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MEMORANDUM FOR: Herbert E. Meyer  
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM : Major General Edward B. Atkeson, USA  
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SUBJECT : Comments on El Salvador Estimate Draft (U)

1. I find the draft estimate on El Salvador interesting and thought provoking. An essential section, "political considerations," is missing, so it is yet a little unfair to critique the paper. Guerrilla warfare is inherently so politically motivated and dominated that it seems premature to say very much.

2. Inevitably, current analyses of insurgencies make references to parallels with our great experience in the field--Vietnam. Occasionally such references are useful, but I do not believe that such is the case here. The South Vietnamese Army collapsed under the guns and threats of the North Vietnamese Army--not the V.C. El Salvadorian insurgents have no tanks, artillery, or motorized infantry. One suggestion I would make to improve this paper would be to delete such misleading references.

3. The paper makes much of the possibility that the insurgents might capture and hold a "liberated" area. It is not clear whether this is an avowed insurgent goal or a construct of our own. Either way, I suspect we make too much of it. Unless the guerrillas are provided with much heavier equipment and can count on rapid reinforcement of one area by another, set piece battles over real estate would seem to be the government's--not the insurgent's--strong suit. It is one thing to claim dominion over wilderness. It is quite another thing to hold towns and villages against attack by coordinated air-ground action, including armored vehicles and artillery.

4. The principal difficulty I have with the paper may not be the fault of the author at all, but may be more with the strategy for dealing with the insurgency. The paper leads us to believe that the government is dedicated to eradication of a 9,000-11,000 enemy armed force with manpower resources of only 35,000. The notion strikes me as extraordinary.

5. Unfortunately the paper does not provide an estimate of the numbers of part-time guerrillas or of the popular support base. By historical analogy

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we might assume these to be anywhere from 27,000 to 100,000 and 70,000 to 500,000 respectively. In view of the good turn out the government was able to achieve during the election I would tend to pick the lower figures. At any rate, I think it is highly unlikely that the figures in the paper completely describe the dimensions of the problem. The bottom line is that in my view the government is going to require a much larger armed force if it is going to pacify the country. A rough rule of thumb for dealing with insurgents is an armed force of about five times the size of the enemy combat cadre.

6. I do not have many statistics immediately available, but the following may be instructive:

<u>Insurgency</u>	<u>Armed Insurgent Strength</u>	<u>Government Armed Strength</u>
Malaya (1947-1960)	5,000	140,000
Greece (1947)	23,000	182,000
Algeria (1962)	20,000	500,000
French Indo-China (1952)	30,000	140,000
Vietnam (1968)	230,000 (main force)	1.3 million

  
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