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ON PAGE A-6

NEW YORK TIMES  
30 JULY 1982

# C.I.A. Chief Tells of Attempt to Aid Salvador Vote

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 29 — The Central Intelligence Agency tried to support the election process in El Salvador earlier this year by supplying invisible ink used to stamp the wrists of voters to prevent them from voting more than once, William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, said today.

In addition, according to Mr. Casey, the C.I.A. shared intelligence information with the Salvadorans about planned arms shipments and guerrilla military tactics, including specific plans by insurgent forces to attack Salvadoran towns on the eve of the election March 28.

Mr. Casey, in an unusual step, lifted some of the secrecy surrounding American intelligence operations in Central America in an effort to refute a published charge that the C.I.A. "meddled" in the Salvadoran elections.

The charge was made by Robert E. White, a former American Ambassador to El Salvador, in an article published on the Op-Ed page of The New York Times on Tuesday.

## Other Moves Reported Weighed

The Reagan Administration also considered sending funds covertly to José Napoleón Duarte, the former Salvadoran junta President, who toured the country to get out the vote, and to the Christian Democratic Party, to underwrite their campaign expenses, according to an intelligence source familiar with the discussions.

It could not be determined whether such aid was actually approved. Mr. Casey said he would not comment on whether such discussions took place.

Deane R. Hinton, the present American Ambassador in El Salvador, reportedly opposed any involvement by the C.I.A. in the election, fearing even a limited role, if it were revealed, might heighten anti-American feeling. Mr. Hinton did not return a call to the embassy in San Salvador today.

In an interview and a letter to the editor of The Times, which is being published Friday, Mr. Casey reported that the C.I.A. provided the Salvadoran Government with "information and capabilities" that helped block the flow of arms to guerrilla forces from Cuba and Nicaragua.

This aid, he said, included sensing devices, metal detectors and other intelligence equipment used to track the clandestine movement of arms and people.

For the election itself, Mr. Casey said, the C.I.A. provided the invisible ink that election authorities stamped on the wrist of each voter to prevent people from voting more than once. He said the intelligence agency also supplied ultraviolet light devices that illuminated the ink and that were used at polls to check if voters had already cast their ballot.

Mr. Casey said the C.I.A. provided the ink and ultraviolet detection lights because "the authorities in El Salvador had a problem they didn't know how to cope with."

In the letter to the editor, he wrote that the assistance was given to meet "a genuine concern on the part of both the United States and El Salvador Governments that the election be held, and that people not be intimidated from voting."

## Salvadorans Sought Aid

Other Administration officials said the ink and ultraviolet lights of the type sent to El Salvador are commercially manufactured and could have been supplied openly by the American Government. Mr. Casey said he was not familiar with the details of the operation, but contended that the C.I.A. supplied the equipment because it was asked to do so by the Salvadorans.

He added that the intelligence operations in El Salvador were part of a larger package of C.I.A. covert operations in Central America approved by President Reagan last November.

The sequence of events that led to Mr. Casey's comments today began with a column published in The Wall Street Journal on July 18. The article, by Suzanne Garment, quoted Mr. Casey as having said that the C.I.A. was active in clandestine operations of a benign nature, including the furnishing of communications equipment to countries facing pressure from Soviet-backed forces. "For instance, we helped in the El Salvador election," he was quoted as having said.

In his Op-Ed page article on Tuesday, Mr. White picked up the comment, writing that Mr. Casey had "bragged that the Central Intelligence Agency had meddled in the election."

Mr. Casey said today that Mr. White's comments had prompted him to provide details of the C.I.A.'s operations to prove that the agency had not meddled in El Salvador. He accused Mr. White of "placing a false interpretation" on The Wall Street Journal article.

Mr. Casey said that despite the sensitive and secret nature of covert operations, he had originally mentioned the El Salvador activities to The Wall Street Journal "to describe the purpose of the kind of special activities that go on these days as opposed to the kind of things people conjure up when they think of the Bay of Pigs."

He was referring to the failed 1961 invasion of Cuba organized and run by the C.I.A. in an effort to overthrow Fidel Castro, the Cuban leader.