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Directorate  
of Intelligence

Intelligence Memorandum  
Office of African and Latin American Analysis  
12 March 1993

## El Salvador: Consolidating the Peace [REDACTED]

### Summary

President Alfredo Cristiani has set an ambitious course to depolarize Salvadoran politics, reform and strengthen democratic institutions, and rebuild the economy. While he has made significant gains, he continues to face serious financial, administrative, and political constraints. The officer corps is uneasy of its ongoing purge and restructuring, Cristiani's party suffers internal tensions and ebbing popularity, and the struggle for power within the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) has complicated reconciliation efforts. Moreover, elements on the extreme right and left retain the ability to commit selective acts of violence that could undermine civil-military relations and fuel disarray within and among the mainstream political parties. In our judgment, diplomatic support and timely financial assistance from the United States and the rest of the international community will be key to consolidating the peace in El Salvador. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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### Cristiani's Achievements

Advancement of the peace process--including a virtually flawless cease-fire in 1992 and the demobilization of all FMLN guerrillas and nearly half of the armed forces--owes much to the critical role played by President Cristiani. He has averted many crises by negotiating directly with the FMLN, domestic interest groups, foreign governments, and the United Nations. His success rests in part on his ability to overlook minor setbacks and focus on major goals. [REDACTED]

Cristiani's economic policies have further enhanced prospects for peace. He has implemented much-needed structural reforms, such as privatization and tax schemes, and prudent monetary and fiscal adjustments. Moreover, [REDACTED] Cristiani has persuaded allies in the private sector to increase investment and expand the job market, which has helped improve relations between business elites and trade unions. Leftist leaders' public recognition of the government's efforts to resolve the country's economic problems also has helped persuade former FMLN rebels to join the Salvadoran mainstream. [REDACTED]

### Difficult Road Ahead

[REDACTED] despite his accomplishments, Cristiani will face considerable obstacles to completing the consolidation of the peace process before leaving office next year. A lack of financial, technical, and institutional resources continue to hamper the President's efforts to comply fully with his obligations under the peace accord. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Among the most critical issues is the distribution of land to former rebel and government combatants. [REDACTED]

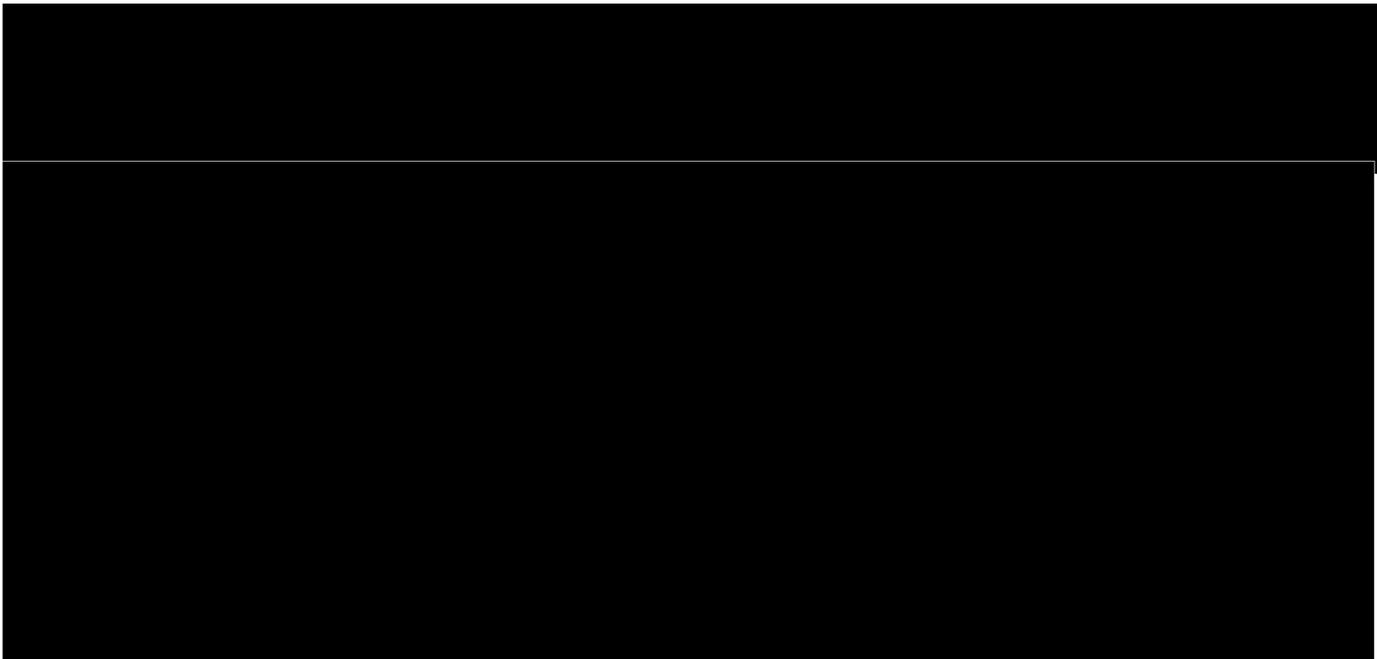
[REDACTED]

Another challenge is the establishment of a new 10,000-strong National Civilian Police (PNC), made up of both former government troops and rebels, as well as non-partisan volunteers.<sup>1</sup> Training and deployment of the PNC are behind schedule because of administrative problems and shortages of equipment, facilities, and financing--the bulk of which depends on promised US and other foreign aid, [REDACTED]

<sup>1</sup> The existing National Police was detached from the armed forces last year and is not scheduled for demobilization until mid-1994, when the new PNC is scheduled to assume its full security role. [REDACTED]

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### Taming the Military

Despite efforts by civilian rightists to generate resistance among officers to negotiations with the FMLN, the armed forces as an institution has cooperated with President Cristiani's pragmatic approach to peace--more out of political convenience, in our judgment, than a commitment to democratic civilian rule. Key motives for military cooperation--continued dependence on US aid, general sympathy with ARENA, and the impending retirement of many senior officers--have thus far muted resentment over recommendations made last fall by the UN-backed, Salvadoran civilian Ad Hoc Commission to purge some 103 officers for human rights abuses and other alleged infractions committed during the war. [REDACTED]

The lack of due process in the Commission's investigations and the ensuing drumbeat of charges against the military by leftist groups prompted a number of senior officers to file defamation suits against civilian critics and threaten a legal battle in the Supreme Court over the constitutionality of the Ad Hoc process. [REDACTED]

To help ensure a smooth transition, the President has promised new job training, lucrative civilian posts, and financial payoffs to a number of senior and mid-level officers slated for removal. Moreover, [REDACTED] Cristiani, seeking to avoid the humiliating publicity that would likely follow massive dismissals, has secretly placed many officers on inactive duty with full pay pending separation. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

A recent [REDACTED] assessment identifies additional areas of concern that Cristiani considers critical to the peace process:

*Strengthening civilian control over the armed forces and reducing its budget and force structure.* Cristiani has made major strides in asserting his constitutional authority over the military. The peace accord has liquidated the National Guard, Treasury Police, and National Intelligence Directorate--important extensions of military power--while budget cuts have spurred force reductions of nearly 50 percent a full year before the deadline mandated by the peace accord. The ongoing purge of the senior officer corps, moreover, marks an unprecedented challenge to the traditional autonomy of the armed forces. Nevertheless, Cristiani knows that the military retains final veto power on strategic issues. He could never have negotiated with the guerrillas had not the High Command participated in the peace talks and helped set the terms for cease-fire and demobilization. Indeed, the President's delay in completing the purge of top officers reflects the heavy debt of loyalty--and a traditional sense of civilian deference--that he feels the government owes the military. [REDACTED]

*Transforming the military's role from internal security to conventional defense.* Disbanding traditional security forces and reducing internal surveillance underscores the military's new focus on building a more streamlined conventional force for national defense. The military's role will include cooperation with other regional armed forces to avoid border difficulties and to maximize assets needed to counter external threats, such as arms smuggling and narcotics trafficking. Pressure on Cristiani to reengage troops in police-style security activities, however, is likely to continue. For example, influential coffee growers have called for military protection of the current harvest, while public pressure is building for deployment of Army units to assist under-manned police in stemming the nation's crime epidemic.<sup>2</sup> Although the High Command recently authorized limited training exercises by some Army units in high-crime sectors as a deterrent, press reports say troops will have no arrest or other law enforcement responsibilities.

[REDACTED]

*Modernizing doctrine and bolstering respect for human rights and civil liberties.* The military academy is upgrading coursework to include more hours of study on modern tactics to reinforce the external security role and on the critical need to protect the civil and human rights of all citizens. The Cristiani administration has proposed legislation aimed at creating a nationwide registration and lottery system for recruitment of draftees; this should complement government peace efforts to improve social justice by doing away with often violent impressment of peasant youths for military service. Changes in the system, however, are likely to be more cosmetic than substantive. Loopholes almost certainly will be created to shield middle-and upper-class

<sup>2</sup> Many military commanders are reluctant to patrol streets and highways for fear of provoking a backlash from human rights organizations, according to the defense attache. [REDACTED]

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youths from national service, and dragooning of recruits from poor neighborhoods probably will continue on a selective basis to fill occasional military quotas. [REDACTED]

*Reducing military impunity by improving professional training of officers and downgrading the influence of cliques.* Generations of officers were indoctrinated as members of a special social caste, contemptuous of civilians and licensed to pursue personal interest with impunity.

[REDACTED]

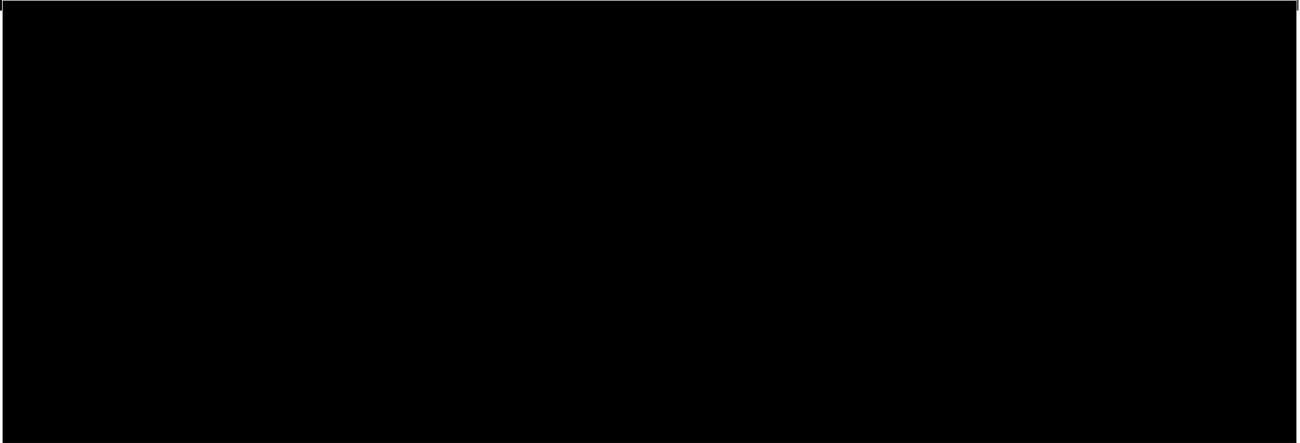
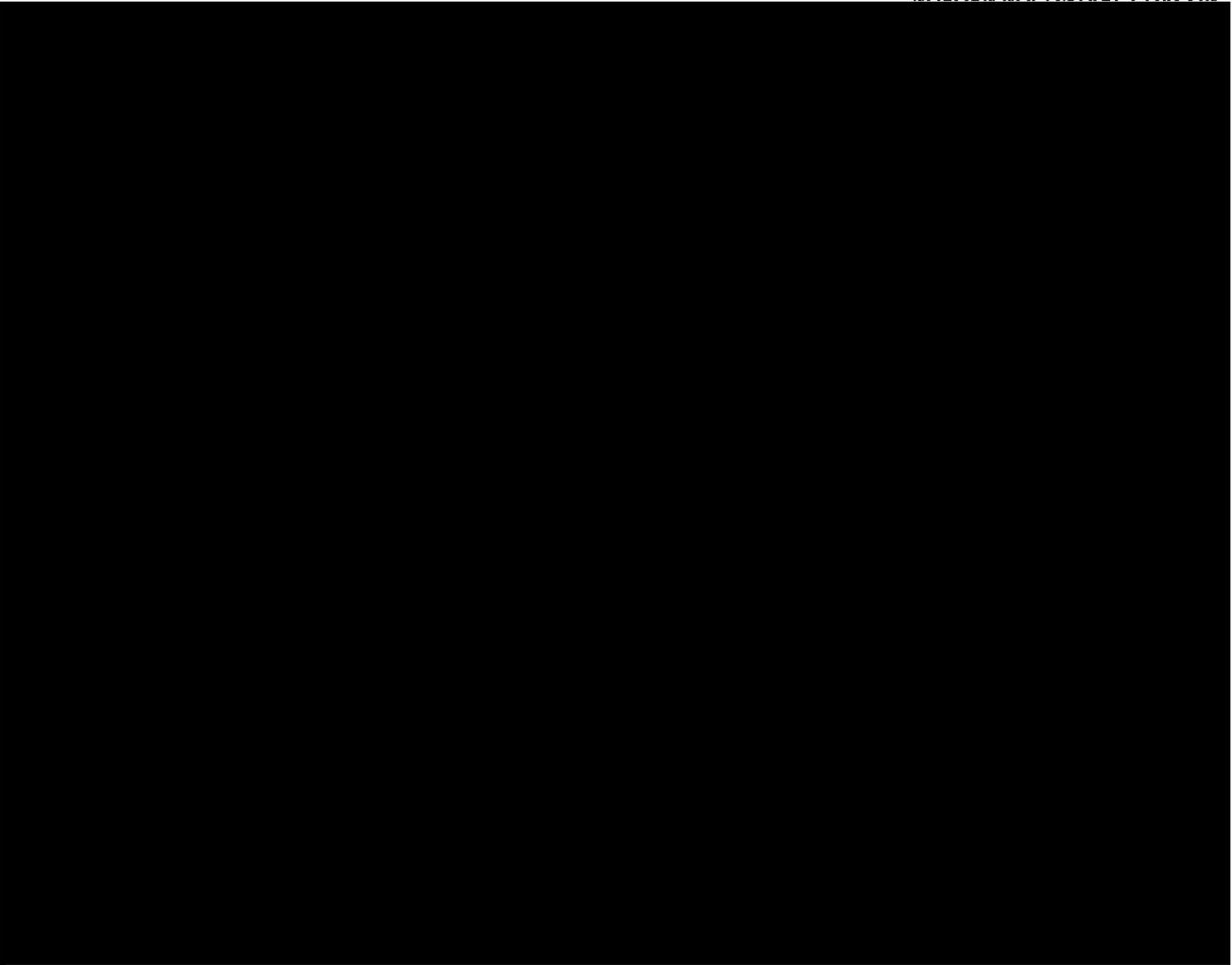
Serious political divisions have hampered FMLN efforts to launch a viable socialist political movement in El Salvador's conservative society. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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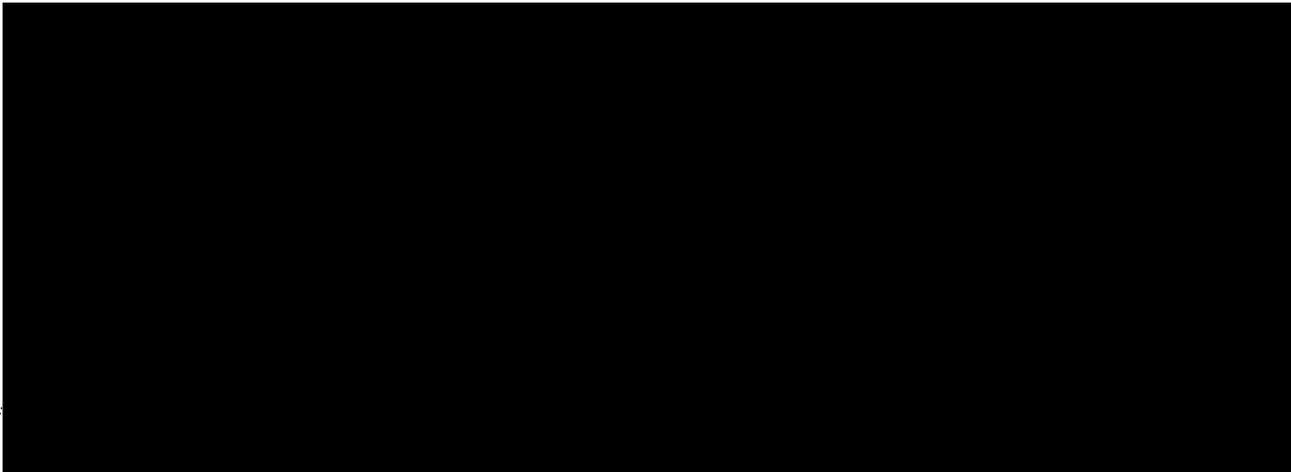
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The year-long run-up to elections in 1994 will be viewed by many observers, particularly outside El Salvador, as the culmination of the peace process. FMLN spokesmen and other leftist politicians appear optimistic that electoral reforms are on track and that the campaign will underscore the most inclusive democratic exercise in the country's history. We estimate-  
-that the elections next year will be carried off smoothly, fairly, and with results respected by the majority of candidates and constituents. 

The electoral campaign, however, while important both in symbolic and practical terms, will not fully define the consolidation of peace, in our opinion. El Salvador still must grapple with many of the same glaring national problems that precipitated the 12-year civil war. Effective and timely land distribution to ex-combatants, rapid progress on judicial reform, continued economic growth, and provision of new jobs and social services for the poor will be key to maintaining stability, advancing democratization, and ensuring a permanent peace. 

A variety of other issues could spell potential problems for consolidating peace over the next year. Violence by criminal elements could escalate dangerously if the new civilian police force cannot be trained, equipped, and deployed expeditiously. Any attempt by the government to use military troops to carry out constabulary functions will risk inciting a backlash from the left, especially if official negligence or abuses of authority by the Army come to light. Moreover, civil disturbances, caused by militant interest groups--labor, students, disgruntled veterans of the war, widows, mothers of the dead and missing, or, alternatively, right-wing zealots attempting to slow reforms or provoke the left--could spark the resurgence of vigilante and paramilitary groups. Such groups, staffed by experienced combatants with easy access to arms, would raise a severe challenge to police and military units charged with restoring order. In this scenario, Cristiani's efforts at national reconciliation and reconstruction could be seriously jeopardized if renewed turmoil threatened international good will, investment, and assistance. 

### **Implications and Opportunities for US Policy**

Cristiani is concerned that US attention to Central America, and to El Salvador in particular, may diminish at a time when he believes strong international support is needed to consolidate the peace process. Some Central American scholars, politicians, and media pundits already are

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complaining that events elsewhere in the world have diverted aid away from the region. Many Salvadorans argue that Washington has more to gain from supporting peace in Central America than it did from earlier wartime aid, and at a much reduced cost. Moreover, they say, Washington will have the advantage of dealing with actors across the political spectrum, thus helping to allay fears of partiality or collusion with individual interest groups. [REDACTED]

Cristiani has tried to counter domestic criticism that he has ceded too much oversight to the international community by increasing diplomatic efforts to generate more benefits to the country from the peace process. We believe San Salvador will seek ways to press Washington to extend work permits for US-based Salvadorans, whose annual remittances are estimated [REDACTED] at between \$500 million and \$700 million dollars. Additionally, the government probably will continue to push for expanding special preferences on nontraditional exports and extending deadlines on liberalized terms of trade under the Enterprise for the Americas and Caribbean Basin Initiatives. [REDACTED]

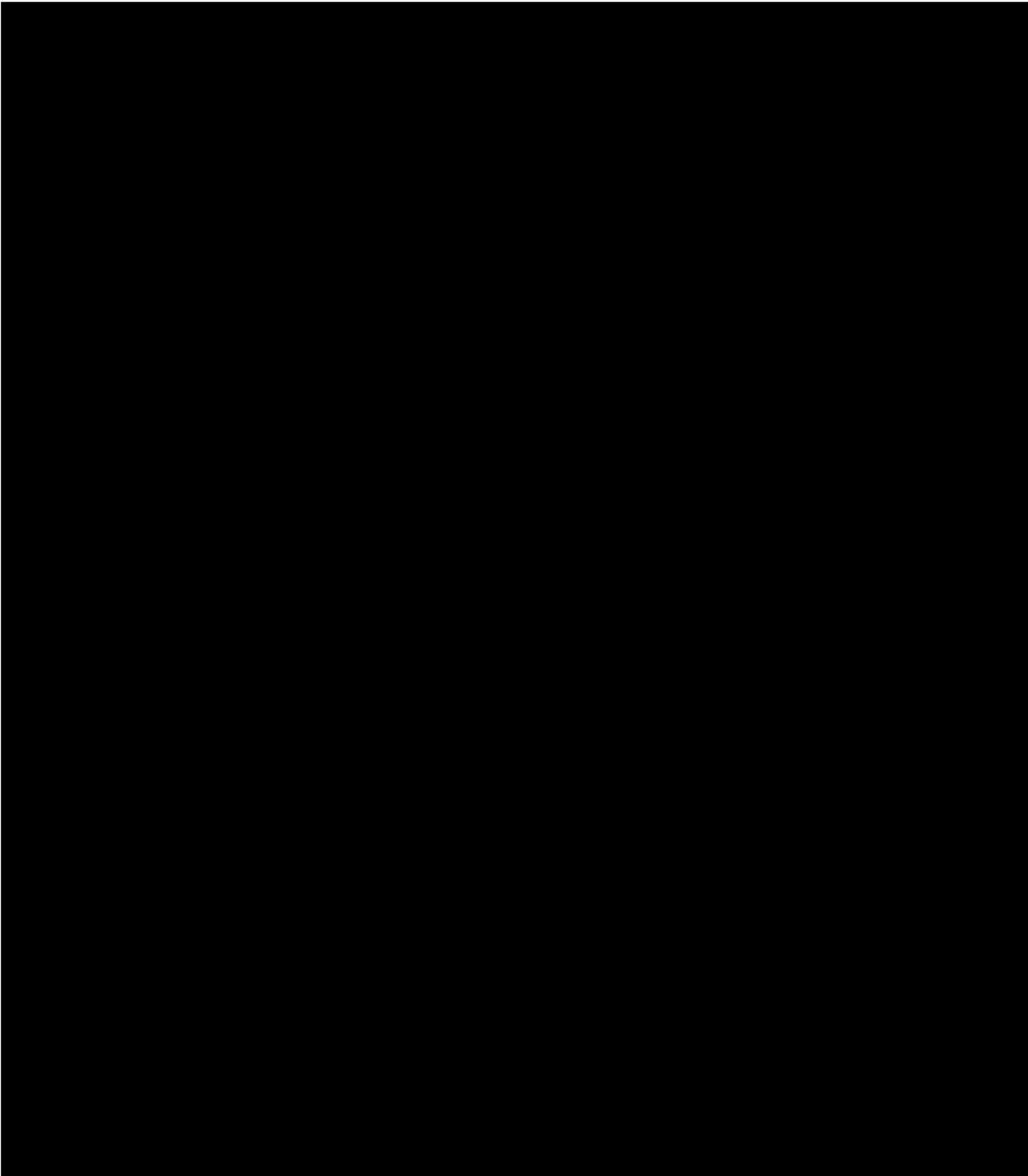
US influence in El Salvador is likely to remain substantial, because both the government and the former FMLN rebels recognize how important continued cooperation with Washington and the rest of the international community is to advancing the peace process. On the other hand, both sides will face domestic pressures to resist perceived infringements on national sovereignty. [REDACTED]

One way the United States and other actors could strengthen the peace process in El Salvador without being perceived as assuming too direct a role might be to encourage additional moves by Cristiani to seek greater integration with regional neighbors on political, economic, and security issues. In addition, the Cristiani administration would likely welcome Washington's help in attracting international funding and investment, perhaps from private consortia, to upgrade major infrastructure such as hydroelectric dams and telecommunications, which will be vital to boosting economic growth and the quality of life for average Salvadorans. Modest assistance in El Salvador for grassroots democracy—for example, "seed money" projects for municipal development, education, immunization, and support to small farmers—could become more cost effective as the peace process advances. [REDACTED]

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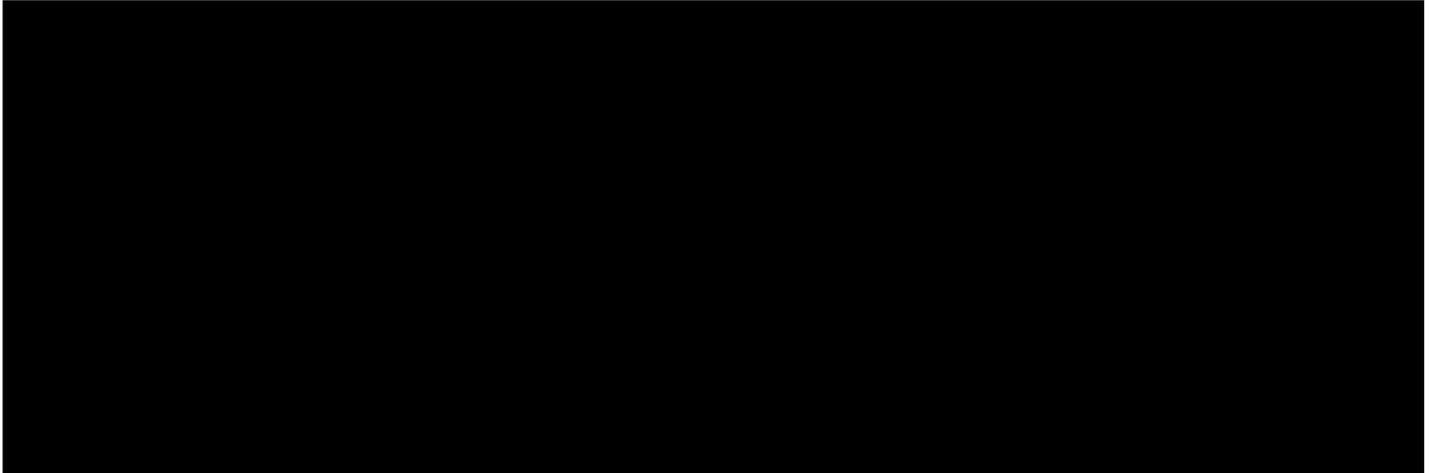
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