

U.S. to Send More Aid to El Salvador

\$55 Million Called Necessary to Bar Probable Takeover

By William Chapman
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Reagan administration, shrugging off sharp criticism from Democrats, said yesterday it is sending an extra \$55 million in emergency military aid to El Salvador. It said continuing U.S. aid is necessary to save that country from a "probable victory" by communist-led insurgents.

Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders told congressional committees the \$55 million is required to stave off a guerrilla campaign to thwart the country's elections and declared: "To withhold . . . assistance at this point would be to abandon El Salvador."

His testimony was greeted with skepticism by House Democrats who questioned sending ever-increasing sums of money to assist a civilian-military junta that they charged continues to tolerate brutal repressions of human rights. Rep. Clarence D. Long (D-Md.), chairman of a House Appropriations subcommittee, told Enders he regards El Salvador as a "bottomless pit."

The additional \$55 million that the administration intends to send immediately would bring to about \$81 million the total military aid for El Salvador this year, more than double last year's \$35 million. In addition, Enders indicated that the administration will propose "in the order of magnitude" of \$100 million in economic aid for El Salvador as part of a new Central American or Caribbean assistance plan it is readying.

Although many Democrats were angry at the decision to rush in a new aid infusion amid new reports of killings of civilians by the military, there appeared to be nothing they could do to block it. The \$55 million will come from an emergency fund controlled by the president who is required only to tell Congress how he spends it.

Salvador comes from a regular foreign aid appropriation that the administration became free to spend after it certified to Congress last week that the country is making progress in the area of human rights.

There was talk among Democrats of passing some sort of rescission resolution to strip the administration of some foreign aid funds to show their displeasure but they found no way to block the actual transfer of military equipment included in the \$55 million.

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Enders' visit to advise congressional committees was complicated by disclosures yesterday that El Salvador forces had slain 19 civilians during a raid on a San Salvador slum area. The government claimed it was pursuing subversives and that some members of the government patrol had been injured.

Enders seemed to contradict that version yesterday when he told the House subcommittee that he finds it "difficult to buy the notion that there was a fire fight." He was also called on to explain the Salvadoran government's role in a major shoot-out last December in Morazan Province where natives claimed soldiers killed hundreds of citizens.

Enders quoted from a new U.S. Embassy report that said the involvement of government soldiers in that round of slayings could not be proved or disproved. It also said the insurgents who fought government forces had done nothing to get civilian noncombatants out of the way of the encounter.

Enders also said he believes the

reports of the number of deaths to be exaggerated. In a report from the scene, The Washington Post reported evidence of several hundred civilians dead.

Some Democrats have talked of passing legislation to cut off all aid to El Salvador because of the latest atrocity reports.

Enders told a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee that that course would be disastrous. Terminating aid would be a "massive blow" to the government, would lead to even more bloodshed, and would "probably" result in an insurgent victory, he testified.

The winners, he said, would follow the Nicaragua pattern, which he described as a brief interlude of political pluralism followed by a one-party state.

Of the \$55 million in new military assistance, about \$25 million will go to replace Salvadoran aircraft destroyed in a raid on a government air base. Enders said replacement of those aircraft was urgently needed to help the government fend off guerrillas who are stepping up offensives in advance of the March election.

In the area of the Morazan "control zone" visited by this reporter, the guerrillas were predominantly armed with automatic rifles, mostly U.S.-made M1s, but also West German G3s, U.S.-made M16s, and Belgian FALs.

"Juan," who works in logistics, claims that the G3s and M16s were "recuperated" from government troops, and the other weapons were purchased on the international black market.

The U.S. and Salvadoran governments have charged, and presented allegedly captured rebel documents as proof, that the guerrillas are principally supplied by clandestine arms shipments from Cuba and Nicaragua. Although questions were raised by opponents of U.S. policy about the allegedly large quantity of weapons shipped, little doubt has been expressed, despite Nicaraguan denials, that the nearby Central American country has served as a conduit for some guerrilla supplies. Cuba, while not publicly offering details, has never denied its overall "support" for the Salvadoran rebels.

Juan denied that any arms came from Cuba or from Nicaragua's San-

dinistas. "We have taken extreme pain to avoid giving the United States any excuse to intervene directly in El Salvador. Nicaraguan and Cuban arms are easy to identify, and would provide that excuse. But for us there is an even more important reason: politically we are not innocent, and we know that accepting arms means accepting certain kinds of commitments. We don't want those kinds of ties in our future government."

This reporter did not accompany the guerrillas on any military operation, and had no independent way of verifying what kind of weapons are actually used in combat or in other zones. In the area visited, there seemed to be a great scarcity of weapons, as well as of clothing, medicine and food.

Before leaving on missions, a squad in one camp visited was seen trading weapons and boots with those who remained behind. Food rations here as elsewhere were invariably two tortillas and a small serving of beans, meat or broth at every meal. Those about to leave on a mission get slightly more. At most camps sweet coffee also is available in the morning and evening.

The paramedics devoted most of their attention to enforcing elementary hygiene in the camp, but had little medicine to work with. Many inhabitants interviewed in the control zone, both civilians and combatants, complained of some form of intestinal infection or skin disease.

The guerrillas maintain, with some credibility based on the extensive territory from which the government forces have not been able to dislodge them and a growing string of military victories, that they have had more success in gaining, motivating and training recruits than their opponents.

Part of their strategy, they said, includes taking government soldiers prisoner and attempting to disarm them both of their weapons and their loyalty to the Army.

"It is much better for us to have soldiers surrender than to die fighting," said "Melo," a grinning, dandyish youth who is in charge of defense for the northeastern front. "First of all, we want them to hand over their weapons, but most impor-

tantly, we want to create good relations for the future, when we will build our 'new type army' with combined guerrilla and government troops."

Five prisoners sat in a hot, bare, dusty courtyard bounded by a half-hearted attempt at a wire mesh fence. They sleep in an adjoining one-room adobe structure precisely like every other peasant house in the area. When questioned, they say they are doing what they do all day: "Waiting for the next meal."

Jose Alberto Martinez, 16, is the youngest. Like the others, he was recruited into the Army six months ago. Unlike the others, he is from Morazan, and has a brother fighting with the guerrillas. He can write enough to sign his name, he says.

Manuel Antonio Rosales was a subsergeant nurse in the Army for five years before he was captured with the others in a battle at the village of La Guacamaya last Dec. 29. His fellow prisoners are barely literate migrant workers, but Manuel is articulate and sophisticated. He is careful to say nothing that will displease his captors, but clearly has no sympathy for the guerrillas.

The others are much more candid. "We like the food here," Nelson Ernesto Orellana, 25, says. "A little meat, a little soup In the Army it was always rice, beans and spaghetti."

"And they [the guerrillas] didn't beat me," adds Guadalberto Campos, 18. "In our unit the officer didn't beat anyone, but in other units it's very frequent. I thought they would do that here too."

There appears to be no systematic attempt at winning over the prisoners to the rebel side. The guerrillas claim they have released most of their prisoners after a brief period and that a few have voluntarily joined their ranks.

None of the five interviewed had any intention of joining the guerrillas, but neither did they intend to rejoin their Army units. "We will have to go to another province to look for work, because the Army will kill us if they find us," said Manuel Antonio, the nurse. "We're not supposed to surrender. But none of us wants to fight again."