

[REDACTED]

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### Special Analysis

EL SALVADOR: Guerrillas Continue War of Attrition

*The insurgents are trying to husband dwindling resources by concentrating on urban operations and small-unit tactics. Government and rebel casualties alike have decreased significantly this year as the government maintains the initiative. Despite recently publicized efforts toward more efficient coordination, unification efforts by the guerrillas seem destined to fail and, in any event, are designed more for propaganda than for operational gain.* [REDACTED]

Despite continual Army attacks in recent weeks against insurgent strongholds in rural areas, the rebels have avoided major battles in part by dispersing in ever-smaller units. Combat deaths for both the government and insurgents are down about 60 percent for the first six months of this year, as compared with the same period last year. This underscores the lower intensity of rural activity by the rebels. [REDACTED]

When the guerrillas occasionally have mounted larger scale attacks, they have had little success against even poorly equipped Salvadoran units. A recent assault by some 150 insurgents on one small town, for example, resulted in 17 guerrillas killed but only four National Guardsmen wounded [REDACTED]

### Defensive Tactics

[REDACTED] indicate that improved tactics by the Army and the quick-strike capabilities of the Air Force are disrupting insurgent operations already hampered by poorer recruits and deficiencies in equipment. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] indicate the guerrillas view ambushes, mines, and hit-and-run attacks on small outposts manned by Civil Defense forces as their most effective tactics under current circumstances. Rebel mining of trails and secondary roads, for example, has become especially costly for the Army, which suffered 37 casualties from mines in two recent operations. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] indicate the insurgents are also trying to kill or kidnap civilian officials and military personnel in San Salvador and government supporters in outlying areas. The insurgents hope such terrorist acts will reduce public confidence in the government and perhaps provoke a rightist backlash. Some urban guerrilla leaders [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] continued

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probably believe adverse public reaction is not sufficient reason to stop assassinations and bombings in the capital. From their perspective, urban terrorism helps to negate the armed forces' advantages in artillery, air power, and battle-trained soldiers [REDACTED]

At the same time, rebels are increasing attacks on civilian economic targets. In recent months, they have sabotaged power, communications, and transportation systems, cut highways, and destroyed farms and produce warehouses in an attempt to distract the armed forces and undermine the weak economy [REDACTED]

### Possibility of Unification

Faced with a worsening military situation, the guerrillas are trying to combine the factions into one army. They have had some success in cooperating on tactics and logistics, but longstanding ideological and strategic differences, as well as competition among rebel leaders, are serious stumblingblocks to effective unification [REDACTED]

One major faction, for example, continues to hold over a dozen kidnaped rural mayors despite objections from other groups. [REDACTED] indicate that leaders differ among themselves on targeting civilians, forced recruitment of peasants, and execution of captured government troops, while others admit privately that unification is years away [REDACTED]

### Outlook

A war of attrition might reduce the morale of the government forces somewhat but is unlikely to slow the government's military progress. Increased use of mine detectors, better training in mine deactivation, and more small-unit operations will help Salvadoran troops counter rebel moves [REDACTED]

In the cities, the government's improved use of [REDACTED] evidenced by the capture of a dozen terrorists in the last month—will hamper guerrilla efforts to expand urban warfare. [REDACTED] reports that one faction recently ordered its urban units to withdraw temporarily from San Salvador to avoid further arrests. [REDACTED]

Economic sabotage will gain additional attention, but the guerrillas would have to intensify such activity substantially to demoralize the public or derail the government's efforts to extend its authority [REDACTED]