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Intelligence

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El Salvador: Evaluation of Operation “Well Being for San Vicente” (S)

An Imagery Analysis Report



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September 1983
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**El Salvador: Evaluation of
Operation "Well Being for
San Vicente" (S)**

Summary

In June 1983 the government of El Salvador launched a military and civic-action operation--"Well Being for San Vicente"--in San Vicente Department to deny the insurgent forces use of their base areas and to return the department to government control. Intelligence acquired between June and August indicates that this operation is meeting with some success. Troop deployments and military operations have been taking place near insurgent base areas in central and northern San Vicente, and as a result, all of the insurgent camps in the central base area, and all but one of the camps in the northern base area have been abandoned. Civic action projects, such as rebuilding the Pan American Highway and the Quebrada Seca Bridge have also been started; however, much remains to be done before transportation, utilities, and security are restored to prewar conditions.

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Information available as of 1 September 1983 was used in this report. (U)

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Introduction

A military and civic-action operation--"Well Being for San Vicente"--was started in El Salvador's San Vicente Department on 10 June 1983. This operation is a test of a new strategy for the El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF)--an attempt to deny insurgents the use of their once secure base areas, and to initiate civic redevelopment projects. The 5,000 ESAF troops committed to the operation are to remain in the department for several months as a security force to allow time for the National Commission for Area Restoration (CONARA) to begin civil projects. The projects are to include the rebuilding of destroyed roads, bridges, and power-lines, and the reopening of schools and health facilities that were forced to close by the insurgents. [1] Also during this time, a militia is to be raised and trained to take over local defense duties when the ESAF withdraws. [redacted]

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To begin these tasks, the 5th Military Brigade, including two U.S. trained immediate-reaction battalions, launched a series of sweeps across the countryside which drove the insurgents from their two major base areas in central and northern San Vicente Department. [2] The central base area, about 50 square kilometers, was north of Cerro El Chorizo, between the Rio Lempa and the San Vicente-Tecoluca road. The base area contained three insurgent camps. The northern San Vicente base area, about 110 square kilometers, extended from the Rio Titihuapa on the north to within a few kilometers of Santa Clara on the south, and from Las Vueltas insurgent camp on the west to Las Aradillas camp on the east. Since 1981, 21 insurgent base camps have been identified in this base area (figure 1). [redacted]

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Discussion

Analysis of imagery acquired during June and July 1983 indicates that operation Well Being for San Vicente has had some success. Government troops were identified in several areas of the department, all 21 of the insurgent camps in the northern base area, as well as two of the three camps in the central base area were abandoned, and civil reconstruction work had begun. [redacted]

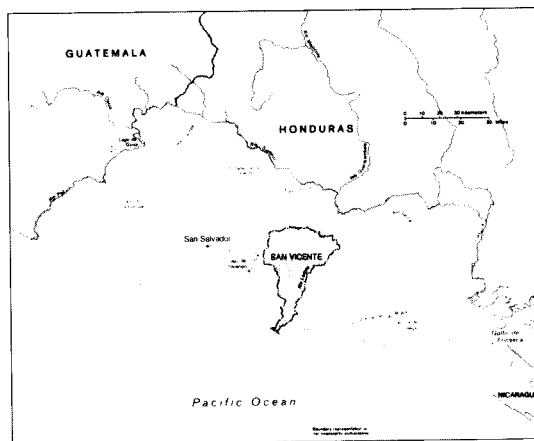
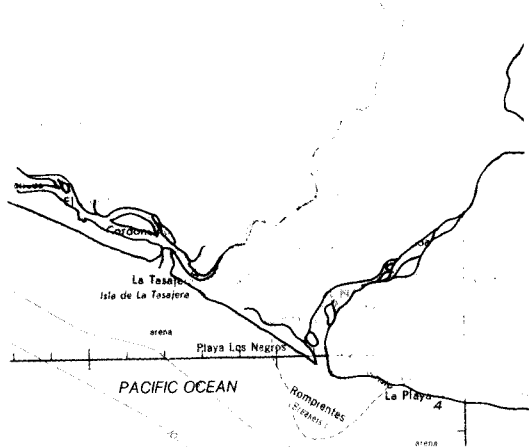
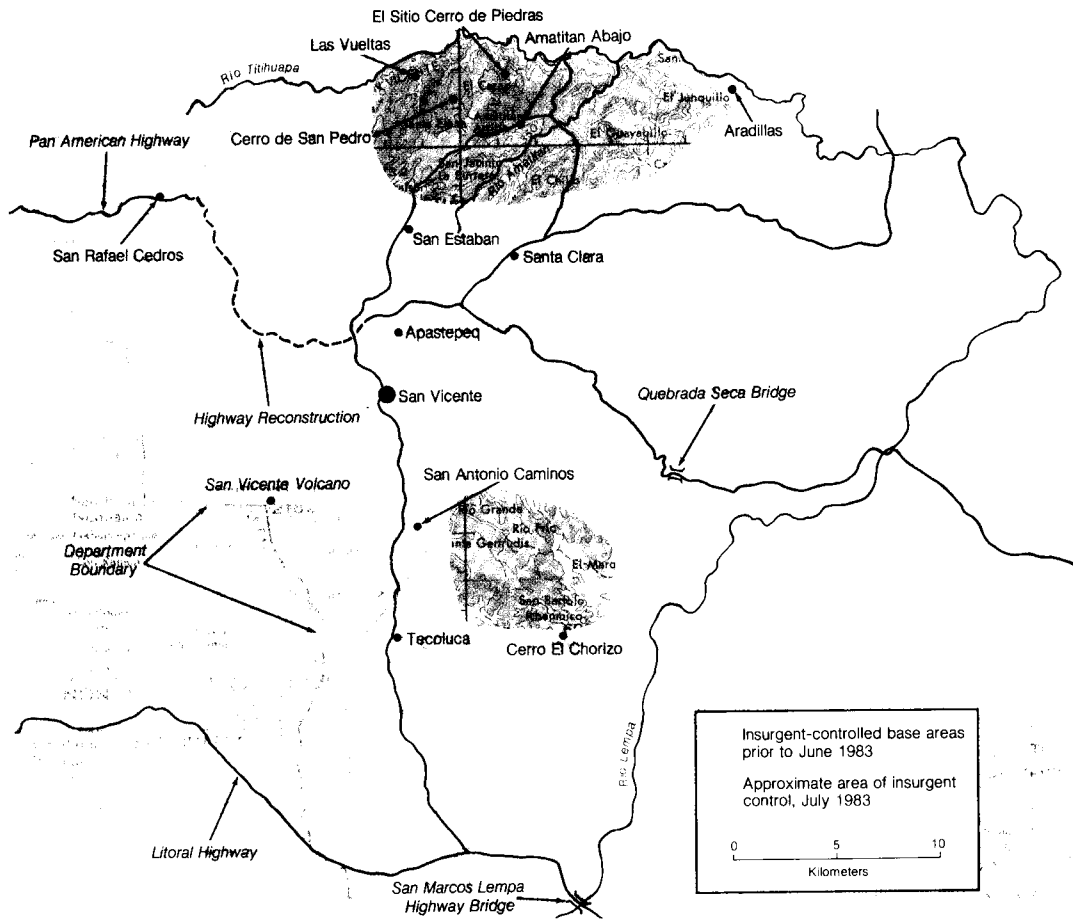
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Government forces had taken up positions in several towns to establish a government presence and to support field deployments. The operation's headquarters was established at the San Vicente 5th Brigade Headquarters and Barracks in the city of San Vicente. A high level of activity was seen there during June and July. Twenty cargo trucks were parked throughout the facility and along adjoining city streets. [3] One M-113 armored personnel carrier was parked outside the garrison, possibly as a

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Figure 1

San Vicente Department



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semipermanent defensive position. [redacted] at least 70 personnel were in formation in the headquarters central courtyard, and three UH-1 helicopters were being refueled and serviced in a soccer stadium 8 blocks south of the garrison.

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On the northern outskirts of Santa Clara, 9 kilometers northeast of San Vicente, two companies of the 5th Brigade established a temporary field camp during June. This camp consisted of an artillery battery of four M-105 howitzers, a helicopter landing zone, eight tents, and one AML-245 (H-90) armored car (figure 2).

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Six kilometers south of San Vicente, an artillery battery was deployed during June at San Antonio Caminos to support the Cazadores Battalion, 5th Brigade, which the ESAF reported was conducting sweep operations against insurgents in the San Vicente Volcano area. The battery was comprised of four howitzers and 20 tents set up in a field east of the San Vicente-Tecoluca highway. Elements of an ESAF infantry company were observed in insurgent camps at Cerro El Ingles and Sitio Cerro de Piedras and in and around the town of Amatitan Abajo [redacted]

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These troop deployments in conjunction with the sweep operations resulted in the insurgents abandoning their central base area, and most of the northern base area. However, the insurgent camp at Cerro de San Pedro in the northern base area still showed signs of guerrilla activity [redacted] This camp is located in a village of about 20 buildings, and there is an extensive trail system which appeared to be heavily used. Crops planted within the village had been abandoned and were either overgrown or dead--a photographic signature of areas held by the insurgents. Camps at Las Vueltas and Las Esperanza, both in the northern base area, appeared to be inactive. [redacted]

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Civic redevelopment could also be identified on photography. Along the Pan American Highway, 17 kilometers of road was being rebuilt and repaved between Apastepeque and San Rafael Cedros. Storm drains were being installed along this roadbed to insure an all weather capability. The Quebrada Seca Bridge, on the Pan American Highway 14 kilometers east of San Vicente, had been destroyed for the second time by insurgents [redacted] the Bailey Bridge that had replaced the original bridge had been rebuilt (figure 3). Reconstruction of this bridge and other roadwork has reestablished an important transportation link to eastern El Salvador, setting back insurgent plans to isolate the area. [redacted]

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[redacted] there were no indications of repair work being done on the San Marcos Lempa Highway Bridge, a suspension bridge 21 kilometers south of San Vicente on the Littoral Highway. This bridge was destroyed by insurgents and its loss hinders the movement into the coastal areas of eastern El Salvador. However, a nearby railroad bridge, which has been decked, is being used to handle vehicular traffic. [redacted]

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The insurgents have disrupted the electric power grid in San Vicente Department. Six high-tension power pylons have been toppled between San Vicente and Tecoluca. [redacted] no repairs were being made to the pylons, and the city of Tecoluca was still without power. These pylons have been down since early May and their location in rough terrain makes access difficult for repair crews. [redacted]

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References

[Redacted content]

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Documents

Document references are available on request. (U)

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