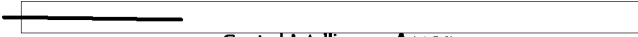


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Central Intelligence Agency

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Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

8 February 1985

Late Stage Indicators of Insurgent Success:
A Salvadoran Update

Summary

Based on a reapplication of the late stage indicators to the Salvadoran insurgency, we believe the government's situation has generally improved since we first applied the indicators in March 1983. The progress of the Magana and Duarte administrations has been slow but steady in three of the four major categories used to measure insurgent success. Evidence of improved government performance has resulted in increased confidence in government capabilities with respect to 9 of the 14 indicators we examined. Two indicators--lack of sufficient government troops for counterinsurgency and the recent coup plotting by some military elements--give the extreme left some opportunities; nevertheless, this is down from four indicators in 1983.

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To be sure, the guerrillas remain a formidable enemy. Despite continuing ideological disagreements, personalistic differences among their leaders and frequent lapses in tactical coordination, the five armed guerrilla factions are still able to mount fairly large military operations and continue to dictate the terms of most insurgent-government military confrontations. Furthermore, guerrilla leaders have to be encouraged by Duarte's recent collisions with the armed forces and the Constituent Assembly which underscore the fragility of his whole administration. On balance however, the positive changes over nearly two years lend credence to the view that time is increasingly on the side of the government.

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This memorandum was prepared by Insurgency Branch, Office of Global Issues. Support was provided by the Office of African and Latin American Analysis and the Directorate of Operations. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Instability and Insurgency Center, on

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Application of Indicators to the Insurgency*

	El Salvador	
	1982/83	1983-85
I. Progressive withdrawal of domestic support for the government		
Withdrawal of support by specific, critical segments of population	No	No
Growing popular perception of regime illegitimacy	No	No
Popular perception of insurgents as leading nationalists	No	No
Insurgent co-optation, incorporation, or elimination of other major opposition groups to the government	No	No
II. Progressive withdrawal of international support for the government		
Withdrawal of foreign support by specific, critical allies	No	No
Increasing international support for the insurgents	No	No
III. Progressive loss of government control over population and territory		
Significant expansion of territory under insurgent control	No	No
Escalation of guerrilla/terrorist violence	Yes	No
Increasing inability of government to protect supporters/officials from attacks	Yes	No
National economy increasingly weakened by insurgent activity	Yes	No
IV. Progressive loss of government coercive power		
Military plots or coups against the government	No	Yes ^b
Armed guerrilla forces multiplying in size	No	No
Lack of sufficient government troops for counterinsurgency	Yes	Yes
Government seriously negotiates sharing of power with rebels	No	No

* Confidence level of judgements:
 ■ High - strong or abundant evidence; data overwhelmingly supports judgement.
 ■ Medium - adequate evidence; contrasting information or conflicting trends may exist, but bulk of data supports judgement.
 ■ Low - weak or insufficient evidence; although data supports judgements, there is significant conflicting information or evidence opposing trends.

^b The involvement of key military officers in the reported coup plotting of December 1984-January 1985 remains enigmatic and may have been intended primarily to signal Duarte of the institution's desire to preserve its prerogatives. In this light, the plotting may have been no more serious than efforts made in the 1982-83 time frame.

[Redacted]

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Late Stage Indicators of Insurgent Success

An analysis of historical cases indicates that a common pattern of behavior and events characterizes the defeat of a government battling an insurgency. This pattern comprises four categories of developments:

- o Progressive withdrawal of domestic support for the government.
- o Progressive withdrawal of international support for the government.
- o Progressive loss of government control over population and territory.
- o Progressive loss of government coercive power.

These categories include a total of 14 interrelated and mutually reinforcing indicators of prospective insurgent victory (see chart). Historically, the indicators have not appeared in any single order. Moreover, while no single indicator can be considered conclusive evidence of insurgent victory, all indicators need not be present for a government defeat to be in progress. While the indicators are designed to identify a progression of events typical of the final stages of a successful insurgency, this progression is not inevitable. Effective government countermeasures can block the evolution of an insurgency and shift its momentum. This, combined with some important insurgent failures, is precisely what we believe has happened in El Salvador since we last applied these Late Stage indicators in 1983

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Domestic Support for the Government

[redacted] the Salvadoran government gained in popular support under both Magana and Duarte while support for the guerrillas may now be at an all-time low. Evidence for this judgment has been considerable during the past year and emerges from every strata of Salvadoran society. On the basis of this reporting, we concur with US

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

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Embassy estimates of last summer indicating that a political party representing the FMLN or acting as its front in a national election would probably only garner 5 to 10 percent of the vote.

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We believe the increase in domestic support for the government has in part been the result of several government efforts.

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- o The government, along with the military, has worked hard to build upon the socio-economic reforms of 1980 and continues to demonstrate its genuine commitment to the democratic process. The 1982 electoral repudiation of the insurgents was repeated again this past spring as more than 80% of El Salvador's electorate risked guerrilla harassment and sabotage to cast ballots. On the other hand, overt political support for the guerrillas has almost disappeared because of several factors, including guerrilla tactical reversals and the improved human rights situation.
- o The Duarte regime has demonstrated its willingness to take risks and instigate bold initiatives to increase its popular appeal. The recent olive branch offered the guerrillas by opening a dialogue is but one example.
- o Although the payoff has been gradual, nearly 600,000 campesinos have now benefitted from agrarian reform. Moreover, programs like the National Campaign Plan-- although only a partial success--and the new Civilian Self-defense Corps have begun to stimulate local community spirit.

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We also believe the government has, in the past year, benefitted significantly from the insurgents' increasing reliance on intimidation and economic targetting. Large numbers of rural poor continue to be the daily victims of roving bands of guerrillas. "War taxes" are collected at gunpoint along the major highways, while numerous small towns and farms have been attacked or overrun with foodstuffs and other basic necessities expropriated. Popular discontent with the FMLN may have reached its height last year when, according to US Embassy and Salvadoran officials, guerrillas forcibly recruited nearly 3,000 people, including a large number of schoolchildren.

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[Redacted]

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International Support for the Government

The government's standing in the international community has also improved. [Redacted] last spring's successful presidential election coupled with President Duarte's solid diplomatic performance during his travels to Europe, the United States, and South America have resulted in a significant dropoff in levels of political and financial aid to the insurgency from several international donors, particularly in Western Europe.

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[Redacted]

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We believe a heightened guerrilla propaganda campaign for much of 1984--designed to undermine the international support for the government--accomplished little, while a more mobile and more aggressive Salvadoran military was able to blunt or turn back a number of large and intermediate-sized insurgent attacks.

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Cuba and Nicaragua remain the principal supporters and conduits of resupply to the five armed guerrilla factions.

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[Redacted] there are periodic lapses in the Havana-Managua pipeline--arms, ammunition, provisions, funds, etc.--which, in addition to more aggressive government operations, help explain the relatively limited FMLN operations of the past year.

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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Government Control Over Population and Territory

The government's position has improved the most during the past year with respect to its political-military control over the population and territory. In part, we believe this improvement has been a result of the insurgents' inability to provide security for the population in areas they occupy and their failure to offer viable alternatives to the government's economic

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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we estimate that roughly three-quarters of all guerrilla ammunition needs and substantial amounts of basic necessities are funneled through the Havana-Managua pipeline.

[Redacted]

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[REDACTED]

and social programs. However, the government has become increasingly active and is responsible for many of its own gains.

- o Increasingly aggressive military tactics no longer concede any base areas to the guerrillas. For example, the traditional insurgent stronghold north of the Torola river was attacked and occupied by government troops on several occasions during 1984 and early 1985.
- o President Duarte has placed considerable emphasis on human rights. Strict new bombing guidelines for the Salvadoran Air Force and a major restructuring of the Public Security force have, in the words of one of the country's leading intellectuals, "markedly decreased the climate of repression."
- o Peace has also returned to the country's universities, formerly the center of leftist organizing. The country's largest--the University of El Salvador--reopened in September after a four-year closure.
- o The government has worked hard to ease the burden of some 500,000 people internally displaced by the war. About 75 percent of all displaced persons nationwide receive at least some good clothing and medical assistance from a national government commission, while the remainder receive comparable benefits from private voluntary organizations like the Catholic Church and the International Red Cross.
- o The government has tried its hand--with limited success--at rebuilding in several war torn areas. In San Vicente and Usulután where the National Campaign is underway, several towns have been rebuilt, numerous roads have been resurfaced and a large number of schools and medical facilities have been reopened. [REDACTED]

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During this year's election, insurgent forces were able to prevent voting in 53 towns--approximately 20 percent of the national municipalities. However, in 10 of the 53 towns people were able to take advantage of alternate voting facilities in neighboring villages while most of the other towns--traditional "backwaters" virtually devoid of the country's major cash crops or other strategic resources--have largely been abandoned. In Chalatenango and northern Morazan, where about three-fifths of the nonvoting towns are located, aerial photography confirms a landscape of destroyed and vacant villages. [REDACTED]

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The guerrillas' ability to attack the country's economic infrastructure remains a potent weapon. Only heavy infusions of US aid have kept the economy from deteriorating further. From the government's perspective, however, there may be some hope. Following a 25 percent decline in GDP in the first three years of

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[redacted]
the insurgency, real economic growth has remained flat for the past two years. [redacted]

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Government Coercive Power

Our estimates of total guerrilla force strength have remained in the 9,000 to 11,000 range for several years. The FMLN attempted to bolster its ranks through forced recruitment during this past summer but [redacted]

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[redacted] a comparable number of guerrillas-- including numerous experienced combat veterans--deserted during the same time. A little over a year ago we did revise our estimate of well-armed, well-trained, combat experienced guerrillas--from 4,000-6,000 to 6,000-8,000 [redacted]

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[redacted] this increase was a result of an altered guerrilla strategy designed to integrate insurgent militia into combat units. We have seen no evidence, however, which would lead us to similarly revise our estimate of overall guerrilla force strength. [redacted]

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Concurrently, the Salvadoran military and security forces have grown dramatically, from approximately 32,000 in mid-1983 to about 45,000 today. Moreover, increasingly aggressive tactics by the Salvadoran army, including psychological operations and closer coordination between air and ground units, have kept the FMLN largely on the defensive since mid-1983. [redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted] we believe the transition of the Salvadoran military into an effective counterinsurgency force is still underway and remains dependent on continued improvement in leadership capabilities and obtaining the force levels needed to saturate the countryside. [redacted]

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The Salvadoran military appears to have grown accustomed if not comfortable with its new relationship to civilian authority. We base this judgement on the general pattern of behavior within the Defense establishment over several years [redacted]

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[redacted] A series of uncharacteristic tactical errors by President Duarte at the close of 1984, however, has deeply strained the president's relations with the military. Duarte inadvertently reinforced fears among the top brass that he will usurp institutional prerogatives, especially by intervening in the promotion process. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Duarte's current position with civilian authorities is no less stressful. Angered legislators have fiercely challenged Duarte's efforts to exercise a partial veto of the electoral law and appear to be supported by the majority of the cabinet [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

Despite the challenges to Duarte's authority during the past month, we believe there is little immediate threat of a coup. Nevertheless, extreme and moderate forces on the right, both civilian and military, have found some important issues to rally around. Duarte can survive this crisis but he will have to move cautiously. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

**SUBJECT: Late Stage Indicators of Insurgent Success:
A Salvadoran Update** [Redacted]

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