



INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

8 October 1980

In Reply Refer to:
I-21320/80

The Honorable William G. Bowdler
Assistant Secretary of State for
Inter-American Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Ambassador Bowdler:

Earlier this week, you indicated that you and Bob White were seriously concerned over the leftist insurgent threat to the impending harvest season in El Salvador and asked what additional measures DOD might be able to undertake in a timely manner to enhance the capability of the Salvadoran military to protect the coffee, cotton, and sugar harvests. We asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Defense Security Assistance Agency to look into this matter and will forward their views to you as soon as their review is complete. In the meantime, I can summarize our major recommendations.

As you are aware, we have already provided non-lethal military equipment to improve the communications, mobility and medical capabilities of the Government of El Salvador (GOES) forces, and we have deployed several small technical assistance teams to assist in the related fields of logistics, vehicle maintenance, communications, medical service and information and public relations. However, we continue to believe that additional training of GOES forces is critical and should precede or be done concurrently with any input of equipment into the Salvadoran inventory. This point has been central to recommendations that DOD has made over the last nine months. Equipment alone will not enhance the military capability to protect the harvest or stop the radical leftist insurgency.

GOES military effectiveness must be improved by developing a professional counter-guerrilla capability of the armed forces, and only intensified training can accomplish this objective. While the deployment of US military personnel to El Salvador is a politically sensitive issue, we continue to believe that the expeditious deployment of some military training teams (MTTs) to El Salvador--not to serve as combat advisors but to instruct in critical areas--is the best way not only to protect the harvest but to insure success against the insurgency. Denial of the insurgents freedom of movement can only be accomplished by the forceful presence of the Salvadoran soldiers on the ground.

We will, of course, ^{endeavor to} expedite the delivery of equipment requested by the GOES, but we believe the most effective security assistance measures that can be taken at this point would entail in-country training of GOES forces. With the

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exception of MTTs for the brigades, this can be done on a low visibility basis and even the MTTs for the brigades could be reduced in size if necessary to limit their visibility.

You suggested that M-113 armored personnel carriers (APCs) might be useful. Our initial review, however, indicates that they would not be available in time to help the harvest and that, in any event, they would be too difficult to maintain and would only stretch the already over-extended maintenance capability of GOES forces. An enhanced wheeled reconnaissance capability might well serve the same purpose at less cost and we are investigating to see if this can be done in the required time frame. In addition to the measures which we have already recommended to the interagency working group and Ambassador White, we feel that there is one new action which might assist in the overall effort to protect the harvest. As a first step, the El Salvadoran high command must develop a coordinated national-level plan for the protection of the harvest. In our view, it would be very useful for us to provide operational planning assistance to them for accomplishing this. We would suggest that such a team of approximately five qualified officers for approximately 30 days could help accomplish these objectives and would solicit your support for the early deployment of such an assistance team.

We share your concern and will take every action possible to assure the success of a moderate outcome in El Salvador.

Sincerely,

FREDERIC L. CHAPIN
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
for Inter-American Affairs

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