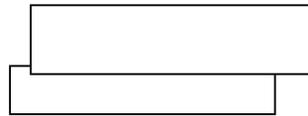




Director of
Central
Intelligence



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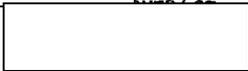
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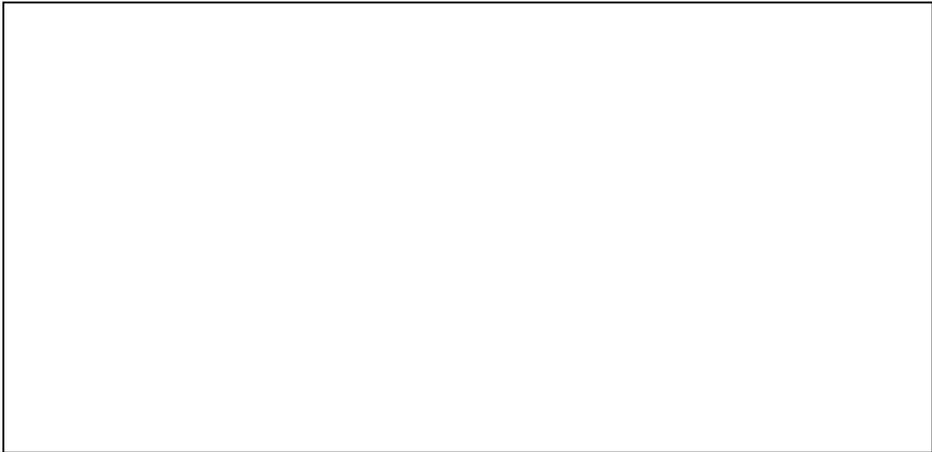
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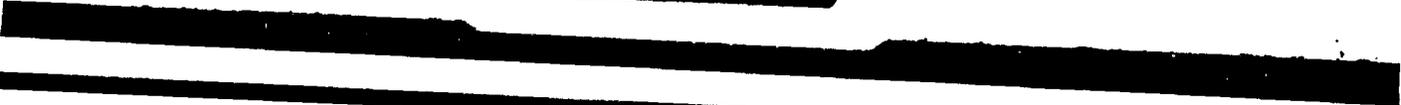
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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

EL SALVADOR: The Military Balance

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The guerrillas' failure to disrupt the elections and the high voter turnout have provided a major psychological boost to the government. The insurgents retain strong military capabilities, however, and a decisive change is unlikely soon. Meanwhile, the guerrillas probably will take advantage of the current political uncertainty over the composition and policies of the new government to attempt some spectacular action. [REDACTED]

The failure to disrupt the election and the unexpectedly high turnout dealt a major political and psychological blow to the insurgent cause. The insurgents expended considerable manpower and material in their effort to prevent the voting, and new recriminations among the guerrilla factions are likely to put heavy strains on insurgent unity. [REDACTED]

The military balance, however, probably will not shift quickly and decisively in the government's favor. The insurgent's preparations to disrupt the election left them with better arms, more trained cadre, and new supply routes. The flow of the Cuban and Nicaraguan arms is likely to continue, although perhaps at a reduced volume. Despite the successful election, the insurgents still enjoy some degree of international political and propaganda support. [REDACTED]

Military Improvements

The Salvadoran military has strengthened its capabilities over the past year and appears to have gained ground on the insurgents. One of its greatest weaknesses had been insufficient manpower to conduct offensive operations while defending population centers and economic targets. Since last year, however, the Army has nearly doubled, and the combined strength of the military and security forces is now over 28,000. [REDACTED]

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To improve command and control of this larger force, the Army has formed two additional brigade headquarters, bringing the current total to six. A quick-reaction battalion activated last year has been conducting increasingly effective sweep operations. []

Two additional quick-reaction units are in training, and regular infantry battalions throughout the country are being strengthened and reequipped with US M-16 rifles, machineguns, mortars, and recoilless rifles. In addition, the US is training 500 officer candidates in an effort to reduce a shortage of junior commanders. []

The acquisition of 14 UH-1H helicopters over the past year has made the Army much more mobile, allowing small units to be deployed by air and wounded personnel to be evacuated quickly. Although some helicopters were destroyed in an insurgent raid in late January, they were soon replaced, and the inventory is being expanded to 20. []

The Army, however, still has significant weaknesses. Soldiers often have to be rushed into combat before completing basic training. Coordination among large units is weak, generally allowing insurgents to escape sweep operations. (S NF)

Inadequate logistic support often forces the Army to end offensive operations prematurely. The government cannot interdict guerrilla supplies delivered by sea and air. []

Insurgent Forces

The guerrillas also have made considerable improvements over the past year. They still appear to have a regular force of between 4,000 and 5,000, and have a part-time militia of between 5,000 and 10,000. []

The insurgents have divided the country into five fronts, each with a commander and general staff. Guerrilla units are mostly concentrated in about eight base areas from which operations are launched. Within these

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eight base areas more than 40 well-defended guerrilla camps have been identified, and there may be many more.

Most insurgent training apparently takes place within the base areas, but many commanders and specialists have taken courses in Nicaragua, Cuba, East European countries, or the Middle East. As a result, the guerrillas have become more adept at ambushes and sabotage.

The insurgent supply network has expanded considerably, with most of the arms and ammunition coming from external sources through Nicaragua.

Despite these improvements, the insurgent problems continue. The largest faction believes in a protracted guerrilla war and is opposed to negotiations, while other factions still hope for a quick victory through a popular insurrection, and barring that, a negotiated settlement giving them access to power. The differences have resulted in lack of unity and coordination at the tactical level, occasionally leading to open fighting.

The insurgents have failed to build a substantial base of popular support, particularly in urban areas. The guerrillas have won the support of peasants and refugees in their base areas, but this has resulted in administrative and economic burdens that have hindered insurgent military operations.

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Current Situation

The guerrillas need some spectacular successes to preserve their credibility and restore morale. They had hoped to seize the eastern cities of Usulután and San Francisco before the elections, but the failure of diversionary attacks elsewhere and the arrival of government reinforcements forced them to retreat. They nevertheless remain strong in these areas, and it will take a major government effort to dislodge them. [redacted]

The insurgents may increase sabotage operations, particularly against major bridges and hydroelectric dams in the country. [redacted]

[redacted] Such important targets are generally well defended, however, and the guerrillas may be forced to strike elsewhere. [redacted]

They also hope to turn the success of the extreme right in the election to their propaganda advantage. They would be aided in this effort by the exclusion of the moderate Christian Democratic Party from the ruling coalition. [redacted]

In addition, the insurgents may try to take advantage of the initial political uncertainty surrounding the new constituent assembly. Nevertheless, guerrillas probably will remain on the defensive for some time. [redacted]

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