

# Salvador Arms-Aid Charges Detailed

By CHARLES MOHR

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 8 — Government officials made public today photographic and other evidence that they said strongly supported contentions that leftist guerrillas in El Salvador get most of their weapons, ammunition and equipment from Communist bloc nations that funnel the material through Nicaragua.

Gen. Paul F. Gorman, commander of the United States Southern Command in Panama, said the evidence showed that El Salvador was "the victim of a pernicious form of aggression by Nicaragua." General Gorman conducted a press briefing with Thomas Pickering, the United States Ambassador to El Salvador.

Mr. Pickering said the press briefing today contained about 95 percent of the material the two officials had been using in recent weeks in secret briefings for members of Congress.

The guerrilla coalition in Salvador has argued that it captures or buys on the black market most of its weapons, but General Gorman said that shipments from the left-wing Nicaraguan Government were the mainstay of the guerrillas.

## Aerial Photography Cited

The press briefing today leaned heavily on a number of recent incidents in which United States AC-130 reconnaissance aircraft sighted trawlers or shrimp boats apparently discharging cargo into smaller boats near the Salvadoran coast and in which the smaller craft ran into the beach.

In one case, television tape showed what seemed to be pack animals, such as mules, then being led into the coastal forest.

The AC-130's are four-engined aircraft that fly frequent intelligence patrols over or near El Salvador from Howard Air Force Base in Panama. The aircraft are equipped with cameras that can detect faint infra-red heat given off by human beings and animals; low-light television cameras and night vision scopes manned by crew members.

General Gorman said that in at least one incident a Salvadoran Army unit captured a number of weapons at a guerrilla base near where the beach landings had taken place. He cited captured maps that seemed to mark trans-

port routes. He also said that serial numbers on United States AR-15 and M-16 rifles captured from the guerrillas recently showed that in one batch more 73 percent of the rifles involved had been sent to Vietnam during the war there and had presumably fallen into Communist hands then.

## 'Accumulation of Evidence'

Ambassador Pickering said that "as in most cases it is the accumulation of evidence, not a single incident alone, that provides the basis for the conclusions."

He added that "no single piece of evidence presented here could in any sense be called a smoking gun or a silver bullet." But he urged journalists to believe that the case for Nicaraguan logistical support of the Salvadoran rebels also rested on a "great deal of additional sensitive information," that could not be made public now.

In most cases the television tapes and still photographs displayed today were too blurry for journalists to detect clearly the offloading of equipment from "mother ships" to smaller sea-going canoes. But in one piece of high-resolution video tape a crate appeared to have been landed by one of the canoes.

General Gorman asserted that overland shipments of weapons also took place. Nicaragua does not have a common border with El Salvador, since a portion of Honduras intervenes. But Salvadoran guerrillas' influence has been strong in that rugged portion of Honduras.

## Seaborne Supply Routes

The Gulf of Fonseca is one possible route for sea-borne infiltration, but the location of the reconnaissance photos shown today would seem to indicate that the ships involved stood out to sea and sailed a considerable distance along the Salvadoran coast beyond the Gulf, in one case as far as the mouth of the Lempa River.

The "furtive" maritime activity was said to have occurred, mostly in June and early July, in such beach areas as Espino, Cuco and Icacal and at Jucullico Bay.

The charges of Nicaraguan involvement in the Salvadoran insurgency were more sweeping when General Gorman spoke than in some of the written material provided, which took a more neutral line.

For instance, photo caption material prepared by United States military officers described some of the depicted scenes as "suspicious activities" and "probable logistics infiltration."

## More U.S. Aid Sought

General Gorman also used the discussion of possible Communist aid to the Salvadoran guerrillas to stress the view that more and faster United States assistance was needed for the Government in that nation.

A House subcommittee today approved most of what the Administration has asked for fiscal year 1985, which does not begin until Oct. 1, but supplemental aid requests for summer and early fall have been bogged down.

General Gorman asserted that "a guerrilla offensive is imminent" and that some additional military aid was needed before "the summer is out." Assistance given in "drips and drabs" made systematic planning difficult and threatened to stifle what he said were increased tactical boldness and better fighting ability by government forces.

Mr. Pickering added that the ability of the small Salvadoran Navy to interdict waterborne supply routes was "a function" of more aid to the navy.

General Gorman contended that the Salvadoran Army had performed well recently and had captured some of the arms displayed today because it had begun to receive more intelligence from guerrilla defectors and peasants. "That wasn't happening last year," he said.

The officials asserted that of about 36,000 M-16 rifles sent to the Salvadoran Government only about 2,000 had been lost, adding that this would arm only about one-fifth of the guerrilla forces.