

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
NEWS BRIEFING
ON
INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION ON
EXTERNAL SUPPORT OF THE GUERRILLAS IN EL SALVADOR
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 8, 1984, 1:32 P.M.

NOTE: The booklet presents the briefing given at the State Department by Ambassador Pickering, U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, and General Gorman, Commander, U.S. Southern Command. Material in [brackets] has been added for clarity. Since this briefing has been converted from audiovisual to the printed form we have modified slightly the manner of presentation, but not the substance.

Ambassador Pickering and General Gorman were introduced by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Alan Romberg.

AMBASSADOR PICKERING: We have been asked by the public and the Congress many times for evidence of Nicaraguan, Cuban, and Soviet support for the guerrillas in El Salvador. This request has focused on the issue of logistics support for those guerrillas.

Why are we so sure the support comes from or through Nicaragua and Cuba to the guerrillas? For the last few weeks we have been giving a classified briefing to the Congress on this subject. A number of members of the Congress on both sides have asked us--indeed, they have urged us--to declassify that briefing and to provide it to you, and through you, obviously, to the American public.

After very careful review last night, we were able to have a decision made to declassify about 95 percent of the key information in the briefing that we have been giving to the Congress.

In the briefing, and in the questions to follow, we will not be able to go beyond what you receive in the basic briefing regarding intelligence sources and methods. The briefing will discuss a number of incidents -- incidents which are interrelated, showing evidence of an outside logistics effort to support the guerrillas in El Salvador. We hope to show some physical evidence of this and, as well, to provide oral and written evidence developed from intelligence collection and analysis.

We are certain you will draw your own conclusions from this briefing. As with most things, it is the accumulation of evidence, not a single piece of it alone, which provides the basis for conclusions. No single piece of evidence to be presented here could in any sense be called a "smoking gun" or a "silver bullet." But what is important is that careful, painstaking, patient work was accomplished to put together information on a series of events and incidents about which we can tell you today.

Critical to your understanding of the briefing is the fact that there is a great deal of additional sensitive intelligence material and information about which we cannot speak today but which has been absolutely central in literally leading us to find, or to find out about, the events that we are going to speak about.

Finally, two other pieces of the chronology of this kind of support are very important, I think, to pass on to you. These are not new pieces but they fit the pattern and are important to recall.

First, in late 1983, a very enterprising newsman, Sam Dillon of the Miami Herald, visited a place called La Concha on the northwest coast of Nicaragua. This small fishing port is located about forty miles from the coast of El Salvador.

Dillon wrote a revealing story of how the local Nicaraguan inhabitants of this so-called fishing cooperative were, as traditional smugglers, co-opted by the Sandinistas after the 1979 takeover to continue their activities by smuggling weapons to El Salvador, using large ocean-going canoes called, in Spanish, "cayucas." The story ran in the Washington Post of September 21, 1983.

The second important event, or development, is a statement made very recently by President Duarte of El Salvador. Duarte noted that at a July 1983 meeting of the Contadora Foreign Ministers, the Nicaraguan Foreign Minister, when pressed on the issue of Nicaraguan materiel support for the guerrillas by the then Salvadoran Foreign Minister, Doctor Fidel Chavez Mena, freely and openly, in front the Contadora ministerial colleagues, admitted that support. We have additional evidence to corroborate from sources who were there in a position to know.

Now, I would like to ask General Paul Gorman, Commander of the United States Southern Command, to present you with the briefing. Afterwards, he and I will be available for your questions, and we have some additional handout material available for you at the end of the briefing. Thanks.

GENERAL GORMAN: Thanks, Tom.

Let me begin with a press conference that was held on July 27, 1984 in San Salvador in which President Duarte accused Nicaragua of intervention in the ongoing war in his country--accused them of acting in that war as the principal source of the munitions being used by the insurgents, and specifically, of moving munitions across its beaches. This is a quotation from that press conference. He said, "They are sending in weapons, training people, transporting bullets at this very minute; they are using fishing boats as a disguise, introducing weapons into El Salvador at night through Montecristo, El Cuco and El Espino."

[On the map, figure 1] I'm going to point out La Concha, [key #1], [also known as] La Pelota, down in Nicaragua just mentioned by Ambassador Pickering, and El Espino, [key #2], El Cuco, [key #3], and Montecristo, [key #4], an island at the mouth of the Rio Lempa, all in El Salvador. These are the places referred to by President Duarte. Also note La Playa Icacal [key #5].

We'll be talking about the areas highlighted in green [shaded area, outlined on map]. They include those beaches to which I've just made reference. The mouth of the Rio Lempa, around the Isla Montecristo, and certain areas up along the Lempa, particularly up in the northern part of the country where it forms the boundary between El Salvador and Honduras.

President Duarte, in that conference of July 27, took issue, specifically, with recent assertions of the insurgent leadership, the leadership of the guerrillas in El Salvador [FMLN], that they captured the ordnance in their possession from the government troops of El Salvador. This is a statement issued by the FMLN Command, the General Command, on 6 July 1984: "We wish to tell the United States Administration that the weapons carried by the Salvadoran workers are the weapons we have recovered in combat from the army they train and direct."

And, again, on July 24: "Imperialist spokesmen have reported that the FMLN has expensive and sophisticated weapons that were acquired in the socialist countries and were brought into the country through Nicaragua. This misinformation campaign seeks to minimize the huge amount of weapons that our victorious army has seized in battle."

As you know, on July 18, 1984, the U.S. government released a background paper on Nicaragua's support for Central American subversion. That's the "Green Book" [as referred to by President Reagan in his July 24, 1984 press conference].

This background paper addressed directly the question of how El Salvadoran guerrilla units are supplied with ordnance. You will recall that the paper describes shipment by sea from northwest Nicaragua to the Salvadoran coast by land through Honduras and by air.

More recently, as Ambassador Pickering mentioned, a classified presentation had been prepared, largely by members of my command, on the origin of guerrilla arms and munitions. This presentation was put before members of Congress.

Members of both parties have asked that portions of that briefing be declassified. My remarks this afternoon are in response to those Congressional requests.

As the Ambassador stated, I can go no further in discussing intelligence sources and methods than my comments on the series of visuals which will follow.

In my opening statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee last week, I praised the El Salvadoran Armed Forces for improvements and reforms undertaken within the past eight months; reforms which I characterized as revolutionary.

Among their more important gains has been distinctly better intelligence. This gain has proceeded only partially from exchanges with the United States. Most of it--that gain of intelligence--is a payback for aggressive patrolling by their armed forces; by sound--and by that I mean humane--use of

guerrilla defectors, prisoners, and documents, something that we did not see until the very recent past, and adroit use of human sources among a population which largely supports and cooperates with President Duarte's government.

I propose to discuss four specific cases, or series of events, which illustrate the problem faced by President Duarte and his armed forces.

First: Infiltration across the beaches of Espino, Cuco, and Icacal, and up the Lempa River and Juquillisco Bay in southeastern El Salvador.

Second: Overland infiltration, using way stations and camps in areas dominated by guerrillas.

Third: Dispersed stores or caches. And,

Fourth: Well-guarded headquarters or base areas for control of guerrilla operations and logistics.

I believe each of these cases, or instances, demonstrates the validity of President Duarte's judgment that his country is the victim of a pernicious form of aggression by Nicaragua.

First, I direct your attention to the Jucuaran area, which is identified on the map as the green area right at the base of the map [see figure 1].

We know from a man who participated in the event, a defector, that on April 28, at night, a shipment of assorted munitions arrived via these cayucas, to which the Ambassador made reference, on the beach, in the vicinity of Playa El Espino near the town of Boca de Botoncillo.

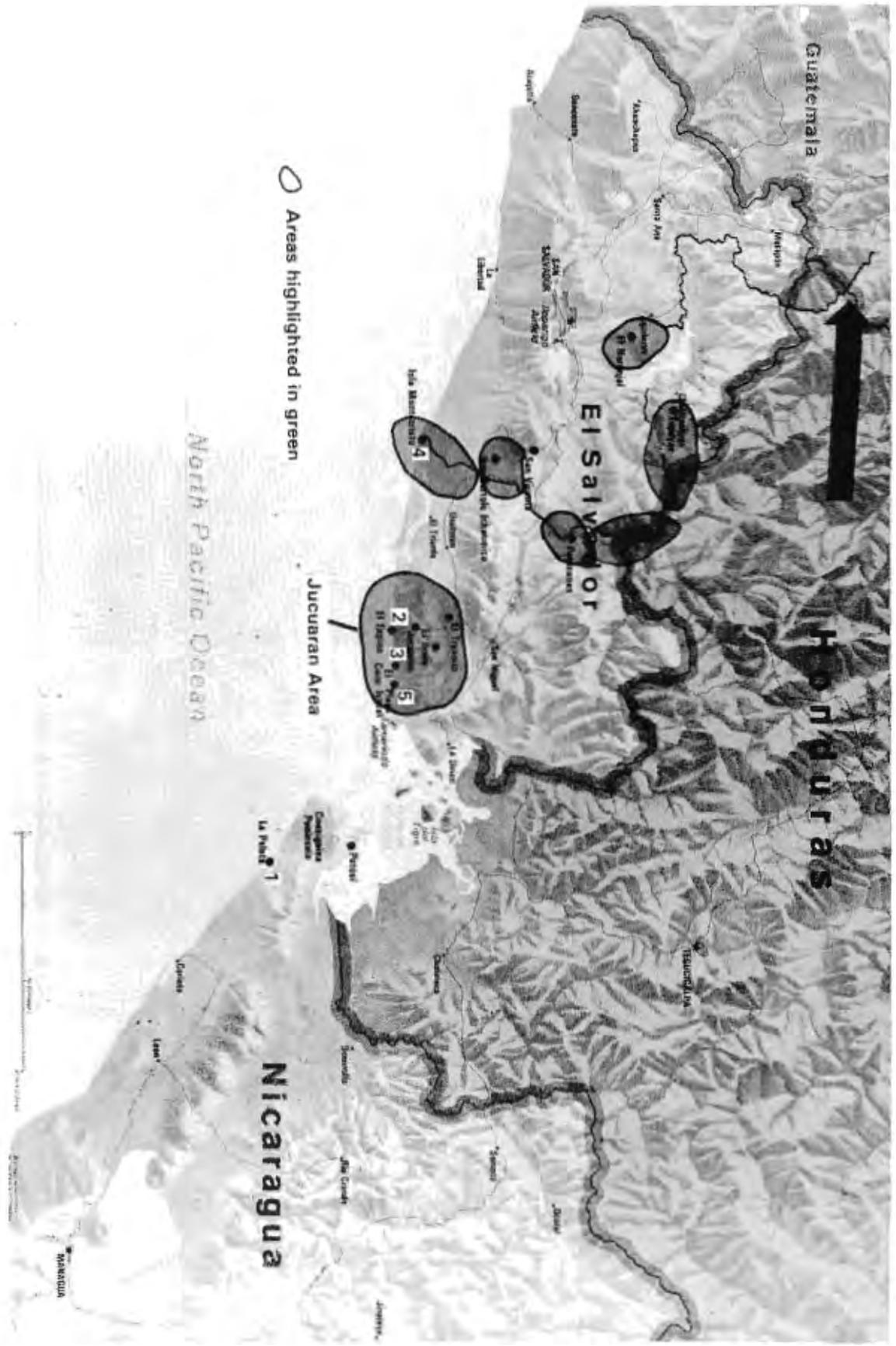
The shipment was there met by a guerrilla reception party and back-packed to a point just to the southeast of the village of Jucuaran. At that point, the shipment was transferred to mules and carried to the vicinity of the town of El Brazo.

Earlier the same evening, trucks were hijacked near the town of El Transito and moved to El Brazo where they rendezvoused with the mule shipment. This was on the evening of May 1. At that time, the shipment was transferred to trucks and moved north toward the city of San Miguel.

Intelligence analysts in El Salvador, and in my command, believe that this shipment was probably involved in logistically supporting the May 6 attack, by that faction of the guerrillas known as the "ERP," on the city of San Miguel--an attack which the Ambassador witnessed, since he was fired on by these ERP troops south of the city as he attempted to bring in the election observers on the morning of May 6.

That attack was thwarted by the Salvadoran Armed Forces, which had been alerted by intelligence not only to its timing but its location.

The U.S.-trained ARCE Battalion of the Salvadoran Armed Forces, reacting to that attack from the south, pursued the guerrillas south of San Miguel,



○ Areas highlighted in green

Figure 1

and on May 10 a company of the ARCE captured, near El Transito, Bulgarian ammunition. You have seen pictures of this before in the "Green Book," but let me point out a couple of things about this ammunition [see figure 2].



BULGARIAN AMMUNITION

CAPTURE DATA

TIME: 10 MAY 1982
PLACE: VIC EL TRANSITO
UNIT OF
CAPTURE: ARCE BN

Figure 2

First of all, Bulgaria operates a factory which produces identifiable NATO-standard ammunition. The United States intelligence services have seen this particular type of round only three places in the Western Hemisphere: south of the town of San Miguel, in El Salvador, just this year; several times in recent years in the hands of the Sandinista army in Nicaragua; and in 1973 and 1974, in the Dominican Republic in the hands of a group of insurgents known to have been supported by the Cubans.

In the continuation of that operation, on May 11, the ARCE Battalion captured a Vietnamese mortar, this time near the town of San Carlos. This is the box in which the mortar sight was contained. The markings here, in Vietnamese, are instructions to use with the 81 millimeter mortar. This is the sight; it was manufactured in North Vietnam in the late 1970s. And in the box there is an inspection, or factory clearance chip, which would indicate that it was shipped from the factory, probably circa 1978. But, again, we don't know much more about it--as far as the material evidence--than that [see figure 3].

VIETNAMESE MORTAR SIGHT



CAPTURE DATA

TIME: 11 MAY 1982
PLACE: VIC SAN CARLOS
UNIT OF
CAPTURE: ARCE BN

Figure 3

Needless to say, neither Bulgarian ammunition nor Vietnamese mortar sights are in the hands of the Salvadoran Armed Forces, and our analysts believe that this materiel was part of that shipment that arrived at the Playa Espino on April 28.

During the operation, the ARCE Battalion commander received, from peasants in the area of the operations, information which indicated that the phenomenon reported on April 28 was not unique, that there were a number of these sorts of landings, and that the guerrilla column that went down to meet the landing of April 28 was but one of many.

Moreover, his information, collected from peasant informers, indicated that there was a large guerrilla headquarters near the mouth of the Rio Lempa.

On May 21, reacting to this intelligence, the Salvadoran Armed Forces inserted small reconnaissance patrols into the Isla Montecristo, near the mouth of the Rio Lempa, for the purposes of locating that headquarters.

On the night of May 23, these patrols captured a young Salvadoran who had been forcibly recruited by the guerrillas ten days earlier. He freely led the Salvadoran Army to a large guerrilla camp nearby which turned out to be the headquarters for which the Salvadorans had been looking.

On May 25, the Salvadoran Army overran this camp, killed 18 guerrillas, seized a large amount of weapons and ammunition, destroyed some 34 ocean-going small boats, the so-called cayucas, and seized a large number of guerrilla documents, the property of the headquarters, including organizational notebooks, records of weapons, plans, and several guerrilla maps.

One of the maps was that of the commander of the FPL faction in the area known by his alias as "Daniel" [see map, figure 4]. You have seen a picture of this in the "Green Book." This is a colored representation, and the colors are important because, as the key [on the map] indicates, the red area is guerrilla-controlled or dominated region. For those of you who know what a mangrove swamp is, this is a very difficult area in which to operate. An ideal place for a guerrilla stronghold.

The mustard-colored area is identified as contested, and the brown area [cross hatched] is identified as an area for expansion, as part of the plan of Daniel.

Identified by a red [broken] line running through this is the secure route, and Daniel's notebooks talk about the movement of supplies from Playa El Espino, identified down here, up the secure route. They record, among other things, rendezvousing with aircraft in the vicinity at airfields.

If you take the information that we received from the defector concerning the April 28 munition shipment and you plot it on Daniel's map, as we have done with the assistance of that gent, you can see an almost complete overlay. I've plotted on here the various events in the sequence that I earlier reported them to you.

"Normally, the seaborne routes near the Nicaraguan coast can either travel directly across the Gulf of Fonseca or detour further out to sea and land at points further west along the Salvadoran coast.

"The first sequence occurred between midnight and 3 a.m. Salvador local time on June 24, 1984. All of the imaged activities occurred on or near Icacal Beach. The first sighting occurred on the eastern bank of the inlet located just to the west of Icacal Beach. This sighting consisted of 25 hot-spots, some appearing to be animals and some appearing to be personnel.



Figure 6

"Just after this sighting, BIELD KIRK also imaged three trawlers, each 60 to 70 feet in length. These were located 1,800 meters to the east of the 25 hot-spots and about one-half mile off shore. You're now seeing one of these trawlers through the infrared sensor. This is the same trawler as seen through the low-light television. The ship has its outriggers extended and is towing two canoes.



Figure 7

"Normally, such trawlers, involved with resupply activity, will load material onto the smaller boats for delivery to waiting personnel on the

beach. On return to the coastline, it searched for the 25 hot-spots. When it discovered the original hot-spots at 2:25 a.m., it split into two groups of twelve to thirteen. The BIELD KIRK aircraft then located approximately 100 hot-spots 1,800 meters to the east on Icacal Beach where the three trawlers were noted previously.



Figure 8

"Analysts believe that these hot-spots were personnel involved in receiving supplies from the trawlers noted just off the shore earlier.

"The next sequence you will see involves the probable meeting of the mother ship--in this case, a shrimper--and two smaller boats which will carry transferred materiel from the mother ship to the coast, as shown by the arrow. This meeting was observed approximately ten nautical miles south of the mouth of the Lempa River just after midnight on the morning of July 10, 1984.



Figure 9

"You are now observing this shrimper and the two boats on low-light television. The shrimper, which is 75 feet in length, has smaller boats in tow. It has its outriggers extended on both sides as if to give the appearance of fishing. It is running with lights on, also to avoid sus-

picion. The two smaller boats, both 18 feet in length, have square-shaped sterns. It is likely that the shrimper had completed a transfer of material to the two 18-foot boats just prior to the arrival of BIELD KIRK.

"When the shrimper realized that the BIELD KIRK aircraft was overhead, it began to move away from the smaller boats in a southwesterly direction towards open seas. The shrimper quickly attained high speed, again, not indicative of normal shrimping procedure.



Figure 10

"For the time being, the two 18-foot boats remained in place. Upon the arrival of the BIELD KIRK, the two boats pushed apart and began to move toward the Salvadoran coast. The boats quickly attained high speed, estimated at between 20 and 25 knots.



Figure 11

"On three occasions during the boats' movement toward shore, one of the boats stopped, apparently to check if the BIELD KIRK aircraft was still overhead. During one such stop, as shown here, a crew member of one boat apparently threw an object overboard.



Figure 12

"Aircraft crew members saw this activity through their night-vision goggles.

"When the boats landed on the beach, they were met by personnel, noted on the screen as hot-spots. Of particular note, a crate was apparently off-loaded from one of the boats onto the shore.

"We have freeze-framed the imagery here to outline better the crate, which is just off the bow of the boat in the center of the screen.



Figure 13

"At this location, along the southeastern coast of El Salvador, BIELD KIRK image would appear to be the formation of a pack animal train on the beach in the early morning hours of July 11. After forming up, the personnel at the lead of the formation led the train inland.



Figure 14

"The larger hot-spots you see are probable pack animals; the smaller hot-spots are personnel. Notice also that smaller hot-spots are leading the larger hot-spots as apparently a man would lead a pack animal. Notice also the interval that is maintained by the hot-spots leaving the beach at the head of the column.

[End of film]

The landing on the beach was right over in this area, and that mule train that you were just looking at on Daniel's map is where the blue spot is [see map, figure 15].

While we were looking at the operations across the beach, we became aware that there was a significant amount of infiltration arriving overland from Honduras as well. In one such area, up along the Rio Lempa, where it comes up against the Honduran border in northern San Miguel, there is a key logistics center, one in which three of the principal guerrilla factions are all involved. It's called the Petacones area, and if you would point that out on the map, please [see map, figure 16].

PONCE BIAT OPERATIONS

- 30 JUNE - CAPTURED GUERRILLA MAP
- 1 JULY - CAPTURED GUERRILLA SUPPLIES
- 2 JULY - KILLED 15 GUERRILLAS, CAPTURED 7 RIFLES
- 3 JULY - INVESTIGATED U.S. INTELL REPORT
- USED ONLY ORGANIC FIRE SUPPORT
- REACTED TO U.S. INTELL AND ACQUIRED MORE INTELL

Figure 16

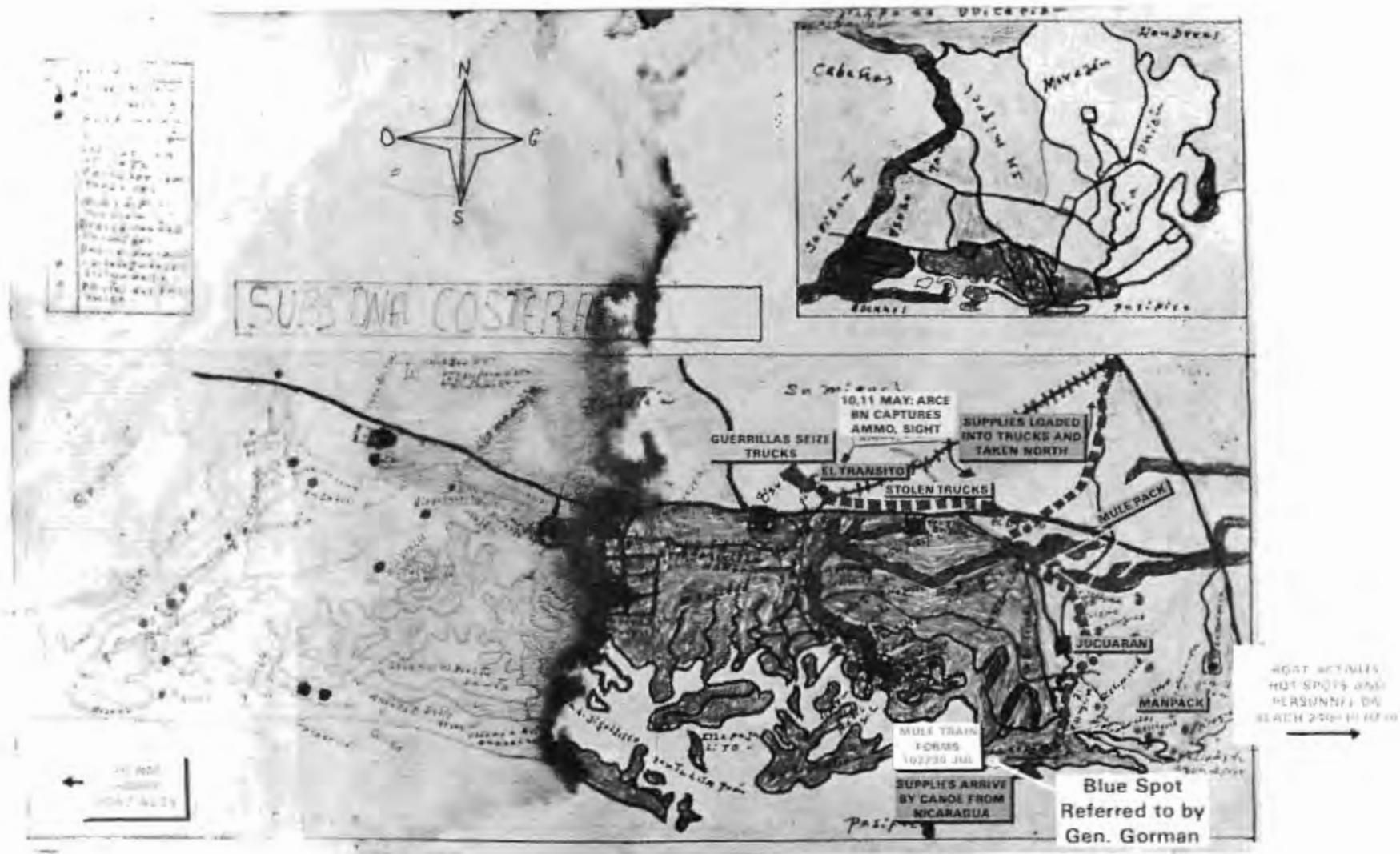


Figure 15

During the period June 30 through July 3 of this year, the Ponce Battalion operated in the Petacones area. The Ponce Battalion is a Salvadoran army anti-terrorist, Salvadoran-raised and Salvadoran-trained unit. But it has a number of officers and non-commissioned officers in it who have been transferred from American-trained battalions.

That battalion, in the time period indicated, taking no losses and operating at night in small groups, in a classic counter-insurgency operation, penetrated this Petacones headquarters area, killed a number of guerrillas, disrupted guerrilla logistics, and acquired significant guerrilla documents. U.S. intelligence analysts agree that these operations in northern San Miguel did, in fact, disrupt guerrilla supply movements to the west and to the south.

This is a map which was captured during this operation [see map, figure 17]. It is the map of the commander in the area. Identified on it are the locales of the three principal guerrilla factions -- the ERP, the FPL, and the PRIC -- who are situated in the area. Their headquarters are identified as well.



Figure 17

The Ponce Battalion operates under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Monterrosa, the Salvadoran Armed Forces Commander for the Third Brigade, headquartered at San Miguel. Two weeks ago, LtCol Monterrosa, during a visit to his headquarters by General Jack Vessey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and myself, presented these two snapshots of guerrillas which were taken from a roll of film removed from a guerrilla body.

The picture over here shows men loading mules with a U.S.-manufactured heavy machine gun. The clothing and the web gear of two of the men are also apparently of U.S.-manufacture [see figure 18].



Figure 18

Along the upper Rio Lempa, U.S. C-130s, such as the one that you just saw in the film, have followed such mule trains moving at night out of Honduras down to the Petacones vicinity.

The same intelligence means have also detected trucks moving from the Honduran border south toward Petacones. Here is a second snapshot [see figure 19]. The gentlemen on the left was identified by the Ponce Battalion Commander as a Communist party political officer.



Figure 19

I want you to note that he is carrying a Soviet-manufactured AK-47 assault rifle. The man in the center has a Soviet-type grenade at his belt, and both of these weapons must have come from outside El Salvador.

The center man and the one on the right are carrying what appear to be U.S.-made rifles, but, as we shall see in a moment, these weapons may very well have come to El Salvador from Vietnam.

Now let me turn your attention to another guerrilla stronghold in El Salvador in the Guazapa Volcano area. About 10 to 12 days ago, the

Salvadoran armed forces began what they called Operation Guazapa 13. During this operation the Salvadoran army successfully acquired intelligence from campesinos and from defectors.

As the army moved into the guerrilla stronghold, a guerrilla turned himself in and offered to lead Salvadoran armed forces units to an arms cache which he had helped create [see figure 20].

The Salvadoran Tigre Battalion immediately followed the guerrilla and located the arms. Among the items seized were some 44 U.S.-manufactured AR-15s, some seven M-16s, some six Belgian-manufactured FAL rifles, one U.S. M-1 rifle, one U.S. M-1 carbine, one U.S. .45 caliber Thompson submachine gun, three U.S.-manufactured light anti-tank weapons, and a substantial amount of TNT, Soviet-manufactured fuses, and other material.

In the U.S. Southern Command, we make a practice of tracing all reported weapons' serial numbers from whatever source, as long as we are certain that the serial numbers are accurate.

In this case, concerning the 44 U.S.-manufactured AR-15s, 33 have been traced, using the computers of the United States Army: 85 percent, or 28 of those weapons, were manufactured in the 1960s and shipped from the United States to Southeast Asia.

For the remaining 15 percent, or 5--there are no records for the serial numbers listed. None of those weapons were shipped to El Salvador. We still have 11 that we're concluding tracing action on.

Let me enlarge on this picture. The U.S. country team in El Salvador and Southern Command have traced the serial numbers on AR-15s and M-16s which the Salvadorans have captured from the guerrillas in recent months. We have also traced serial numbers of such U.S.-made weapons from lists or records in documents captured from the guerrillas in recent operations.

In this sample, 73 percent of the 214 weapons, as of July 21, were manufactured in the 1960s and shipped by the United States to Southeast Asia; 19 percent, some 40 weapons, were shipped to El Salvador.

Of 239 weapons, for which we could find serial numbers listed in guerrilla records, 57 percent were traceable to Vietnam, and only 5 percent traceable to shipments to the Salvadoran armed forces.

This evidence suggests to me that the guerrillas are not primarily armed with American weapons captured from the Salvadoran army, but with American weapons supplied by Vietnam through some transshippers--Cuba and Nicaragua.

Some of you have heard the ERP Commander, Alejandro Montenegro, who was captured in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in 1982. He stated, and has stated repeatedly, that the majority of guerrilla M-16s came from Vietnam to Cuba, Cuba to Managua, Managua to El Salvador.

Also of interest in this look at weapons are Chinese-made--I refer there to the People's Republic of China--type 56 rocket launchers which were manufactured in the late 1950s [see figure 21].



Figure 21

These are familiar to American servicemen who served in Vietnam, where they saw them in profusion, as an RPG-2. It is a Chinese-made Soviet-style rocket-propelled grenade launcher.

Of particular interest, however, to this discussion are the serial numbers which are contained on the pistol grip here. We found, in recent months, two significant bodies of such weapons, one in El Salvador and a second in Grenada.

In the Cuban Embassy and in a warehouse on Grenada, a number of those weapons were captured, and a list of those serial numbers was prepared. We recently discovered that comparable weapons found in El Salvador, captured from guerrillas, removed from the battlefield or taken from caches, fit the same serial number sequence and fit very closely [see figure 22].

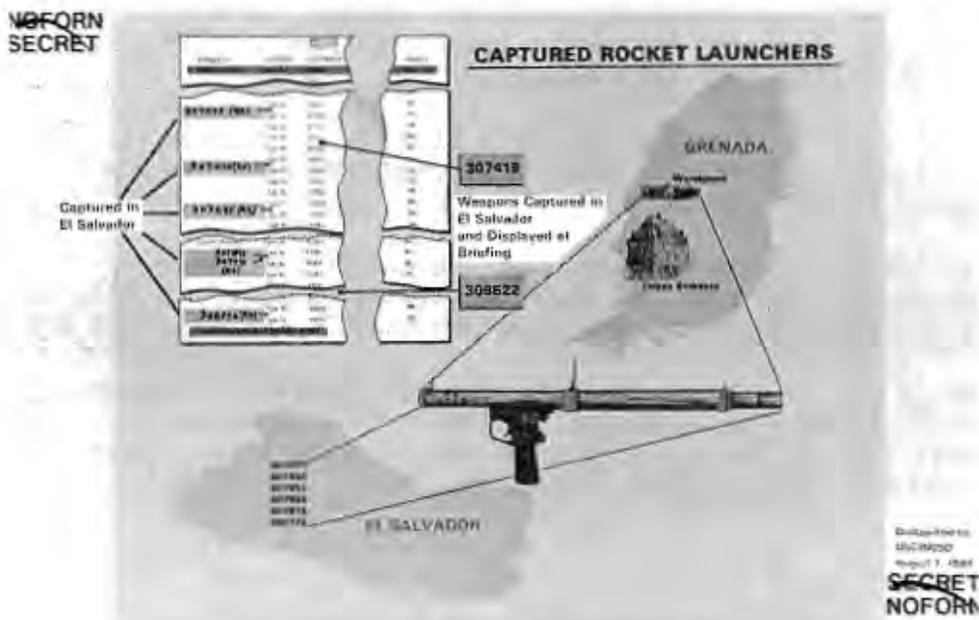
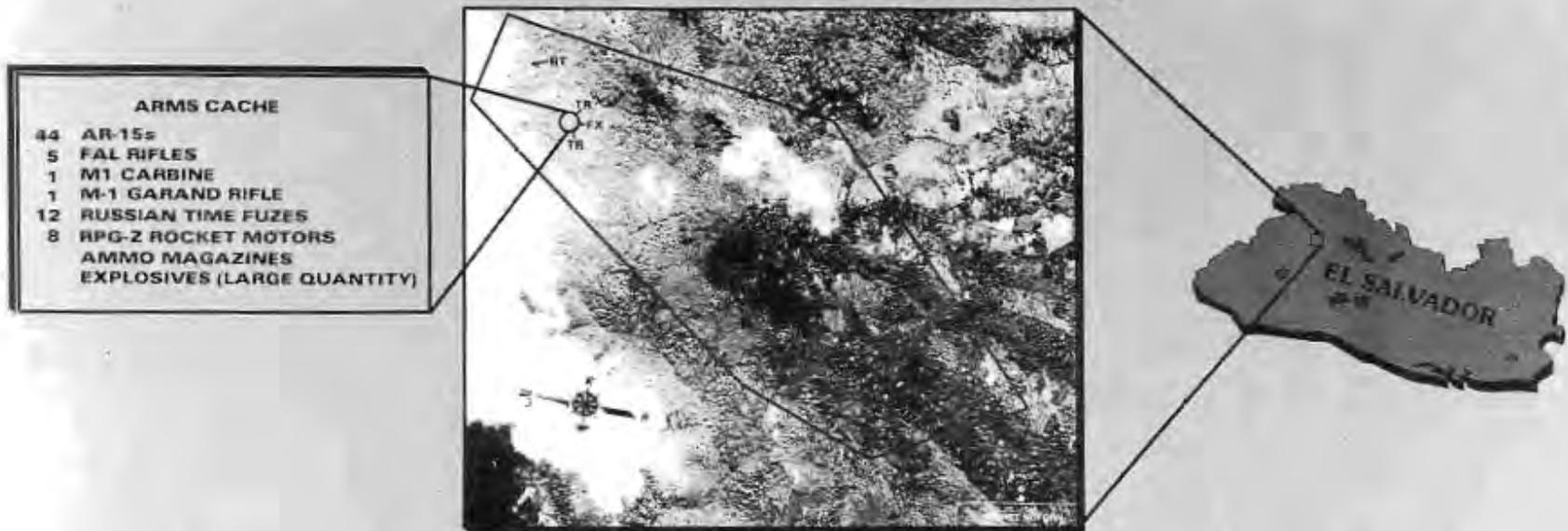


Figure 22

~~NOFORN~~
~~SECRET~~

TIGRE BN OPERATIONS (27 JULY 84)



ACTION AT GUERRILLA EL NARANJAL BASE CAMP

Declassified by:
USCINCSO
August 7, 1984

~~NOFORN~~
~~SECRET~~

Figure 20

[At this point General Gorman indicated the fit of serial numbers for RPG-2 grenade launchers captured in El Salvador within the sequence of grenade launchers captured in Grenada as illustrated in figure 22.] It is difficult to imagine how that coincidence could have occurred had not these weapons reached El Salvador via the same sequence cited by Montenegro; that is to say, Vietnam to Cuba, Cuba to Managua, Managua to El Salvador.

I now want to shift your attention to yet another guerrilla stronghold in San Vicente department of El Salvador, again along the Rio Lempa north of the Isla Montecristo, to which we made earlier reference.

In recent weeks there have been a series of battles in San Vicente. In those battles where intelligence was available to the Salvadorans, they performed superbly. Without intelligence, they were unable to avoid ambushes, and they took casualties.

In support of Operation Guazapa 13 and in action in the Cerros de San Pedro, the 5th Brigade's Jiboa Battalion was operating north of San Vicente City.

On July 26, the Jiboa was ambushed by a large guerrilla force. In response to the ambush, the 5th Brigade's Canas Battalion moved out of San Vicente to reinforce Jiboa. It, too, was ambushed. Both units suffered casualties. These units lacked tactical intelligence on guerrilla movements, which contributed greatly to the ambushes.

It is significant, however, and consistent with the pattern of professional improvement, to which I made earlier mention, that the commanders concerned in those setbacks have already been relieved by the Ministry of Defense.

In contrast to these tactical mishaps, between July 27 and 29, Salvadoran airborne infantry and special operations units launched an operation in the vicinity of San Bartolo Icharmico that was advantaged by tactical intelligence, and which inflicted severe losses on the guerrillas.

Again, utilizing a deserter who was prepared to lead these troops past the outguards, special operations units set up ambushes along the known guerrilla-used escape route from a major headquarters in that area.

Other army units and the Salvadoran Air Force then assaulted the guerrilla headquarters from different directions, the guerrillas fled the assault, and, as suspected, moved into the prepared ambush.

With this ambush and subsequent fighting the next day to include guerrilla counter-attacks and counter-ambushes, guerrilla losses were heavy. Salvadoran armed forces losses were light.

Among the items seized were a significant quantity of guerrilla headquarters records and documents, including maps, administration papers, and currency.

Two documents from this batch are particularly instructive. The first lays out a plan by the guerrillas for sustained propaganda for the rest of 1984 against "interventionist escalation by Yankee imperialism" with Presidents Reagan and Duarte particular targets of the propaganda campaign.

The second document is a military plan which indicates that whatever the guerrillas of the FPL faction may say for propaganda purposes about where their support comes from, in their own councils they regard the socialist countries of Nicaragua, Cuba, and the USSR as their "strategic rear guard essential for the logistical flow and financial resources."

These documents, which have just been transmitted to Washington, we are going to make available to you in the press office immediately following this meeting in both a copy of the original and an English translation. I regret that the full text of the military plan is not in hand. It is a long document. We are working on that, and it will be published as soon as we get it up here to Washington. I picked from it what I consider to be the significant portions. [See translation of section of military plan, Annex A.]

In my judgment, President Duarte of El Salvador is exactly right when he castigates Nicaragua for its role in fostering political violence in El Salvador. The guerrilla front is ludicrous in insisting that it gets no ordnance from abroad. External support for the guerrillas continues to be a mainstay of the guerrillas.

Conversely, the democratic government of President Duarte, inaugurated in June of this year, cannot long endure without U.S. assistance. A guerrilla offensive is imminent. The insurgents are determined to damage Duarte's prospects by any means at their disposal, and they possess the means for much bloodshed and destruction.

The measure, which is now before Congress, the Central America Democracy, Peace and Development Initiative, based on the recommendations of the National Bipartisan Commission, was carefully formulated, in my view, to provide the minimum amount of U.S. economic and security assistance needed to assure security for the Salvadorans against guerrilla depredations.

As you know, the Kissinger Commission argued for decisively large amounts of aid for El Salvador. In February, Congress was presented with a two-year request for security assistance. Of this amount, only about one-third has thus far been made available, and in dribs and drabs, making systematic planning difficult.

I am convinced that the entire amounts will be needed, and some help should be sent before the summer is out.

First, to meet the impending guerrilla attacks;

Second, to continue the momentum of improvement in the Salvadoran armed forces;

Third, to provide that confidence and continuity of U.S. support which breeds tactical boldness and facilitates coherent tactical and strategic planning; and

Fourth, to convince the guerrillas and their supporters to accept meaningful negotiations rather than prolonged struggle.

Thank you for your attention.

AMBASSADOR PICKERING: The floor is open for questions.

Q: General Gorman, could I just ask two questions, one right after another? When you detail this flow of arms, could you be a little more specific? You say a guerrilla offensive is imminent. Has the flow of arms increased substantially? Has it abated? Could you give us some idea of what the flow of traffic is?

And, secondly, with this considerable surveillance that you appear to have, just how effective has the United States and the Salvadoran armed forces been in blocking the weapons flow? I mean, how much have we captured as compared to what we think gets in?

GENERAL GORMAN: The preoccupation of the Salvadoran armed forces over the last several months has been safeguarding the electoral process. That was certainly my primary mission.

What we have reported to you here was intelligence acquired during the process of providing that security. It was serendipitous to our primary purposes.

The Salvadoran armed forces, as have we, have been aware, of course, of this logistics flow for years. What is new about all of this is the specificity as to where it is occurring and the methodology that is being employed by the guerrillas in moving this materiel.

It is also highly significant that each of the events that I have cited in Jucuaran, in the Petacones, in the Guazapa area, and in the San Vicente area, involved defectors. That is to say, the Salvadorans were led to their quarry by members of the guerrilla forces themselves, and were assisted by intelligence provided by the people in the countryside. That was not happening until very recently, and I believe that it reflects the consensus that exists in El Salvador for the support of the Duarte government.

AMBASSADOR PICKERING: Paul, could I add one thing? One of the things you noticed, that at least a share, perhaps a very large share, is seaborne infiltration. The inability of the Salvadoran navy to deal with seaborne infiltration is a direct function of the lack of assistance to that navy, a direct function, I would say, of the incapacity of us to persuade the Congress that this was, (a) a real problem, and (b) that the Salvadoran navy should be given the capability to deal with it.

That's the reason why at least one portion of this briefing was particularly important--to support the current request for FY 84 Security Assistance for El Salvador.

Q: Ambassador Pickering, you're not going to give percentages of what you think you may have captured as opposed to what's flown in? I mean, is

there any idea to say what you're talking about in terms of --

AMBASSADOR PICKERING: No. I would say this, if I may--recent estimates of 50 percent being captured are way off the mark. Those have been corrected in subsequent statements by the principal source for that information. We believe it is considerably less.

One real indication is that over 36,000 M-16s have been provided to El Salvadoran forces by the United States. Less than 2,000 have been lost by those forces, a figure of less than 7 percent. The guerrillas are estimated at between 9,000-11,000 people, so that would be at the wildest, I suppose, perhaps less than 20 percent of their armament--perhaps around 12 percent of their armament.

Q: General, you say at one point toward the end in your conclusion, if my notes are correct, that without U.S. assistance the Duarte government cannot long endure.

Do you mean to say there, sir, that if Congress refuses or cuts the amount of aid requested by the Administration, Congress would be to blame for this Duarte collapse?

GENERAL GORMAN: I would say that the Salvadorans cannot maintain their present military posture without continued U.S. assistance, and that the amounts and kinds of assistance that we have provided up to now will not carry them through the year if the expected offensive materializes.

Q: But are you predicting collapse without --

GENERAL GORMAN: Oh, no.

Q: -- continued U.S. aid?

GENERAL GORMAN: As many of you have observed, what happens when U.S. aid falters, or they suspect that U.S. aid is not going to be forthcoming, they hunker down. It is during such periods that the guerrillas resurge, and this hunkering down on the part of the Salvadoran armed forces and the resurgence of the guerrillas accounts for the seesaw nature of the war today.

Q: General Gorman, you said that in the San Bartolo ambushes, the big difference was made by the tactical intelligence that the Salvadoran army had in one case and didn't have in the other. Are you suggesting with this that the United States should provide tactical intelligence from airplanes to the Salvadoran army?

GENERAL GORMAN: In that event the tactical intelligence, to which I make reference, was human intelligence acquired by the Salvadorans themselves.

Q: Ambassador Pickering, specifically what support do you think should be provided the Salvadoran navy, as such, to interdict these supplies?

AMBASSADOR PICKERING: The proposals that we have put forward to the Congress make very clear that additional boats are required and additional

training is required, and some additional armament is required, in order to [use] the sort of intelligence that might become available -- prosecute contacts as a result of the sort of intelligence that might become available.

All of those things are required. The navy has had the bottom priority. That has necessarily reflected the scarcity of assistance to begin with, and some attitude of mind on the part of the Salvadorans. The attitude of mind, I think, has been shifted about, but additional assistance in that area is certainly a very important part of the package that the President proposed to the Congress last February and is urgently seeking now.

Q: General Gorman, I wonder if you could say anything more about this Bulgarian factory that is manufacturing NATO ammunition?

GENERAL GORMAN: NATO-standard ammunition.

Q: How long has that been functioning? Can you say anything more about it at all?

GENERAL GORMAN: No.

Q: General Gorman, this briefing that you just gave, is this the same briefing that you gave the members of Congress -- have given to them?

GENERAL GORMAN: As the Ambassador indicated, it is substantially the same.

Q: So, in other words, there is more that they got than this?

GENERAL GORMAN: As he indicated, yes. There is a good deal more that is available.

Q: General Gorman, as late as about a year ago there was a feeling in El Salvador that the El Salvadoran armed forces were not able to utilize a lot of this COMINT and ELINT kind of intelligence that the United States could furnish.

Has that changed?

GENERAL GORMAN: Yes, sir. Let me describe to you an event that occurred on the evening of August 4. A U.S. AC-130 aircraft on the Troncal Highway, just south of the Honduran border in Chalatenango, located a group of trucks -- my memory is six in number, 18-wheelers -- parked beside the road with 18 of these hot-spots alongside the trucks.

We had no explanation for that; simply reported it to the Embassy. After some consultation with the Estado Mayor [Military Headquarters] at night -- middle of the night -- they asked that the aircraft return to the scene and report further on the activity. When it got back, it could find none -- neither the trucks nor the hot-spots.

However, the Salvadorans had already issued orders to the Atlacatl Battalion, which was located some miles to the south, to move to that place.

They arrived about dawn. They discovered a group of banana trucks from Honduras parked in a tunnel.

The story of the truck drivers was that they had been proceeding down the highway about 6 o'clock that evening. They were stopped by a group of guerrillas. The trucks pulled over, the drivers were herded off to the side, robbed, and the guerrillas began removing bananas from the truck.

When the BIELD KIRK came overhead, most of the guerrillas piled in the trucks, apparently aware that they could be observed. So what the BIELD KIRK saw outside of the trucks were apparently the drivers and the guards that were left with them.

Immediately after the BIELD KIRK departed the scene, the guerrillas moved the trucks to a nearby tunnel in order to conceal them from overhead and proceeded to finish their unloading of the bananas.

The Atlacatl Battalion closed [reached the area] some six hours later, having moved north on foot.

What that illustrates is (a) this year we've got an Estado Mayor to talk to in the middle of the night. The Embassy is able to do business in passing such observations, (b) that the Estado Mayor does in fact exercise command and control countrywide, and (c) that they can react to such intelligence.

Q: But in the case of the July 10 incident which we saw a film on, was there any reaction by the Salvadoran forces?

GENERAL GORMAN: The Ambassador mentions the paucity of boats. They have three 100-footers. They can keep two of those at sea at any point in time. You're talking about 50 miles of coast.

They tried, but you can see from the speed of those vessels, the prospect of their making an intercept is very small, indeed.

In a number of incidents they have been able to go to a place where there was reported activity and ascertain what that activity was. In most such cases they ascertained that the activity was either friendly -- troops, etc., or innocent, i.e., fishermen.

We have yet, however, to intercept one of these crates. Salvadoran patrols have seen the crates in cayucas. They've even taken photographs, hand held photography, which turned out to be so blurry that we couldn't make anything out of it. We know that the stuff is coming. We have yet to get our hands on it, or they have yet to get their hands on it. They are as frustrated at it as are we.

But I think that the judgment of a year ago, which was sound, is no longer true. I think they are increasingly in a posture where they can and do react to real time intelligence.

Q: General Gorman, could you please flesh out your statement that a guerrilla offensive is imminent. What makes you so sure that it is imminent, and would this be a final offensive?

GENERAL GORMAN: All I can tell you concerning that is that it is the judgment of U.S. and Salvadoran intelligence analysts, based on all of the sources at our disposal, that the guerrillas plan to conduct an offensive, and they plan to conduct an offensive soon.

They have been talking about August. Our present judgment is that they would have difficulty in mounting a countrywide phenomena of the sort that we have seen them attempt in the past. But we have learned one thing in this war, and that is not to underestimate the resourcefulness of those people.

Q: I'd like to ask one very brief military question and one political question to the Ambassador. The military question is, simply, what would it cost, in your estimation, to essentially seal off the coast that's been used in the gulf and La Union, where you've been describing today, in terms of training and boats, and so on?

GENERAL GORMAN: The Salvadoran guerrillas and their external supporters have demonstrated remarkable facility in shifting their methodology to meet countermeasures. I could not begin to estimate in dollar terms what that would cost.

The proposals that we presently have before Congress, in my view, would permit the Government of El Salvador within two years to obtain effective control over 80-90 percent of its territory and people, effectively confining the guerrillas to marginal areas of the country.

That effective control, in my view, includes, importantly, blocking or attenuating most of the sort of activity that we were observing over the past two months, and I believe that the aid proposal before the Congress would put the Salvadorans in a position to do just that.

Q: I'd just like to follow with a political question. President Duarte, since he has become President, has kind of put aside for now the question of a dialogue, saying that security conditions are not adequate for the left to participate in municipal elections.

Senior officials here, prior to the elections, said that that was a policy goal for their integration into the 1985 municipal elections.

Has there been, in a sense, a policy change by President Duarte, and what's the view of the U.S.?

AMBASSADOR PICKERING: No. I would say not. I think that President Duarte has a series of priorities as he moves ahead in establishing his newly elected government, which has been in office just a little over two months.

He has told us that he maintains very high priority on opening up this issue of a dialogue. That he would like, however, to improve the security situation of the country. He has moved to do that. As you know, at least a number of key events have taken place, not the least of which is the disbanding

of the Treasury Police intelligence unit of over 100 men.

Those sorts of steps, he believes, must be taken, not only to guarantee effective security for all of his people, but also to begin to respond to the argument advanced by the guerrillas frequently for their nonparticipation in the electoral process, that they cannot be guaranteed sufficient security to deal with that issue.

I believe this is a live question. I believe President Duarte in due course will make his views known about how and in what way he wishes to proceed, but at the moment he is in this consolidation phase, and it's very important, in our view, that he have the time and the breathing space and the necessary support during this consolidation phase to move on to other things in the future.

Q: Do you think there will be efforts, however, prior to the 1985 elections for the dialogue to open or re-open?

AMBASSADOR PICKERING: I can't predict that, but my impression is that the Salvadorans are sensitive to the notion that, in order to have people come in and talk about participating in elections, you have to have an election in the offing, and I think that's a very important part of the process.

The next Salvadoran election is scheduled for the spring of 1985 and is to be related specifically to electing members of their National Assembly, their congress, and mayors of cities, considered by many a very appropriate time to try to persuade people who have been on the outside to participate in the process, because there are real opportunities in that kind of process, as opposed to a presidential election, in having candidates win.

Q: Could we ask General Gorman a couple of questions, please?

AMBASSADOR PICKERING: Sure.

Q: General, could you tell us whether you think there should be an involvement of U.S. troops in El Salvador --

GENERAL GORMAN: No.

Q: -- to seal off that situation?

GENERAL GORMAN: No.

Q: What, sir?

GENERAL GORMAN: I said no.

Q: And could you tell us, sir, since you talk about "the stuff is coming" and "external supporters regularly," could you tick off those foreign countries, as you see it on the spot, that are in fact involved in supporting the guerrillas? Could you give us a list of those countries?

GENERAL GORMAN: Well, I think the remarks that I made here earlier specifically identify Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Soviet-bloc nations -- Bulgaria, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam -- and, I presume, virtually any of the countries that have been involved in providing armaments to the Nicaraguans, including Libya and other radical Arab countries.

Q: Sir, your briefing has revealed that the guerrillas have considerably sophisticated strategic and other military skills. Where have they learned these skills? Campesinos and others do not have these skills. Are they being trained in other countries such as Cuba or Nicaragua, or are they being trained by members of the military from these other countries?

GENERAL GORMAN: Yes, ma'am. Just within the past several days there were captured in Honduras members of yet another group that had been infiltrated into that country from Nicaragua.

One of these men defected to the Honduran authorities, and he led the Honduran authorities to two others, and to weapons that they had buried, upon arrival there. I cite this for two reasons: First, they left Honduras some time ago, were taken to Nicaragua, and then moved to Cuba, where they have undergone training in preparation for reinsertion into Honduras.

This training has been extensive. In some instances, these men were trained as long as two years by the Cubans. They carried back into country two U.S.-manufactured rifles each.

I have a weapons serial number trace on only one of those weapons at the moment, but it was manufactured in the 1960s and shipped to Vietnam, like most of the other weapons that I see.

[Second,] when I appeared before the National Bipartisan Commission last fall, I placed in their hands a map. It was the map used by the guerrilla commander for the attack on the bridge at the Quebrada Seca, which some of you will recall was the place where the entire detachment guarding the bridge was massacred outright by the guerrilla assault force.

That map was laid out in a symbology that was a direct lift from a Soviet general staff college, and I showed the Commission the field manuals that are used in such Soviet education. The man who put together that plan was no simple campesino. He was a man who had received military training -- an excellent military training -- from professionals. That was a plan that would have gotten an A at Fort Leavenworth [site of U.S. Army Command and General Staff College].

AMBASSADOR PICKERING: Let me take one more question

Q: Your recent suggestion that the self-imposed limit on the Military Group be raised to 125, that wouldn't require any appropriation action by Congress, would it, and is it going to go through?

GENERAL GORMAN: Each and every U.S. individual that is in there under the so-called "55-man limit" is chargeable to the Salvadoran Government. They have to pay for that out of their security assistance, and they pay handsomely, sir.

- END OF BRIEFING -

ANNEX A

TRANSLATION OF SECTION OF CAPTURED FMLN MILITARY PLAN

A. Function of the Rear Guard

The function of the Rear Guard is a strategic issue for the development and advance of the war. The Rear Guard consists of:

1. Strategic: Interior and Exterior
2. Tactical: Immediate

B. The problem of the Rear Guard must be seen from the perspective of the FMLN. Due to this we plan for the FMLN:

1. Strategic Rear Guard: Socialist countries (Nicaragua, Cuba, and USSR).
2. Internal strategic Rear Guard: To the east because of its geographic position close to the strategic rear guard and the possibility of joining it.
3. Fundamental Rear Guard: The northern strip of the country that offers geographical and political conditions for it.
4. (Immediate) Tactical Rear Guard; Developed on each front where the conditions are created to develop the different theaters of operation.

C. For the FPL - FAPL:

1. Chalate becomes our fundamental rear guard, controlled by the FMLN.
2. The CP and CG must give continuous attention to the problem of the build-up and development of the rear guard.

D. Development Plan for the Rear Guard:

1. Geographic location.
2. Development of political, military, and recruitment operations.
3. Creation, development, and consolidation of the rear guard routes:
 - Toward the strategic rear guard in the exterior.
 - Toward the front in different directions of attack and theaters of operation.