecessor programs from 1950 to 1990, and since 1980 over 4,000 ESAF members have been trained through IMET. The top 10 countries from 1980 to 1990 are (1) Colombia, 8,199; (2) Philippines, 4,344; (3) El Salvador, 4,151; (4) Jordan, 3,836; (5) Honduras, 3,250; (6) Thailand, 2,792; (7) Ecuador, 2,353; (8) South Korea, 2,311; (9) Egypt, 1,990; and (10) Panama, 1,749.

¹⁶The Third World average is derived from 70 Third World countries, and those 70 countries account for almost 90 percent of all students trained through the IMET program. The percentages presented here assume that the average international military student remains in the military for 20 years, and there are no repeating students (even though we know there are repeating students, there is no way to determine repeaters with our data). The source of our data is the U.S. Department of Defense Security Assistance Agency's *Fiscal Year Series*, Washington, D.C., various years.

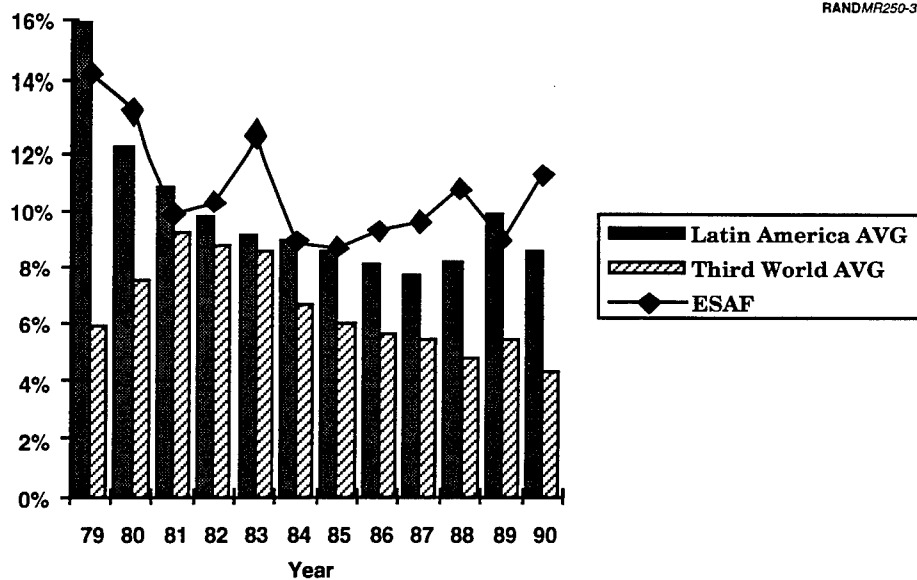


Figure 3.1—Salvadoran Soldiers Trained in CONUS Through IMET as a Percentage of Total ESAF

However, most of these students have not been taking courses that have direct applicability to internal defense and development. The courses listed in Table 3.1, many of which were taken at the SOA, represent the number of students either trained or projected to be trained in the United States through the IMET program from 1988 to 1993.¹⁷ This list shows the 20 most heavily attended courses and accounts for 88 percent of the students.¹⁸ Those courses listed in bold print have direct applicability to internal defense and development; they represent only a small percentage of the total courses.

Many courses have some relevance to internal defense and development.¹⁹ For example, engineering, medical, transportation, signal and communication,

¹⁷Low-intensity conflict is taught at nearly 40 different Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine, and other DoD institutions. Latin American soldiers attend many of these institutions (see Clifton J. Everton, *Low Intensity Conflict Education and Training Within the Department of Defense: A Compilation of Courses and Instructional Periods*, Langley AFB, Va.: Center for Low Intensity Conflict (CLIC), CLIC Paper, October, 1990; United States Army, School of the Americas, *Course Catalog*, 1992; Inter-American Air Forces Academy, *Catalog of Courses Offered by the Academy, 1991*; U.S. Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School, *Course Catalog*, 1991). However, the United States Army School of the Americas (SOA) is perhaps the most important training institution for the United States with regard to Latin American countries (at least in terms of numbers of students trained). Indeed, about 6,500 El Salvadorans have graduated from the SOA. See U.S. Army School of the Americas, *Course Catalog*, 1992, p. vi.

¹⁸Course data for ESAF students attending U.S. Air Force schools are provided in Appendix B. Unfortunately, similar data for the U.S. Navy could not be obtained.

¹⁹The courses were categorized by the author with help from a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel familiar with course contents. The categorizations are illustrative rather than definitive.

Table 3.1
IMET-Funded Courses Attended by ESAF Members at U.S.
Army Schools from 1988 to 1993

Course	Students
Combat Armor Officer, Advanced—Spanish	520
Training Management NCO—Spanish	483
Commando Operations	285
Officer Candidate Course	283
Basic NCO—Spanish	168
Infantry Officer, Basic—Spanish	151
PSYOPS Officer—Spanish	116
Instructor Training—Spanish	103
Specialized English Language Training	94
English Language Course	79
Training Management Officer—Spanish	66
Infantry Officer, Basic—Spanish	41
Command and General Staff	39
Battle Staff Operations	30
Security Assistance TM Training and Orientation Course	26
Sapper—Spanish	23
OJT Operations Training—CONUS	20
OJT Profi-Spec-OS	20
Country Liaison Officer—Spanish	17
Spanish Instructor (REF) (UH-1FS)	16
TOTAL	2,580

NOTE: Courses in boldface type have direct applicability to IDAD.

constabulary, commando, ranger, psychological operations, and intelligence courses are all directly related to the skills necessary for internal defense *and* internal development. Moreover, many other courses have an indirect applicability, such as resource management courses. These types of courses represent about 20 to 30 percent of the courses taken by ESAF personnel in the United States through the IMET program, as indicated in Figure 3.2.

These numbers belie the true magnitude of the U.S. training effort directed at the ESAF, however: Many soldiers have been trained in El Salvador by deployed advisers and do not show up in these figures. The true scope of the U.S. training effort is revealed by the fact that, whereas over half of the active-duty officers in the ESAF in 1992 received training *in* the United States, *all* officers have had contact in some fashion with U.S. advisers and trainers, and all officers ranked

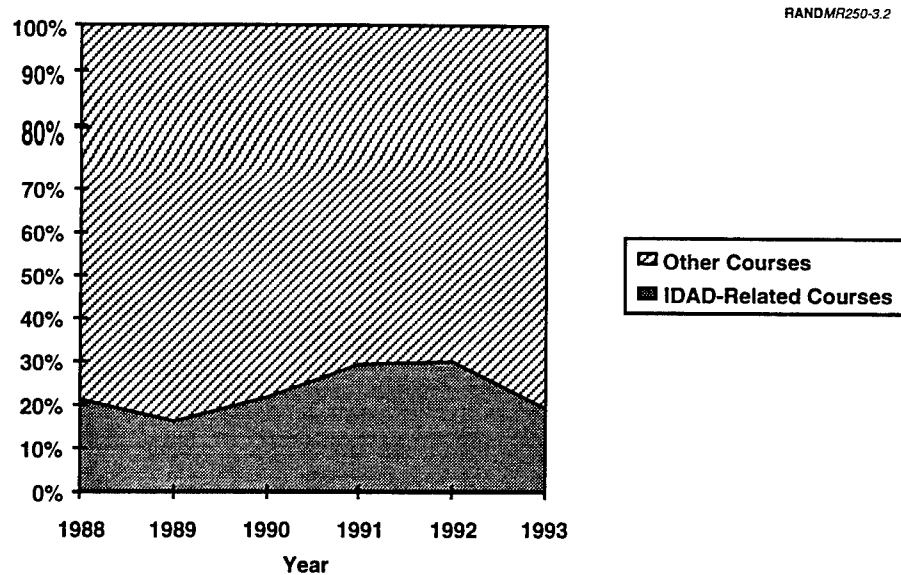


Figure 3.2—IDAD-Related Courses Attended by ESAF Members at U.S. Army Schools as a Percentage of Total Courses

captain and below have received training by the United States.²⁰ Finally, the magnitude of the U.S. training effort, even in 1991, is illustrated by a comparison of the number of training teams sent to El Salvador (48) with the Third World median (1).²¹

Internal Defense—COIN Training

The above-described training resources have been used to effect important structural changes in the ESAF's organization. As the primary supplier of equipment and training, the United States coordinated a nearly fourfold expansion in personnel and a fivefold increase in maneuver battalions during the 1980s.²² To provide adequate training to this burgeoning force structure, the

²⁰Briefing delivered in Panama City at USSOUTHCOM's Security Assistance Training Program Management Review, March–April 1992, by member of MILGP in El Salvador. The head of the Salvadoran navy, the heads of the Joint Operations and Joint Logistics, all officers on the Joint General Staff, and the ESAF vice chief of staff are all former IMET students.

²¹Headquarters, Department of the Army, Security Assistance Training Briefing, given at USSOUTHCOM's Security Assistance Training Program Management Review, Panama City, Panama, March–April 1992. A variety of training teams is deployed to El Salvador. A partial list includes the Mobile Training Team (MTT), the Technical Assistance Field Team (TAFT), and the Technical Assistance Team (TAT). These training teams can be as small as a single soldier, and the training focus can be anything from the host-nation military's judicial system to its logistics system. Note that as part of their operational responsibilities, U.S. soldiers are expected to impart the values of respect for civilian authority and human rights while teaching basic soldiering skills.

²²As was previously noted, the El Salvadoran Armed Forces increased by 300 percent, from around 14,000 personnel in 1979 to a peak of about 55,000 in 1989, and increased its maneuver battalions from 8 in 1980 to 44 in 1990.

ESAF depended heavily on U.S. assistance to build, staff, train, and equip its National Training Center (CEMFA). The primary purpose of CEMFA is to train basic and advanced soldiering skills to new soldiers, but it also provides NCO professional development courses.²³

The United States has also played an important role in training an officer corps to command this force structure, even though the ESAF has its own military academy, the *Escuela Militar*, which is a four-year training program;²⁴ the academy and the *tanda* system are inextricably linked; and many officers are reluctant to adopt U.S. COIN techniques.²⁵ The United States initiated a 13-week Officer Candidate School (OCS) program at the School of the Americas to create its "own" cadre of officers.²⁶ This training effort began early in the 1980s, with the first group of 470 cadets being sent to the SOA in 1982, and 600 more cadets sent in 1983.²⁷ The idea was not only to provide an officer cadre for the expanding force structure but also to train them in U.S. COIN techniques by focusing on the small-unit command expertise necessary for long-range, nighttime patrolling.²⁸ Other techniques that the United States used for permeating the ESAF with soldiers and units indoctrinated with U.S. COIN strategy was to create whole units from scratch. The United States created five of these rapid-reaction units; the first was the infamous Atlacatl Battalion.²⁹ Many of these personnel were trained at the Regional Military Training Center

²³The CEMFA has the capacity to train 7,500 recruits per year.

²⁴In the early 1980s, the ESAF military academy was only producing 25 to 40 officers per year. See Waghelstein, *El Salvador: Observations*, 1985, p. 39.

²⁵In the beginning, at least, there was much reluctance on the part of the ESAF to adopt U.S. advice on COIN techniques. See "Military Contenders Pause for Breath," *Latin America Weekly Report*, February 18, 1983, p. 2. There were reports in 1983 that Defense Minister Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova was having problems persuading ESAF commanders to adopt U.S. advice on counterinsurgency. The U.S. advisers insisted that the guerrillas' strategy could be turned to the government's advantage. The U.S. advisers wanted the ESAF to forget, at least initially, the marginal areas in which the guerrilla forces were strongest and to concentrate instead on protecting the economically vital south, establishing permanent guards on key targets, and constantly patrolling strategic areas and likely infiltration routes. This advice, unfortunately, went directly against the grain of most ESAF officers, who preferred what was viewed as a somewhat safer approach: keeping the troops concentrated in large numbers in well-protected barracks, then moving out *en masse* on "lightning" strikes against the guerrillas whenever they surfaced. See "Stalemate on All Fronts," *Latin America Weekly Report*, February 25, 1983, p. 8.

²⁶Some believe that the main goal of the OCS program was to break the power of the *tanda*, but a U.S. Army officer familiar with this program disputes this notion. Rather, he asserts that the United States' OCS program was created only to supply officers for the expanding ESAF force structure.

²⁷Waghelstein, *El Salvador: Observations*, 1985, p. 39.

²⁸See "Civilian Deaths Running at 500 per Month," *Central America Report*, May 27, 1983, p. 154.

²⁹The battalion is labeled "infamous" because of its involvement with the Jesuit slayings in November, 1989, and other alleged incidents involving massacres. For example, the Atlacatl Battalion has been accused of the 1981 massacre of 1,000 people at El Mozote; the 1983 killing of 100 people at Lake Suchitlan; the 1984 killing of 68 individuals at Los Llanito; and many other incidents continuing from 1985 through 1989. See "Americas Watch Documents Mozote Massacre," *El Salvador On Line*, March 9, 1992, pp. 4-5.

(CREMS), established at Puerto Castillo, Honduras, in 1983.³⁰ The initial plan was for about 120 U.S. advisers to train ESAF soldiers in the art of COIN warfare.³¹ However, because of the historical animosity between Honduras and El Salvador, the center was closed in 1985.³²

Internal Development

A tremendous amount of economic aid was provided to El Salvador during the 1980s to shore up an economy that was under siege.³³ However, most of that aid was channeled through the U.S. State Department's Agency for International Development (AID), which had limited contact with the ESAF. U.S. economic or social development training provided to the ESAF by the U.S. military was of the type associated with civic action, which includes the soft elements of COIN, such as engineering, transportation, medical, and communications training. In fact, the United States planned and orchestrated the first attempt by the ESAF to engage in extensive civic-action programs. These activities were conducted initially in the San Vicente region within the context of the National Campaign Plan, and there were other, subsequent efforts elsewhere. The ESAF found itself digging wells, building roads, administering health care, and constructing schools, just to name a few activities, all in the spirit of winning the hearts and minds of the local population.

Building roads and digging wells contribute to the country's economic and social development; however, substantial attention also was devoted to another type of internal development: political development. These training activities were intended to professionalize the ESAF so that its officers respect democratically elected civilian authority and human rights. Except for a 3-year period in the late 1970s when President Carter suspended military aid to El Salvador for human-

³⁰CREMS was established in Honduras because of the lack of real estate in El Salvador (El Salvador is the most densely populated country in Latin America), the ongoing war, and the availability of land in Honduras.

³¹The primary mission of the 120 U.S. trainers was to train 2,400 Salvadoran soldiers in the art of COIN warfare. It required six months to assemble the first 1,000-man rapid-response battalion and four light infantry units of 350 each. See "Strengthening the Climate of Security," *Central America Report*, June 17, 1983, p. 179.

³²The Hondurans resented the United States for bringing "the enemy" to train on their territory. At least since the 1969 "Soccer War," and continuing to today, the Honduran military has viewed the Salvadoran military with suspicion. Because about 70 percent of the slots were reserved for ESAF members, the Hondurans were left to compete with other regional militaries for the remaining 30 percent; therefore, substantial resentment was generated by their presence. See "Evidence of Unrest Among Officers," *Latin America Weekly Report*, July 6, 1984, p. 4; "In Brief: Honduras/United States," *Latin America Weekly Report*, April 15, 1983, p. 12.

³³For example, depending on what accounting scheme is used, the total level of economic assistance provided to the government of El Salvador (GOES) was between \$3 and \$4 billion dollars (constant 1990 dollars) during the 1980s. At times, the annual U.S. contribution to the GOES budget reached almost 45 percent. See Congressional Research Service, *El Salvador, 1979-1989*, 1989, p. 56.

rights violations, all graduates from the Salvadoran military academy since 1970 have attended the Salvadoran Cadet Preparation Course at SOA or the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Georgia, where they received instruction in human rights. In fact, the Cadet Course at SOA has had an explicit block of instruction in human rights since 1982, and practically every *Escuela Militar* cadet since that time has received such training. Also, as previously mentioned, the 7th Special Forces Group has incorporated human-rights training in all its technical and tactical training for ESAF and HOAF.³⁴ For example, teaching soldiers how to set an ambush is a technical skill, but the advisers also incorporate human-rights instruction by putting a civilian through a mock ambush to see what happens. If the civilian is "killed," then the students fail and are reminded of how important it is not to kill civilians. However, a particularly vexing problem is the difficulty of distinguishing combatants from noncombatants. U.S. advisers emphasize that, unless certain, it is generally better to err on the side of prudence. Human-rights training is also made explicit in classroom instruction.³⁵

All these training efforts have been aimed at effecting structural changes in the ESAF organization, supervising tactical changes in ESAF operations, improving basic and advanced soldiering skills, improving economic and social conditions, and developing a professional military establishment. In the next subsection, an assessment is made of the overall success of these efforts.

The Mixed Success of U.S. Training

The El Salvadoran Armed Forces are technically and tactically more proficient than they were at the beginning of the 1980s. However, they remain better at the hard elements of COIN than at the soft elements. Attempts to professionalize the ESAF have achieved mixed results. There is no question that the ESAF does not systematically engage in human-rights abuses to the extent it once did, but

³⁴The activities of the 7th Special Forces Group are instructive, since the 7th Group sends many deploy-for-training teams (DFTs) (as well as MTTs) to the Central American region. In July 1990, the 7th Group promulgated new guidelines for teaching human rights to U.S. and foreign soldiers. As part of their pre-mission training requirements, U.S. soldiers receive human-rights training and are expected to show familiarity with the U.S. State Department's *Country Report on Human Rights Practices*. Moreover, they are to incorporate the values of respect for human rights and civilian authority in their training of foreign militaries (interview with 7th Special Forces Group officer, May 1992). Various-sized joint exercises are conducted between U.S. and foreign military forces, to train U.S. and foreign forces in the conduct of joint military operations (e.g., construction, artillery, medical, small-unit tactics). These exercises are usually justified in terms of their benefit to U.S. forces, but they are commonly tailored to transmit important training to the host military. Joint exercises are usually large events, but can be small exercises conducted by individual units. The DFT falls into this category and has been used extensively by the United States Southern Command. See James B. Ervin, "Strategy and the Military Relations Process," *The DISAM Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Fall 1988, pp. 56-74.

³⁵As noted previously, all classes at the SOA have instruction in human rights.

abuses are still reported with alarming regularity. The same holds true for the ESAF's respect for civilian authority. The ESAF does not engage in overt political activity as it once did; however, many believe that the ESAF still wields considerable influence behind the scenes.

Internal Defense: Increased Technical and Tactical Proficiency

Initially, the United States had serious problems getting the ESAF to implement advice on tactics and strategy because of the substantial resentment emanating from some quarters in the army and the nationalistic political right (ARENA), which then opposed all U.S. advice on the grounds that the United States was interfering with Salvadoran sovereignty.³⁶ Even as late as 1987, there were reports that many officers still did not accept the United States' approach to the war, and these included several U.S.-trained officers. Apparently, some officers expressed a continued interest in a more rapid, and purely military, conclusion to the war.³⁷ In effect, those officers did not subscribe to the notion of "winning hearts and minds."

Partially as a result of this reluctance, the ESAF suffered many notable defeats against the FMLN during the first half of the 1980s, a stage of the war during which the FMLN was engaging the ESAF with large units, behaving more like a conventional army than a guerrilla army. As part of this campaign, in early 1983 the FMLN was able to capture and temporarily occupy the largest city to date, Berlin;³⁸ deny victory to the ESAF in its large offensive in Morazan;³⁹ strike against the elite U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion;⁴⁰ thwart the ESAF's success in "cleansing" certain departments of the FMLN;⁴¹ capture key military

³⁶See "Rumblings in the Barracks," *Central America Report*, July 8, 1983, p. 201.

³⁷See "Military Promotions Affect 85," *Central America Report*, June 19, 1987, p. 179.

³⁸See "Questions over U.S. Policy," *Latin America Weekly Report*, February 11, 1983, p. 10.

³⁹See "Morazan Offensive Puts Heat on the Military," *Latin America Weekly Report*, February 4, 1983, p. 6.

⁴⁰The FMLN made a key strike against the Atlacatl Battalion. See "Army in San Vicente, FMLN in San Salvador," *Central America Report*, July 1, 1983, p. 196.

⁴¹The San Vicente operation was the first major effort to implement the U.S.-directed "pacification" program designed to break the back of the insurgents. But one report had the ESAF's operations in San Vicente floundering. With about half of the army's forces absent, the rebels returned to the region. See "Intervention, the US's 1984 Solution?" *Central America Report*, December, 16 1983, p. 389. The ESAF had major problems trying to get the FMLN out of this region. See "Army in San Vicente, FMLN in San Salvador," *Central America Report*, July 1, 1983, p. 196.

installations;⁴² close down major transportation arteries in the country;⁴³ and generally place the ESAF on the defensive.⁴⁴

Success began to emerge for the ESAF, at least in its ability to defeat the FMLN in direct combat, but only because it slowly adopted U.S. tactics. One of the first notable successes occurred in mid-1983, when the ESAF engaged the FMLN once again in one of its principal strongholds, Guazapa. However, this time the ESAF achieved tactical success by employing U.S. tactics: a force of 1,200 men, broken into 45-man patrols, working with close air support from A-37s.⁴⁵ The ESAF would experience other gains as well,⁴⁶ but consistent victories did not begin to materialize until around 1985. By that time, the ESAF was employing U.S. COIN techniques, with regular success on the battlefield,⁴⁷ which resulted in the government's claim that it was defeating the FMLN⁴⁸ and the FMLN's acknowledging that it could not prevail in sustained combat against the ESAF.⁴⁹

There is no question, therefore, that the ESAF is a more technically and tactically competent military as a result of U.S. military assistance.⁵⁰ The ESAF is able to

⁴²The ESAF pitted 10,000 soldiers against the enemy in eight departments, and the FMLN responded by capturing the army barracks at El Paraiso and the headquarters of the IV Infantry Brigade in Chalatenango. See "The Army Launches New Offensive," *Latin America Weekly Report*, January 6, 1984.

⁴³The rebels closed the two main highway arteries in the country for two days. See "The War Returns to Normal," *Central America Report*, October 26, 1984, p. 334.

⁴⁴The ESAF was firmly on the defensive at this time, as evidenced mainly by several FMLN gains. See "Civilian Deaths Running at 500 per Month," *Central America Report*, May 27, 1983, p. 154; "Plowing Ahead with Pacification," *Central America Report*, July 22, 1983, p. 218; "Rising Military and Civilian Losses," *Central America Report*, August 26, 1983, p. 257.

⁴⁵See "Army Changing Tactics," *Central America Report*, July 29, 1983, pp. 229-230.

⁴⁶The U.S.-trained, Atlacatl Battalion recaptured the town of Tenancingo, which FMLN forces had controlled for two days, and the ESAF also recaptured San Rafael Oriente in San Miguel Department. See "In Brief: San Salvador/Army," *Latin America Weekly Report*, October 7, 1983, p. 12.

⁴⁷The ESAF began to implement a COIN strategy that incorporated military, economic, political, and social aspects—all designed to undermine the support of the rebels (i.e., the first expression of the National Campaign Plan in San Vicente). See "More Stress on 'Hearts and Minds,'" *Central America Report*, February 1, 1985, p. 25; "Army Pursues Its 'Sustained Military Offensive,'" *Central America Report*, March 8, 1985.

⁴⁸The Salvadoran government claimed to have the upper hand on the FMLN ("The War Returns," *Central America Report*, January 17, 1986, p. 15) and that the COIN efforts of the preceding two months were "yielding successful results and the FMLN is on the run" (see "Government Forces Report Gains," *Central America Report*, May 2, 1986, p. 126).

⁴⁹A rebel leader admitted that the FMLN was beat down and could not gain territory, so it simply did hit-and-run tactics. He went on to assert that the rebels would have won in 1979 if the United States had not intervened and increased the size of the ESAF to its present levels as well as equipped it as it did. See "Duarte Chooses Military Option," *Latin America Weekly Report*, August 2, 1985.

⁵⁰Other assessments share this perspective. See, for instance, General Accounting Office, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance in the 1980s*, Washington, D.C.: GAO, GAO/NSIAD-89-170, July 1989, which states that U.S. military assistance "increase(s) its professionalism and technical skills and [has] assisted the Salvadoran army in taking the offensive against the insurgents" (p. 21). With regard to improving combat capability, the answer is yes, according to the *Colonels' Report*; the training has been effective (see pp. 28-29). See GAO, *El Salvador: Military Assistance Has Helped Counter but Not Overcome the Insurgency*, Washington, D.C.: GAO, GAO/NSIAD-91-166, April 1991, pp. 3-4, 13, which asserts that "U.S. military assistance has helped improve El Salvador's military

effectively combat the FMLN when engaged in large conventional engagements; its soldiers are more technically sound as a direct result of the U.S.-supported National Basic Training Center; its logistics capabilities are becoming stronger;⁵¹ and the increase in its medical expertise resulted in a significantly lower casualty rate.⁵² Nevertheless, by the end of the 1980s, although the ESAF was no longer on the verge of losing, it was certainly not on the verge of winning.⁵³

Technical and Tactical Problem Areas

Even though the ESAF was employing U.S. tactics with increasing frequency, it basically still adhered to a "conventional" approach in its execution of the war; that approach is widely cited as a chief reason for the inability of the ESAF to defeat the FMLN and the subsequent deadlock. U.S. advisers persuaded the ESAF to leave their barracks and engage the FMLN, which it eventually did with great success. However, as a result of those successes, the FMLN changed its *modus operandi* to more traditional guerrilla tactics. The predilection within the ESAF for large, battalion-size sweeps using air support and artillery, unfortunately, remained firmly entrenched.⁵⁴ Such tactics have proven to be ineffective against the FMLN, as evidenced by the guerrillas' continued demonstration that they could muster a large force, inflict heavy damage on the ESAF,⁵⁵ and initiate major offensives, such as the FMLN's coordinated attacks

capabilities, enabling it to contain the military threat posed by the insurgency and prevent the overthrow of the elected civilian government."

⁵¹As one Special Forces officer with extensive experience in Central America described it, "before we improved their logistical capability, the ESAF would march into a village and demand to be fed by the village's richest family." Interview, April 1992. Such practices obviously generated resentment and did not contribute to winning the hearts and minds of the people.

⁵²The combat fatality rate of wounded soldiers went from over 30 percent to about 10 percent. See GAO, *El Salvador: Military Assistance*, 1991, p. 4.

⁵³Military capabilities have improved, but problems remain that impede operations. See GAO, *El Salvador: Military Assistance*, 1991, p. 20.

⁵⁴See Sheehan, "Comparative Counterinsurgency Strategies," 1989, pp. 139-141; also see Congressional Research Service, *El Salvador, 1979-1989*, 1989, pp. 104-105. They are characterized as "a cumbersome, heavily burdened force [that is] ill suited for conducting the small unit operations that American trainers have eagerly advocated," *Colonels' Report*, 1988, p. 30, which goes on to say that "Salvadoran attempts to adopt small unit tactics have been ineffective" (p. 37). American trainers continued to prod ESAF into adopting COIN-style tactics—small-unit patrols, ambushes, and night operations, but the "ESAF still devotes too much of its strength to ineffectual[ly] securing fixed sites such as *cuartels*, bridges, industrial plants, and coffee plantations. In the field, unwieldy battalions continue to expend too much energy pursuing guerrillas, without purpose or result" (p. 38).

⁵⁵See "FMLN Proves Capacity; Salvador's Military Start Talking Politics," *Latin America Weekly Report*, April 16, 1987; "Salvadoran War Intensifies Again," *Latin America Weekly Report*, May 14, 1987; "FMLN Launches Offensive to Halt March Elections in El Salvador," *Latin America Weekly Report*, March 3, 1988. Two whole departments, Chalatenango and Morazan, were excluded from the polls because they were controlled by the FMLN; see "Postscript: El Salvador/Elections," *Latin America Weekly Report*, March 10, 1988.

mounted throughout the country in November 1989.⁵⁶ Even though improvements have been made, the problem of persuading the ESAF to consistently and systematically use U.S.-trained COIN techniques (e.g., long-range, small-unit, night patrols) persists. This problem, highlighted by Col. Waghelstein in 1985 and the *Colonels' Report* in 1988, was still apparent in the early 1990s. According to one U.S. military adviser with significant experience in Central America, "the Salvadoran Army has been thoroughly trained in U.S. counterinsurgency tactics, and they can do them well—the problem is getting them to actually use these tactics."⁵⁷

Another important element for the successful implementation of a COIN strategy is an effective psychological operations program. However, as late as December 1983 the ESAF had no meaningful PSYOPS program. When a PSYOPS was finally started, it was given a low priority; the ESAF did not know how to do it adequately, and the Americans obviously regarded it as a low priority.⁵⁸ The PSYOPS effort has subsequently gained momentum,⁵⁹ but there have been problems with its implementation.⁶⁰ Under current plans to restructure the ESAF, a PSYOPS unit will be assigned to each Salvadoran brigade, so the current

⁵⁶See "FMLN Guerrillas Launch Two-Track Offensive Reminiscent of 1981," *Latin America Weekly Report*, November 3, 1988; "FMLN Steps up Its Two-Track Drive," *Latin America Weekly Report*, November 17, 1988, p. 8; "FMLN Offensive Begins to Bite," *Latin America Weekly Report*, May 25, 1989; "Second Major Drive in FMLN Offensive," *Latin America Weekly Report*, June 8, 1989. On the FMLN November 1989 offensive, see "FMLN Offensive Borders on Insurrection," *Central America Report*, November 17, 1989, pp. 355–358; "FMLN Follows Ortega in Upsetting the Situation in Central America," *Latin America Weekly Report*, November 23, 1989; "A Week on, the FMLN Guerrillas Strike at the Capital's Residential Areas," *Latin America Weekly Report*, November 30, 1989; "War: According to Plan Says FMLN," *Latin America Weekly Report*, November 30, 1989; "In the Wake of the November Offensive," *Central America Report*, January 12, 1990, p. 3; "Violence Continues Despite Political Progress," *Central America Report*, January 18, 1991, p. 12.

⁵⁷Interview, Panama City, Panama, March 1992.

⁵⁸For example, the *Colonels' Report* notes that "one officer slated as the PSYOPS advisor spoke Spanish so poorly that he was peremptorily reassigned out of El Salvador. Another came to El Salvador upon graduation from his very first PSYOPS course—a level of experience that did not escape the notice of the Salvadoran general staff. In July 1984, an American PSYOPS mobile training team (MTT) finally arrived in El Salvador. Deployed with insufficient notice, the team was ill prepared (only one team member spoke Spanish) and contributed little" (p. 39). However, Col. James Steele, the MILGP commander from 1984 to 1986, said "they [the ESAF] are training Psychological Operations experts for every unit. We've played a role in that process, and I think it's one of the things that we can really be proud of." See Small Wars Operational Requirements Divisions, *El Salvador Psychological Operations Assessment*, Panama City: USSOUTHCOM, J-5 Directorate, February 4, 1988, p. 16.

⁵⁹As an example of how the ESAF used PSYOPS techniques, the government attempted to strip the guerrillas of any moral authenticity and label them as terrorists. To achieve this, the government prohibited regular radio, TV, and print media from reporting news originating from rebel sources—*Radio Venceremos* and *Radio Farabundo Marti*. See "Government Forces Report Gains," *Central America Report*, May 2, 1986, p. 126.

⁶⁰A USSOUTHCOM evaluation found that the "evidence indicates that 1) the C-V concentrates primarily on the enemy military force, and 2) mid-term objectives and specific military operations are conducted more often than not on an ad hoc basis by the Brigades. Thus, the war of information—the success of which relies on PSYOPS—is not being won or lost. Like the overall war, it is stalemated." See Small Wars Operational Requirements Divisions, *El Salvador Psychological Operations Assessment*, 1988, pp. 16, 22.

ESAF reorganization provides the United States with a unique opportunity to influence the ESAF's PSYOPS organization and implementation. In fact, the U.S. MILGP in El Salvador has sent about 116 ESAF officers to the PSYOPS Officers Course at the School of the Americas since 1988.

Part of the seeming inability to perform as an effective COIN force can be attributed to important historical factors. Colonel Waghelstein writes that, although the ESAF had been trained in COIN techniques since the late 1950s, the lessons just did not take. A formidable internal security force was in place, and so perhaps out of arrogance, the ESAF did not think that a credible insurgency could develop in El Salvador. Also, to the extent that the ESAF trained for traditional military operations, it tended to focus on a potential conventional threat from Honduras,⁶¹ not an internal threat from a guerrilla organization.⁶² Another important consideration has to be manpower problems, some of which result from forced recruitment practices⁶³ and the quality of personnel.⁶⁴

Moreover, U.S. advisers have also been faulted for their apparent inability to adequately teach COIN techniques; it has been argued that the U.S. advisers are themselves too mired in a conventional mind-set.⁶⁵ To a certain extent, this sentiment was echoed by members of the U.S. MILGP in El Salvador during interviews conducted in March and April 1992, who lamented the fact that training received by ESAF soldiers in the United States at the School of the Americas, the Command and General Staff School, and other professional military education establishments did not adequately reflect the unique circumstances in El Salvador. For example, it was pointed out that tactical procedures for the Central European battlefield were being taught to ESAF

⁶¹Sheehan, "Comparative Counterinsurgency Strategies," 1989, p. 134.

⁶²U.S. Army War College, *El Salvador: Observations*, 1985, p. 35.

⁶³Severe morale problems have apparently resulted from forced recruitment practices (e.g., going to a movie theater and taking all available males away for conscription into the ESAF). See Congressional Research Service, *El Salvador, 1979-1989*, 1989, pp. 69, 72.

⁶⁴See the 2-year training plan (*Security Assistance Training Program Management Review: FY93-FY94 Country Two-Year Training Plans*, Quarry Heights, Panama: Headquarters, USSOUTHCOM, Strategy, Policy, and Plans Directorate, 1992). There are still problems with the ESAF ability to perform adequate maintenance and its self-sufficiency. One GAO report asserts that the ESAF became more reliant, not less, during the 1980s as a result of the high funding levels: "The increased funding during the 1980s raised the dependency of Central American militaries—particularly those of El Salvador and Honduras—on the United States for their sustainment and support even though these increasing levels of assistance and military equipment might have been necessary to achieve security goals." See GAO, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance*, 1989, p. 21. Perhaps owing to the fact that only about 50-60 percent of the ESAF's new recruits go through the National Basic Training Center (the rest are "trained" at the battalions), many such conscripts are not prepared to do maintenance on complex machinery, especially the aviation equipment.

⁶⁵*Colonels' Report*, 1988, pp. 14-15. Michael Sheehan makes this point too. He says that the training received by ESAF from the Americans is very "technically" oriented: "American soldiers train for conventional missions in virtual isolation from the civilian population, and little emphasis is put on civil-military relations for the individual soldier. The Salvadoran military reflects this U.S. influence in its training programs" ("Comparative Counterinsurgency Strategies," 1989, p. 134).

soldiers, such as how to use a Bradley fighting vehicle (of which the ESAF has none) to set an anti-armor ambush (the FMLN has no armor).⁶⁶ However, to be sure, much of this has changed, at least at the SOA. As of December 1991, the entire SOA course structure had been revamped to reflect "post-Soviet" circumstances.⁶⁷

Internal Development—Social and Economic

One implication of the so-called conventional mind-set discussed above is that the United States has been more effective at teaching the hard elements of COIN than the soft elements.⁶⁸ This "conventional mind-set" is not the only reason the United States has had limited effectiveness in getting the ESAF to engage in the soft elements of COIN, however. The predicament is illustrated by an examination of the implementation of the National Campaign Plan, an operation in which U.S. advisers played a very active planning role.⁶⁹

The basic idea was to rid the San Vicente area of rebels, rebuild the area's social and economic infrastructure, then reintroduce the population.⁷⁰ In the process of this massive civil works effort, the population would be converted, if it was not already, into supporting the government. This plan's implementation met with mixed success⁷¹ mainly because resources were limited⁷² and the Salvadorans were unable to field a credible civil-defense force.⁷³

⁶⁶Interview, member of U.S. MILGP in El Salvador.

⁶⁷Interview with director of training at SOA.

⁶⁸According to Sheehan, "the Salvadoran military, under the tutelage of its American benefactors, has failed to commit the necessary personnel and resources for the implementation of a broad counterinsurgency strategy. Security assistance equipment sent to ESAF has been almost entirely devoted to combat requirements. In addition, personnel assignments are dominated by combat and intelligence trainers. Of the 55 authorized trainers in El Salvador, the U.S. military has normally designated only one trainer for psychological operations, two for civil defense, and one for combined civil-military action" ("Comparative Counterinsurgency Strategies," 1989, pp. 139-140). However, Sheehan is not taking into account the numerous MTTs and DFTs sent to El Salvador over the past decade.

⁶⁹See "U.S. Advisors Supervise San Vicente Offensive," *Central America Report*, June 17, 1983, p. 177; Waghelstein, *El Salvador: Observations*, 1985, p. 57.

⁷⁰See, for example, "Irt Brief: El Salvador/Counter-Insurgency," *Latin America Weekly Report*, June 24, 1983, p. 11; "Plowing Ahead with Pacification," *Central America Report*, July 22, 1983, p. 218.

⁷¹Such mixed success has been demonstrated time and again. For example, in 1989, 17 mayors, mainly of the ruling Christian Democrat and ARENA parties, resigned their posts following ultimatums issued by the FMLN. This is just one example of the overall lack of security for local politicians outside the major urban centers. See "Postscript: El Salvador/Mayors Resign Under Threat," *Latin America Weekly Report*, January 5, 1989. The ESAF had expended tremendous resources in San Vicente as a showcase of effective COIN techniques. Yet, within two years of their implementation, which was designed to rid the area of the rebels and their sympathizers, the rebels were still there and were able to paralyze transportation in the eastern departments. See "Coups Rumors, Boycotts, and Private-Sector Strike," *Central America Report*, January 23, 1987, p. 17.

⁷²The ESAF was simply spread too thin; there were not enough forces to enable the ESAF to maintain a presence in San Vicente while conducting necessary operations in other parts of the country. Also, the U.S. military was hindered by trying to do internal development training and

There have been several such civic-action efforts, each achieving more or less the same results as the initial foray into the San Vicente region. Perhaps the best evidence to support this contention is the most obvious one: The government of El Salvador and the El Salvadoran Armed Forces never really won the hearts and minds of the Salvadoran population. This failure became quite evident in 1989, when several hundred guerrillas were able to infiltrate San Salvador undetected; these rebels obviously received substantial support among the local population. It is impossible to disentangle the causal connections between social and economic indicators, civic action by the ESAF, and economic assistance provided to the government by the United States. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that aggregate social and economic indicators for El Salvador do not differ significantly from Latin American or Third World averages (see Table 3.2). As one can see, despite the war, El Salvador was able to register gains or losses quite similar to those of other countries.

Internal Development—Political

The United States has faced a most formidable barrier in attempting to professionalize the ESAF, because of the type of changes it has been attempting to institute: They are changes that tear the basic fabric of society and threaten to undermine the existing structure. Moreover, the individuals and groups the United States has depended on to implement such changes are the very ones whose positions in society would be most threatened by the reforms.⁷⁴

activities: "In El Salvador, congressional mandate requires that military policy and U.S.-supported development programs remain separate . . . in organizational terms, this means that in an insurgency-ravaged country where the military represents the closest thing to an effective national institution, AID is expected to carry on as if neither the war nor the military existed. . . . Congress enjoins American officials fighting a small war from using the local military force to help implement U.S. development programs (which are critical for the successful execution of a civic action program). . . . the ESAF civic action program sputters along ineffectually for want of adequate resources." See *Colonels' Report*, 1988, pp. 12, 43-45. Sheehan also comments that the "combined civil-military actions programs and projects sponsored by AID are the primary vehicles of the economic and social programs in the Salvadoran national plan. . . . because of legislative restraint and institutional reluctance to be too closely associated with the COIN campaign, these projects are planned and conducted independently of the security plans" ("Comparative Counterinsurgency Strategies," 1989, p. 146).

⁷³The whole civil-defense effort has experienced only limited success (*Colonels' Report*, 1988, pp. 40-41), the cause of which can be attributed to the ESAF and to the U.S. training effort. According to the *Colonels' Report*, "civil defense has been a bit player in the overall American program. The United States has not made a concerted effort to persuade ESAF to treat civil defense seriously" (p. 41). However, what the United States could do given legal restrictions associated with training police forces is questionable, and the distinction between civil-defense forces and police forces is fuzzy (see Waghelstein, *El Salvador: Observations*, 1985, p. 55). The principal problem, however, can be attributed to the Salvadorans, whose original civil-defense forces of the late 1970s were notorious human-rights abusers and were typically used as private security forces of the landed elites and local power brokers (Sheehan, "Comparative Counterinsurgency Strategies," 1989, p. 143).

⁷⁴Ben Schwarz cogently makes this point in *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 1992.

Table 3.2
Selected Social and Economic Indicators for El Salvador

Economic and Social Indicator		1980	1987	Percentage Change
Per capita gross national product (GNP; constant 1991 dollars)	El Salvador	\$1,223	\$1,015	-17
	Latin America	\$2,244	\$2,049	-9
	Third World	\$4,129	\$2,470	-40
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000)	El Salvador	74.8	59.0	-21
	Latin America	67.3	51.2	-24
	Third World	88.3	75.3	-15
Literacy rate	El Salvador	65%	72%	11
	Latin America	77%	84%	9
	Third World	56%	62%	11
Daily caloric intake	El Salvador	2,163	2,160	0
	Latin America	2,397	2,518	5
	Third World	2,374	2,493	5
Population per physician	El Salvador	2,720	2,898	7
	Latin America	2,696	1,745	-35
	Third World	8,273	7,470	-10

SOURCES: World Bank, *World Development Report*, various years; Ruth L. Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures*, Leesburg, Va.: WMSE Pubs., various years; and World Bank, *World Tables*, Washington, D.C., various years.

Human Rights. Despite these obstacles, there is no question that the human-rights situation in El Salvador has improved markedly.⁷⁵ Many think that the systemic-level violence has been narrowed down to individual-level violence; in short, the ESAF as an institution does not engage in human-rights abuses to the degree it once did, but problems with individual officers still exist.⁷⁶ The improvement in the human-rights situation is evidenced by a decrease from 10,000 politically motivated killings in 1981—attributed to the Salvadoran

⁷⁵See "Examining Human Rights," *Central America Report*, October 19, 1990, p. 31. Also, by 1986 the Organization of American States (OAS) reported that the human-rights situation in El Salvador was improving, but there were still problems (i.e., too many killings and disappearances). See "OAS: Human Rights Improve; But Violations Persist," *Central America Report*, December 5, 1986, p. 373; "Human Rights Criticism Persists," *Central America Report*, March 18, 1988, p. 86.

⁷⁶Obviously, there is disagreement over this position. For example, the United Nations' Truth Commission Report, released in March 1993, concluded that there was high-level responsibility for the murders of the Jesuit priests in 1989. The report says that "there is substantial proof that five high-ranking army officers, including Gen. Ponce (the minister of defense) and his deputy, Gen. Juan Orlando Zepeda, ordered the murder of Father Ignacio Ellacuria, rector of the Central American University, and five other priests." See Stanley Meisler and Tracy Wilkinson, "U.N. Report Condemns Prominent Salvadorans," *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 1993, p. 1. The report goes on to declare that, throughout the 1980s, "most of the slayings cannot be attributed to a few sporadic events that can be explained by the actions of certain individuals at certain times, but rather they are part of a panorama of systematic, general and organized violence." See Tracy Wilkinson, "Officials, Death Squads Get Most Salvador Blame," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1993.

military, security forces, and the death squads—to about 100 in 1990.⁷⁷ The U.S. State Department, for example, estimates that there were 750 deaths per month in 1980, 22 per month in 1986, 17 per month in 1989, and approximately 8 deaths per month in 1990.⁷⁸ Other human-rights organizations, such as *Tutela Legal* and Amnesty International,⁷⁹ do not agree with the State Department's *absolute* numbers, especially those attributed to the military;⁸⁰ however, their numbers do show the same overall downward trend in politically motivated violence.

Regardless of the decline in the number of human-rights abuses, progress has been slow in promoting respect for human rights and democracy.⁸¹ An unacceptably high number of egregious human-rights violations is still attributed to the military,⁸² including massacres,⁸³ links to death squads,⁸⁴ and general political repression.⁸⁵ Consequently, the UN continues to keep its human-rights observer mission active in El Salvador, citing the high number of politically motivated murders as the reason.⁸⁶ Indeed, even the U.S. State Department, in its *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1991*, acknowledges that there is

⁷⁷A high-ranking member of the ruling Christian Democrats (PDC) claims that human-rights abuses by the armed forces were increasingly rare, in "In Brief: El Salvador/Army Abuses," *Latin America Weekly Report*, February 21, 1986. For a comprehensive discussion of the changes in the human-rights situation in El Salvador, see Congressional Research Service, *El Salvador, 1979–1989*, 1989, pp. 76–97.

⁷⁸See Congressional Research Service, *El Salvador, 1979–1989*, 1989, p. 77; GAO, *El Salvador: Military Assistance*, 1991, p. 31.

⁷⁹*Tutela Legal* is the human-rights office of the Roman Catholic Church in San Salvador, and Amnesty International relies heavily on *Tutela Legal* for its numbers.

⁸⁰According to the United Nations Truth Commission Report that 22,000 complaints were received of violence occurring between January 1980 and July 1991, "the (El Salvadoran) state apparatus and Establishment bore the brunt of the (human rights) complaints. The commission said that 85 percent of the complaints were directed at agents of the military and security forces, allied para-military groups, and 'death squads.' The FMLN was named in only 5 percent of the cases." See Meisler and Wilkinson, "U.N. Report Condemns Prominent Salvadorans," 1993.

⁸¹See GAO, *El Salvador: Military Assistance*, 1991, p. 26.

⁸²For example, San Salvador's Auxiliary Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez accused the army's First Infantry Brigade of killing innocent *campesinos*; see "Army Invades Church Refuge," *Central America Report*, February 19, 1988, p. 54. Also, the ESAF was indicted for killing the Swiss theologian Juerg Weis, who was supposedly investigating human-rights violations in combat areas; see "Human Rights Notes," *Central America Report*, January 27, 1989, p. 29. Military repression against University of El Salvador (UES) students was reported when the First Infantry Brigade, which guards the university's entrances, opened fire on student demonstrators; see "University Under Army Fire," *Central America Report*, July 28, 1989, p. 227.

⁸³See "Army Blamed for Massacre," *Central America Report*, September 30, 1988, p. 302. Also, three ESAF officers were arrested and held for questioning over a massacre; see "El Salvador: Military Takes Heat for Massacre," *Central America Report*, March 10, 1989, p. 78.

⁸⁴See "Death Squads: The Shadow Remains," *Central America Report*, September 9, 1988, p. 275; "Human Rights Polemic," *Central America Report*, October 21, 1988, p. 326; "Human Rights Violations Condemned," *Central America Report*, December 2, 1988, p. 372.

⁸⁵For additional reports of continuing repression, see "International Outcry over Violence," *Central America Report*, September 29, 1989, p. 302; "Unending Repression," *Central America Report*, October 20, 1989, p. 325; "ARENA's First Year Balance," *Central America Report*, June 15, 1990; "Postscript: El Salvador/Human Rights Record," *Latin America Weekly Report*, June 14, 1990.

⁸⁶See "UN Continues Another Year of Human Rights Monitoring," *Central America Report*, March 30, 1990, p. 93.

a continuing problem.⁸⁷ Also, the Salvadoran air force has been vehemently condemned for killing many civilians in its seemingly indiscriminate bombings of San Salvador neighborhoods during the 1989 offensive; entire neighborhoods were significantly damaged to rid the area of the FMLN.⁸⁸ As a result, some ESAF officers were subsequently relieved of duty by President Cristiani.⁸⁹

In a discussion of the human-rights situation during November and December 1991, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) issued a report that notes several instances of the El Salvadoran Armed Forces' being blamed.⁹⁰ A partial list of these numbers is presented in Table 3.3.

The number of human-rights abuses reportedly committed by the military during the period covered in Table 3.3 averages one execution every nine days, one death threat every third day, one personal injury every other day, one indiscriminate attack every fourth day, and one act or threat of violence intended to intimidate the civilian population every day. Nevertheless, there has been measurable improvement.

However, such improvement brings up the issue of multiple causation: Can the improvement in human rights be attributed more to training or to the conditionality of U.S. assistance?⁹¹ What would the human-rights situation be if there were no threat of aid revocation? Would the training have produced the same dramatic decline in human-rights abuses? It is not possible to

⁸⁷See United Nations, *The First Report by the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador* [ONUSAL], which was published in February 1992. One passage reads: "There were several political and other extrajudicial killings by the ESAF in 1991" [the emphasis is added, and there are several examples presented in the report], p. 593.

⁸⁸The ESAF has been criticized for killing civilians in aerial bombing campaigns and for allegedly being responsible for massacres before the 1989 offensive. See "Rise in Civilian Casualties Criticized," *Central America Report*, September 15, 1984, p. 282; "The War Returns," *Central America Report*, January 17, 1986, p. 15; "International Outcry over Violence," *Central America Report*, September 29, 1989, p. 302; "In the Wake of the November Offensive," *Central America Report*, January 12, 1990, p. 3; Millman, "El Salvador's Army," 1989, p. 95.

⁸⁹Cristiani removed his air force chief, General Rafael Bustillo, in part because his troops had been consistently accused of human-rights abuses and widespread civilian bombing during the November 1989 offensive. See "Postscript: El Salvador/Clean-up of High Command," *Latin America Weekly Report*, January 11, 1990.

⁹⁰UN, the first report published by ONUSAL, February 19, 1992, pp. 53-54.

⁹¹Some have credited U.S. training efforts and conditionality: "U.S. efforts to promote respect for human rights and conditional aid accordingly [my emphasis] have helped reduce the number of reported human rights abuses from the number reported in the early 1980s, although such abuses continue to occur." See GAO, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance*, 1989, p. 21.

Table 3.3
Selected Statistics from the United Nations Observer Mission in
El Salvador for November and December 1991

Category	Perpetrator	Total
Summary executions	Attributed to members or former members of the armed forces	7
	By persons unknown	29
Death threats	Armed forces	24
	By persons unknown	11
Violations of integrity of the person	Armed forces	29
Indiscriminate attacks	Armed forces	14
Acts or threats of violence, the primary purpose of which is to intimidate the civilian population	Armed forces	64

scientifically assess these questions; however, there is some evidence that the training has had a positive effect.

The United States Embassy has played a large role in brokering the current peace accords.⁹² As a result, State and Defense Department officials have had extensive contacts, both formal and informal, with representatives of the FMLN. At least some members of the FMLN have expressed a desire to keep U.S. advisers in El Salvador, as a consequence of the belief that the U.S. advisers have had a positive influence on the level of professionalism among the ESAF's personnel.⁹³ Moreover, the FMLN has, on occasion, indicated that it prefers dealing with the younger, U.S.-trained officers in the ESAF, citing their higher degree of professionalism.⁹⁴

Civil-Military Relations. As noted above, the military had been in power for 50 years, from 1932 to 1982. Despite the absence of a liberal democratic tradition in El Salvador, positive gains have been made over the past 10 years in establishing a stable democratic system. For example, there have been six major elections and transfers of power since 1982: The Constituent Assembly was elected in 1982,

⁹²See, for example, Robert Buckman, "U.S. Colonel Won't Forget Path to Salvadoran Peace," *Washington Times*, December 30, 1992, p. 10.

⁹³Several sources independently confirmed that the FMLN had sent a letter to the U.S. Congress indicating its desire for U.S. advisers to remain in El Salvador for their positive impact on the ESAF. However, repeated attempts to acquire this letter were unsuccessful. Interview, March-May 1992.

⁹⁴See the *Colonels' Report*, 1988: "To the extent that American training has had an impact, it has influenced the younger generation of officers" (p. 26). Also, a State Department official said that, in his several meetings with FMLN representatives, they have indicated that they like dealing with the younger officers. However, Schwarz argues that it is the younger officers who are the worst human-rights offenders (see Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador*, 1992).

followed by presidential elections in 1984, legislative elections in 1985 and 1988, presidential elections in 1989, and legislative elections in 1991.⁹⁵

There is no way, however, to gauge the ESAF's true depth of commitment to democratically elected civilian authority. It is difficult, if not impossible, to measure the degree of informal influence, or influence behind the scenes, that is exercised by the military. But it seems clear that the military still exercises substantial influence,⁹⁶ and is capable of intervening in the political process if the country's situation deteriorates.⁹⁷ The United Nations Truth Commission noted that "none of the three branches of government—judicial, legislative or executive—were capable of controlling the ever-growing military domination of society" [emphasis added].⁹⁸ The Truth Commission stated that

in order to promote the urgent need in El Salvador to professionalize the military, bring it under civilian control and instill it with a respect for human rights, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

- 1) immediate removal from the military of all officers cited for human rights and other major violations;
- 2) steps to assure civilian control of military promotions, the military budget and all intelligence services;
- 3) a new, legally backed, provision permitting military personnel to refuse to obey unlawful orders;
- 4) steps to cut all ties between the military and private armed groups or other paramilitary groups;
- 5) the profound study of human rights at the military academy and in other officer training courses.⁹⁹

⁹⁵Elections are only one facet of progress toward democracy. There are other indications of movement toward a democratic culture. For example, voters have turned out in large numbers for all elections, despite threats of violence; the political parties respect the results; the 1989 participation of the Democratic Convergence, which is a coalition of three leftist parties, indicates that the "political space" is opening; the FMLN is set to participate in March 1994.

⁹⁶Some Central American experts at a GAO-sponsored conference "believe that in the process of modernizing Central American militaries, the United States may also have increased their power to the detriment of civilian governments." See GAO, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance*, 1989, pp. 25–26. Also, refer to William LeoGrande, "After the Battle of San Salvador," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Spring 1990, pp. 342–343, 348–349.

⁹⁷At the same GAO conference, some experts asserted that "the real power in their countries remains in the military and that if a crisis occurred, the military would reassert its power." See GAO, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance*, 1989, p. 31.

⁹⁸Meisler and Wilkinson, "U.N. Report Condemns Prominent Salvadorans," 1993.

⁹⁹United Nations, Truth Commission Report, *Executive Summary*, March 15, 1993, p. 6.

The U.S. Army, however, has publicly affirmed its support for the democratically elected civilian authority and denied the repeated rumors of impending coups.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, whenever the civilian regime has mounted a frontal attack on the ESAF's institutional prerogatives, it has failed. For example, when Cristiani was elected, one of his first edicts was to order that all institutional funds, including the ESAF's Social Provision Institute of the Armed Forces (IPSFA),¹⁰¹ be placed in the country's central accounts. However, the IPSFA represents the country's largest source of liquid capital and has been used by the ESAF to purchase real estate, and small and large businesses; invest in joint ventures with multinational corporations; establish an insurance company; and create a bank. The ESAF, unsurprisingly, was unwilling to relinquish this formidable financial power and Cristiani was forced to back down.¹⁰²

The ESAF also has been generally unwilling to subject itself, or at least its officers, to civilian judicial control.¹⁰³ In fact, a State Department official said that "the Salvadoran military officers despise having to answer to civilian judicial authority."¹⁰⁴ For example, despite the fact that there have been approximately 40,000 politically motivated murders during the 12-year war,¹⁰⁵ many committed by the military, only two officers have been convicted.¹⁰⁶ In many instances,

¹⁰⁰As further evidence that the military supports the country's transition to democracy, one U.S. official claimed that "the ESAF did not support Duarte and the Christian Democrats or Cristiani and ARENA. Yet, it supported the results of both elections." Interview, U.S. Embassy, El Salvador, April 1992. Also, after the April 1985 elections, the extreme left and extreme right accused the government of rigging the elections. However, Defense Minister Casanova said that the army "has come to understand that the survival of the institution depends on our not going against the sovereign will of the people." And so, at least rhetorically, the army leadership was supporting the democratically elected Duarte. See "After the Votes, Talk of Talks," *Latin America Weekly Report*, April 19, 1985. Moreover, as a result of a political crisis facing the regime of President Duarte (a parliamentary boycott by opposition representatives, a 24-hour private-sector strike, and intensified guerrilla campaigns), the armed forces publicly denied coup rumors and restated their absolute support for the Duarte government. Also, the El Salvadoran Armed Forces Chief of Staff Adolfo Onecifero Blandon said "the democratic process underway in the country is the result of the popular aspiration that the army has sworn to defend." See "Coup Rumors, Boycotts, and Private-Sector Strike," *Central America Report*, January 23, 1987, p. 17.

¹⁰¹The IPSFA is like a social security fund, and all soldiers must contribute.

¹⁰²See Millman, "El Salvador's Army," 1989, p. 97.

¹⁰³The *tanda* system certainly exacerbates this situation. According to the *Colonels' Report*, p. 26, it is "the aspect of professionalization where the ESAF has made the least progress in changing the ethos of the officer corps. The 'tanda' system . . . remains today the chief barrier to a competent officer corps." Also see "El Salvador Military Aid: Cut and Conditioned," *Central America Report*, October 26, 1990.

¹⁰⁴Telephone interview, Washington, D.C., May 1992.

¹⁰⁵One published report estimated that the death squads purportedly linked to the armed forces were responsible for 40,000 of the 70,000 deaths attributed to the war. See Lindsey Gruson, "Salvadorans Consider Sweeping Amnesty for Military," *The New York Times*, March 18, 1990.

¹⁰⁶Colonel Benevides and Lieutenant Mendoza were the only officers convicted in the Jesuit murder case; see "Convictions in Jesuit Murder Case," *Latin America Weekly Report*, October 10, 1991, p. 2. However, these convictions came only after the ESAF initially denied involvement and intense pressure was applied by the United States. For background on the incident see, for example, "FMLN

charges are made against specific officers, but the investigations are typically stonewalled or the military conducts its own internal "investigation." The verdict in these internal investigations is normally "not guilty,"¹⁰⁷ and when questioned, the ESAF has been known to threaten the questioners.¹⁰⁸ Since only two military officers have ever been prosecuted and imprisoned for civilian murders and human-rights abuses (although a number of national guardsmen have been jailed), there is a widely held view that the military can get away with murder.¹⁰⁹ In spite of this evidence, the U.S. MILGP in El Salvador feels that U.S. training has had a positive effect.¹¹⁰

Offensive Borders on Insurrection," *Central America Report*, November 17, 1989, p. 357; "War: According to Plan Says FMLN," *Latin America Weekly Report*, November 30, 1989; "Crackdown Follows FMLN Pullback," *Latin America Weekly Report*, December 7, 1989. Finally, Cristiani admitted that the military killed the Jesuits: "Postscript: El Salvador/Army Killed Jesuits," *Latin America Weekly Report*, January 18, 1990; "Cristiani Names Suspects of Jesuit Killings, Faces New Murder Scandal," *Latin America Weekly Report*, January 25, 1990. The way the Jesuit case was handled indicates an overall lack of sufficient reform and respect for the legal system. See "Justice Delayed, Justice Denied," *Central America Report*, May 11, 1990; "More Obstructions in Jesuit Case," *Central America Report*, June 15, 1990, p. 173. The assassinations and subsequent handling of the Jesuit case confirmed for many that, despite the Pentagon's 10-year relationship with the ESAF, it continued to follow its own path; see "El Salvador Military Aid: Cut and Conditioned," *Central America Report*, October 26, 1990; "Rebels Up the Ante—U.S. Calls the Bet," *Central America Report*, December 14, 1990, p. 383; "Pressures in Jesuit Case," *Central America Report*, January 18, 1991, p. 13; "Jesuit Case Reopened," *Central America Report*, May 17, 1991, p. 140.

¹⁰⁷This is evidenced by the fact that the man who allegedly ordered the deaths of two AIFLD (American Institute for Free Labor Development) officials in January 1981, Captain Rodolfo Lopez Sibrian, was released from prison and reportedly returned to active duty; see "Reagan Gives His Blessing," *Latin America Weekly Report*, January 28, 1983. Another example is the generally perceived lack of seriousness on the part of the government to investigate army involvement in a kidnap ring: One implicated officer was restored to his post and another was allowed to leave the country; see "Accidents, Cronyism Mar Army Image," *Central America Report*, May 23, 1986, p. 150. Also, a court order for the arrest of two military officers touched off a crisis within the army high command. The case involves Colonel Elmer Gonzalez Araujo, who was a member of the year-group that occupied the major military posts. The *tanda* protected him from prosecution, which resulted from his alleged involvement in a massacre in 1983. See "High Command Crisis Over Arrest Orders," *Latin America Weekly Report*, October 8, 1987, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸The army was criticized for letting a couple of army officers off the hook for some kidnappings. In response, Defense Minister Casanova warned the press that "the armed forces will take the necessary drastic measures to sanction those journalists who defame army officers." See "Accidents, Cronyism Mar Army Image," *Central America Report*, May 23, 1986, p. 150.

¹⁰⁹Questions continue over the effectiveness of the El Salvadoran judiciary because (1) the military continues to shield its officers from the normal judicial system and (2) the government unit investigating sensitive crimes is headed by a military officer. See GAO, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance*, 1989, p. 32. Also see "El Salvador: Military Takes Heat for Massacre," *Central America Report*, March 10, 1989, p. 78; "A History of Impunity," *Central America Report*, May 11, 1990.

¹¹⁰For example, a recent 2-year training plan for El Salvador reads: "The ESAF changed themselves, in 12 years, from a power-hungry Army with no respect for Human Rights into a professional Army that supports and obeys the elected government while respecting Human Rights. This change includes the giving up of its police role to civilians. The creation of a new civilian police force has not gone smoothly. Serious questions have arisen over whether the GOES is sincere about creating a genuinely new civilian police force." See "El Salvador: Obstacles in the Road to Peace," *Central America Report*, May 8, 1992.

Summary

The United States has attempted to transform the El Salvadoran Armed Forces since the early 1980s. However, this transformation, facilitated by \$4.5 billion in economic and military assistance, has only been partially successful in creating a military that possesses and implements the skills necessary to achieve internal defense and development.

There is no question that U.S. training and equipment have created a more capable counterinsurgent military. Without U.S. training and equipment, the government of El Salvador would have likely been deposed by the FMLN. Nevertheless, although the ESAF is more capable than it was in 1979, it still suffers from some shortcomings. For example, even though most combat units in the ESAF are capable of implementing U.S. training in tactics and doctrine, those tactics are not always implemented by the ESAF. After 10 years of U.S. involvement in El Salvador, the ESAF only reluctantly engaged the FMLN with the kind of tactics that U.S. advisers have urged.

The ESAF is also more adept at the "hard" elements of counterinsurgency (i.e., combat operations) than the "soft" elements (i.e., civic action). However, this is only partially the fault of U.S. trainers and advisers. It is true that civic-action, or nation-building, types of skills have played a secondary role in the U.S. training hierarchy, but the United States has little leverage over the main reasons the ESAF has had problems with the soft elements. Many reasons are cited: insufficient resources to simultaneously secure large areas and engage in internal development activities; lack of ESAF emphasis on civil defense; and an overly narrow attitude among ESAF officers about the nature of guerrilla warfare (i.e., military focus instead of a political one).

The United States has also achieved a large measure of success in fostering the development of a stable democracy in El Salvador, but it is unclear if U.S. training can take the credit. On the one hand, human-rights abuses have decreased and the ESAF appears to support the democratically elected civilian authority. On the other hand, many experts agree that the ESAF still wields considerable influence behind the scenes. For instance, any attempt by the civilian government to wrest power, resources, or influence from the ESAF is met with resistance, usually successful resistance. Also, the judicial system is generally considered dysfunctional, since military officers are rarely prosecuted: Only two ESAF officers have ever been convicted in a murder investigation despite the ESAF's alleged widespread involvement in many politically motivated executions and disappearances.

It would almost seem that the authors of the Expanded IMET program had El Salvador in mind when the program was initiated. Attempting to train human rights, civil-military relations, and the tenets of democracy will be especially difficult for the United States and crucial for the Salvadorans as the U.S. presence evaporates. Moreover, the ESAF does use its nation-building skills to aggrandize political and economic power. Unfortunately, a fundamental problem, at least according to officials at USSOUTHCOM and in the MILGP in El Salvador, is that there is a dearth of qualified civilians in the GOES to train.¹¹¹

¹¹¹USSOUTHCOM officials have lamented that this is a problem generally in Latin America (Briefings at Training Conference, Panama, March 1992). Both State Department and MILGP members confirmed that this is a problem in El Salvador (interview, April 1992).

4. Honduras

Policy Goals and Program Objectives

The United States' policy goals for Honduras since the early 1980s have been to (1) combat, deter, and/or defeat any burgeoning insurgency; (2) deter and, if necessary, defeat the Sandinista military in a potential conflict; (3) strengthen democratic principles, institutions, and structures; and (4) achieve broad-based socioeconomic development.¹ The achievement of these policy goals would ensure internal defense and development for Honduras; the goals are to be accomplished through the successful implementation of various programs that fall into two broad categories:²

- Developing effective counterinsurgent military forces
- Developing professional military establishments.

Developing an Effective Counterinsurgent Military Force

Honduras has never experienced an insurgent threat as have its Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Nicaraguan neighbors; therefore, the HOAF was not necessarily well-equipped in counterinsurgency equipment, personnel, or tactics.³ But although the threat looming over Honduras in the early 1980s was less ominous than El Salvador's, instability still threatened the region. As a result, U.S. officials were concerned by the early 1980s about the FMLN moving

¹These goals are derived from the Kissinger Commission Report, 1984.

²The training objectives are listed in U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Presentation for Security Assistance Programs*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, various years, and the 2-year training plans for various years developed by the MILGP in each country.

³The Honduran government has really had only a relatively minor problem with insurgents. In 1983 six Honduran guerrilla groups were reported to have joined forces to form the National United Directorate of the Honduran Revolutionary Movement (DNUH). See "The Armed Left Unites," *Central America Report*, Vol. X, No. 17, May 6, 1983, p. 129. This alliance was really forged in response to the Reagan Administration's strategy of using Honduras as a regional training and staging center for implementing its anti-Sandinista and anti-FMLN strategy. Estimates of total rebel forces numbered no more than 1,000 at the alliance's peak in 1986. Nevertheless, acts of sabotage, directed principally at U.S. military personnel and bases, have occurred periodically throughout the country. There have been four principal rebel groups: the Popular Liberation Movement (MPL), or the *Cinchoneros*; the People's Revolutionary Forces (FPR), or the Lorenzo Zelaya Front; the Morazanista Front for the Liberation of Honduras (FMLH); and the Revolutionary Central American Workers Party (PRTC). See "Honduras: Guerrilla Groups, a Brief History," *Central America Report*, 25 May 1990, p. 149.

freely between the Salvadoran-Honduran border and the possibility of a Cuban-Nicaraguan-supported insurgency in Honduras.

Developing Professional Military Establishments

Developing a professional military has proven to be just as challenging in Honduras as in El Salvador, in large measure because of the HOAF's traditionally prominent role in the country's politics, its endemic corruption, and its history of human-rights abuses.

History of Repression. The Honduran military is considered much more benevolent than the Salvadoran military,⁴ although the Honduran Armed Forces were accused of some extra-judicial executions and "disappearances" during the early 1980s. For example, a group of U.S. congressmen visited Honduras in 1983 and threatened to recommend a cutoff of all U.S. aid if the cases of 43 persons disappeared since January 1981 were not resolved. Ascribing responsibility for these disappearances is not easy; nevertheless, it was widely believed that the Honduran "security forces" and military were behind them. Another report alleged that the Honduran military and its security forces were responsible for the deaths of at least 10 opposition leaders and the disappearance of 145 people during 1982 and 1983.⁵ Moreover, a substantial portion of the Honduran population apparently placed blame on the Honduran government, as evidenced by the mass protests over the missing people.⁶ As a result of those protests, the

⁴The sources of moderation and repression in the Salvadoran and Honduran militaries have deep historical roots. In essence, coffee cultivation in El Salvador, which is extremely labor-intensive, could not take place without a strong central authority. The prime coffee land was occupied as communal property by peasants, but the landed oligarchy needed the land and the peasants to produce and harvest the crop. Between 1850 and 1890, a series of steps was taken to create a centralized military establishment to enforce an arrangement that provided the land and the peasants to the coffee oligarchy. Honduras, on the other hand, did not begin coffee cultivation until just after World War II. The principal agricultural product has been bananas, a capital-intensive rather than labor-intensive crop. Also, the prime banana-growing land was unused tropical coast instead of heavily occupied communal land. Finally, rather than a landed oligarchy having an interest in bananas, it was a foreign-controlled multinational corporation. As a result, the Honduran military does not share with the Salvadoran military the historical legacy of being used by the indigenous landed elite as a repressive and coercive instrument. See José García, "Origins of Repression and Moderation in the Militaries of El Salvador and Honduras," Las Cruces, N.M.: New Mexico State University, Center for Latin American Studies, mimeographed, May 1982; Steve C. Ropp, "The Honduran Army in the Sociopolitical Evolution of the Honduran State," *The Americas*, Vol. 30, No. 4, April 1974, pp. 504-528; and James A. Morris, *Honduras: Caudillo Politics and Military Rulers*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984.

⁵See "In Brief: Honduras/Human Rights," *Latin America Weekly Report*, December 16, 1983, p. 12.

⁶The human-rights movement demonstrated its strength in the traditional May Day demonstrations by labor and students in 1984, when some 75,000 people marched in major cities demanding the return of 114 people who had been missing since 1982. The killings (93 from 1981 to May 1984) and disappearances had begun a year before the first freely elected government took office in January 1982 after 20 years of military rule. Armed Forces Chief Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, who had been trained in Argentina, had taken over as head of the public security forces. See "Human Rights: Rights Leaders See Small Opening," *Latin America Weekly Report*, May 11, 1984, p. 10.

government offered a clumsy attempt to assuage critics by publishing a report that absolved the government (and hence the military) of responsibility;⁷ the report was met with virtually universal derision.⁸ In fact, an ex-sergeant in the Honduran intelligence service charged high-level Honduran army officers and CIA advisers with involvement in political disappearances, kidnappings, and executions (by Battalion 3-16, an army battalion in the HOAF).⁹ The military acknowledges the existence of Battalion 3-16; however, it argues that the allegations of human-rights abuses are without substance.¹⁰ Nevertheless, as a result of these lingering allegations and the general perception that the Honduran military systematically violated human rights in the early 1980s, Honduras was brought to trial in an international forum. In fact, the forum marked the first time in the history of international law that a state was tried in an international tribunal (before the Interamerican Human Rights Court, or CIDH, in Costa Rica) for human-rights violations.¹¹ Besides these allegations, there are other reports of the Honduran military's systematically violating its citizens' human rights.¹²

History of Political Involvement. Transforming the Honduran military into an institution that willingly accepted civilian authority would be a challenge, given its long history of involvement in politics. By 1981, the Honduran military had been in power for 10 years; however, the military as an institution had occupied the presidency of the country for all but seven years since the 1956 coup.¹³ In

⁷See "Government to Investigate Rights Violations," *Central America Report*, May 13, 1983, p. 142; "Report Exonerates Security Forces," *Latin America Weekly Report*, November 1, 1985, p. 3.

⁸See "A Rights Report that Sheds Little Light," *Central America Report*, November 8, 1985, p. 343. See also "Rights Report Rankles," *Central America Report*, March 29, 1985, p. 92, which states that "the Honduran military's investigation of human rights abuses, parts of which were released in preliminary form at the end of last year, has convinced practically no one. The public suspects a cover-up, and unless the final version, due out this month, is substantially different, it will also be dismissed. The violations continue and the security forces are the prime suspects."

⁹See "CIA and Honduran Army Accused of Killings," *Central America Report*, 22 May 1987, p. 146.

¹⁰See "Human Rights Controversy Persists," *Central America Report*, November 18, 1988.

¹¹See "Human Rights Violations Before International Court," *Central America Report*, October 23, 1987, p. 327. During the trial, reports "Landmark Human Rights Verdict," *Central America Report*, August 12, 1988, p. 242, "jurors were presented with evidence revealing a systematic campaign by the Honduran military to eliminate suspected leftists in the early 1980s."

¹²There were, for example, reports of the Honduran military's violating the sanctity of a United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) refugee camp on the Guatemalan border. Another series of reports has the Honduran military and/or security forces being responsible for three labor-leader kidnappings that provoked work stoppages and mass protests, and one of the worse crises that President Roberto Suazo Cordova's government has yet faced"; see "Human Rights, Going, Going," *Central America Report*, March 30, 1984, p. 100. Also, see "Government Violates Rights of Suspected Guerrillas," *Central America Report*, July 20, 1984, p. 223; "Human Rights Groups Putting on the Pressure," *Central America Report*, August 24, 1984, p. 258; "Rights Violations Persist," *Central America Report*, July 12, 1985, p. 204; "U.S. Troops and Honduran Army Under Fire," *Central America Report*, April 4, 1986, p. 94; "Serious Human Rights Charges," *Central America Report*, July 25, 1986, p. 221; "Continuing Human Rights Tension," *Central America Report*, September 26, 1986, p. 293; "No End to Rights Violations," *Central America Report*, November 7, 1986, p. 343.

¹³Morris, *Honduras: Caudillo Politics*, 1984, p. 36.

fact, there have been 161 coups and insurrections in the 170 years since Honduras' independence,¹⁴ five of them occurring since 1956. Furthermore, any attempt to disentangle the Honduran military from politics is exacerbated by the fact that the military is given statutory control over several state institutions.¹⁵ The frustration of attempting to build a liberal democracy where there is no liberal democratic tradition was expressed by a State Department official, who lamented that in Honduras "there are ministers, but there is no ministry; there are inhabitants, but there are no citizens; and there is a democracy, but no democratic culture."¹⁶

Culture of Corruption. Corruption has been endemic to the Honduran culture, and it is not limited to the military. One example of its pervasiveness is the 1985 revelation that the Honduran president, Roberto Suazo Cordova, gave "various officers of the presidential honor guard 'gratuities' totaling 425,000 lempiras, plus L.250,000 to buy military equipment" in mid-1984.¹⁷ Other reports have the president and his cabinet illegally enriching themselves at public expense.¹⁸ The military has also faced several allegations of corruption. For instance, General Humberto Regalado Hernandez' bid for reelection as chief of the Honduran Armed Forces was blocked in 1989 by charges that he embezzled U.S. military funds.¹⁹ Also, General Walter Lopez, the head of the armed forces, was forced to resign in 1986 in the face of allegations that he illegally took money from the Contras,²⁰ and there have been other charges that drug traffickers have corrupted senior army officers.²¹ These allegations have persisted, despite claims to the contrary by the military; they can be attributed in no small measure to the familial involvement of many of the participants.²²

¹⁴José L. Nunnez-Bennett, *Honduras Defense Policy*, Carlisle Barracks, Penn.: U.S. Army War College, April 22, 1986, p. 5.

¹⁵The armed forces normally are, by law, allowed to participate in the political arena, since several state institutions are put directly under military control. For example, the Honduran Telecommunications Company, the National Aeronautic Directorate, and the Geodesic and Map Services are directly controlled by the military. Also, the minister of defense is a member of the administrative board of the National Energy Company as well as other important boards. See Nunnez-Bennett, *Honduras Defense Policy*, 1986, pp. 18-19.

¹⁶Interview, U.S. Embassy, April 1992.

¹⁷See "Corruption Fouls the Air," *Central America Report*, May 17, 1985, p. 138. The current (spring 1993) exchange rate is about L.5 to \$1.00.

¹⁸See "Corruption Charges Abound," *Central America Report*, May 1, 1987, p. 128.

¹⁹See "Regalado Promoted out of Office," *Central America Report*, October 27, 1989, p. 335.

²⁰See "Race to Embrace Social-Democracy," *Latin America Weekly Report*, September 25, 1986, p. 2.

²¹See "Postscript: Honduras/Drugs," *Latin American Weekly Report*, February 25, 1988. But Under Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs Elliott Abrams argued that "these reports published in the United States press linking Honduran military officers with drug trafficking to the United States were generated by opponents of President Reagan's Central American policy." See "Postscript: Honduras/Drugs," *Latin American Weekly Report*, March 3, 1988.

²²Colonel Rigoberto Regalado, Honduran Ambassador to Panama and step-brother to the chief of the Honduran Armed Forces, was detained in Miami on May 16, 1988, on charges of carrying over

Training Efforts

The United States has devoted significant resources in Honduras to accomplish the training objectives of developing effective counterinsurgent military forces that behave in a professional manner.²³ In many ways, the Honduran military shares a unique historical association with the U.S. military: Honduras' modern-day professional military establishment was created under U.S. guidance. The United States helped establish all of the Honduran military's professional training institutions after World War II, including the Basic Arms School in 1946, followed by the School for Enlisted Men, the School for Officers, and, in 1952, the military academy, Francisco Morazan.²⁴

Magnitude of the U.S. Training Effort

The U.S. military's relationship with the HOAF expanded dramatically during the 1980s. As the primary supplier of equipment and training to the HOAF, the United States coordinated a substantial increase in personnel and maneuver battalions.²⁵ But perhaps more important, Honduras was used by the United States as a regional staging center both to train the ESAF and to support the Contras.

Many resources have been devoted to training and equipping the HOAF, as well. For example, Honduras has received \$368 million (constant 1991 dollars) in FMS²⁶ and \$13 million (constant 1991 dollars) in IMET²⁷ since 1980. From 1950 to 1990, nearly 7,000 Honduran military personnel have been trained through IMET and its predecessor programs in the United States;²⁸ almost half (3,250) have been trained since 1980.²⁹ Roughly 20 to 30 percent have had IMET training, an

10 kilograms of cocaine in his luggage; see "Postscript," *Latin American Weekly Report*, June 2, 1988. Also, a special Honduran congressional commission charged with investigating drug trafficking indicated that Honduras has been serving as a "narco-trafficking bridge." It then went on to implicate Tania Regalado, daughter of the armed forces chief, General Humberto Regalado Hernandez, in drug trafficking. See "Narco-bridge?" *Central America Report*, January 12, 1990, p. 6.

²³The focus is on the Honduran army instead of the navy and air force, because (1) Honduras' IDAD efforts are *overwhelmingly* army operations; (2) the size of the Honduran army dwarfs the size of the navy and air force; and (3) relatively few seamen and airmen have attended the NAVSCIATTS or the IAAFA. Refer to Appendix A.

²⁴Steve C. Ropp, "The Honduran Army," *The Americas*, 1974, p. 509.

²⁵The Honduran Armed Forces increased in personnel from 14,000 in 1980 to almost 22,000 in 1987; it increased its maneuver battalions from about 10 to around 20.

²⁶Honduras has ranked seventeenth on the Third World FMS recipient list since 1980.

²⁷Honduras has ranked eleventh on the Third World IMET recipient list since 1980.

²⁸There are many notable former students, including current Honduran Commander in Chief Luis Alonso Discua-Elver; all Honduran generals and over 90 percent of the unit commanders (battalion and above) have been trained through the IMET program.

²⁹The 3,250 Honduran soldiers trained since 1980 rank Honduras as the fifth highest on the Third World list since 1980.

extremely high percentage relative to the Latin American and Third World averages, as is especially apparent in Figure 4.1.³⁰ Also, all graduates from the Honduran military academy attend the SOA's basic officer's course.

The courses listed in Table 4.1, many of which are taken at the SOA, represent the number of students either trained or projected to be trained in the United States through the IMET program from 1988 to 1993.³¹ This list shows the 20 most heavily attended courses and accounts for 89 percent of the students.³² Those courses listed in bold print have direct applicability to internal defense and development.

A cursory examination of Table 4.1 reveals that members of the HOAF rarely take courses that have direct applicability to IDAD.³³ This point is further emphasized by Figure 4.2, which reveals that only about 15 percent of the students are in courses concerned with internal defense and development

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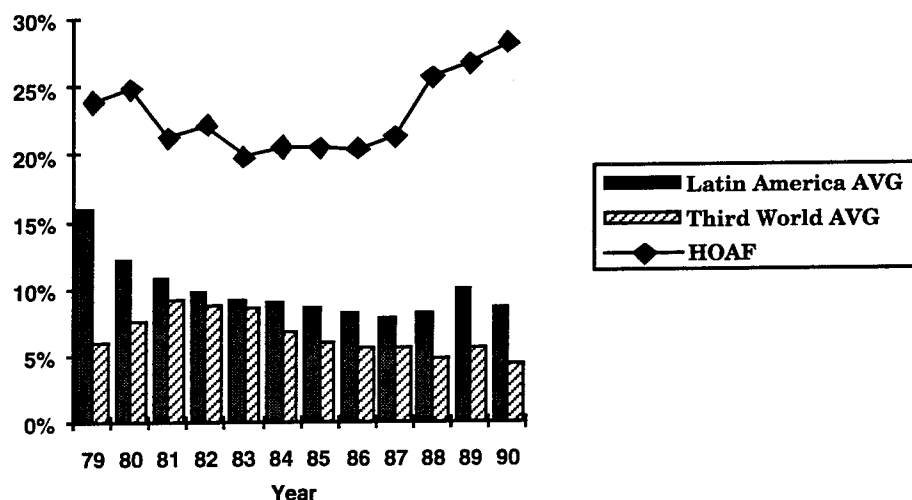


Figure 4.1—Honduran Soldiers Trained in CONUS Through IMET as a Percentage of Total HOAF

³⁰This percentage is based on the assumptions that the average length of military service is 20 years and there are no repeat students. The percentage for the officer corps would be substantially higher than 20 to 30 percent.

³¹The United States Army School of the Americas (SOA) is perhaps the most important U.S. training institution for Latin American countries. Indeed, about 3,500 Hondurans have graduated from SOA. See U.S. Army School of the Americas, *Course Catalog*, 1992, p. vi.

³²Course data for HOAF students attending U.S. Air Force schools are provided in Appendix B. Unfortunately, similar data for the U.S. Navy could not be obtained.

³³The courses were categorized by the author with help from a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel familiar with course contents. The categorizations are illustrative rather than definitive.

Table 4.1
IMET-Funded Courses Attended by HOAF Members at U.S.
Army Schools from 1988 to 1993

Course	Students
Instructor Training	158
Combat Branch Orientation	141
English Language Course	103
Infantry Officer Basic—Spanish	84
OJT Operations Training—CONUS	70
Cadet Preparation, Infantry—Spanish	69
Enlisted Training Management	59
Officer Training Management	46
Sniper	40
Psychological Operations Officer	30
Staff Officer Course—Spanish	30
Joint Operations—Latin America	27
Counter-Narcotics Operations	26
Artillery Repair	14
Military Intelligence Officer, Basic—Spanish	12
Armor Officer, Advanced	12
Armor Officer, Basic	11
Instructor Training	11
Ammunition Specialist	10
Ammunition Inspector	10
TOTAL	963

NOTE: Courses in boldface type have direct applicability to IDAD.

(including engineering, medical, transportation, signal and communications, intelligence, psychological operations, and ranger courses).

Much deliberate COIN training has been provided to the HOAF, but most training has been "conventionally" oriented³⁴ because of the potential Nicaraguan threat³⁵ and the absence of significant insurgent activity in

³⁴Most of the training and maneuvers seemed to be designed with the Nicaraguans in mind, as evidenced by the type of maneuvers (e.g., large conventional armor movements) and equipment (e.g., heavy armor and F-5 fighter jets). See "Getting Ready for War," *Central America Report*, July 22, 1983, p. 223; "Big Pine Number Two," *Central America Report*, August 12, 1983, p. 244; "Maneuvers with No Treaty," *Central America Report*, Vol. XII, No. 11, March 22, 1985, p. 81; "With U.S. Aid, Obstacles Fade," *Central America Report*, February 21, 1985, p. 52; "A Hardening Attitude Toward Sandinista," *Central America Report*, Vol. XIII, No. 14, April 18, 1986, p. 105; "Close Ties with U.S. Continue," *Central America Report*, January 8, 1988, p. 6; "In Brief: Honduras/United States," *Latin America Weekly Report*, February 11, 1983, p. 12; "Contras Banned from Returning," *Latin America Weekly Report*, July 13, 1984, p. 4; "With U.S. Aid, Obstacles Fade," *Central America Report*, February 21, 1986, p. 52.

³⁵Because of the "action/reaction" dynamic behind arms races, it is impossible to determine whether Nicaragua actually intended to use its massive army to invade neighboring countries or was merely reacting to the U.S.-supported buildup in Honduras. Alternatively, Nicaragua might have

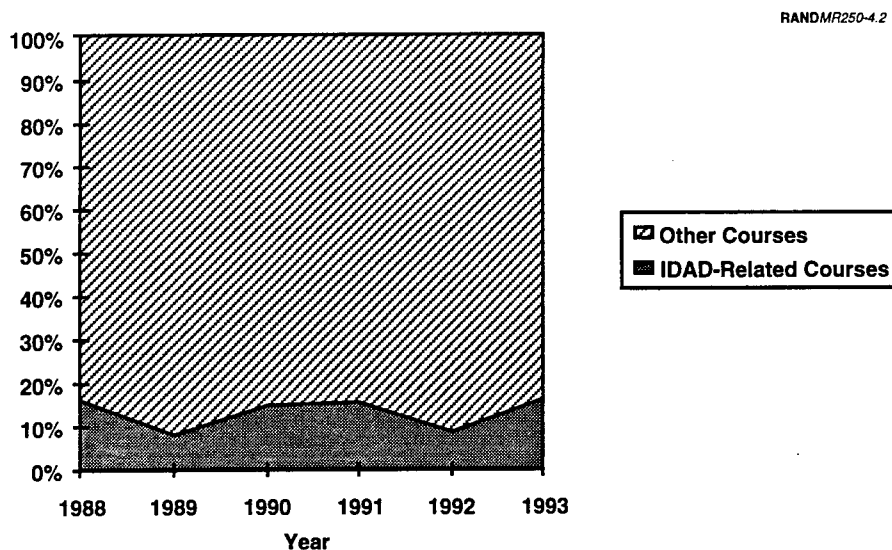


Figure 4.2—IDAD-Related Courses Attended by HOAF Members as a Percentage of Total Courses

Honduras. There were, however, instances of increased guerrilla activity in Honduras and attempts by the Defense Ministry to counter them in the early 1980s, as evidenced by reports of clashes involving up to 300 guerrillas in the departments of Olancho, Atlantida, Yoro, and Colon.³⁶ Also, a potentially serious insurgency, believed to be supported by Nicaragua and Cuba, appeared in La Ceiba (on the Caribbean coast) in 1986, and the FMLN frequently used Honduran territory as a sanctuary. As a result, the U.S. military has trained the HOAF in COIN techniques.³⁷

wanted to use the force structure for cross-border raids into Honduras directed at the Contras, as in 1988, when the Sandinista army raided Bocay. Nevertheless, Nicaragua increased its force structure substantially from the late 1970s to the late 1980s: For example, personnel in the active army, from 7,100 to 70,000; maneuver battalions, from 3 to 57; reserve battalions, from 0 to 115; main battle tanks, from 3 to 130; armored personnel carriers, from 0 to 114; and artillery pieces, from 4 to 96. See International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1978-1979 and 1988-1989*, London: Brassey's. Given this formidable array of conventional firepower and the frequent forays into Honduran territory directed against the Contras, the U.S. military spent most of its time teaching conventional (non-COIN) military techniques and tactics to the HOAF.

³⁶See "U.S. Techniques Are Tested Against Local Insurgents," *Latin America Weekly Report*, September 30, 1983, p. 5; "Guerrillas and Maneuvers," *Central America Report*, October 31, 1986, p. 332; "Insistent Insurgency," *Central America Report*, November 28, 1986, p. 367; and "Human Rights and Counterinsurgency," *Central America Report*, February 19, 1988, p. 55.

³⁷Some of this training took place at the regional training center (CREMS), but most of it was in the form of joint exercises. For a description of training that is specifically designed to teach COIN techniques (e.g., *Operation Lempira*), see "Maneuvers Galore," *Central America Report*, March 21, 1986, p. 85; "New U.S. War Games in Progress," *Latin America Weekly Report*, July 5, 1985, p. 3. Some selected examples of exercises where COIN was taught are (1) Emergency Readiness Deployment Exercises, involving 600 to 700 U.S. troops and around 500 Honduran troops; (2) *Bigger Focus '84*, from July 1984 to February 1985, in 100-200-man units; (3) *Big Pine III* (or *Ahaus Tara III*), from February 1985 to May 1985, with 4,500 U.S. personnel and 6,000 Honduran troops; (4) *Granadero I*,

Internal Development

In addition to teaching the hard elements of COIN, many of these exercises were designed to impart training for the soft elements. For example, in the context of one of the larger joint exercises, *Big Pine II (Ahuas Tara II)*, the U.S. military, with the HOAF alongside, performed at least 40 civic actions throughout the country.³⁸ When General Paul Gorman assumed command of USSOUTHCOM in 1983, he directed that USSOUTHCOM coordinate "high impact civic action missions" in conjunction with planned military exercises.³⁹ Needless to say, civic-action programs have been included in virtually all the joint exercises conducted in Honduras, with the triple purpose of providing training to U.S. troops, training to the HOAF, and better social conditions for the Honduran population.⁴⁰

The same type of human-rights training that has been provided to the ESAF has also been afforded the HOAF. In particular, both countries send students to the School of the Americas, where they receive human-rights instruction, and both countries benefit from the 7th Special Forces Group's human-rights instruction. However, the United States has never really pressured Honduras on human rights because (1) the HOAF has a relatively good record, especially compared with that of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua; and (2) U.S. policy in the region has been concerned mostly with supporting the Contras, defeating the FMLN, and improving the human-rights situation in El Salvador. In short, according to one State Department official, "it was not perceived to be in U.S. interests during the 1980s to pester Honduras on human rights. We wanted to focus on the Contras and the FMLN, so why muddy the real issue?"⁴¹

April 1984 to June 1984, involving around 2,800 HOAF troops and 1,300 ESAF troops; and (5) *Cabanas '85*, from June 1985 to September 1985, with some 1,000 U.S. troops.

³⁸Examples of activities executed as part of *Ahuas Tara II* are naval interdiction, aerial targeting, artillery and anti-armor exercises, airlifts and a marine amphibious landing, military construction, civic actions, and training in counterinsurgency techniques. See Eva Gold and Mary Day Kent, *The Ahuas Tara II Exercises*, Philadelphia, Penn.: NARMIC/American Friends Service Committee, mimeograph, February 1984.

³⁹See Bernard Eugene Harvey, *U.S. Military Civic Action in Honduras, 1982-1985: Tactical Success, Strategic Uncertainty*, Langley AFB, Va.: Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict, October 1988. He writes that military civic action (MCA) was a high priority for USSOUTHCOM, especially when Gen. Gorman became the commander in chief (CINC) in 1983. He writes that "although the previous commander had initiated involvement in civic assistance and PSYOPS, the new commander, General Paul Gorman, broadened and deepened the COIN program in Central America. His concept did not call for a large increase in the number of soldiers need[ed] to counter existing and potential insurgencies. Rather, it demanded revitalization of their operational methodology and included MCA as an important adjunct to military operations" (p. 10).

⁴⁰Some assert that the real goal of these civic-action programs was to win the support of the Honduran population for U.S. policy in the region (which required stationing large numbers of U.S. military personnel on Honduran soil).

⁴¹Interview, April 1992.

The Mixed Success of U.S. Training

The Honduran Armed Forces have become technically and tactically more proficient since the beginning of the 1980s. However, the insurgent threat in Honduras was never large. Even so, when required to perform counterinsurgency techniques, the HOAF have performed well. They have proven especially adept at the soft elements of counterinsurgency, showing a keen interest in military civic action.

Efforts to professionalize the HOAF have met with mixed results. Whereas the systematic abuse of human rights has not been a problem in Honduras, at least compared with neighboring countries' records, and the military seems willing, at least on the surface, to accept civilian authority, there are still lingering problems with corruption and graft within the HOAF.

Internal Defense: Technical and Tactical Proficiency

One of the unique historical characteristics of Honduras, relative to most of its Central American neighbors, is its lack of social unrest and insurgent groups. As a result, the HOAF have never been challenged, as have their Salvadoran, Nicaraguan, and Guatemalan neighbors, by a credible insurgency.⁴² There was an incipient insurgency in the early 1980s, whose genesis was the large U.S. presence in the country, but it only slightly threatened social stability. Moreover, the Cuban-Nicaraguan-sponsored rebels that were active in Honduras during the mid-1980s were quickly dispatched by a U.S.-trained COIN force.⁴³ Either because of the effectiveness of the HOAF's COIN techniques or the absence of a meaningful reason to rebel, the leaders of Honduras' largest guerrilla organizations have recently renounced their armed struggle.⁴⁴ These rebels have stated that the underlying causes of their insurgency are still intact, but "being in

⁴²See "Honduras: Guerrilla Groups, a Brief History," *Central America Report*, May 25, 1990, p. 149. Various reasons have been advanced for the relative quiescence in Honduras. Some have pointed out that Honduras, while extremely poor, has had a relatively equal income distribution; class differences exist, but they are not as stark as in other Central American countries; there was never a group of "14 families" in Honduras as in El Salvador; land has always been abundantly available in Honduras; the military has always been relatively benevolent; the Honduran military is drawn substantially from the lower class and the liberal factions; and the issues that move Honduran citizens are too diverse, differing from community to community.

⁴³See Gabriel Marcella, "The Latin American Military, Low Intensity Conflict, and Democracy," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Spring 1990, p. 33.

⁴⁴Note that while one group, the Popular Liberation Movement (MPL-C), or *Cinchoneros*, launched an attack on the offices of the National Party, another group, the Revolutionary Forces, or *Lorenzo Zelaya*, announced that they would be willing to lay down their arms in exchange for amnesty. See "Rebels Attack, Rebels Resign," *Central America Report*, May 3, 1991, p. 128. However, within two weeks of the attack on the National Party offices, the MPL-C indicated they too would be willing to lay down their arms, but conditioned their surrender on "concrete legal and electoral reforms." See "Guerrilla Movements in Transition," *Central America Report*, May 17, 1991, p. 139.

"being in agreement with the principles of national sovereignty, social justice and democracy, we believe in the necessity to continue the struggle through civic means."⁴⁵

The overall quality of the soldiers constituting the HOAF has increased over the last decade, attributable in large part to the establishment of the National Basic Training Center, which was supposed to professionalize and standardize basic training. However, according to one U.S. adviser in Honduras, "only about 50 to 60 percent of the soldiers go through the Training Center, the rest are trained in the battalions."⁴⁶ On a related note, the MILGP has been attempting, with only minor success, to persuade the HOAF to stop its practice of forced recruitment (the soldiers from which are "trained" in the battalions).⁴⁷

Internal Development—Social and Economic

The HOAF have developed a keen interest in the soft elements of COIN, or the items commonly associated with military civic action (MCA). Indeed, as internal and external threats evaporate, the HOAF is sharpening its focus on internal development. As part of its effort to define itself in a peaceful Central America, it is trying to establish its *raison d'être* by demonstrating it can do MCA effectively.⁴⁸

The U.S. military as well has devoted considerable training resources in Honduras for teaching civic-action skills (as previously noted). Consequently, it has engendered a strong interest within the HOAF to perform MCA.⁴⁹ Beginning in 1985, for example, the Honduran military staff hosted a series of military civic-action seminars. Those seminars brought together Honduran military and government officials in an attempt to create a national civic-action plan. The first seminar brought together many high-ranking officials at the Honduran Armed Forces Command and General Staff School, including the Chief of the Honduran Armed Forces Combined Staff, Colonel Efraín Lizandro González Muñoz.⁵⁰

⁴⁵See "News in Brief: Honduras, Another Guerrilla Group Disarms," *Central America Report*, October 25, 1991, p. 320. Also see "Postscript: Honduras/Cinchoneros," *Latin America Weekly Report*, May 23, 1991.

⁴⁶Interview, U.S. military officer, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, April 1992; "Armed Forces Seek Peace-Time Relevancy," *Central America Report*, February 21, 1992, p. 43.

⁴⁷See "Military Conscription Challenged," *Central America Report*, June 15, 1990, p. 171; and interviews in Honduras with U.S. military personnel.

⁴⁸Interview, U.S. military officer, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, April 1992; "Armed Forces Seek Peace-Time Relevancy," *Central America Report*, February 21, 1992, p. 43.

⁴⁹See Harvey, *U.S. Military Civic Action*, 1988, p. 3: "[T]he Honduran Armed Forces developed a stronger bureaucratic interest in MCA between 1982 and 1985 (as a result of U.S. MCA activities)."

⁵⁰Harvey, *U.S. Military Civic Action*, 1988, p. 28.

The U.S. military civic action in Honduras, according to one expert, was a tactical success,⁵¹ but in 1985 it was not clear whether it would be a strategic success.⁵² However, it seems apparent in 1992 that Harvey's criteria for strategic success have been satisfied: (1) the insurgency has given up its armed struggle to be assimilated into the country's political system; (2) the population supports the regime; and (3) a measure of social and economic development has come to the country.⁵³

However, problem areas remain. As previously noted, many maneuvers have been designed, for example, to send U.S. Army Engineers to Honduras to build or improve roads and landing strips, and many of these efforts heavily involved working alongside Hondurans.⁵⁴ But according to some, the Hondurans still cannot satisfy their construction obligations.⁵⁵ For example, the United States and HOAF have been collaborating for some years on the construction of a 55-kilometer-long road in the interior of Honduras. Each year, each country is supposed to construct a predetermined number of kilometers, and each year the HOAF fails to complete the required amount.⁵⁶

This is just one micro example; therefore, we offer a macro perspective on selected social and economic indicators. Again, as with the case of El Salvador, it is impossible to disentangle the contribution made through military civic action from other government efforts, but the aggregate figures in Table 4.2 provide a window to the Honduran social and economic circumstances. Honduras suffers

⁵¹It was a tactical success because it "fulfilled its tactical purpose of helping to improve economic and social conditions in the near term, improving the popularity of the military forces with populations, and motivating the Honduran military to engage in MCA as part of a national development plan. Activities such as building roads, digging water wells, and treating Honduran medical patients opened some new economic opportunities to Hondurans, relieved suffering, and improved societal conditions." See Harvey, *U.S. Military Civic Action*, 1988, p. 3.

⁵²See Harvey, *U.S. Military Civic Action*, 1988, p. 3: "[S]trategic success, i.e., fulfilling three long-range goals, could not be determined by the end of 1985. The long-term objectives of MCA were to facilitate economic and social development, maintain popular support for the indigenous government, and prevent insurgency."

⁵³Compared *cross-sectionally* with other countries in the region, Honduras is economically depressed. It is the poorest country in Central America and ranks only second to Haiti for all of Latin America. However, compared *longitudinally* with its own social and economic development, it has gained more ground than the typical country. For example, a sample of 70 Third World countries reveals that their per capita gross national product (in constant 1991 dollars) decreased by 34 percent from 1979 to 1987. During this same period, the average decrease for the Central American countries was 16 percent, whereas Honduras' per capita GNP decreased from \$991 to \$870, or about 12 percent. Using this crude criterion, Honduras' economic situation has not deteriorated as badly as that of most countries in the Third World or in the Central American region. However, it is not entirely clear that this situation can be attributed solely to the HOAF MCA efforts, given the large amount of U.S. economic assistance during this period.

⁵⁴See "Honduras: More Maneuvers," *Central America Report*, January 16, 1987, p. 13; "U.S. Military on the Move," *Central America Report*, April 14, 1989, p. 112.

⁵⁵Interview with foreign service officer, U.S. Embassy, Honduras, April 1992.

⁵⁶Several reasons have been advanced for this failure: The HOAF engineer battalion is not capable; or the HOAF is capable, just lazy, and it knows the United States will complete the project.

Table 4.2
Selected Social and Economic Indicators for Honduras

Economic or Social Indicator		1980	1987	Percentage Change
Per capita GNP (constant 1991 dollars)	Honduras	\$973	\$870	-11
	Latin America	\$2,244	\$2,049	-9
	Third World	\$4,129	\$2,470	-40
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000)	Honduras	87.2	69.0	-21
	Latin America	67.3	51.2	-24
	Third World	88.3	75.3	-15
Literacy rate	Honduras	60%	60%	-1
	Latin America	77%	84%	9
	Third World	56%	62%	11
Daily caloric intake	Honduras	2,175	2,068	-5
	Latin America	2,397	2,518	5
	Third World	2,374	2,493	5
Population per physician	Honduras	3,120	1,560	-50
	Latin America	2,696	1,745	-35
	Third World	8,273	7,470	-10

SOURCES: World Bank, *World Development Report*, Washington, D.C., various years; Ruth L. Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures*, Leesburg, Va.: WMSE Pubs., various years; and World Bank, *World Tables*, Washington, D.C., various years.

from many economic problems—it is an extremely poor country. However, the percentage change in these key indicators is not strikingly different, in most cases, from the Latin American average.

Internal Development—Political

As previously noted, the Honduran military has historically been a benign and benevolent institution, especially when compared with its counterparts in the contiguous Central American states.

Human Rights. Nevertheless, even though most students of Honduran history and politics consider the approximately 150 disappearances that occurred between 1981 and 1983 an aberration, there have been reports of disappearances even as late as 1987.⁵⁷ In 1988, then-Honduran President José Azcona Hoyo admitted state security forces had perpetrated rights violations, and an army

⁵⁷ Most of the disappearances occurred between 1981 and 1983, when Alvarez was in charge, but there were even reports of disappearances in 1987. See "Human Rights Charges No Deterrent to Violations," *Central America Report*, November 13, 1987, p. 350.

spokesperson allowed that, although these events took place in the past, they have nothing to do with the new military administration.⁵⁸ Yet, charges of human-rights violations persist,⁵⁹ and the primary perpetrators seem to be the state security forces, the Honduran Public Security Forces (FUSEP), and the National Department of Investigation (DNI).⁶⁰ The killings attributed to the military are not viewed as politically motivated. Rather, they are viewed as isolated incidents of individuals committing murder for something other than political reasons, not institutional abuses systematically directed against the regime's opponents.⁶¹ According to the U.S. State Department, no politically motivated killings were committed by the Honduran military in 1991.⁶²

Civil-Military Relations. The current government is the third civilian regime since the civilians regained control of the presidency in 1982. This, in itself, can be taken as evidence that the Hondurans are beginning to acquire a respect for democratic values. Moreover, the U.S. MILGP in Honduras thinks that civil-military relations have been strengthened, particularly with the establishment of the National Defense College (NDC).⁶³

⁵⁸See "Human Rights and Counterinsurgency," *Central America Report*, February 19, 1988, p. 55; "Human Rights Report," *Central America Report*, July 15, 1988, p. 213.

⁵⁹For example, the president of the Honduran Human Rights Defense Committee, Dr. Ramon Custodio, charged during a press conference in December 1987 that the Honduran First Infantry Battalion had drawn up a plan to cause him "a fatal accident." See "Human Rights Trial Provokes Violence," *Central America Report*, January 15, 1988, p. 11. Also, the government of then-President José Azcona and the armed forces have been accused by human-rights campaigners and opposition politicians of responsibility for three killings. See "Three Human Rights Witnesses Killed," *Latin American Weekly Report*, January 28, 1988, p. 9. The military was implicated in a massacre, but the army denied any involvement. See "Military Implicated in Massacre," *Central America Report*, May 17, 1991, p. 14. However, as recently as 1992, the military was criticized for its human-rights abuses. See "Army Slammed Again on Rights," *Latin America Weekly Report*, February 27, 1992.

⁶⁰FUSEP and DNI have been repeatedly accused of torture and assassinations. See "FUSEP Accused of Assassinations," *Central America Report*, October 5, 1989, p. 310. Also, the security forces (FUSEP) were alleged to have killed a Supreme Court Judge. See "Human Rights Notes," *Central America Report*, September 4, 1987, p. 271. The U.S. military does not train these police forces, even though they are, arguably, in need of the most reform. Part of the problem with the level of corruption in these security agencies is the low monthly pay. Each man makes about \$70 to \$80 per month, which is insufficient to live on even in Honduras. The police are motivated out of economic necessity, then, to engage in corrupt practices. DNI is being restructured, but funds are scarce (interview, U.S. Embassy, Honduras, 1992).

⁶¹For additional information on the "isolated individuals," not "institutional excesses" argument, see "Honduras: UN Observer Listens But Holds Comment," *Central America Report*, October 20, 1989, p. 326.

⁶²Interview, foreign service officer, U.S. Embassy, Honduras, April 1992.

⁶³The NDC was established in 1991. The original idea came from Guatemala, but the Hondurans have eagerly pursued it. It was funded, in part, with IMET-E funds to send Hondurans to the Defense Resource Management Course in the United States and to send MTTs to Tegucigalpa. One focus of the NDC is to develop a national strategy for bringing together the country's best and brightest—about 30 military and 25 civilians, 20 to 40 years old, who are at middle-management level (i.e., major or lieutenant colonel)—for a nine-month program of instruction. In many cases, it is the first prolonged contact between the military and civilian sectors.

Others, however, have questioned such assertions, and have argued that the scales have tipped increasingly in favor of the military.⁶⁴ Indeed, there is ample evidence that the HOAF is a dominant player in politics and perhaps does not respect civilian authority to the extent the United States would prefer. For example, then-Army Chief General Alvarez, along with the foreign minister and president, "explained the CREMS project to the Honduran congress because of their displeasure at being *unconstitutionally excluded from the discussions and pacts* [my emphasis] surrounding the Regional Center for Military Training and Security (CREMS) at Puerto Castilla." After the meeting, the congress voted to authorize the project.⁶⁵ Also, the military normally chooses its own CINC without the input from the civilian congress that it is supposed to receive,⁶⁶ and there have been periodic "coup threats."⁶⁷ The military has also been known to intervene in the political arena over important policy issues.⁶⁸ Finally, it would appear that the military can exercise heavy influence still, as evidenced by the problems the government seems to be having in persuading the HOAF to accept budget reductions.⁶⁹

⁶⁴See GAO, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance*, 1989, pp. 25–26: "Some experts at our Washington and San Jose Conferences believe that in the process of modernizing Central American militaries, the United States may also have increased their power to the detriment of civilian governments." Also refer to Aryeh Neier, "In Latin America, Winter for Democracy . . .," *The New York Times*, February 11, 1989, p. 27: "In Honduras, where a military regime was giving way to an elected civilian government in 1981, the armed forces exercise more power than ever and are more abusive than when they held the presidency." Finally, see James LeMoine, "Honduras Said to Reevaluate Help for Contras," *The New York Times*, November 15, 1987, p. 20: "Although the (Honduran) government is formally democratic and elected by the people, the army appears to be the chief source of political power. All important political decisions are debated by a group of top army officers who vote to decide the army's view. That view is then expressed in the de facto governing body of the country, the National Security Council, where the president and two other civilians are outnumbered by as many as six army officers."

⁶⁵See "Military Shows It Is in Charge," *Central America Report* June 24, 1983, p. 186.

⁶⁶See "New Commander in Chief," *Central America Report*, February 28, 1986, p. 59. Also see "Honduras on Brink of Military Crisis," *Latin America Weekly Report*, March 5, 1992, which states that "in Honduras, the military have long acted as a parallel power . . . deciding on their own appointments, all the way up to the defense minister." However, one U.S. Army officer knowledgeable about Honduran politics has stated that "the norm is that the constitution is followed—which provides for the civilian congress to select the CINC from a slate of three candidates submitted by the HOAF Superior Council. The facade however is that the congress 'understands' that the first name on the list is the HOAF preference, and that is who is selected" (interview with U.S. official in Honduras, April 1992).

⁶⁷See "A Call to Dialogue Amid Violence, Coup Rumors," *Central America Report*, February 24, 1989, p. 60: "Honduras is ripe for a coup, according to a report disseminated February 6, 1989, by U.S. CIA Director William Webster." Perhaps a veiled coup threat has been made by the Honduran Armed Forces chief, Amulfo Cantarero Lopez; see "Army Chief Resigns Abruptly," *Central America Report*, December 14, 1990, p. 384.

⁶⁸One example in 1989 was over who should be given the franchise to vote in Honduras' elections. The military "weighed in" against the Liberal party, which was trying to expand the franchise. See "Postscript: Honduras/New Electoral Row," *Latin America Weekly Report*, November 23, 1989.

⁶⁹See "US Envoy Slams Oversized Army," *Latin America Weekly Report*, February 20, 1992; and "Flat Rejection of Defense Cuts," *Latin America Weekly Report*, May 16, 1991. According to recent news reports, "Honduran tanks, troops and artillery returned to the streets on Sunday—a move that some say may be the result of a power struggle within the military or an attempt to intimidate military

The military judicial system does not work as well as it should, either. According to one U.S. foreign service officer in the Embassy:

[I]f a member of the armed forces breaks the law, it falls under the military judicial system, not the civilian judicial system. They (the accused) simply go back to the barracks and then the institution protects them. The military courts are closed to public viewing, and none of these cases ever gets resolved. Their judicial system, both military and civilian, is terrible.⁷⁰

For example, when General Alvarez returned to Honduras in 1988, he found earlier legal charges against him reactivated, although the case was later transferred to a military court and no further action was taken.⁷¹ Also, the military issued a report that explored the disappearances of 100 people, but did not find a single person culpable. Moreover, there have been reports of the military's even refusing to honor arrest warrants on officers accused of killing people.⁷² In order to strengthen the military judicial system, the U.S. MILGP has arranged for an MTT composed of three U.S. military judicial experts to come to Honduras.⁷³

Efforts to professionalize the Honduran military are made more difficult for the United States by Honduran civilian officials. For example, the United States wants the Honduran military to respect civilian authority and to understand its proper place within a democracy—which means, in part, that the military does not go out and act as a police force. However, in 1989, Defense Minister Sanchez proposed a "reform" to allow the military to take to the streets at the request of the president to back up the FUSEP, and the congress authorized it.⁷⁴ Also, the military seems to be used somewhat frequently by the president to quash labor disputes.⁷⁵ The United States prefers that the Honduran military not engage in activities of this type; however, because of the unique role of the Honduran military in its society, there is little hope that it will comply.⁷⁶

critics. . . . the troop movements come amid a debate in Honduran society over cuts in the military." See DoD Electronic Mail News Service, March 1, 1993.

⁷⁰Interview, U.S. Embassy, April 1992.

⁷¹"Army Blamed for Massacre," *Central America Report*, Vol. 15, September 30, 1988, p. 302.

⁷²See "News in Brief: Honduras," *Central America Report*, August 30, 1991, p. 256.

⁷³Interview, U.S. MILGP member in Honduras, April 1992.

⁷⁴See "New Measures to Counter Violence," *Central America Report*, March 17, 1989, p. 86.

⁷⁵The military was called in to counter a plant strike (see "Army Quashes Power Plant Strike," *Central America Report*, December 20, 1991, p. 383); a land occupation by peasants ("Army Ultimatum to Peasant Squatters," *Latin America Weekly Report*, June 11, 1992); and a railroad strike ("Postscript: Honduras/Military Ends Strike," *Latin America Weekly Report*, August 16, 1990).

⁷⁶According to one U.S. Army officer (written correspondence from Pentagon official, October 1992), "normally when the military gets involved with the police it is not quite a 'take to the streets' operation. The 1989 circumstance was a manpower augmentation to address a crime wave that required more police presence than FUSEP had. The solution was to detail enough military to FUSEP to give policemen one or two soldiers to accompany them on patrol in order to spread FUSEP manpower thinner. The police were still the law enforcers with military accompaniment to back

Corruption. A high-level U.S. State Department official said in an interview that "the military is probably more corrupt now (in 1992) than it was in 1980."⁷⁷ One important reason for the persistent military corruption is entrenched civilian corruption. He went on to say, "the civilians are extremely corrupt. This makes the military less willing to place themselves directly under civilian control. Indeed, the opposition party doesn't even want the military under civilian control, because they don't trust the party in power. . . . the first step in reforming the military is to reform the civilians."⁷⁸

Finally, the Honduran military enjoys prerogatives that virtually no one else enjoys.⁷⁹ In fact, it might even be a misnomer to refer to the upper echelon in the military as soldiers. According to senior U.S. State and Defense Department officials, they are more like businessmen.⁸⁰ It was asserted that "the top 20 to 30 officers spend less than 10 percent of their time thinking about military or strategic matters. The balance of their time is spent running their businesses."⁸¹ The president of Honduras would be abandoned by his own party, according to one State Department official, if he tried to stop the military's corruption, because all sectors mutually support each other's corruption and graft.

Summary

Since Honduras did not experience an insurgent threat as did El Salvador, most U.S. training was conducted with the conventional Nicaragua threat in mind. Nevertheless, while the threat looming over Honduras in the early 1980s was less ominous than El Salvador's, the region still verged on instability. As a result, U.S. officials were concerned by the early 1980s about the FMLN moving freely between the Salvadoran-Honduran border and the possibility of a Cuban-Nicaraguan-supported insurgency in Honduras. Consequently, the United States provided much COIN training for internal defense, mostly in the form of joint exercises. There is every indication that the training was adequate, because the HOAF was able to quickly dispatch the largest insurgency in the country with little difficulty.

them up. The military has also served as garbagemen when public workers went on strike. Also, the military is often the favored mediator in labor disputes, by both labor and management, and especially when civilian mediation failed."

⁷⁷Interview, U.S. Embassy, Honduras, April 1992.

⁷⁸Also see "Corruption Charges Abound," *Central America Report*, May 1, 1987, p. 128.

⁷⁹See "The Gift That Wasn't," *Central America Report*, July 28, 1989, p. 232.

⁸⁰There is an array of military-owned enterprises, including a bank, a credit-card company, real estate operations, schools, and a funeral home. See "Honduras on Brink of Military Crisis," *Latin America Weekly Report*, March 5, 1992.

⁸¹Interview, U.S. Embassy, April 1992.

But while the United States has created a more capable military establishment, some believe that the Honduran military has become more reliant, not more self-sufficient, during the 1980s.⁸² Large quantities of hardware were sent to Honduras, and the HOAF have had a difficult time providing the necessary maintenance and logistics support for that equipment. However, it appears as if the HOAF is slowly achieving self-sufficiency with the new Army Tech School, which will teach logistics and maintenance.⁸³

Developing a professional military has proven to be just as challenging in Honduras as in El Salvador. The difficulty can be attributed, in large measure, to the HOAF's traditionally prominent role in the country's politics, its endemic corruption, and its history of human-rights abuses. Even if U.S. training can alter belief systems, *it cannot alter the systemic or structural factors within the society that the student must return to, and these are what really determine the individual's behavior.* For example, officials in the United States Embassy in Honduras expressed exasperation over their attempts to weed out corruption from the Honduran Armed Forces. Several officials cited examples of attempts to get HOAF officers to bring alleged human-rights abusers to trial or to stop HOAF officers from engaging in illegal business activities but have been stymied because of the institutional, cultural, and monetary forces that shape their behavior.⁸⁴ According to one U.S. State Department official in Honduras, "the police and army are like businesses or enterprises. As such, they represent important 'rice bowls.' So why should the army give up its rice bowl?"⁸⁵ It would appear that U.S. training can have little impact if the institutional or social incentive structure is working against the training goals.⁸⁶

⁸²The increased funding during the 1980s "raised the dependency of Central American militaries, particularly those of El Salvador and Honduras, on the United States for their sustenance and support even though these increasing levels of assistance and military equipment might have been necessary to achieve security goals." See GAO, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance*, 1989, p. 21.

⁸³The United States programmed the construction with FMF funds. In spring 1992, an MTT was in Honduras to help the HOAF develop an effective logistics doctrine, since their current doctrine is considered archaic. The U.S. advisers on the MTT include a quartermaster specialist, a supply person, a maintenance person, and a munitions specialist (a U.S. major and three warrant officers). Interview with U.S. Army personnel, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, April 1992.

⁸⁴Interviews with U.S. State and Defense Department officials, U.S. Embassy, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, April 1992.

⁸⁵Interview, April 1992.

⁸⁶These sentiments were expressed as well by the authors of the *Colonels' Report* (1988, p. 24) in their assessment of El Salvador. In pointing out that the existing system is structured to benefit the officers, they ask what incentive the officers have to change (especially the older group). They go on to say that "given its (the ESAB's) history, a muscular, assertive Salvadoran military is unlikely to accept a back-row seat in Salvadoran politics unless the officer corps receives appropriate inducements to do so" (p. 47). Regarding Honduras, according to one U.S. State Department official, "political behavior, 'professionalism,' respect for human rights and civilian authority in Honduras have strong cultural roots. The United States can only expect to change things at the margin." This indicates that officials in the Embassy feel that changes can be achieved, but only minor ones.

Indeed, most of the high-level civilian officials in the Callejas government have been educated at the most prestigious American universities. This fact implies, of course, that these officials have spent several years in the United States, have strong English-language skills, and were integrated into American society. Yet, these officials are considered to be extremely corrupt. U.S. officials in Tegucigalpa, for example, observed that many of the high-level civilian officials in the Honduran government regularly enrich themselves directly from the public coffers or indirectly as a result of their positions of authority. Many of these officials have reportedly purchased large real-estate holdings in the United States that would be unaffordable with their state salaries.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, to quote the U.S. Ambassador to Honduras, "there are pockets of opportunity out there."⁸⁸ This is where the Expanded IMET program can play an important role. The MILGP in Honduras has already begun to implement the program through its funding of the Honduran National Defense College. Through this institutional arrangement, military and civilian leaders are brought together, in some cases for the first time, for a nine-month period to learn about resource management and proper civil-military relations.

Fundamental changes cannot be imposed by the United States unless the Hondurans are willing recipients.

⁸⁷Interviews with U.S. officials, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, April 1992.

⁸⁸Interview, U.S. Embassy, April 1992.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

El Salvador and Honduras have been the principal regional players in the U.S. military's most significant counterinsurgent action since the Vietnam War. As the major supplier of equipment and training during the 1980s, the United States orchestrated an unprecedented expansion of the military establishments of the two countries and expended substantial resources to help them achieve a greater measure of internal defense and development. But the efforts have met with mixed success. Unfortunately, many obstacles hinder attempts for ascertaining the effectiveness of U.S. military training and advisory programs for teaching IDAD skills to the ESAF and the HOAF.

Obstacles to Ascertaining Effectiveness

First, admittedly a cliché but, unfortunately, a fact: The first casualty of war is the truth. Indeed, the government of El Salvador (GOES), the ESAF, and the FMLN have all used various propaganda techniques to accuse others of human-rights violations. Moreover, selective interpretation of the truth is not limited to the Salvadorans. The highly politicized atmosphere surrounding U.S. policy toward Central America has made it often difficult to obtain the "truth" from U.S. officials. Also, the vitriolic manner in which some human-rights organizations attack the ESAF causes one to question their objectivity.

Second, multiple causality presents a problem. Assuming it is possible to determine with reasonable certainty the outcome of a particular event, it is still problematic to impute causation, because the causes of most events are diverse.¹ For example, most would agree that the level of human-rights abuses committed by the ESAF has declined markedly since the early 1980s, but the cause of that decline is open to dispute. Indeed, officials from the State Department *and* officers in the military advisory group (MILGP) expressed satisfaction and claimed credit on behalf of their respective organizations for the improvement in the ESAF's human-rights activities.² But because these influences are

¹The United States has followed multiple strategies in attempting to strengthen democracy and improve the human-rights situation in Central America. See GAO, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance in the 1980s*, Washington, D.C.: GAO, GAO/NSIAD-89-170, July 1989, pp. 29-30.

²Interviews, U.S. Embassy, El Salvador, April 1992.

confounded, it is not possible to determine whether the improvement was caused by State Department efforts, U.S. military training, or both.³

Third, measurement of influence⁴ presents a vexing problem because the nature of political phenomena is elusive.⁵ For example, it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure the degree of political influence that the military wields behind the scenes—a particularly important limitation, given that many agree that the ESAF and HOAF wield considerable influence behind the scenes.

Fourth, there is the question of the appropriate time frame in which to assess the effectiveness of U.S. military training and advisory programs. Some assert that if positive results are not yet apparent, especially after the level of effort the United States expended during the 1980s, then it is unlikely that positive results will appear. Conversely, others have stressed that, given the massive social and economic problems, coupled with the absence of a democratic tradition, U.S. policymakers have been unrealistic about the time frame within which they expect to see results.⁶ This sentiment was expressed by members of the MILGP in El Salvador when they pointed out that the first group of officers trained

³Another plausible answer is “neither.” One gets the impression from reading the *Colonels’ Report* (1988) that training has been generally ineffective, and that coercion has been the only effective tool for changing ESAF behavior: “The results of American efforts to professionalize the officer corps—and they achieved partial success at best—are instructive. In general, the United States made headway only when it used what one diplomat termed the ‘blunt, heavy tools’ in its bag, most notably the threat of cutting off security assistance” (p. 25). Also, for a detailed discussion on the methodological problems that multiple causality poses for social science research, see Charles Wolf, Jr., “The Political Effects of Military Programs: Some Indications from Latin America,” *Orbis*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Winter 1965, p. 871.

⁴The GAO report on the IMET program (*Security Assistance: Observations on the International Military Education and Training Program*, Washington, D.C.: GAO, GAO/NSIAD-90-215BR, June 1990) points out that there are no measures of effectiveness (or easy ones to develop) for evaluating the IMET program. This is also discussed in Defense Security Assistance Agency and Department of States’ report to the Senate, *The United States International Military Education and Training Program*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, February 1990.

⁵Charles Wolf stated the problem eloquently back in 1965 when he wrote that “the political effects of military programs are hard to unravel for reasons that are powerful and familiar. In the first place, political effects are themselves difficult to identify, let alone measure. The kinds of political change that we can observe directly tend to be confined to sharp, discrete changes: a coup or revolution, a sharp outbreak of guerrilla activity, a new constitution, the signing of a treaty. . . . Gradual changes, in the extent of public participation in politics, in the degree of competitiveness in the political environment are usually still more ambiguous and more difficult to observe accurately” (“The Political Effects,” 1965, p. 871).

⁶See GAO, *Central America: Impact of U.S. Assistance*, July 1989, which argues that less was accomplished than anticipated because “the time frames established were proven to be unrealistic.” It is not possible to quickly overcome “a long history of military dictatorships, inefficient and corrupt government institutions, extreme poverty, and political violence” (p. 3). The report goes on to say that “the uneven gains toward democracy in the region underscore the reality that the movement toward democracy must be considered a long-term process. Some of the institutions and processes that characterize democracy—subordination of the military to a civilian government, equal treatment under the law regardless of social position or wealth, and popular participation in decision-making—have not been part of the historical tradition of some Central American countries, and changes in that direction may evolve only gradually” (p. 34).

through the United States' Officer Candidate School program may not be colonels (i.e., in positions of real authority within the ESAF) until the year 2002.

With the above four issues in mind, I offer some conclusions and recommendations.

Internal Defense

The ESAF would have lost the war to the FMLN without U.S. training and equipment. The ESAF, a garrison force ill-suited to counterinsurgency in the early 1980s, has been improved immeasurably by the United States' training efforts. Nevertheless, the ESAF has been unable to achieve military victory over the FMLN, a stalemate that highlights lingering problems. For example, U.S. trainers have taught the ESAF how to perform as a tactically proficient COIN force; however, the United States is powerless to get the ESAF to implement these tactics. According to one U.S. military adviser with significant experience in Central America, "the Salvadoran Army has been thoroughly trained in U.S. counterinsurgency tactics, and they can do them well—the problem is getting them to actually use these tactics."⁷ When the ESAF has used U.S. COIN techniques (e.g., night patrols, ambushes, small-unit patrols), they have performed well. However, the war's emergence into a stalemate reflects the ESAF's ability to perform the "hard" elements (e.g., combat operations, intelligence, logistics) of COIN better than the "soft" elements (e.g., psychological operations, civil affairs). In short, the ESAF has been able to keep the FMLN from winning through its effective use of the hard elements, but it has not been able to remove the FMLN's base of support, in part because of its ineffective use of the soft elements.

The HOAF has never been challenged by an effective insurgency. As a result, the United States devoted much more attention to the potential Nicaraguan conventional threat and trained the HOAF accordingly. Nevertheless, the HOAF did receive COIN training from the United States in many of the joint exercises during the 1980s. When required to perform as a COIN force in response to an insurgency that emerged in the mid-1980s, they were able to quickly dispatch the rebels, demonstrating an ability to effectively perform counterinsurgency operations.

⁷Interview, Panama City, Panama, March 1992.

Internal Development

Both the Salvadoran and Honduran Armed Forces have shown a capacity to engage in internal development activities (e.g., building roads, digging wells, establishing schools). However, most of the development funds are channeled through the Agency for International Development (AID), which purposely keeps its distance from the military for statutory reasons. Consequently, most of the internal development activities are not coordinated with the host-country military activities or the military institution.

El Salvador and Honduras have experienced some successes in building the foundation for stable democratic systems. The U.S. Administration and Congress have made it clear that elections are the *sine qua non* for U.S. military and economic assistance (i.e., "conditionality"). As a result, there have been several peaceful transfers of power from civilian regime to civilian regime. These transitions have marked the first time in decades that one civilian peacefully replaced another. However, many observers believe that, in both countries, the military still exercises substantial influence behind the scenes, and there is considerable evidence to support such beliefs. Furthermore, some observers even assert that these militaries are more powerful now than earlier in the 1980s.

As the United States has attempted to train the skills applicable to internal defense and development, it has faced three fundamental hurdles. First, can the United States effect basic attitudinal and behavioral change in the *individual* soldier who receives the training? Second, assuming the individual soldier internalizes the lessons on "professionalism," can this individual-level metamorphosis be translated into a wider *institutional* transformation? Third, given the multitude of exogenous factors that affect democratic political development and structurally induced political repression, can the military play an instrumental role in effecting change on a *societal* level?

Strong political, personal, historical, and financial reasons abound for these militaries to remain politically viable and independent. Consequently, it would appear that no amount of U.S. training could persuade them to do otherwise. One can view the institutions and their principal players as rational actors seeking to maximize a utility function. The utility function is, more often than not, financial gain and political aggrandizement, either for the individual or the institution. These militaries respond to their own interests, and they do not necessarily respond to a U.S.-sponsored course of instruction on democracy. During the decade of the 1980s, it was in the interest of these institutions to respect the U.S. conditions (e.g., elections) to continue the aid flow. However,

conditions did not keep them from exercising influence behind the scenes. And as U.S. aid evaporates in the future, these militaries are likely to begin flexing their muscle in more overt ways.

Finally, numerous preconditions necessary for the development and nourishment of a stable democratic system are essentially missing in El Salvador and Honduras. They include a high degree of social and economic development, a fairly equal distribution of wealth (e.g., land and income), high levels of literacy, and suitable cultural norms that include a tradition of tolerance, free speech, and due process of law.⁸

Although human-rights abuses continue, especially in El Salvador, the human-rights situations in El Salvador and Honduras have progressively improved over the course of the last decade. It appears in 1992 that most human rights abuses are conducted by *individuals* for personal reasons rather than by the *institution* for political reasons—although some would object to this assertion. Nevertheless, assuming there has been an improvement, to what should we attribute it? It is not entirely clear how effective U.S. training efforts would have been in the absence of the threat of aid revocation (i.e., conditionality). It seems that both training and threats can claim some credit. For example, several individuals interviewed for this project described the younger ESAF officers, who are primarily U.S. trained, as much more professional and less likely to engage in egregious human-rights violations than older officers. Some would dispute this contention; nonetheless, even the FMLN has indicated that the human-rights behavior of the younger officers has vastly improved compared with that of their commanding officers, and this improvement is attributed to the positive influence of U.S. advisers and training efforts.⁹

The human-rights situation in Honduras was never as bad as that in El Salvador; the HOAF has traditionally been a benevolent institution compared with its counterparts in contiguous countries. However, reports were made of several disappearances and human-rights violations committed by the HOAF from 1981 to 1984; periodic charges of human-rights violations continue to be directed against the HOAF. Nevertheless, the State Department reports that there were no politically motivated murders in 1991. Moreover, such violations are viewed as isolated cases of individuals motivated by personal reasons rather than institutionally sanctioned systematic abuse. Since "conditionality" was an issue

⁸See Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971, pp. 48–188; and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, pp. 27–63.

⁹The FMLN reportedly sent a letter to the U.S. Congress expressing this belief. The author was unable to obtain a copy of the letter, but several individuals confirmed its existence.

in Honduras as well, and the abuses of the early 1980s are viewed as anomalous, it is difficult to determine whether U.S. human-rights training was the principal reason for the improvement. Nevertheless, it is clear that the policies did not fail and, indeed, probably contributed in some meaningful way to make the HOAF more cognizant of fundamental human rights.

Future Directions and Potential Improvements

The peace in Central America presents many challenges. First, the Salvadoran and Honduran Armed Forces must be demobilized. In the context of the peace accords, the Salvadorans are scheduled to cut their force structure by half, but the Honduran military is resisting efforts to reduce its budget. Both militaries are trying to define their postwar missions. Second, as part of their postwar missions, both militaries are planning to engage in significant civic-action projects. The Salvadoran infrastructure will be the target of substantial reconstruction efforts; consequently, the Salvadoran army has already been coordinating with the Interior Ministry to define the ESAF's role.¹⁰ Third, democratic elections are scheduled for 1993 in Honduras and for 1994 in El Salvador. As a result, postwar military professionalism will become especially important. In the face of these challenges, what role can the United States play in training these militaries? The following subsections provide some answers.

Improve Civil-Military Relations

A former U.S. State Department desk officer for El Salvador claimed that "in the early 1980s, the Salvadoran military and the politicians never associated with each other."¹¹ This seems to be a pattern in Central America, with the military more or less remaining an entity separate from the rest of society. Unfortunately, the vilification of the other side more often than the blossoming of a healthy relationship seems to be the product of these circumstances.

As a first step toward the development of a healthy civil-military relationship, the United States should continue its support for the Honduran National Defense College and provide the necessary funding under the expanded IMET program to seed the development of a similar institution in El Salvador. The Honduran program, which began in 1991, is considered to be quite successful; it owes much

¹⁰The interior minister has reportedly given the ESAF a list of 15 projects. Interview, U.S. Embassy, El Salvador, April 1992.

¹¹Telephone interview, May 1992.

of its success to U.S. support of the institution. In many instances, it has brought military and civilian personnel together for the first time.

Beware of Nation-Builders

It appears that the Salvadoran military will play a role in postwar reconstruction through military civic action, and the Honduran military views civic action as its *raison d'être* for the future. Consequently, the United States faces a dilemma. On the one hand, it is important for the military to be involved in society; it is not healthy for the military to be isolated. On the other hand, it is dangerous for the military to be too involved, because a wealth of evidence indicates that these militaries translate their nation-building skills into financial gain and political power.

Some members of the U.S. MILGP in El Salvador dispute the contention that the ESAF translates its nation-building skills into political power. They argue, for example, that "the Corps of Engineers doesn't threaten political stability in the United States, so it's ludicrous to believe that the ESAF's nation-building does so in El Salvador."¹² However, this analogy is not appropriate. The MILGP needs to be aware of the potentially deleterious effects associated with the ESAF's nation-building skills and needs to fashion training programs accordingly. Conversely, the U.S. in-country team in Honduras has been more sensitized to these concerns.

Develop More-Capable Judicial Systems

The Salvadoran military does not have a separate judicial system. As previously noted, according to one State Department official, "the Salvadoran military despises having to answer to civilian judicial authority."¹³ This claim is evidenced by the long history of criminality and lack of convictions among Salvadoran officers. The Honduran military has a separate judicial system, but it is perceived as dysfunctional. When officers are charged with a criminal offense, "they simply go back to the barracks and then the institution protects them."¹⁴ Unfortunately, the first necessary step for a functional democracy must be an effective judicial system.

¹²Interview, U.S. Embassy, El Salvador, April 1992.

¹³Telephone interview, Washington, D.C., May 1992.

¹⁴Interview, U.S. State Department official, U.S. Embassy, Honduras, April 1992.

It is doubtful that the United States can transform these judicial systems, given the institutional strength and ethos of the *tanda* and *promoción*. Nevertheless, whereas only the Salvadorans and Hondurans can actually reform themselves, the United States can help make their judicial systems more technically capable, which is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for establishing a viable judiciary. The U.S. MILGP in Honduras, for example, has arranged for a three-person "legal MTT" to train personnel from the Honduran military judiciary. Efforts such as these should be continued.

Be More Sensitive to Indigenous Training Needs

The United States military training establishment needs to be more sensitive to the indigenous training needs of Third World militaries. In the course of this research, it was commonly lamented that the United States frequently teaches skills and ideas that are of little use to the Salvadoran or Honduran soldier. The idea is to teach U.S. doctrine to Third World officers for greater understanding and interoperability between the military establishments. However, much U.S. doctrine is simply not applicable to the Third World context. For example, officers sent to the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) are taught the principles of AirLand Battle, which means that they are taught a doctrine suitable for large armies engaged in combined-arms-maneuver warfare—a doctrine that has little applicability to the Latin American context. Consequently, many Latin American countries do not send their officers to the U.S. courses, opting instead for Mexican or Argentinean CGSCs. The CGSCs in Mexico and Argentina are also taught in Spanish and cost nothing for the ESAF and HOAF to attend, whereas English is the sole language of instruction at the U.S. CGSC at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and foreign governments must pay for their officers to attend. However, at the junior officer and NCO level, the School of the Americas recently (early 1992) revamped its course structure and supposedly expunged it of its "Soviet biases," thereby making it more relevant to the training requirements of the Latin American soldier. Also, many classes are taught in Spanish at SOA.

Strive for Self-Sufficiency

The Salvadoran and Honduran militaries are not self-sufficient. Both militaries depend heavily on the United States for logistics and maintenance support. Therefore, U.S. training should be focused increasingly on these technical requirements.

Use More In-Country Training Teams

In an environment of scarce resources, it is obviously important to spend every IMET dollar wisely. One way to increase the effect of every IMET dollar is to spend it increasingly on Mobile Training Teams and less frequently on training in the United States. This might not be possible for some skills, but it should be possible for most training requirements. For the same amount of money, more soldiers can be trained through in-country training teams than with U.S.-based instruction.

Training in the United States has other disadvantages that would be eliminated with in-country training teams. For example, several U.S. military personnel interviewed for this project said that they are aware of many cases of a soldier's being ostracized by his peers for having "gone American" by spending too much time in the United States. Moreover, the ancillary benefits of instruction in the United States, such as internalizing American values, remain unsubstantiated and may well be overstated.

Appendix

A. IDAD in El Salvador and Honduras: The Purview of the Army

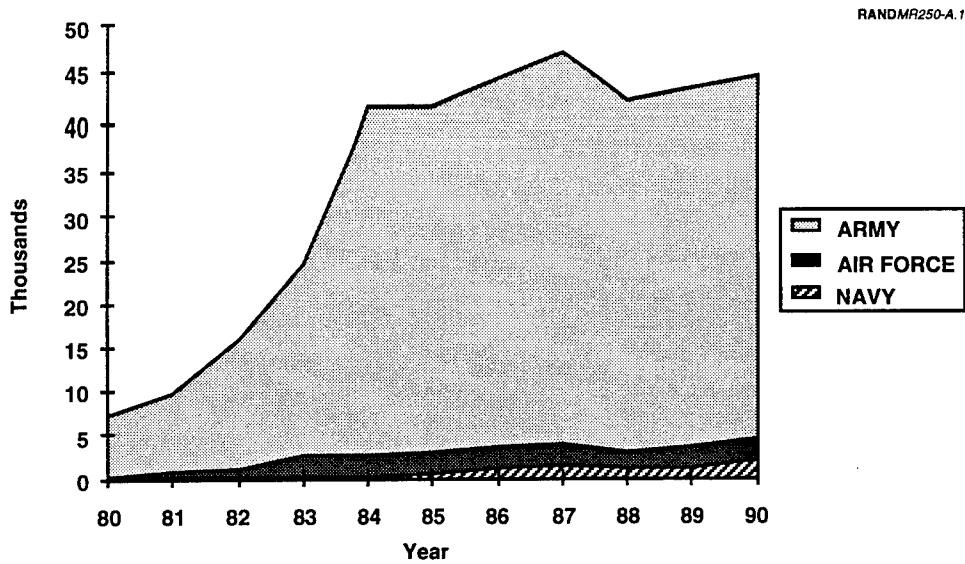
To justify the report's focus on the Salvadoran and Honduran armies as opposed to their navies or air forces, I present data in this appendix on the U.S. training efforts in El Salvador and Honduras. There are three justifications: (1) Both countries' internal defense and development (IDAD) efforts are *overwhelmingly* army operations; (2) the size of their armies dwarfs the size of their navies and air forces; and (3) relatively few seamen and airmen attended the U.S. Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS), Panama City, Panama, or the Inter-American Air Forces Academy (IAAFA), Homestead AFB, Florida.

Figure A.1 shows that during the 1980s, the Salvadoran army constituted up to 92 percent of the total military personnel in the Salvadoran Armed Forces. By comparison, the Salvadoran air force and navy constituted only up to 6 and 2 percent, respectively. A similar situation is reflected in Figure A.2, which shows that the Honduran army represented up to 87 percent of the personnel while the Honduran air force and navy had up to 9 and 4 percent, respectively.

Not only are the two navies and air forces small relative to their armies, but only a small fraction of those seamen and airmen actually attended NAVSCIATTS or IAAFA.

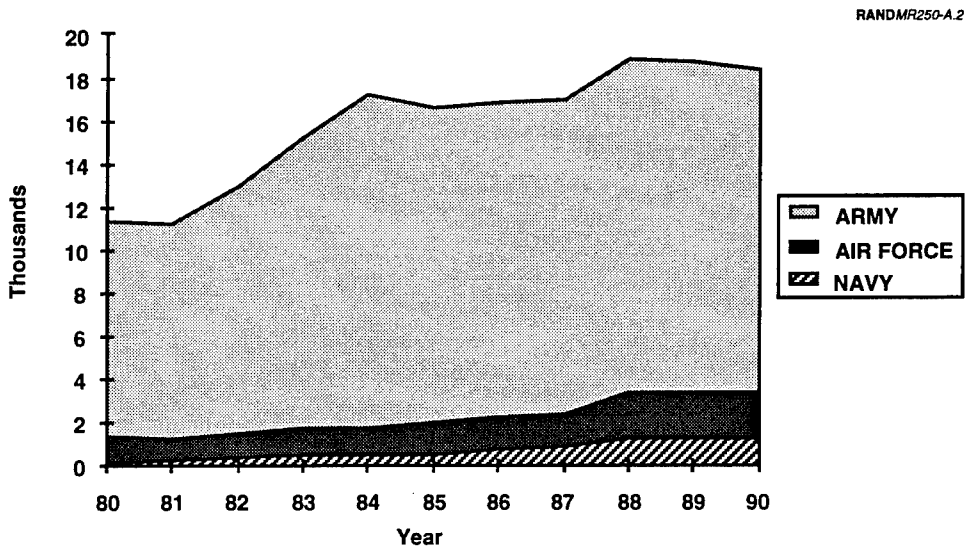
NAVSCIATTS is arguably the most important U.S. Navy institution for training Third World militaries; NAVSCIATTS is to the Navy what SOA is to the Army. Figures A.3 and A.4 show that NAVSCIATTS enrollment for Salvadoran and Honduran personnel has been quite low relative to the size of their navies. For instance, the median of seamen trained from 1984 to 1990 at NAVSCIATTS as a percentage of the size of their navies is 2.9 percent for El Salvador and 5.3 percent for Honduras.

A similar pattern is found in air force training at the Inter-American Air Forces Academy. This institution plays an important role in training personnel from Third World militaries and, like NAVSCIATTS, is to the Air Force what SOA is to the Army. Figures A.5 and A.6 show that IAAFA enrollment for Salvadoran and Honduran personnel has been quite low relative to the size of their air forces.



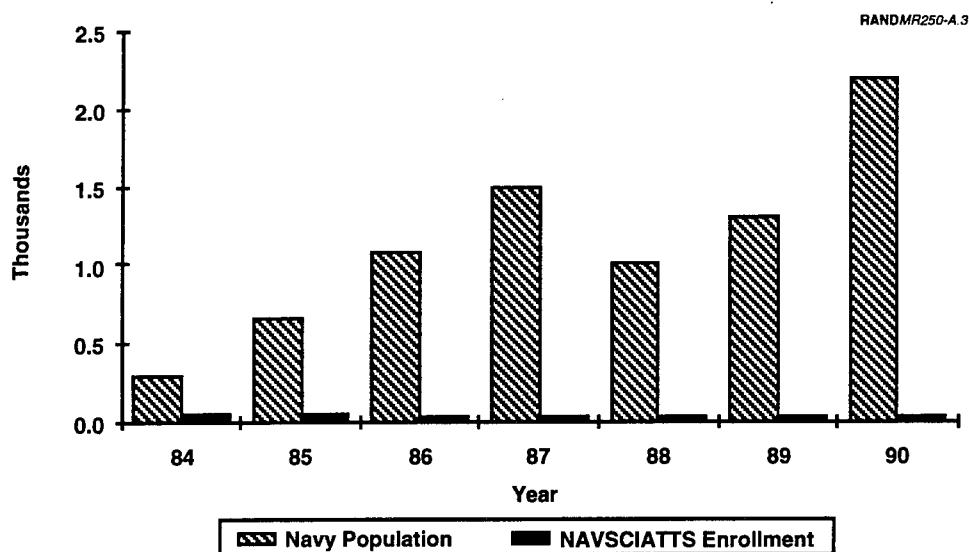
SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, London: Brassey's, various years.

Figure A.1—Breakdown of El Salvadoran Armed Forces by Service from 1980 to 1990



SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, London: Brassey's, various years.

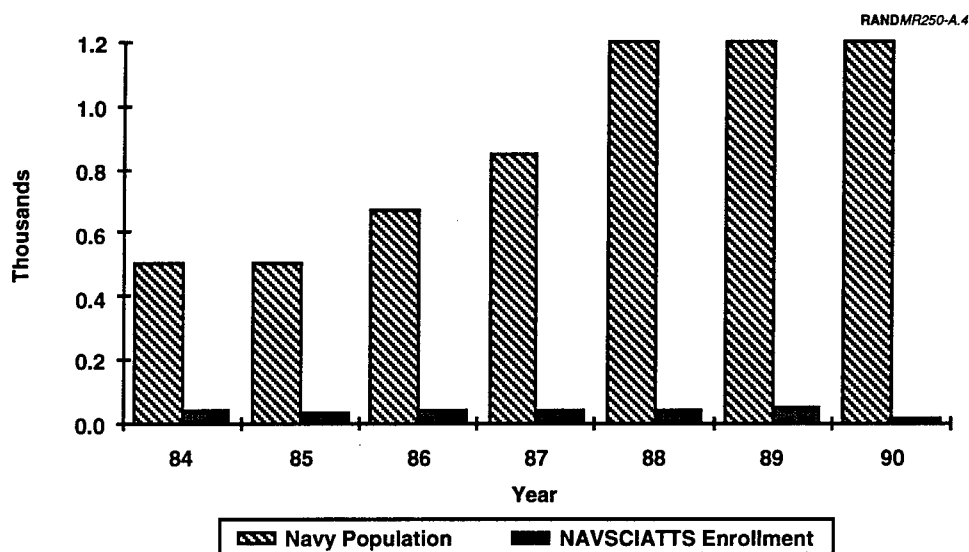
Figure A.2—Breakdown of Honduran Armed Forces by Service from 1980 to 1990



SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, London: Brassey's, various years; *NAVSCIATTS Course Catalog*, Panama City, Panama, 1992.

NOTE: Salvadoran enrollment at NAVSCIATTS numbered 48 persons in 1984, 54 in 1985, 29 in 1986, 30 in 1987, 32 in 1988, 38 in 1989, and 40 in 1990.

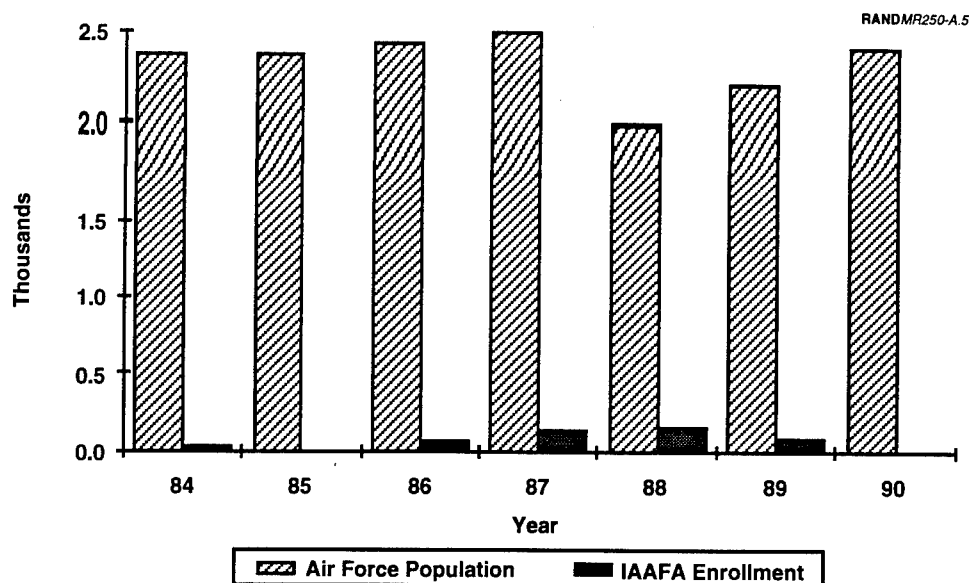
Figure A.3—NAVSCIATTS Enrollment Relative to the Total Salvadoran Navy Population



SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, London: Brassey's, various years; *NAVSCIATTS Course Catalog*, Panama City, Panama, 1992.

NOTE: Honduran enrollment at NAVSCIATTS numbered 39 persons in 1984, 35 in 1985, 40 in 1986, 45 in 1987, 40 in 1988, 50 in 1989, and 18 in 1990.

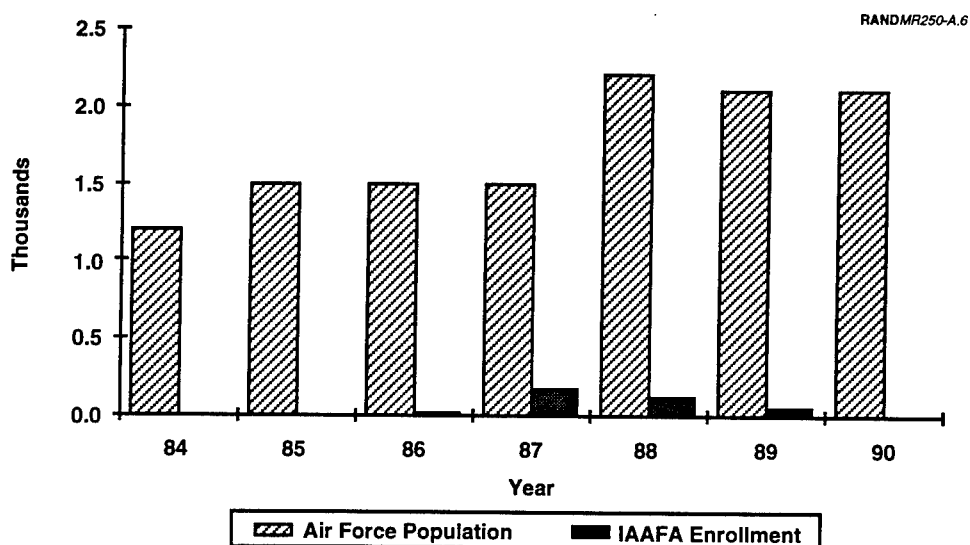
Figure A.4—NAVSCIATTS Enrollment Relative to the Total Honduran Navy Population



SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, London: Brassey's, various years; Air Force Security Assistance Training Group (AFSAT).

NOTE: Salvadoran enrollment at IAAFA numbered 25 persons in 1984, 0 in 1985, 73 in 1986, 137 in 1987, 162 in 1988, 88 in 1989, and 0 in 1990.

Figure A.5—IAAFA Enrollment Relative to the Total Salvadoran Air Force Population



SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, London: Brassey's, various years; Air Force Security Assistance Training Group (AFSAT).

NOTE: Honduran enrollment at IAAFA numbered 0 persons in 1984, 0 in 1985, 19 in 1986, 166 in 1987, 121 in 1988, 49 in 1989, and 0 in 1990.

Figure A.6—IAAFA Enrollment Relative to the Total Honduran Air Force Population

For instance, the median of airmen trained from 1984 to 1990 at IAAFA as a percentage of the size of their air forces is 3.0 percent for El Salvador and 1.3 percent for Honduras.

B. FMS- and IMET-Funded Courses Attended by ESAF and HOAF Members and Taken at Selected U.S. Air Force Schools

This appendix presents data on courses taken at selected U.S. Air Force schools. First, Table B.1 presents the number of students who attended Expanded International Military Education and Training (IMET) courses. Personnel at the U.S. Air Force's Training Operations Division, Air Force Security Assistance Training Group (AFSAT), determined that these courses meet Expanded IMET initiative requirements.¹ Of the thousands of personnel who served in the ESAF and HOAF from 1980 to 1993, only 110 soldiers attended courses that AFSAT considers to fall under the purview of the Expanded IMET initiative. These data are essentially consistent with the notion that there is comparatively little formal internal defense and development (IDAD) training.

At the same time, however, depending on how widely one defines internal defense and development, Table B.2 shows that many heavily attended courses at the Inter-American Air Forces Academy (IAAFA) provide skills that could be applied in the civilian sector (e.g., electronics and mechanics), although one should keep in mind that a small number of students actually attended these courses. From 1983 to 1989, El Salvador sent 485 students and Honduras sent 355 students to IAAFA. For both countries, the annual number of students sent to IAAFA is equal to about 3 percent of the total personnel in their air forces—a rather small percentage.

¹Note, however, that as of September 1993, the Defense Security Assistance Agency found that "[w]hile they may accomplish in part some Expanded IMET objectives, they are not now considered to be Expanded IMET courses." In memorandum to Ralph Novak, director, Policy Research, Security Assistance Agency, Washington, D.C., 1993.

Table B.1
Expanded IMET Initiative Courses from 1980 to 1993

Course	ESAF Students	HOAF Students
Air Command and Staff College	18	16
International Officer School and SOS	47	25
Air War College	2	2
TOTAL	67	43

Table B.2
The Twenty Most Frequently Attended Courses at IAAFA from 1983 to 1989

Course	ESAF Students	HOAF Students
Helicopter Mechanic	81	9
Inventory Management and Warehouse	48	15
Jet Engine Mechanic	47	4
Aircraft Mechanic/Jet	38	13
Security Specialist	13	28
Support Equipment/AGE	20	20
Electronic Fundamentals	23	16
Aircraft Electrical Repair	27	10
Armament System Specialist	20	12
Supply Officer	14	15
Aircraft Pneudraulic	20	7
Information Systems	20	6
Airframe Repair	14	6
Aircraft Mechanic	10	10
Technical Instructor	9	10
Avionics Instrument	9	6
Aircraft Maintenance Support	6	8
Micromin. Modular Repair	2	12
Airborne Comm./Nav. Eq.	6	5
Aircraft Maintenance Officer	5	6

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