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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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AND/OR RELEASE OF THIS DOCUMENT DATE:
02-24-2015

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Security Assistance to El Salvador (U)

(2) Secretary Muskie's recent memorandum to you concerning assistance to El Salvador focused heavily on the economic situation in that country. Your approval of continued economic aid, non-lethal FML pipeline military equipment and continued training of Salvadoran officers in Panama and the U.S. will be helpful. There is, however, a further military dimension which also deserves consideration.

(5) El Salvador's national security establishment consists of some 17,000 personnel divided between the military (12,000), national guard (2,000), the security police (2,000), and the treasury police (500). These forces have limited training and are extremely short on equipment and materiel (for example, many soldiers lack boots, and the entire force has only three small operational helicopters); the officer corps is very thin, and central control over the forces has been limited. The objective of these forces is to eliminate or neutralize a guerrilla insurgent force which has grown in the last year from 2,000 to 5,000 and which has been able to increase the size of its operations from attacks involving a few people to operations involving one or two hundred. The guerrillas have received training in Cuba, Nicaragua, and by the PLO, and are receiving arms from Cuba, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Viet Nam and Eastern Bloc countries, either flown in from neighboring countries or brought in by sea.

El Salvador

(8) The military situation is precarious. Government forces are not able to prevent the guerrillas from conducting significant operations throughout the country, although the guerrillas themselves are not yet strong enough to prevail in open battles with government forces. An increase in strength by either side could make a significant difference and, as indicated above, the guerrilla forces have been growing in strength and we anticipate this will continue. They are reportedly organized for attacks designed to disrupt this year's harvest, and are seeking to topple the present government within the next several weeks. Thus, there are both long-term and immediate reasons counseling military assistance which had not earlier existed.

(6) A special United States' military planning team was recently in El Salvador and developed with the Salvadoran military a plan to protect the crucial present harvests. Protection of the harvests

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and generation of foreign exchange from them are essential to keep El Salvador from economic chaos. The critical elements of the plan are centralized control of the military, national guard, treasury and security police; division of the entire country into five military zones with single commanders responsible for all operations in the zone; and use of increased mobility, especially helicopters, by the Salvadoran forces to let them quickly bring forces to bear against guerrilla operations. Effective implementation of the plan would require United States advisers for central headquarters and each of the zonal commanders (about five per headquarters, 30 total) and release of programmed materiel assistance and the helicopters.

(S) Such a plan is judged by the JCS to allow the security forces to conduct effective military operation against the guerrillas. There is also a political dimension to such action which needs addressing. Our entire strategy in El Salvador is premised on supporting the Christian Democrat/military coalition. It was the military itself which, in overthrowing the Romero government some 14 months ago, brought civilians into government. Since then, there has been continued pressure by some elements of the military and other security forces to eliminate civilian participation. Twice before, we have averted right-wing military coups--with significant help from senior military leaders in the high command. Again, in the last two weeks, the announcement that we had suspended aid produced significant pressure for a right-wing takeover of the government. The leader of our planning team for harvest protection was working full time with the high command, and his personal observation is that such a coup was averted only by the intervention of Colonel Garcia, the Minister of Defense; Colonel Carranza, the Sub Minister, and Colonel Castillo, Chief of Staff.

(S) The conditions we have laid down for the resumption of military aid, however, demand the removal of some or all of these persons from positions of responsibility. We should recognize that, were that to happen, there likely would be no one to restrain the pressure for a right-wing coup.

(S) Our Ambassador in El Salvador has eloquently argued that government participation in or condonation of right-wing violence must cease if the government is to win the support of the people. I wholeheartedly agree. He has also argued that withholding of military aid can be used as a stick to cause the military and security forces to bring about the necessary reforms. Here, I disagree. The military needs greater control from the center to police itself and assistance in mechanisms to make that central control effective. Insistence by us on elimination of the few officers capable of controlling the entire military/security force establishment will exacerbate, not solve, the problem. Moreover, the withholding of United States military assistance strengthens the right-wing by providing substance to its argument to the officer corps that there is little benefit in cooperating with the United States.

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(S) In sum, I would advise that we resume military aid to El Salvador because

- there is an immediate military necessity for such aid, and
- politically, the resumption of such aid is more likely to avoid a right-wing coup than its withholding.

(S) The SCC had earlier recommended that we resume our military assistance to El Salvador if the Christian Democrats were satisfied with the arrangements that they had made with the military. I propose that:

- We inform the Christian Democrats that we are willing immediately to renew security assistance if they desire. If they accept our offer, we inform them that the following measures will take place in the next few weeks:
 - The FY81 FMS loan agreement will be released next week and shipment of needed individual clothing and equipment will begin 1 January 1981.
 - In order to assist in improving the control of all security forces, we will redeploy a five-man operations and planning team to work with the Ministry of Defense by 1 January, and dispatch similar teams to each of the five operational zones as quickly as possible, certainly by late January.
 - The two-man advance party for the helicopter training team will deploy at once with the helicopters, and associated training personnel, to deploy as soon as possible thereafter.

Harold Brown

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

29 December 1980

Memo For Dave

SUBJECT: El Salvador Military Assistance Pipeline

Your information from Dave Newsome is incorrect. The President, on Saturday, not only specifically approved continuing delivery of the pipeline from FY 80 FMS assistance but also the training of El Salvador officers and men in Panama and the U.S. scheduled to begin in Jan 81. This was achieved by a message to Dr. Brzezinski in response to a memo sent to the President with our cooperation. Bob Pastor informed me of this this morning and was about to telephone Bill Bowdler. Pastor had been in touch with Tarnoff in State yesterday and apparently Sec Muskie's concern was about lethal equipment. Pastor assured Tarnoff that no lethal equipment was in the pipeline and this satisfied Tarnoff, who said that Sec Muskie would probably also be satisfied.

The President insisted that if any announcement were made about the training, that the limits on U.S. military assistance to El Salvador should be made clear, i.e., that there is no lethal equipment being delivered and that there is a freeze on the

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Memo For _____

FY 81 FMS program, including the helicopters. Pastor and I see no reason why there should be any announcement, although the caveats must be stressed if there is any leak. Frank Kramer will be informed as soon as he comes in.

File
Fred

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
December 29, 1980

Memo For THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Frank Carlucci tells me that within the next couple of days CIA will be putting out an appreciation of the situation in El Salvador which will conclude that provision of military assistance is more likely to prevent a right-wing coup than failing to do so. The NODIS cable reporting Duarte's conversation with our charge supports this view. I think you ought to reopen this question with the President if you think it is feasible to do so in light of the breakfast conversation ten days ago. A vehicle to reopen the question would be the attached memorandum prepared by Frank Kramer.

DM
David E. McGiffert

Attachment
a/s

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to President strongly supports this.
(3) Attached is a brief explanatory note to me indicating what the President etc was the substance.
Dr ~~SECRET~~ X12229/
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OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

MEMO FOR _____

Warren -

The situation in El Salvador is getting critical. I hope you can reconsider your position on the enclosed, which is being sent to the President. I would also hope that State will promptly approve our going forward with Panama and US IMET programs, as the President has already approved.

Graham

30 Dec

"Warren,

The situation in El Salvador is getting critical. I hope you can reconsider your position on the enclosed, which is being sent to the President. I would also hope that State will promptly approve our going forward with Panama and US IMET programs, as the President has already approved.

Graham

30 Dec 80"

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