

## U.S. Disputes Report of 926 Killed in El Salvador

By BARBARA CROSSETTE

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 1 — The Administration today disputed reports that a major massacre of civilians took place in a Salvadoran village in December. It also announced that it was about to send emergency assistance to El Salvador.

President Reagan is about to sign an executive order releasing \$55 million in Defense Department funds and supplies for emergency assistance to El Salvador, Thomas O. Enders, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, said in Congressional testimony. The grant does not require Congress-

sional approval. The Defense Department expects to be reimbursed through budget requests for the fiscal year 1983.

Mr. Enders also said the United States Embassy in San Salvador had been asked to investigate reports last week that as many as 926 people had been killed in a Government sweep through guerrilla-held territory around the village of El Mozote in the northeastern province of Morazán.

Mr. Enders, who was testifying before a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee this morning and a House Appropri-

ations subcommittee this afternoon, said the embassy's preliminary report indicated that no more than 300 people lived in the region before the Dec. 16-17 Government attack. The report, he said, was based on recent interviews with people near but not in El Mozote, which is again in rebel hands.

He said that although the guerrillas knew the attack was coming, they did nothing to remove civilians from the path of battle.

"Civilians did die during the operation," he said, "but no evidence could be found to confirm that Government

forces systematically massacred civilians. Nor does the number of civilians killed even remotely approach the number being cited in other reports about the incident."

The State Department, in a statement today, traced the reports of a massacre to a broadcast by Radio Venceremos, the Salvadoran guerrillas' radio.

"Radio Venceremos issued its first report of the alleged incident on Dec. 27, two weeks after the sweep occurred," the State Department said, adding that the radio report said "192 noncombatants had died in El Mozote."

"On Jan. 2, it increased the figure to 472," the statement said. "On Jan. 27, press reports in the U.S. raised the figure killed to 700 'in and around' El Mozote."

Mr. Enders said the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, which he said was "not a human rights organization at all," raised the figure to "almost a thousand."

Mr. Enders withheld judgment, however, on reports of a Government raid in San Salvador yesterday in which 19 civilians were said to have been killed.

"We are still trying to find out what happened," he said. "But I do deplore the violence of what happened there, and I find it hard to buy the notion that this was a fire fight."

#### 4 U.S. Churchwomen's Case

In his testimony, Mr. Enders said he expected the Salvadoran Government to announce "almost immediately" that six Salvadoran National Guardsmen would be indicted on charges of murdering four American churchwomen in December 1980. He said the six had been given polygraph tests with the help of experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Before the House subcommittee, Mr. Enders deflected suggestions that the case was being prosecuted now only to pacify a Congress increasingly unwilling to look favorably on further aid to El Salvador.

Mr. Enders and other Administration officials are facing a week of sharp questioning by members of Congress challenging the Administration's certification that the Salvadoran Government has made sufficient progress in curbing violence and guaranteeing human rights to allow it to receive American military and economic aid.

Under current legislation, the United States will give El Salvador \$112 million in economic support assistance and \$25 million in military aid this year. The \$55 million in emergency funds and supplies will be in addition to those amounts.

Lieut. Gen. James H. Ahmann, director of the Pentagon's Defense Security Assistance Agency, testifying today before the House Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations, said that \$25 million of the emergency funds would be used to replace aircraft and other items destroyed in a guerrilla attack Wednesday on Ilopango Air Force Base on the outskirts of San Salvador.

General Ahmann said the aircraft lost in the attack included five or six fighter planes, a trainer aircraft, five or six UH-1H helicopters and five C-47 transports.

He said that in addition to replacing, repairing or adding to El Salvador's aircraft, the American funds would increase security at Salvadoran airfields and other military installations and improve communications for Salvadoran forces.

Under questioning, General Ahmann said the increase in military supplies "may require more U.S. personnel" in El Salvador. There are 40 American military trainers in that country now, he said.

General Ahmann also told the subcommittee that the Administration would replace the \$55 million in Defense Department funds and supplies through a Pentagon budget request for fiscal 1983. The \$55 million would therefore not come from foreign aid money