

[REDACTED]

El Salvador: Controlling Rightwing Terrorism

Introduction

Politically motivated civilian killings in El Salvador fell sharply in 1964 as the government took action on a variety of fronts to rein in death squads. That reduction, in conjunction with significant political and military developments, has aided democracy and the promise of an eventual resolution of the civil war. Recent death threats against President Duarte and other government officials over the issue of dialogue with the insurgent left, however, have underscored the truculence of powerful rightwing terrorist groups that in the past acted with virtual impunity. Some recent events, such as rumors of impeachment maneuvers against Duarte in the Assembly and coup plotting within the military, suggest that the President may be approaching the limits of his ability to constrain extremist violence. Moreover, the press of political, military, and socioeconomic issues may make Duarte's task more difficult over the coming year.

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This assessment is a descriptive and analytic overview of the structure and goals of the Salvadoran extreme right and its terrorist capabilities. It reviews those factors that have contributed to a reduction in rightist terrorism, examines prospects for resurgent violence, and outlines the implications for US policy.

Legacy of Violence

Violence is part of the cultural history of El Salvador, just as it is in neighboring countries. Salvadorans are at once intensely nationalistic and community oriented, while also being fierce champions of personal gain. Highly ingrained in the national psyche are the interlocking values of ownership of property, loyalty to family and friends, and pride of the individual. The historical record shows that retribution can be swift against those who challenge such principles, and the practice of violent vendetta traditionally has been common among all socioeconomic classes and along

the entire political spectrum. Even during the comparatively peaceful and prosperous years of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the relative level of common domestic violence—resulting from property feuds, spontaneous duels, and crimes of passion—was among the highest in the world, according to international statistical references. By the mid-1970s, homicide was the third leading cause of death in the country.

[REDACTED]

Political violence, similarly, has occurred for generations. We believe that, before the Marxist insurgency in 1979, such violence largely reflected the various military regimes' efforts to neutralize what were perceived to be subversive elements. During the past five years of insurgent war and transition toward democracy, the public record shows that thousands of noncombatants have disappeared or have been killed by unidentified persons and vaguely identified groups. President Duarte has publicly placed the death toll at over 40,000 and has primarily blamed rightwing death squads. We agree that a large but unknowable percentage of the political violence in recent years has been carried out by rightwing civilian and military extremists.

[REDACTED]

Statistics on civilian political deaths indicate that there have been just over 10,000 killings confirmed by civil authorities and the local media since January 1981. Many thousands more were killed during 1980, before records were systematically maintained. Unsubstantiated totals

[REDACTED]

often range from 40,000 to as high as 60,000. Investigations, part of this discrepancy is due to leftist-oriented church and human rights groups that have counted guerrilla band casualties as civilian political killings attributable to the right wing. The insurgent left has contributed significantly to the total by carrying out over the past five years several thousand *justificados* (justified executions). Guerrilla targets have included government personnel, supporters, and their families, as reflected in [REDACTED] and public admissions made by rebel spokesmen.

Evolution of the Extreme Right

Rightwing political violence had its genesis in El Salvador's late-19th-century conversion from mercantilism to capitalism. At that time the government confiscated peasant farmers' subsistence holdings and turned them over to large coffee growers in order to develop an agricultural export system. A semifeudal, social-Darwinian system soon evolved around landless wage-earning laborers, a tiny managerial aristocracy, and a constabulary army to maintain order.

By December 1931, however, the world depression had gutted the economy, and a newly elected civilian government was threatened by growing unrest. The Army staged a coup and established a military dictatorship. A month later, impoverished Indian laborers seeking return of their lands launched a small uprising in the western provinces. According to a variety of academic sources, the rebellion was fomented in part by Communist Party militants who were attempting to integrate rural workers with the fledgling socialist trade union movement in the capital. Fearing a widespread conspiracy, the Army and the civilian elites reacted by massacring as many as 30,000 peasants in a few weeks.

The resulting endemic national paranoia over the Communist threat reinforced authoritarian rule by the armed forces and its affluent civilian backers for the next half century. The chain of military regimes provided order and stability, and largely gave the plantation owners and monopolist businessmen a free hand over the economy. Combining with favorable international economic trends and foreign aid, this system of rule resulted in substantial material progress for the upper and middle classes, and development of a strong physical and institutional economic base. Given these historical roots, order and stability

also became closely identified with institutionalized violence against dissident leftist elements, as well as intimidation of the rural peasant and urban labor classes.

Control over society was handled by the military government and civilian elites largely through paramilitary constabulary forces, regular Army units, and numerous official and private vigilante organizations. The historical record shows that, given the inherent weaknesses of the formal judicial process, these security bodies would often function at the local level as judge, jury, and executioner of individuals perceived to be criminals or subversives.

The Sandinista victory in Nicaragua in July 1979 shocked Salvadoran military leaders and provided the catalyst for a reformist coup in October, as

Convinced that dramatic political, social, and economic changes were needed to deter a popular insurrection among the urban and rural poor during a period of economic downturn and leftist unrest, the new armed forces leadership formed a civil-military junta with the moderate Christian Democrats that was committed to democratic elections and socio-economic reforms.

perhaps 20 percent of the entire officer corps was subsequently purged, which, in part, had the effect of neutralizing many corrupt senior officers and their subordinates who had long ago been co-opted by rightist civilian elites. With the Army backing reform, the political and economic power of the oligarchy was quickly reduced, with many of its key members liquidating assets and opting for self-imposed exile in Guatemala and the United States.

Structure and Operations of the Extreme Right

In our view, the violent attitudes and actions of the extreme right represent much more than just the conservative political spectrum. We believe that the extreme right is distinguishable from the mainstream right wing by two basic characteristics:

- Absolute intolerance of any element that has contributed to change in the pre-1979 status quo.
- Willingness to confront that change with active subversion of the constitutional system and with violent terrorism.

In our view, the extreme right does not predominate in any one social, economic, or political sector. Rather, it is a fanatic fringe drawn from all elements of society.

Indeed, despite a relative neutralization of the old order by the 1979 coup, we judge that El Salvador remains a decidedly conservative society, with rightist political tendencies running deep in the military, the private sector, and the general public. This was illustrated in the 6 May 1984 presidential election, which gave only a narrow margin of victory to Napoleon Duarte. Nearly half of the vote—in the largest and most honest election in the nation's history—went to the extreme rightist candidate, Roberto D'Aubuisson. Despite repeated public allegations of his terrorist links, D'Aubuisson won 10 of 14 departments and a majority of the rural vote over the progressive Duarte. This suggests that many Salvadorans perceived D'Aubuisson as representing a no-nonsense conservatism that would lead itself to reestablishing law and order and eradicating the insurgency.

Furthermore, in the absence of an effective criminal justice system and, until recently, an Army capable of containing the insurgency, the extreme right has been fighting what it considers a legitimate clandestine war against the left. Rightwing extremists have viewed government reformers as national emergency threats equal to those posed by the guerrilla movement. Hence, rightwing violence—as reflected in overall levels of civilian political deaths—has generally increased as insurgent operations have escalated, when the battlefield performance of the armed forces has diminished, or when political and economic issues have been intensely debated in the Legislative Assembly.

The Public View of Rightwing Terrorism

The phenomenon of rightist violence, while publicly denounced by the leaders of virtually all sectors of Salvadoran society, evokes mixed feelings among average citizens in private discussion. While some talk about "death squads" only in hushed tones, others express detachment and even gallows humor over the disappearance or assassination of individuals. Occasionally, some will claim to have close friends on the right who allegedly engage in violence or who have personal knowledge of specific terrorist activities. Conversely, others choose to believe that rightwing terrorist groups do not exist.

These contrasting attitudes are evident throughout society and reflect a great ambivalence about the national role played by rightwing terrorists. Many Salvadorans, of all economic classes, believe that, however repugnant the methods used by rightist vigilantes, their impact on Marxist subversion has been largely positive. Such people applaud government efforts to professionalize the armed forces and crack down on official corruption and abuses. At the same time, however, they denounce the US "obsession" with human rights and rationalize the need to fight leftwing terrorism with "whatever means are necessary." Often cited in such arguments is the official treatment meted out during the 1970s to the Tupamaros in Uruguay, the Montoneros in Argentina, and the Miristas in Chile, as examples of extraordinary measures sometimes needed to save a society from chaos.

Against this backdrop, local criminals probably can continue to operate as mercenaries for hire to settle personal scores or fill the ranks of ad hoc death squads for fanatic rightists. Such an environment, moreover, will continue to make it difficult for San Salvador to investigate, prosecute, and convict local security force personnel who may still feel compelled to act on their own against suspected insurgents and their sympathizers.

The rightwing extremist minorities of the various social sectors often wield enough power to influence events in ways disproportionate to their numbers. Important members of large agricultural, industrial, and commercial organizations are well-known rightwing zealots. [redacted] indicate, for example, that a number of wealthy Salvadoran expatriates living in Miami have lent both overt and covert financial and organizational support to paramilitary groups associated with coffee exporter Orlando De-Sola and others. Money and personal connections in El Salvador permit such individuals to aid or even participate in illegal activities in that country with relative freedom from prosecution because of their ability to bribe and intimidate Salvadoran Government and military officials. Accountability for extremist activities is constrained further because most of the Salvadoran media are privately owned by archconservatives, whose editorial policies include fierce criticism of even moderate government programs and praise for the hardline positions of the far right. [redacted]

[redacted] that some civilians are "untouchable," moreover, because of the power they wield through control of death squads. [redacted]

D'Aubuisson and ARENA

The creation of rightwing political parties over the years also has served the interests of the extremist minority in El Salvador. The most powerful of these groupings is the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA). Founded in 1981 by Roberto D'Aubuisson—a former Army intelligence officer who was cashiered by the military following the 1979 coup—ARENA has evolved into the second-largest political party after the ruling Christian Democrats. [redacted] election results show that it commands enthusiastic support from a broad spectrum of society and, as a multifaceted organization with important contacts among foreign governments and groups, it has helped legitimize extremist calls for retrenchment on reforms and eradication of the insurgent left through more radical use of force. [redacted]

[redacted] behind ARENA's legitimate exterior lies a terrorist network led by D'Aubuisson henchmen and funded by wealthy Salvadoran expatriates residing in Guatemala and the United States. [redacted]



ARENA party leader Roberto D'Aubuisson campaigning with his then wife Yolanda Mungia for the 1982 Assembly elections. [redacted]

[redacted] strongly implicates D'Aubuisson loyalists in the 1981 murder of two US labor advisers. Public confessions by the two National Guard triggermen and reports by eyewitnesses have connected various civilian and military associates of D'Aubuisson to the crime. A pro-ARENA Supreme Court judge has been successful in using legal maneuvers and personal influence to free Army Capt. Eduardo Avila from prosecution for the crime. [redacted]

[redacted] that D'Aubuisson personally arranged for lower courts to drop charges against Lt. Isidro Lopez Sibrian, another junior officer implicated in the murders. [redacted]

In 1983, D'Aubuisson confided [redacted] plans by security force personnel to eliminate suspected leftists. He claimed that safeguarding human rights

[REDACTED]

was impossible in an insurgent war and advocated "extraofficial" operations to combat the enemy. Since that time, [REDACTED] have indicated that ARENA's terrorist components—directly managed by some of D'Aubuisson's closest advisers—remain intact and are preparing for future operations against the left, government officials, foreign journalists, and diplomatic personnel. [REDACTED]

ARENA's clandestine activities appear to be largely the responsibility of party security chief Dr. Hector Regalado. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that Regalado was recruiting [REDACTED] former policemen for work in death squads. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] said that Regalado had commissioned triggermen to eliminate key leaders of the Popular Democratic Unity (UPD), a large labor coalition that has joined the Christian Democratic government to administer agrarian reform programs. [REDACTED]

ARENA has cast its net wide in identifying the threat from the "left." Following President Duarte's election in May 1984, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] indicated that the party's security apparatus also was targeting members of the Christian Democratic Party for assassination. Former National Police personnel [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] were to be paid [REDACTED] for their participation in this special project. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that ARENA elements were establishing a base of operations [REDACTED] for the purpose of organizing armed resistance against the Duarte government. The group seeks to conduct terrorist operations against the Christian Democratic Party and the US Embassy in San Salvador. [REDACTED] that ARENA leaders and other extreme rightists have decided on this course because they fear that the Duarte administration might launch investigations against suspected terrorists and thus interrupt their domestic activities. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is preparing for possible assassination attempts against President Duarte and other Christian Democratic leaders. [REDACTED]

These and other operations are often planned and implemented by individuals working out of safehouses belonging to known rightist civilian or military officials. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] a wealthy ARENA party member and close personal friend of D'Aubuisson owns a home that is used as a base for terrorist operations and to store weapons and ammunition. The house [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is said [REDACTED] to be used by members of the Secret Anti-Communist Army (ESA), a rightwing terrorist group that [REDACTED] indicates has been ARENA's primary instrument for clandestine operations over the past three years. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the ESA has occupied a second house [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] where a large cache of dynamite, time fuses, and blasting caps also is hidden. [REDACTED]

Rural Vigilantes

Violence linked to ARENA is only one manifestation of rightwing terrorism in El Salvador. To eliminate challenges to its power, the extreme right traditionally has used civilian vigilante organizations, elements of the armed forces, and death squads led by ideologues and mercenaries. [REDACTED]

In the 1960s and 1970s, a surge of political activity among left-of-center opposition parties, peasants, urban workers, and student groups inspired the creation of several official and clandestine rightwing organizations, both ad hoc and permanent. The National Democratic Organization (ORDEN), for example, was a government-sponsored civic group formed in 1966 and comprising tens of thousands of conservative peasants, many of them former Army enlisted personnel who were part of the nation's inactive reserve force. [REDACTED] Until its official dissolution in 1979, ORDEN served both as an intelligence-gathering body and instrument of enforcement against real or suspected enemies of the regime. [REDACTED]

Although [REDACTED] suggests that such government-directed groups have been inactive for several years, vigilante violence—albeit declining [REDACTED]—has continued in the countryside. [REDACTED]

ORDEN's structure generally has remained intact, with many of its former members having joined the Territorial Service and Civil Defense Forces—Army-run militias that provide local security in outlying villages and tactical intelligence to the military. We believe these militias too often function without official authorization as peasant vigilantes. The abduction in late 1983 of nine agrarian reform workers from the town of San Pedro Masahuat in La Paz Department, and their subsequent torture and murder in the Zaragoza hamlet of La Libertad Department, was attributed [REDACTED] to local Civil Defense personnel. So, too, was the 1982 massacre of peasant farmers in the La Florida hamlet of Santa Ana Department and killings of Christian Democratic party members in the jurisdictions of El Paisnal and Aguilares in San Salvador Department. [REDACTED]

More recently in San Salvador Department, in the town of Nejapa, Civil Defense personnel have been engaging in abuses against peasant farmers affiliated with one of the larger democratic labor unions.

that Civil Defense personnel were being employed by their local commander as a "death squad." that the local commander was being assisted by elements within the regular armed forces and is responsible for the deaths of 11 people in the immediate area, including two children. Labor officials have delivered a protest note to the military high command in San Salvador.

In addition, the government's Human Rights Commission is investigating a case involving the murders of some 30 local peasants near the town of Armenia in Sonsonate Department. During 1981 and 1982, Civil Defense personnel from the Armenia jurisdiction abducted neighbors suspected of subversion and, after brutally killing them, threw their bodies into a deep well. Four vigilantes have been arrested in this case, and one has confessed to the crimes.

Rural vigilantism is augmented in the towns and cities by civilian mercenaries and fanatics allied with specific individuals or groups who routinely have waged their own vendettas against suspected subversives and political enemies. For example,

was hired by rightwing paramilitary organizer and ARENA loyalist Mario Radaelli as a "hit man" in unspecified operations. Rightist terrorist cells also use both active-duty and retired military personnel in their campaigns, in the security forces.

Armed Forces Death Squads

In addition to ARENA and rural vigilantes, the military has also been responsible for a share of rightwing violence in El Salvador. Despite the now relatively moderate character of the military high command, the armed forces' staff and field commands are largely controlled by a younger generation of ambitious officers who have proved themselves to be among the best trained and motivated in a talent-deficient officer corps.

Unfortunately for the Duarte administration, many of these officers are former academy classmates and military colleagues of D'Aubuisson who share his ultrarightist views. Although they generally have abided by the moderate doctrine of their superiors in San Salvador, several,

are alleged to have associations with rightwing terrorist organizations and, in some cases, to have been leaders of death squads within the Army and the security forces.

death squads in the armed forces operate out of both urban military headquarters and rural outposts. They are led by senior enlisted personnel and junior officers, and they may function with or without the knowledge of immediate superiors. In 1983, for example, at least 20 and perhaps as many as 75 members of an Indian agrarian reform cooperative in the Las Hojas hamlet of Sonsonate Department were abducted and later executed by regular troops of the 6th Detachment.

indicates that some military officers in Sonsonate were influenced by disgruntled landowners to take action against the Indians. Neither the leader of the operation, Capt. Salvador Figueroa Morales, nor his commanding officer, Lt. Col. Elmer Gonzalez Araujo, have been disciplined by their superiors. Indeed,

implicated both Gonzalez and Figueroa in a plot to assassinate Julio Ray Prendes, Minister of the Presidency and a top Christian Democratic leader.

The November murder of a Lutheran minister in San Miguel Department illustrates that some actions are committed by regular military personnel without supervision. Spokesmen for the armed forces have announced publicly that two Army enlisted men from the 3rd Brigade confessed to killing the minister on a whim, apparently assuming he had links to insurgents in the area.

Rightwing terrorists have been accustomed to operating with wide latitude, and it is almost certain that some Army and security force personnel continue to

Two young girls become victims of a Salvadoran rightwing death squad. Their alleged offenses and the name of the group that killed them are probably inscribed on the pieces of paper attached to their wire-bound thumbs.



cooperate with and participate in death squad activities.

has indicated that the National Guard, National Police, and Treasury Police have all harbored terrorist elements within their ranks. In addition to the 6th Detachment in Sonsonate, other regular military units implicated,

in abductions and death squad activities include components of the Army Signal Corps, the Air Force, and the 1st Brigade, all three located in San Salvador; the Cavalry Regiment in San Andres; the Artillery Brigade in San Juan Opico; the Engineers Center in Zacatecoluca; the former 4th Infantry Detachment in Usulután; and the 2nd Brigade in Santa Ana. That several of these are key units with strong political sway within the military institution underscores the difficulty facing the high command in its efforts to improve the human rights record of the armed forces.

Scope and Method of Operation

While we are certain of the broad sponsorship for rightwing terrorism by ARENA, rural vigilantes, and elements of the military, the precise scope and operations of terrorist groups is more difficult to assess. The methods used by the extreme right—such as interrogating or killing victims far from where they were abducted—suggest a nationwide capability within at least some of the clandestine organizations. Compartmentation, a rigid code of secrecy, and the shifting whims of extremist leaders make estimating the numbers of terrorist organizations and their members difficult. The geographic breadth and frequent simultaneity of rightist operations

—suggest to us that as many as a dozen hit squads may exist in El Salvador during any given

[REDACTED]

period of time. It is our judgment that most are nameless and largely ad hoc groups, keyed to specific missions in local areas. Some appear more permanently organized, however, and wider ranging. Perhaps the most notorious of these is the Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez Anti-Communist Brigade, named for the military dictator who carried out the 1932 peasant massacre. This group has operated for several years, frequently publicizing its abductions and executions of leftist student and labor leaders with notes attached to bodies, newspaper advertisements, and radiobroadcasts.

[REDACTED] indicates that such groups occasionally coordinate their activities with the security forces, and in some cases specific missions and personnel probably overlap different organizations. Perhaps the most outrageous instance of this occurred in November 1980, when masked gunmen abducted leftist political leaders during a news conference held in a Jesuit school near the US Embassy. Security for the affair was provided by a large number of uniformed National Police personnel, yet the abduction of six top leftists occurred in broad daylight without any interference from the authorities. The victims' mutilated bodies were found the following morning a few miles from the capital.

[REDACTED] has indicated apparent working relationships among such clandestine terrorist organizations as the Secret Anti-Communist Army (ESA), the National Salvation Movement (MS-28), and the Salvadoran Anti-Communist Commandos (CAS). Some [REDACTED] moreover, believe that the Martinez Brigade and the ESA have a common leadership whose ultimate loyalties are to D'Aubuisson and his financial backers in Miami.

Constraints on Rightwing Violence

Although the various rightwing terrorist groups remain active and appear organizationally intact, they are being utilized with far less frequency than in past years. Indeed, the level of rightist terrorism in 1984 was surprisingly low, given the stakes involved in the presidential elections, expectations of summer and fall

[REDACTED]

guerrilla offensives, and rule by the moderate Christian Democrats. New policies by the government and the military high command designed to present terrorists with a less hospitable climate have probably given pause to some extreme rightist elements.

Changes in the Military

Following [REDACTED] visit to El Salvador

[REDACTED] a number of [REDACTED] a new willingness among senior military officers to attempt to control rank-and-file extremists.

[REDACTED] indicated that the high command would accept some US demands—such as transferring certain unsavory officers out of the country—because the armed forces badly needed US aid. Several Army and security force officers have since been sent overseas to diplomatic posts.

[REDACTED] that Defense Minister Vidio warned by ARENA security advisers—assigned by D'Aubuisson to manage security at the Legislative Assembly—that if they remained in El Salvador they would be investigated for their involvement in terrorist activities. One of these advisers, Dr. Hector Regalado, later told [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that he resigned his public position as chief of security to avoid tarnishing ARENA's image during the spring election campaign.

These actions came in the wake of arrests by the National Police of three other D'Aubuisson security operatives on kidnaping charges. Moreover, [REDACTED], the National Police were responsible for anonymous telephone calls to civilians suspected of involvement with rightwing death squads. The callers threatened them with prosecution if they did not leave the country. The National Police at that time also arrested Army Capt. Eduardo Avila, implicated in the 1981 murder of two US labor advisers. Legal maneuvers by extreme rightist supporters, however, soon secured Avila's freedom, and all serious charges against him were dropped.

[REDACTED] the Defense Ministry believed there was growing willingness within the officer corps to investigate extremist elements.

The calling card of the Mano Blanca (white hand) rightwing death squad appears on the doors of a schoolhouse where assassinated members of a leftwing teacher's union were employed.



Notices were placed in the local media announcing a campaign by the armed forces against the "death squads," and calling for help from the public and the justice system in identification and prosecution of the squads' members. One such notice was signed by most of the armed forces' staff and field commanders. In addition, the Ministry set up an ad hoc military commission at the beginning of 1984 to investigate reports of criminal activities and human rights abuses within the armed forces.

Throughout 1984, moreover, the Defense Ministry—under orders from President Duarte—moved to exert greater control over the three security forces.

Political moderates were placed in charge of the National Police and Treasury Police, with the latter having undergone a major personnel reorganization that transferred or discharged some 110 officers and enlisted men from its notorious intelligence and investigations section. Colonel Lopez Nulla—staunchly critical of rightist violence—was appointed Vice Minister of Defense in charge of public security. This new position was created to better coordinate and control the activities of the two police organizations and the National Guard.

The present military leadership continues to recognize that US aid levels and the effective prosecution of the war rest in part on the Salvadoran armed forces' human rights performance.

As a result, such actions as the telephone warnings to civilians suspected of involvement with the death squads and a reiteration of strict guidelines for armed forces conduct are likely to continue. In our judgment, the close relationship between key military officers and extreme rightist civilian politicians—as indicated by

incipient coup plotting during the New Year holidays—provides an effective conduit for the military to constrain extreme rightist actions.

Revamping the Justice System

Despite their preoccupation with establishing the credibility of the political process while escalating the war effort, both the provisional coalition government of President Magana and the successor Duarte administration pushed through judicial measures aimed at controlling the terrorist element. Early in 1984, a

Rightwing Terrorist Organizations

Salvadoran Anti-Communist Command (CAS)
Created in late 1983. Largely engaged in propaganda. Publicly denounced Defense Ministry for imposing human rights doctrine on the security forces. [REDACTED] believes the group may only be front for other clandestine organizations. [REDACTED]

Death Squadron (EM)
May not be an organized group but rather a generic label used loosely by ad hoc hit squads probably operating out of military posts. Trademark since at least 1979 has been initials EM carved into bodies of victims. [REDACTED]

Secret Anti-Communist Army (ESA)
One of the most active groups in recent years. Believed by some [REDACTED] to have been formed in mid-1980 by elements that since have been integrated into ARENA's paramilitary structure. [REDACTED]

White Hand (MB)
Like the EM and other nameless groups, a probable ad hoc name for terrorists working out of the Army and security forces. Trademark traditionally was a handprint in white paint left on the property of victims or near their bodies. [REDACTED]

Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez Anti-Communist Brigade (MHM)
Responsible for many high-profile killings over the past five years. Victims often found clutching leaflets with the group's message on them. MHM has used newspapers, radio, and even television to make announcements of acts committed and operations planned. [REDACTED]

Salvation Movement of 28 March (MS-28)
Group first appeared on the scene in late 1983. Its propaganda and name—28 March 1980 was the last day of Phase I government expropriation of large plantations—suggest the group represents the interests of a tiny group of fanatic coffee barons, many of whom probably reside in Miami. [REDACTED]

Organization for Liberation From Communism (OLC)
A group that appeared on the scene at about the time of the October 1979 coup; its current status is unknown. May have been absorbed by one or another of the above groups, possibly the ESA, which some [REDACTED] believe comprises personnel from former terrorist organizations such as the White Warriors Union and the Salvadoran Anti-Communist Brigade. [REDACTED]

White Warriors Union (UGB)
Formed in May 1977 following the leftwing kidnaping and murder of Foreign Minister Mauricio Borbonovo. The group was led by Roberto D'Aubuisson and other National Guard officers. [REDACTED] and emphasized the assassination of Catholic priests perceived to be active supporters of the insurgent movement. The UGB appears to have been disbanded soon after the October 1979 coup and D'Aubuisson's release from active duty. [REDACTED]

special investigations unit was created with US financial and technical aid to help the government analyze terrorist activities and bring to justice perpetrators of rightwing violence. The much-publicized case against five National Guard enlisted men charged with torturing and killing four US churchwomen in late 1980 was finally resolved. All five were convicted in May by a civilian jury and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Although an initial coverup of the affair probably was orchestrated by midlevel National Guard officers, there has never been any credible evidence that the killings of the churchwomen were ordered by higher authority. [REDACTED]



Conservative women's group confronts visiting liberal US legislators in January 1983 with protest signs demanding that Salvadoran President Magana refuse to dialogue or negotiate with the rebels and calling Senator Dodd a "white rat."

Judicial proceedings against civilian and military personnel arrested for past terrorist acts also continue to progress, albeit unevenly. One setback in this effort was the Supreme Court's review of the case of Lt. Lopez Sibrian, which in November 1984 resulted in his acquittal of all charges stemming from the 1981 murders of two US labor advisers. As suggested by

however, US pressure recently helped Duarte in December to convince a reluctant military high command to have the lieutenant dropped from the list of active-duty officers. Moreover, Duarte's government in November warned local media owners of fines and other legal sanctions if they continued to publish or broadcast declarations from self-proclaimed rightwing terrorist organizations. After a two-month hiatus, however, extremist communiques and death threats are once again being published.

The administration is now struggling with the rightist-dominated Legislative Assembly to create a judicial commission to oversee broad reforms proposed by Duarte for the civil and criminal justice system.

a recent Assembly bill would cut off funding to this and other presidential commissions, probably forcing Duarte to veto this legislation. These obstacles could also affect plans by the President to activate a "criminological institute" to investigate specific rightwing terrorist acts.

that its first priorities would

include an investigation of the March 1980 assassination of Archbishop Romero, said by other to have been authored by D'Aubuisson and his backers.

Self-Imposed Constraints

In addition to changes in the military and judicial systems, last year's reduction in rightist violence is also attributable, in our opinion, to a variety of self-imposed constraints. Some extreme rightists probably concluded that, in the wake of the visit by Vice President Bush in 1983, at least a temporary stand-down in terrorist activities would be required to direct the attention of the US administration away from the issue of human rights. Almost certainly, in our view, the US Congressional focus on political violence in El Salvador and the need for continued US military and economic aid provided extreme rightists additional incentives to curtail terrorist operations.

The right wing probably also has been encouraged by the upturn in government fortunes on the battlefield since January 1984 and a commensurate loss in political support for the rebel alliance. The far right may believe that favorable trends in the military situation have temporarily reduced the need for civilian terrorist operations against insurgent elements.

The election campaign last year ironically also played a role in reducing rightwing terrorism. It is our judgment that many rightist leaders genuinely believed that D'Aubuisson and his ARENA party could win the 1984 presidential elections. Hence, there was an incentive for extremists not to undermine their leader's public appeal with high-profile terrorist violence. Following the electoral defeat of ARENA, moreover, the party became less cohesive,

Extremist elements, therefore, may have been preoccupied less with fomenting violence and more with sorting out their options in dealing with the new Duarte government and the scheduled Legislative Assembly and municipal elections in March 1985.

**Some Prominent Cases of Rightwing Terrorism,
1980-84**

Salvadoran Cases

- In December 1980, National Guardsmen killed eight members of a rural cooperative in San Vicente after they were denounced as subversives by the local Civil Defense. Disposition: The Guard commander who ordered the killings was transferred to another department. The military promised financial remuneration to families of the victims.
- In March 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated while performing Mass in a San Salvador chapel, presumably by right wing. Disposition: No government investigation or arrests.
- During 1981, atrocities occurred in two working-class neighborhoods of the capital. Some 40 suspected leftists were summarily executed by elements of the 1st Infantry Brigade and Treasury Police. Disposition: No investigations or arrests.
- During 1981-82, some 30 peasants from Sonsonate Department were abducted and killed by local Civil Defense forces and their bodies thrown into a well in the town of Armenia. Disposition: Government investigation recently begun; three suspects arrested.
- In November 1982, Army troops stationed in Usulután abducted at least 15 youths from nearby Santa Elena and murdered them. Disposition: No investigation or arrests.
- The same month, Army and Civil Defense personnel tortured and killed at least seven members of La Florida farm cooperative in Santa Ana Department. Disposition: No investigation or arrests.
- In February 1983, between 20 and 75 Indian farmworkers from Las Hajas jurisdiction of Sonsonate Department were abducted and killed by Army and Civil Defense troops commanded by Captain Figueroa Morales of the 6th Detachment. Disposition: Figueroa was transferred, and three Civil Defense suspects detained last May. No further information.
- In November 1983, Civil Defense forces tortured and murdered nine peasant men and women in Zaragoza hamlet in La Libertad Department. Army Lt. Col. Denis Moran—reputed death squad leader—ordered the killings. Disposition: No investigation and no arrests. Lieutenant Colonel Moran recently transferred to the Inter-American Defense School in Washington, D.C.
- In February 1984, seven Civil Defense members were on trial in Santa Ana for murders committed over a four-year period. Disposition: No information on the outcome.
- The April 1984 trial of notorious ex-Army Maj. Guillermo Roeder—arrested in 1982 for crimes ranging from embezzlement to murder—was considered a key test of the Salvadoran justice system. Disposition: Roeder was acquitted of all charges.
- In November 1984, a Salvadoran Lutheran minister was murdered by two Army personnel in San Miguel. Disposition: The perpetrators confessed and were remanded to civil authorities.

Cases of US Citizens

- The murder of four US churchwomen in December 1980 was resolved in May 1984, when five National Guardsmen were convicted by a civilian jury and sentenced to 30 years in jail.
- The case of John Sullivan—a freelance journalist abducted and killed by presumed rightists in December 1980—is unlikely to ever be fully investigated by the government. Investigations have yielded no solid leads.
- The case of two US labor advisers assassinated in January 1981 remains tenuous. Two National Guard triggermen confessed in 1982, but two officers who ordered the killings and wealthy civilian conspirators have escaped prosecution in civilian courts. One of the officers was released from active duty in December under orders from President Duarte.