

# Institute for Policy Studies

## Resource

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE SECURITY FORCES IN EL SALVADOR AND U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE

*Prepared by Cynthia Arnson of the I.P.S. Militarism and Disarmament Project*

#### THE SECURITY FORCES<sup>8</sup>

*"Extremist elements in El Salvador retain capability to initiate limited attacks against public order, but are not expected to seriously intimidate the political stability of this country nor to severely tax the (security) forces' resources." (U.S. Agency for International Development, 1974)<sup>9</sup>*

The official government security forces consist of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; all are under the direction of the Minister for Defense and Public Security. Three paramilitary units--the National Guard, the National Police, and the Treasury Police--are also under the direction of the Defense Ministry and are usually commanded by Army officers. An additional unit, the Customs Police; is under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Treasury. The Territorial Service, made up of Army reservists, numbers about 75,000. Its membership overlaps with that of ORDEN (Organizacion Democratica Nacionalista), a paramilitary unit under the Ministry of Defense and by custom headed by the President of the Republic.

#### The Army

With 6500 men and 5 infantry regiments, the Army is the largest official state security organization. Its Chief of General Staff commands all other armed forces units. Besides providing for "external defense," the Army "...is charged with assisting in the maintenance of public order and participating in civic action."<sup>10</sup> The Territorial Service is directly under Army jurisdiction.

#### The Navy

Formed in 1952 out of the Coast Guard, the El Salvadoran Navy of 130 men has coastal patrol and search and rescue responsibilities. With only four small patrol boats, the Navy has little combat capability.

## The Air Force

Consisting of 300 men, the Air Force was designed to support ground troops through aerial surveillance, airdrop, resupply, and transport.

## The National Guard

Created in 1912 by Spanish officers, the National Guard functions as a militarized police force, with detachments in most rural towns and villages. With approximately 2500 men, it is organized into five commands with regional headquarters throughout the country. The National Guard, essential in maintaining political control in rural areas, has normally been under the direction of an Army major.

## The National Police

Numbering about 1900 men, the National Police is responsible for "law and order" in urban areas and for criminal investigations throughout the country. It works in close collaboration with the National Guard and the military. The Investigative Division of the National Police constitutes the country's intelligence unit, and investigates political as well as criminal cases.

## The Treasury Police

With about 660 men, the Treasury Police serves as a support force for the National Guard and the National Police. It also has responsibility for customs duties. In this capacity, it is aided by the Customs Police, numbering about 530, with border control and narcotics control duties.

## PARAMILITARY SECURITY FORCES

### ORDEN (Organizacion Democratica Nacionalista)

Founded in 1968 by General Jose Alberto Medrano "...to make a barrier to the attempts of the communists to provoke subversion in the countryside,"<sup>11</sup> ORDEN is a civilian paramilitary organization of 50,000-100,000 which enjoyed full government support. Its members were authorized to carry firearms and often worked in collaboration with government security forces in addition to engaging in violent and repressive measures of their own. ORDEN was formally prohibited by Decree Law 12 of the first civilian-military junta that overthrew General Romero. General Medrano has called for its reconstitution, however, as the National Democratic Front.

### White Warrior's Union (Union Guerrillera Blanca--UGB)

The UGB is a right-wing terror squad which threatened in 1977 to execute all Jesuit priests in the country for being "communists". The UGB is believed to have links to the Eastern Region Farmer's Front (Frente de Agricultores de la Region Oriental--FARO), a landowners organization instrumental in blocking the implementation of the Agrarian Reform Act of 1976.

Anti-Communist Armed Forces of Liberation--War of Elimination  
(Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Anticomunista--Guerra de Eliminacion--FALANGE)

FALANGE is a right-wing death squad consisting of active, retired, or off-duty members of the security forces.

Organization for the Liberation from Communism (Organizacion para la Liberacion del Comunismo--OLC)

Created after the overthrow of Romero, the OLC stated in a February communique that "...the Communists and their followers are our country's worst enemies. Our entire war is aimed at them and we are willing to offer our lives in the course of this war."<sup>12</sup>

U.S. INVOLVEMENT WITH SALVADOR'S SECURITY FORCES

From the turn of the century until immediately after World War II, Chilean officers directed military training and operations for the Salvadoran Armed Forces. Chileans founded the first War College, later renamed the Command and General Staff School, and directed its activities until 1957. U.S. training and doctrine became increasingly important following World War II, when El Salvador received its first U.S. grants under the Military Assistance Program, as well as the first U.S. military mission.

Security assistance from the United States to El Salvador between Fiscal Year 1950 and Fiscal Year 1979 has totalled \$4.97 million in Military Assistance Program grants, \$3.479 million in Foreign Military Sales Agreements, \$2.454 million in Excess Defense Articles, and \$5.814 million in International Military Education and Training Program grants, all for a total of \$16.72 million. The United States has trained a total of 1971 Salvadoran officers,<sup>13</sup> including at least 17 in Urban Counterinsurgency, 14 in Military Intelligence, 108 in Basic Combat and Counterinsurgency, and 124 in Basic Officer Preparation.<sup>14</sup> According to the Pentagon in 1977, "...our security assistance program facilitates our overall relations with the government of El Salvador and fosters useful professional contacts with key members of the Salvadoran armed forces."<sup>15</sup>

Internal Security and the U.S. Office of Public Safety (OPS)

To upgrade El Salvador's police and internal security forces, the United States instituted in 1957 a Public Safety program under the auspices of the Agency for International Development, "...to develop the managerial and operational skills and effectiveness of its civil police forces."<sup>16</sup> Between 1957 and the program's termination in 1974, OPS spent a total of \$2.1 million to train 448 Salvadoran police, and provide arms, communications equipment, transport vehicles, and riot control gear.

Until 1963, the program was directed mainly at the National Police; from 1963 on, the program's emphasis shifted to the National Guard. At the height of U.S. involvement between 1963

and 1965, five U.S. advisers were stationed in the country to oversee training and program management. When Congress terminated the OPS program in 1974, U.S. A.I.D. analysts concluded that "...the National Police...has advanced from a non-descript, cuartel-bound group of poorly trained men to a well-disciplined, well-trained, and respected uniformed corps. It has good riot control capability, good investigative capability, good records, and fair communications and mobility. It handles routine law enforcement well."<sup>17</sup>

Graduates of OPS training, including those brought to the United States for studies at the International Police Academy (IPA) in Washington, D.C., occupied key positions in the Salvadoran security establishment. The assistant to the head of the Intelligence Division of the National Police was an IPA graduate; at various times the top positions in the Treasury Police, the Customs Police, and Immigration were U.S.-trained, as were the second and third-in-command in other security agencies.

Public safety advisers reorganized the Police school, prepared a standard textbook for the Treasury Police, and trained and equipped special riot control units in the National Police and National Guard. OPS created within the National Police a bomb-handling squad "...responsible for investigating terrorist activities..."<sup>18</sup> established a central police records bureau, and installed a teletype system linking El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Panama. Funds provided under OPS were used to purchase 2045 revolvers and carbines; 94 transport vehicles, including jeeps, sedans, and trucks; 208 mobile radio units and base radio stations; 755,000 rounds of ammunition; 950 tear gas grenades and projectiles; and assorted other riot control helmets, handcuffs, training films, cameras, and narcotic test kits.<sup>19</sup>

#### ARMS SALES (see also, charts attached)

Until the mid-1970's, the El Salvadoran Armed Forces were equipped primarily with surplus U.S. equipment, largely from World War II stocks, including 3 T-34, 10 T-6, and 6 T-41 trainers, and 6 C-47 helicopters.<sup>20</sup> In 1975 the Israeli and El Salvadoran governments concluded a package deal to re-equip the Salvadoran Air Force: Israeli sales of 18 refurbished French fighter bombers and trainers were the first jet aircraft operated by the Salvadoran Air Force. Since the Israeli sales in 1975, France has sold several more trainers, as well as light tanks, and the state-owned Brazilian firm EMBRAER has concluded a sale of 12 patrol aircraft, which use U.S.-designed engines and radar.

In 1977, El Salvador joined Argentina, Brazil, and Guatemala in rejecting proposed U.S. military assistance, in protest over U.S. criticism of its human rights record. No new requests for assistance were made in Fiscal Years 1979 or 1980, although deliveries of previously-authorized equipment and training have amounted to at least \$1.04 million since 1978.

Arms sales by private U.S. firms, which must be licensed by the State Department's Office of Munitions Control, have totalled \$2.0 million since Fiscal Year 1971. Increasingly, U.S. companies have been selling to private guard services in El Salvador, as well as to traditional security forces.

#### CURRENT U.S. ARMS POLICY

On November 9, 1979, the U.S. government authorized a sale of \$205,541 of tear gas, gas masks, and protective vests to El Salvador's security forces. Three days later, for a cost of \$7176, a six-man U.S. military training team arrived in El Salvador to train security forces in riot control.<sup>21</sup> Between October 1, 1979 and December 31, 1979, El Salvador used \$213,000 in Foreign Military Sales credits and purchased \$801 worth of weapons through the Commercial Sales program.

On December 14, 1979, the Defense Department informed Congress of its intent to reprogram \$300,000 in International Military Education and Training grants from Fiscal Year 1980 funds for El Salvador. These funds, which are now available to be spent, would go primarily for the purchase of U.S. Mobile Training Teams, placing U.S. military personnel in El Salvador for training purposes. On March 4, 1980, the Defense Department informed Congress of an additional reprogramming of \$5.7 million in Foreign Military Sales credits for El Salvador.<sup>22</sup> Congress has fifteen days in which to act on the Administration's recommendation; otherwise, the reprogrammings become effective. In Fiscal Year 1981, the Administration is asking for an additional \$5 million in Foreign Military Sales credits and \$498,000 in training grants, bringing total proposed assistance (reprogramming plus new funds) to a total of \$11.5 million, or 69% of all military assistance El Salvador has received since 1950. With no further authorizations of U.S. money, El Salvador still has \$472,000 "in the pipeline" from authorizations from previous years.<sup>23</sup>

Referring to the proposals for security assistance to El Salvador, Archbishop Oscar Romero, in a letter to President Carter in mid-February, stated that "...the contribution of your government, instead of favoring greater justice and peace in El Salvador, undoubtedly will sharpen the repression." Referring to the November tear gas sale, Romero charged that "...the security forces, with better personal protection and effectiveness, have repressed the people even more violently, using deadly weapons."<sup>24</sup>

#### APPENDIX: MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND OPPOSITION GROUPS<sup>25</sup>

##### POLITICAL PARTIES

##### Christian Democratic Party (Partido Democrata Cristiano--PDC)

The PDC is the largest political party, founded in 1961. It is led and supported primarily by intellectuals and the urban middle class, but has some following in rural areas. The PDC, which has links to the Catholic Church and to other Christian Democratic parties in Europe and Latin America, is currently represented on the government junta by Hector Dada and Jose Antonio Morales.

National Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario--MNR)

The MNR is a small social democratic party with a limited, primarily urban base. Guillermo Ungo, Secretary General of the MNR, served on the first civilian-military junta.

National Democratic Union (Union Democratica Nacionalista--UDN)

The UDN is a small leftist party that served as the legal expression of the Communist Party, which was banned under Romero. Immediately prior to Romero's overthrow, the UDN led the PDC, the MNR, and several unions to draw up the Common Platform, which included most of the reforms announced by the first civilian-military junta.

POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS

Popular Revolutionary Bloc (Bloque Popular Revolucionario--BPR)

The most important of the popular organizations, the BPR was formed in 1975 and today claims over 80,000 members. The coalition of peasants, workers, students, teachers, and slum dwellers includes the two major peasant federations--the Federation of Christian Peasants (FECCAS) and the Union of Rural Workers (UTC), the national teachers' organization (ANDES), the union of urban dwellers (UPT), the Union Coordinating Committee (CCS), and three university and secondary school federations (MERS, FUR, and UR-19). Using non-violent tactics, the Bloque has worked to create alliances of rural and urban workers in a "prolonged popular war" toward socialism.

United Popular Action Front (Frente de Accion Popular Unificada--FAPU)

Founded in 1974, the FAPU coalition is the oldest and most moderate of the popular organizations. Its members include two student organizations (FUERSA and ARDES), one peasant union (MRC), one labor union (VP), and one teacher's organization. FAPU's strategy prior to Romero's overthrow was to create a broad anti-government front; recently, FAPU has led calls for a broad government of national unity.

Popular Leagues-28th of February (Ligas Populares 28 de Febrero--LP-28)

Named after the day in 1977 when government troops killed over 100 demonstrators protesting General Romero's election, the LP-28 is among the smallest of the popular coalitions and is primarily student-dominated. It has one union affiliate (LPO) and one peasant organization (LPC) in its membership.

Popular Liberation Movement (Movimiento de Liberacion Popular--MLP)

Founded in late 1979 after General Romero's overthrow, the MLP coalition is the smallest of the popular organizations and supports efforts to unite the left.

Having had different leadership and different political strategies, the major popular organizations (BPR, FAPU, and LP-28) and the UDN joined to form the Movement for Popular Unity (MUP) in mid-January, 1980. With a representative Coordinating Committee (the Coordinadora), the MUP is calling for a broad-based popular government and is currently seeking alliances with established political parties, such as the MNR.

### GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS

#### Popular Forces of Liberation--Faribundo Marti (Fuerzas Populares de Liberacion-FPL)

The largest of the left-wing armed groups, the FPL was founded in 1970 and recruited initially from the universities and the radical wing of the Communist Party. Since 1977 it has drawn more heavily from labor unions. The FPL is close to the BPR and its activities have largely been directed against the economic elite and members of ORDEN.

#### Popular Revolutionary Army (Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo-ERP)

Founded in 1971, the ERP is identified with the LP-28, and has focused its activities primarily against members of the government security forces. One of its early leaders, Roque Dalton Garcia, was killed by a wing of the ERP, leading to a formal split and the creation of the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN).

#### Armed Forces of National Resistance (Fuerzas Armadas de la Resistencia Nacional-FARN)

Founded in 1975, the FARN is identified with the FAPU. It has raised considerable funds and gained the most international notoriety through abductions of members of the international business community.

#### Revolutionary Party of Salvadoran Workers (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Salvadoreños-PRTC)

The newest of the leftist armed groups, the PRTC was formed in 1979 and is close to the MLP.

### FOOTNOTES

1. U.S. Department of Defense, Congressional Presentation Document: Security Assistance Fiscal Year 1979, Washington, D.C., 1978.
2. International Commission of Jurists, Review, "El Salvador," June, 1978. (reprinted by Amnesty International, August, 1978), p. 2.
3. Ibid., p. 1.
4. Organization of American States, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Report on the Situation of Human Rights in El Salvador. Washington, D.C., 1979, p. 166.

5. figures published by the Salvadoran Human Rights Commission, San Salvador, February, 1980.
6. quoted in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), Washington, D.C., Feb. 5, 1980.
7. International Commission of Jurists, Review, "El Salvador," December, 1979.
8. The information for this section comes from Howard Blutstein, ed., Area Handbook on El Salvador, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1971, pp. 191-212; U.S. Agency for International Development, Phaseout Study of the Public Safety Program in El Salvador, Washington, D.C., 1974; Amnesty International, El Salvador: General Background, London, December, 1977, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1979-1980, London, 1979.
9. U.S. Agency for International Development, op. cit., p. 2.
10. Blutstein, op. cit., p. 199.
11. Estudios Centroamericanos, San Salvador, Jan.-Feb., 1972.
12. quoted in FBIS, February 7, 1980.
13. U.S. Department of Defense, Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts, Washington, D.C., 1979.
14. Michael Klare, Supplying Repression, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C., 1977, p. 38.
15. U.S. Department of Defense, Congressional Presentation Document: Security Assistance Fiscal Year 1978, Washington, D.C., 1977, p. 323.
16. U.S. Agency for International Development, op. cit., p.1.
17. Ibid., p. 3.
18. Ibid., p. 9.
19. Ibid , pp. 20-23.
20. International Institute for Strategic Studies, op. cit., p. 84.
21. U.S. Department of State, telephone interview, February 4, 1980.
22. testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs John Bushnell before the House Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, February 7, 1980.
23. U.S. Department of Defense, Foreign Military Sales..., and Defense Security Assistance Agency, "Foreign Military Sales System," January 17, 1980.
24. quoted in the Washington Post, February 19, 1980.
25. Information for this section comes from Amnesty International, op. cit., pp. 16-18; International Commission of Jurists, Review, June, 1978; Latin American Political Report, May 25, 1979; and CIDOC, Informativa, San Salvador, October-November, 1979.



U.S. OVERSEAS - LOANS AND GRANTS - OBLIGATIONS AND LOAN AUTHORIZATIONS  
(U.S. FISCAL YEARS - MILLIONS OF DOLLARS)

COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR

	1977	1978	1979
I. ECON. ASSIST.-TOTAL...	6.8	10.9	10.6
LOANS.....	0.0	5.7	4.2
GRANTS.....	6.8	5.2	6.4
A. AID.....	2.7	8.0	6.9
LOANS.....	0.0	5.7	4.2
GRANTS.....	2.7	2.3	2.7
(SEC. SUPP. ASSIST.)...	0.0	0.0	0.0
B. FOOD FOR PEACE.....	2.7	1.7	2.9
LOANS.....	0.0	0.0	0.0
GRANTS.....	2.7	1.7	2.9
TITLE I-TOTAL.....	0.0	0.0	0.0
REPAY. IN S-LOANS.....	0.0	0.0	0.0
PAY. IN FOR. CURR.....	0.0	0.0	0.0
TITLE II-TOTAL.....	2.7	1.7	2.9
E. RELIEF. EC. DEV & WFP.	1.3	0.6	1.3
VOL. RELIEF AGENCY.....	1.4	1.1	1.6
C. OTHER ECON. ASSIST....	1.4	1.2	0.8
LOANS.....	0.0	0.0	0.0
GRANTS.....	1.4	1.2	0.8
CONTR. TO IFI.....	0.0	0.0	0.0
PEACE CORPS.....	1.4	1.2	0.8
OTHER.....	0.0	0.0	0.0
II. MIL. ASSIST.-TOTAL...	0.5	0.0	0.0
LOANS.....	0.0	0.0	0.0
GRANTS.....	0.5	0.0	0.0
A. MAP GRANTS.....	0.0	0.0	0.0
B. CREDIT SALES-FMS....	0.0	0.0	0.0
C. INTL MIL. ED. TRNG...	0.5	0.0	0.0
D. TRAN-EXCESS STOCK...	0.0	0.0	0.0
E. OTHER GRANTS.....	0.0	0.0	0.0
III. TOTAL ECON. & MIL...	7.3	10.9	10.6
LOANS.....	0.0	5.7	4.2
GRANTS.....	7.3	5.2	6.4
OTHER US LOANS.....	1.5	0.0	6.4
EX-IM BANK LOANS.....	0.0	0.0	6.4
ALL OTHER.....	1.5	0.0	0.0

ASSISTANCE FROM INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES-COMMITMENTS

	1977	1978	1979	1946-79
TOTAL.....	23.6	101.9	60.0	541.0
IBRD.....	6.7	32.2	23.5	215.6
IFC.....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9
IDA.....	6.0	0.0	0.0	25.6
IDB.....	10.1	69.6	29.5	272.4
ADB.....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
AFDB.....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
UNDP.....	0.8	0.1	5.6	20.5
OTHER-UN.....	0.0	0.0	1.4	6.0
EEC.....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0