

An exclusive report on the U.S. role in El Salvador's official terror

BEHIND THE DEATH SQUADS

BY ALLAN NAIRN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL KIENITZ

(Copyright © 1984, The Progressive, Inc.)

(Continued from Cover)

building and managing the Salvadoran security apparatus that relies on Death Squad assassinations as its principal means of enforcement.

Evidence of U.S. involvement covers a broad spectrum of activity. Over the past twenty years, officials of the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the U.S. armed forces have:

- ¶ conceived and organized ORDEN, the rural paramilitary and intelligence network described by Amnesty International as a movement designed "to use clandestine terror against government opponents." Out of ORDEN grew the notorious *Mano Blanco*, the White Hand, which a former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, Raul H. Castro, has called "nothing less than the birth of the Death Squads";

- ¶ conceived and organized ANSESAL, the elite presidential intelligence service that gathered files on Salvadoran dissidents and, in the words of one U.S. official, relied on Death Squads as "the operative arm of intelligence gathering";

- ¶ enlisted General Jose Alberto "Chele" Medrano, the founder of ORDEN and ANSESAL, as a CIA agent;

- ¶ trained leaders of ORDEN in surveillance techniques and use of automatic weapons, and carried some of these leaders on the CIA payroll;

- ¶ provided American technical and intelligence advisers who often worked directly with ANSESAL at its headquarters in the *Casa Presidencial*;

- ¶ supplied ANSESAL, the security forces, and the general staff with electronic, photographic, and personal surveillance of individuals who were later assassinated by Death Squads. According to Colonel Nicolas Carranza, director of the Salvadoran Treasury

Police, such intelligence sharing by U.S. agencies continues to this day;

- ¶ kept key security officials—including Carranza, Medrano, and others—on the CIA payroll. Though the evidence is less conclusive about Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, presidential candidate of the right-wing ARENA party, some of his close associates describe him as a former recipient of CIA funding;

- ¶ furnished intelligence files that D'Aubuisson used for a series of 1980 television broadcasts in which he denounced dozens of academics, trade unionists, peasant leaders, Christian Democrats, and members of the clergy as communists or guerrilla collaborators. Many of the individuals D'Aubuisson named in his television speeches were subsequently assassinated. The broadcasts launched D'Aubuisson's political career and marked the emergence of the paramilitary front which later became ARENA;

- ¶ instructed Salvadoran intelligence operatives in the use of investigative techniques, combat weapons, explosives, and interrogation methods that included, according to a former Treasury Police agent, "instruction in methods of physical and psychological torture,"

- ¶ and, in the last decade, violated the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974, which prohibits spending U.S. funds "to provide training or advice or provide any financial support for police, prisons, or other law enforcement forces for any foreign government or any program of internal intelligence or surveillance on behalf of any foreign government."

Up to the early 1960s, El Salvador's security forces had been little more than loosely coordinated barracks units in the service of local land owners and political *caudillos*. "They had very, very limited political orientation, if any," says Robert



General Jose Alberto 'Chele' Medrano, an agent of the CIA, organized El Salvador's rural paramilitary network and its national intelligence service—the forerunners of the modern Death Squads. Here, Medrano holds a silver medal President Lyndon Johnson awarded to him 'in recognition of exceptionally meritorious service.'

run by the U.S. State Department with assistance from the CIA, AID, the Customs Bureau, the Immigration Service, and the Justice Department—"were designed to develop ways of dealing with subversion," recalls William Bowdler, who represented the State Department at the sessions.

For El Salvador, Washington assigned a central role to General Medrano, then a senior officer of the National Guard and the army general staff.

Medrano is something of a legend in Salvadoran politics. Rank-and-file National Guardsmen still revere him as a fearsome *jefe* and the hero of the 1969 war with Honduras. To his supporters, he is "the founder of Salvadoran nationalism." But to Christian Democrat Jose Napoleon Duarte, Medrano is something else—"the father of the Death Squads, the chief assassin of them all."

Medrano, now retired, prides himself on moving about El Salvador unaccompanied by bodyguards. He drives through the countryside armed only with a .45-caliber pistol and a glove compartment stocked with hand grenades. In a recent series of interviews spanning some twelve hours, he spoke freely about the origins and growth of the security system.

"ORDEN and ANSESAL—the Salvadoran National Security Agency—grew out of the State Department, the CIA, and the Green Berets during the time of Kennedy," Medrano told me. "We created these specialized agencies to fight the plans and actions of international communism. We organized ORDEN, ANSESAL, and counterinsurgency courses, and we bought special arms—G3 automatic rifles—to detain the communist movement. We were preparing the team to stop communism."

The meetings of the interior ministers resulted in the formation of ANSESAL and parallel domestic security agencies in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Honduras, and Costa Rica. These forces "would meet every three months under the supervision of the State Department and exchange information and methods of operation," says Medrano. "They had direct radio teletypes from office to office."

According to a U.S. adviser who helped

Eugene Whedbee, who served as CIA station chief in El Salvador from 1962 to 1964. That began to change with the Kennedy Administration's Alliance for Progress, founded on the assumption that national security systems working side by side with capitalist development would preempt communist revolution in Latin America.

In El Salvador, the U.S. State Department, the CIA, the Green Berets, and the Agency for International Development (AID) all participated in the effort to suppress dissent.

The United States was "developing within the civil security forces . . . an investigative capability for detecting criminal and/or subversive individuals and organizations and neutralizing their activities," wrote Byron Engle, director of the AID Public Safety Program, in a 1967 memo to his staff. "This requires a carefully integrated effort between the inves-

tigative element and the regular police, paramilitary or military force, operating separately or in conjunction with each other." Engle, himself a former CIA official, referred to thirty-three countries, including El Salvador, in which the Public Safety Program was operating.

The landmark event in the formation of the national security apparatus in El Salvador and the rest of Central America was the Declaration of San Jose, issued on March 19, 1963, at the conclusion of a meeting of six Central American presidents. "Communism is the chief obstacle to economic development in the Central American region," proclaimed President Kennedy, who had chaired the meeting.

The Declaration of San Jose triggered a series of follow-up meetings among Central American ministers of the interior, who held jurisdiction over police and internal security. These meetings—organized and

'You Learn How to Torture ...'

Rene Hurtado is the pseudonym of a former member of the Salvadoran Treasury Police who now lives in a Minneapolis suburb. In an interview in late March, he said that the Treasury Police, a branch of El Salvador's security forces, would routinely kidnap, interrogate, torture, and then kill political suspects. He claims to have participated in torture sessions and provides a detailed account of the methods employed.

According to Hurtado, U.S. personnel conducted an intelligence course for Treasury officers that included training "in methods of physical and psychological torture." He claims to have met with the U.S. instructors. Though he refuses to say whether he himself received training from them, he asserts that some of his associates did.

The intelligence course was given for one month in 1980 at the headquarters of the Salvadoran army general staff, Hurtado says. The instructors did not observe or participate in actual torture sessions, nor did they visit Treasury Police headquarters, he explains. But in the classroom, he says, they discussed such techniques as psychological torture, manual beating, and electric shock, occasionally supplementing the lectures with Spanish-language written material that was more generalized than the oral presentations. The instructors were sometimes in military uniform, sometimes in civilian dress.

Hurtado, who gave his real name but asked that it not be used, showed documents and photographs verifying his military and Treasury Police service.

At one time, Hurtado held a sensitive position for which he was carefully screened. Following a fight with a superior officer, he was expelled from the military in 1981, he says. He resides in the United States without legal immigration status and is being sheltered by the religious sanctuary movement. He was contacted directly and independently after another former member of the Salvadoran military provided his home telephone number.

What follows is Hurtado's account of the interrogation and torture methods used by the Treasury Police:

First, you try to torture him psychologically. If he's a Marxist or a revolutionary, it's not easy to make him talk, so you have to psychologically harm the prisoner. If the person is important—if he's, let's say, a journalist or a teacher or a labor or student leader, or if he's a

person with some leadership or has something to offer—he isn't treated cruelly at the beginning. Well, of course, they may hit him at some time, but after that, when he's taken to one of the interrogation rooms, you start by talking to him as a friend, you try to convince him that you understand his idealism.

You might say: "Who are the compañeros in your organization and why do they kill us? How many people have you killed?" Things like that. You try to trap the person psychologically. You'll say:

"Don't be a fool. Those bastards want to fuck you over, they're using you. We could kill you right here and now, but we're not killers, we're not your enemy. If you collaborate with us, we're going to get you out of the country. Where would you like to go. Europe? Spain? England? We'll send you to one of those countries. We'll give you money, but you have to talk to us, because if you don't, we're going to fuck you over."

When you are trying to interrogate for the first time, you try to come across as a sensitive, decent person—not as a killer. You say you are not a bastard like the other interrogators. You make friends with him. You offer him a soda and some food. You ask him where his mom and dad live, you talk about his wife and kids. It has a tremendous impact when he knows his kids have been captured but doesn't know where they are.

But after using these methods for a few days or a week or two, you start getting tough. You will say:

"Look, those bastards are giving me a lot of shit. Because they want you to talk, they're going to beat the shit out of you. And I don't want those bastards to think I'm screwing up. So if you don't talk, I'm going to turn you over to those fuckers and they're going to beat the piss out of you."

After these sessions, the physical torture begins. First, you put the prisoner in a small, completely dark room, and you don't let him sleep. You place him, naked and handcuffed, on a bed frame. The room stinks horribly because of the urine and excrement of former prisoners, and you keep him there for a week without sleep so that his nerves will be shot when you start to torture him.

When the actual physical torture begins, there are a lot of different methods: cutting off pieces of his skin, burning him with cigarettes. They teach you how to hit a person in the stomach, but in a sophisticated way so the person suffers

a lot of pain but you don't see signs on the outside. Or sometimes you just beat his hands and beat him in the stomach, either with fists or with heavy sticks. Beat him, and beat him, and beat him.

After that, if he still doesn't talk, you take him to a toilet filled with excrement. You put on gloves and shove his head in the toilet for thirty seconds or so. You pull him out, then shove his head in again. You do this over and over.

Then you wash him and take him to the electric shock room. There's a special torture room in the Treasury Police; only the intelligence section can enter, no uniformed men are allowed. It's soundproof so they don't hear anything outside.

You learn how to give electric shocks, shocks to the brain, shocks to the stomach. There are some very sophisticated methods for this kind of torture. It's a little machine; you use a cord like a telephone, like an old phone with a crank and you start turning the crank. You do it with different wires; they're small. There's a more sophisticated one that looks like a radio, like a transformer; it's about fifteen centimeters across, with connecting wires. It says General Electric on it.

It's like if you have a stereo and you don't know how to use it, you learn: This generates twenty volts, this forty volts, this will give a serious blow, this less so, this one will kill a person.

You put the wires on the prisoner's vital parts. You place the wires between the prisoner's teeth, on the penis, in the vagina. The prisoners feel it more if their feet are in water, and they're seated on iron so the blow is stronger. If you put mineral water on them and then do the shock, it's agonizing.

In general, you will kill the prisoners because there's an assumption they shouldn't live. If we pass them to the judge, they'll go free and we'll maybe have to pick them up again. If there's lots of pressure—like from Amnesty International or some foreign countries—then we might pass them on to a judge, but if there's no pressure, then they're dead. When it's over, you just throw him in the alleys with a sign saying *Mano Blanco*, ESA (Secret Anticommunist Army), or Maximiliano Hernandez Brigade [three names commonly used by Salvadoran Death Squads].

You learn how to torture, how to cut the balls off a person when he's still alive. These are the things that happen in war.

—A.N.

Colonel Nicolas Carranza, director of the Treasury Police, was trained by the Green Berets in the 1960s and is currently on the CIA payroll. The Treasury Police is notorious for its role in directing the Death Squads.

install the teletype system, known as the Central American Communications Network, it was part of a broader plan "to reorganize the intelligence effort and get Central Americans to work together against subversion. At the meetings, you'd say to them, 'Well, if I had this sort of equipment, I'd do this and this,'—sort of ease them along."

The State Department and AID's Public Safety office in El Salvador had administrative responsibility for establishing the ANSESAL network, Medrano says, but the substantive day-to-day intelligence work was coordinated by the CIA: "The CIA was already participating in connections with us. The CIA would work with us and give us reports."

Medrano was the CIA's boy," says one current State Department official. Indeed, Medrano himself says he was on the CIA payroll, a fact confirmed by ORDEN colleagues. "He came to my house regularly. He was a close friend," recalls Raul Castro, U.S. ambassador to El Salvador from 1964 to 1968. "And he was a good friend of the United States."

Medrano flew frequently to Washington for consultations at CIA headquarters. In July 1968, he received a silver Presidential medal from Lyndon Johnson "in recognition of exceptionally meritorious service." Medrano refuses to discuss the particular service he performed, though he recalls Johnson's words as the President presented him with the medal: "I know all about you, Medrano. You're doing good work. I know your pedigree"—like I was a bull!"

The U.S. Government also sent Medrano on a three-month tour of Vietnam, where he traveled with Army units, the Green Berets, and CIA operatives. As he recalls it, Medrano "studied every aspect of warfare from primitive jungle fighting to psychological civic action to strategic bombing."

Medrano gave Washington ample return on its investment. In El Salvador, he organized an intricate, many-tiered intelligence and paramilitary network that extended from the remotest mountain hamlets to the presidential palace. The rural component of this network was ORDEN (Spanish for "Order"), a group founded, in Medrano's words, to "indoctrinate the



peasants regarding the advantages of the democratic system and the disadvantages of the communist system."

Green Beret Colonel Arthur Simons was instrumental in the development of ORDEN, says Medrano. In 1963, Simons, then commander of the 8th Special Forces Group in Panama, dispatched a team of counterinsurgency trainers to El Salvador. (According to his service record, Simons had recently completed a stint as commander of the White Star Mobile Training Team, a Green Beret unit that had been sent to Laos to work with indigenous troops. Previously, he had served as chief of staff at the Army Special Warfare Center in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, which was originally called the Psychological Warfare Center and was later renamed the John F. Kennedy Center for Military Assistance.)

"Colonel Simons sent me ten men to begin training us," recalls Medrano. After "talking among ourselves and with Simons, the idea occurred to us to catechize the people. We talked about how we had to indoctrinate the people, because he who has the population wins the war."

"The army can easily annihilate guerrillas in the urban zone," says Medrano, "but the peasants are tough. They are good in the mountains. They can walk at night, see in the dark, see among the trees. We couldn't let them be deceived by the guerrillas."

Medrano says the Green Berets helped him plan the structure and ideology of ORDEN, and then stayed on to train a team of Salvadoran soldiers—among them Colonel Carranza, who now heads the Treasury Police, and Colonel Domingo Monterrosa, currently chief of the Third Brigade and El Salvador's star combat

commander. The soldiers went to the countryside to instruct civilian ORDEN leaders, who in turn established the organization's local chapters. At its peak, ORDEN membership reached an estimated 100,000. "It was almost like a religion," Medrano recalls.

ORDEN had the dual mission of teaching anticommunism and gathering information on individuals deemed suspicious. "You discover the communist by the way he talks," says Medrano. "Generally, he speaks against Yankee imperialism, he speaks against the oligarchy, he speaks against military men. We can spot them easily." Once identified, they would be reported to ORDEN's central office, where a staff of eighty would record the information and relay it to ANSESAL. There, "we would study it and pass it on to the president, who would take appropriate action," says Medrano.

"In this revolutionary war, the enemy comes from our people," Medrano says. "They don't have the rights of Geneva. They are traitors to the country. What can the troops do? When they find them, they kill them."

Sometimes the killings were carried out by ORDEN itself, other times by the army, the National Guard, or the *Mano Blanco* Death Squad. Former Ambassador Castro says *Mano Blanco* "was an offshoot of ORDEN, and the same people in ORDEN were to some extent the same people in the *Mano Blanco*. Even today, some of the same people are in the Death Squads. That was the origin."

According to U.S. and Salvadoran officials, the close relationship between the security forces and the U.S. Government was sustained over the next twenty years.

Edgar Artiga, a civilian leader of ORDEN, says he and eighty other ORDEN officials participated in a two-month CIA course in 1969. The course, held at the headquarters of the Salvadoran National Guard, was taught jointly by General Medrano and three CIA instructors from the U.S. embassy, who brought along movies about life in the Soviet Union. The curriculum, says Artiga, included "anti-communism, democracy, detection and identification, and self-defense." Trainees were instructed in the use of 9-millimeter revolvers and such weapons as the M-16 rifle, which was not yet generally available. All the students were paid daily in cash, according to Artiga. A number of Artiga's classmates continued on the CIA payroll after the course was completed, he says.

Training was also conducted in the United States. Among those who received such schooling was Carlos Sosa Santos, the leading explosives expert for the Salvadoran armed forces, who was instructed by the AID Public Safety Program. Sosa has trained dozens of army and security force members in "techniques for secretly placing bombs in houses, cars, and individuals' personal belongings," according to a National Police intelligence officer who studied under Sosa.

The U.S. contribution extends far beyond training. American intelligence services have actually furnished the names, photographs, and whereabouts of suspected dissidents, say Salvadoran security officials.

This March, during a tour of the political intelligence archives of the National Police Center for Analysis and Investigations, I spoke with Captain Rafael Lopez Davila, who displayed files on leftist political leaders. The dossiers included entries reporting on their travels to foreign cities, specifying what flights they took, whom they visited, and where they stayed. The CIA provided such information, Lopez says.

According to General Medrano, the CIA regularly kept ANSESAL posted on the activities of Salvadorans working or studying abroad. In important cases, the CIA supplied photographs and tapes of conversations.

A Salvadoran who served as an aide to a senior intelligence official in the 1970s says he was shown CIA photographic and electronic surveillance reports on many dissidents. "With this information, we knew exactly what we were doing, who was who," he says, adding that many of the subjects were later assassinated by Death Squads.

A former staff member of the *Casa Presidencial* reports that an American CIA officer told him the CIA and the Salvadoran security forces kept Rutilio Grande, a prominent Jesuit priest, under surveillance before his March 1977 assassination.

The CIA agent claimed to have seen the dossier on Father Grande, which reportedly included photos and accounts of his visits to other Central American countries as well as his activities in his home parish of Aguilares. A former Treasury Police officer who goes by the name of Rene Hurtado (see Page 22) says he was told by ANSESAL members that their agency was responsible for killing Grande.

When a reformist junta briefly came to power in El Salvador in 1979, it abolished ORDEN and ANSESAL and condemned the organizations for committing human rights abuses. Since then, the Salvadoran military have continued to maintain and expand their surveillance and record-keeping activities. And as in the 1960s and 1970s, when U.S. agents and technicians invented and oiled the intelligence machine, U.S. personnel remain at the center of the system.

According to a Salvadoran colonel involved in the process, the United States routinely receives copies of all major political surveillance reports compiled by Salvadoran security officers. In turn, U.S. officials provide the security forces with information. Colonel Carranza confirmed this relationship.

"The Americans would directly receive all the information on a case even before we had developed the activity, before we had decided how we would terminate a case," Carranza says, referring to the procedure in effect before 1983. "Now we give everything—in relation to captures that the Treasury Police have made—to the general staff and they give it to the embassy."

U.S. intelligence officials "have collaborated with us in a certain technical manner, providing us with advice," says Carranza. "They receive information from everywhere in the world, and they have sophisticated equipment that enables them to have better information or at least confirm the information we have. It's very helpful." Carranza says he processes the information with "a small computer, and we also work with the general staff's computer for developing a workable inventory and index."

Colonel Adolfo Blandon, the armed forces chief of staff, says "six or seven" U.S. military advisers—several of them specialists in intelligence and psychological warfare—are currently working with the general staff.

The National Guard now concentrates on monitoring "unions and strikes and the penetration of the education system, where they are brainwashing our students," says Colonel Aristedes Napoleon Montes, director of the National Guard. Reynaldo Lopez Nuilla, director of the National Police, says he has an intelligence staff of 200, including a thirty-man "operations group." He, too, cites unions as an area of con-

centration, but also mentions the Salvadoran Human Rights Commission (the nongovernmental one, that is; the government maintains its own "human rights commission," of which Lopez Nuilla is a member). And the Catholic organization, Socorro Juridico (legal assistance), "we know to be organized precisely by the guerrillas," says Lopez Nuilla. "It's evident in the things they say."

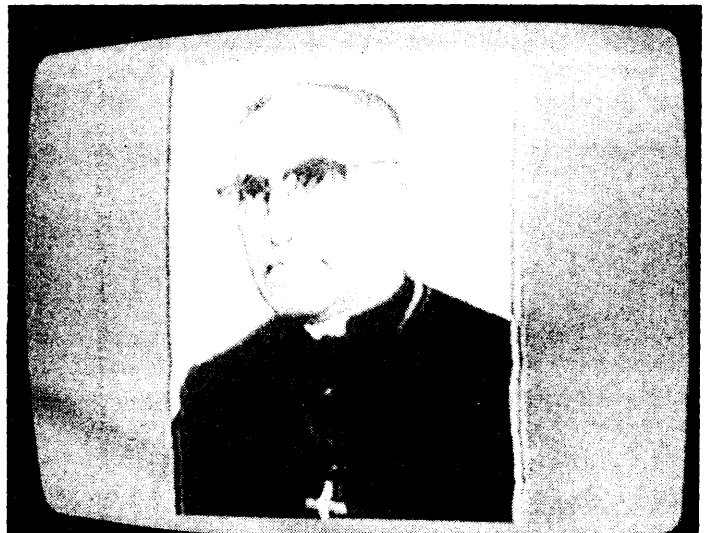
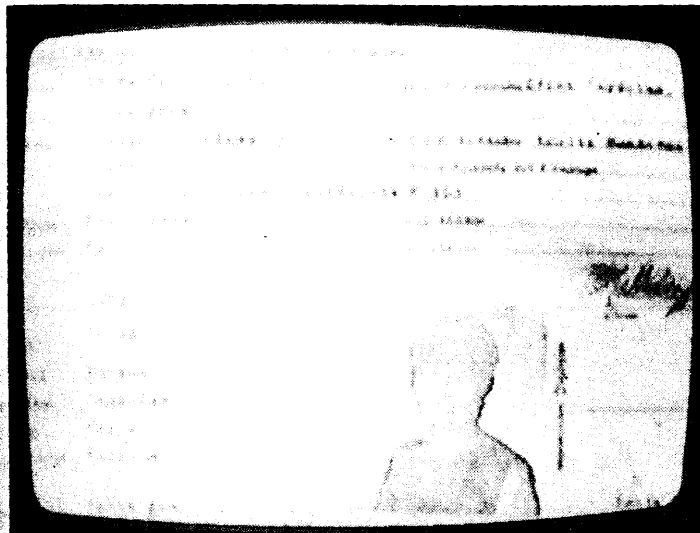
In the National Police political intelligence archive, originally organized by U.S. AID Public Safety advisers, Captain Rafael Lopez Davila, the investigations chief, showed me a special section on unions and their members. The three-story filing room also contained a "library of subversive literature," which, along with Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* and Lenin's collected works, held the publications of UCA, El Salvador's Catholic University.

According to the Salvadoran armed forces *Guide to Normal Operative Procedures*, a confidential policy manual, each army and security force outpost is required to maintain a "Special Archive of S-2 Intelligence." The file covers "the disposition of the subversive delinquents (their location . . . styles of action and mobilization)," lists "militants and sympathizers," and carries a miscellaneous "register of personalities of the enemy."

Names enter the archive through surveillance reports from officers and informants or through reports from troops who have detained an individual for questioning. To qualify for a place in the files, an individual may commit such diverse offenses as "carrying or moving subversive propaganda of whatever type . . . insulting authority . . . carrying notebooks, papers, or symbols related to subversive organizations, [or] traveling in cars destined for points of concentration of the subversive delinquents—unauthorized demonstrations and rallies, etc., especially if the attitude is suspicious."

Surveillance reports compiled by local intelligence units are retained for their own files while a copy is forwarded to the central archives of the service involved. Individual subjects are interrogated, says Colonel Montes, first at the local post and then, if the case warrants it, at the intelligence section of the security force. "All of this information is then turned over to the general staff, with whom we retain a very close coordination," Montes says.

This intelligence system serves as the nerve center of Death Squad operations. "We worked with written orders," recalls one former National Guardsman, a fifteen-year veteran who says he went on Death Squad missions while stationed in the province of La Libertad. "We got names and addresses and were told to pick them up, get information, and kill them later." In important cases, he adds, special troops or security force agents would come from San Salvador with the lists.



Roberto D'Aubuisson, in televised speeches, used information and photographs from CIA files to identify suspected leftists who were subsequently slain by the Death Squads. One he denounced was Archbishop Oscar Romero, whom he warned: 'You still have time to change your ways.'

"Every garrison of any size had Death Squads. It's that simple," says a U.S. official in San Salvador who studied the Death Squads last year. "All this comes out of a military intelligence function."

When the Reagan Administration launched a publicity campaign against the Death Squads last December, it pointed a finger at individual officers, leaking their names to the press and demanding their removal. Three of those officers were the directors of the intelligence departments of the Treasury Police, the National Guard,

Asked why the Administration chose to blame those specific individuals while leaving the institutions untouched, the U.S. official in San Salvador responded: "Things generated in Washington create certain necessities that don't necessarily reflect the true problems here, but are done for political purposes up there, and this is a good example." The official, heavily involved in the publicity campaign, considered it a success.

"These men were done an injustice," says Colonel Blandon, the chief of staff. "We kept asking the embassy for proof against them but they never gave it. The Americans sacrificed them to avoid their own problems."

The use of the term "Death Squad" has, in some respects, fostered a profound misunderstanding of El Salvador's official terror apparatus. It conjures up images of discrete bands of gangsters randomly cruising the countryside in search of opportunities to kill. In fact, the term more meaningfully applies to a system that can dispatch a soldier

Another misunderstanding about the Death Squads arises from the fact that they came to public notice in the United States in connection with the spectacular emergence of Roberto D'Aubuisson as a powerful political figure. U.S. officials who want to shield the Salvadoran government from culpability in the Death Squads, as well as some liberals who want to undermine D'Aubuisson's electoral prospects, have promoted the mistaken notion that the Death Squad phenomenon—this sprawling institution with a twenty-year history and tens of thousands of victims—is the personal instrument of one diabolical man.

In March, Roberto Eulalio Santivanez, a former colonel who had been paid \$50,000 by critics of U.S. policy in El Salvador, began circulating to the mass media a detailed account of Death Squad operations. Speaking as an unnamed source from "the highest level of the security police," Santivanez told *The New York Times* that D'Aubuisson was "the man who organized and continues to direct the Death Squads."

(Continued from Page 25)

fense Minister General Jose Guillermo Garcia and Colonel Carranza, director of the Treasury Police, helped organize and operate D'Aubuisson's Death Squad network. In a CBS News interview with Walter Cronkite, Santivanez said Carranza had been on the CIA payroll. *The New York Times* confirmed the CIA connection, citing U.S. intelligence sources. They reported that Carranza had received \$90,000 per year for the past five or six years. (Two colleagues of Carranza had said he was a CIA agent weeks before Santivanez did.)

According to Santivanez's version as reported in *The Times*, the Death Squads did not exist before D'Aubuisson rose to prominence in the wake of the 1979 reformist coup. Because of a commitment to protect Santivanez's anonymity, the story identified him as a source with "personal knowledge of these crimes because his government post had put him in direct contact with top military leaders." In fact, Santivanez was the director of ANSESAL and D'Aubuisson's immediate superior from 1977 to 1979, a period of mounting government repression that culminated in the fall of the Carlos Humberto Romero government and the abolition of ANSESAL for its role in the Death Squad killings.

Santivanez was "Romero's black man," says the U.S. embassy official who studied the Death Squads. "He kept the files and took care of people when there was dirty work to be done. His hands are as bloody as anybody's." The official nonetheless confirms that Santivanez's account of involvement in the Death Squads by Carranza and the high command was "substantially correct," though he says it exaggerated D'Aubuisson's personal role.

The story of the relationship between the U.S. Government and the D'Aubuisson branch of the contemporary Death Squads is complex, paradoxical, and far from complete.

D'Aubuisson, a Medrano protege whom the General remembers as "a fine officer who was loved by the people," made his mark in the ORDEN-ANSESAL network, organizing ORDEN chapters as a National Guard officer and rising to second in command of ANSESAL under Santivanez.

"Roberto was an officer of ANSESAL, which is affiliated with the CIA," says Major Oscar Serrato, one of a small group of Salvadorans who began secretly collaborating with D'Aubuisson soon after the reformist junta came to power in October 1979. Two years later, Serrato helped found ARENA, the rightist political party D'Aubuisson heads. "He worked with the CIA for years, and that's how he was able to learn all the machinations, the people, national as well as international, that were working to establish the communist scheme."

Two of D'Aubuisson's former associates from the National Guard and ANSESAL claim he received U.S. Government money, one saying it came from the CIA, the other from either the CIA or the Defense Intelligence Agency. State Department officials in El Salvador during the 1970s say that although D'Aubuisson had "a disturbingly close relationship" with one U.S. military attache (who could not be reached for comment), they did not know whether he had received payments.

When D'Aubuisson officially left the army after the 1979 coup, he launched his political movement with a series of television speeches. He assailed the junta for abolishing ORDEN—"born in the bosom of the armed forces," D'Aubuisson declared. "ORDEN has ceased to function with that name," he said, "but its principles live and are newly serving the fatherland with the *Frente Democratica Nacionalista* [Democratic Nationalist Front, D'Aubuisson's new political organization]."

D'Aubuisson openly defended the security forces for their role in the spate of disappearances and assassinations in late 1979 and early 1980. "In no moment should you feel culpable for fighting these terrorists," he said. "If our commanders have captured people like this, they are committing no fault." And he quoted from Napoleon: "Nothing done to defend your country is against the law."

Having established the principle, D'Aubuisson got down to specifics, marshaling charts, photos, videotapes, and computer graphics for an intricately detailed, name-by-name, face-by-face tirade against "El Salvador's terrorist conspiracy."

D'Aubuisson denounced union leaders, priests, academics, peasant organizers, students, professionals, government officials, and Christian Democrats. Among those he named was Archbishop Oscar Romero, whom he told, "You still have time to change your ways." He also attacked Mario Zamora, a leading Christian Democrat and member of the government, who—like others identified in the broadcasts—was assassinated in a matter of weeks.

"Unfortunately, when we mentioned a person, *poom*, they'd shoot them," says

Alberto Bondanza, a D'Aubuisson intimate and one of the founders of ARENA. "Then they started linking us with the Death Squads. If by chance the army arrived and happened to shoot one of these people in a battle, then everybody threw the blame on us."

"D'Aubuisson was pointing out the communists so the troops could kill them," Medrano says. "He had good information. He was speaking the truth."

"He had everything—photos and complete personal histories—direct from the ANSESAL files," says Major Serrato, who participated in the planning meetings out of which the broadcasts grew. He said D'Aubuisson made copies of the ANSESAL material shortly before the agency was dissolved and its archives transferred to the general staff. "The proofs he presented were concrete and irrefutable: photos and documents that were prepared by the CIA, documents from the archives of the CIA. All of the material was passed back and forth constantly."

D'Aubuisson maintained CIA contacts in 1980 and 1981, according to Jimmy Nixon, an American citizen and ARENA activist who ferried visitors and private messages to D'Aubuisson while he was staying in Guatemala during that period. Nixon says he is uncertain of the current relationship.

Another American closely associated with D'Aubuisson, Billy Murphy, complains of the treatment ARENA received at the hands of the U.S. embassy under the Carter Administration and its last ambassador, Robert White. "Those sons of bitches were doing everything they could against us," he says.

But Murphy adds that ARENA enjoyed amiable relations with one political officer at the embassy who "would always let us know in advance what was going to happen in the junta." He and other D'Aubuisson aides met regularly with "good friends" from the U.S. Military Group and the embassy's military attache, he says. "You had a wonderful man here" in the Military Group, says Murphy. "He did his best, but he couldn't do anything."

Clandestine U.S. ties with the Salvadoran security apparatus remain firm, and appear to have been strengthened in the 1980s. National Guardsman Luis Alonso Bonilla claims that U.S. military and civilian personnel helped train members of the security forces as bodyguards in 1980. Bonilla, who says he took a similar course in 1975, says it included instruction in combat and ambush techniques. A National Police detective and member of the elite explosives unit established by AID's Public Safety Program says four of his associates visited the United States for an explosives course in November 1983. "I've been visited by some members of

ADDITIONAL COPIES

of this issue are available at \$2 each, postpaid, or at the following special bulk rates: In bundles of 10 or more sent to a single address—\$1.50 per copy, postpaid; in bundles of 100 or more sent to a single address—\$1.00 per copy, postpaid. Send payment and order to:

REPRINTS

THE PROGRESSIVE
409 EAST MAIN STREET
MADISON, WI 53703



Death Squad victims, murdered in early 1984, according to the Archbishop's human rights office in El Salvador.

the embassy with whom I've always maintained good relations," Carranza told me last September, "and I have the promise that they are going to help us train our personnel." He said he also needed investigation and interrogation equipment, and was unruffled by the fact that U.S. law prohibits such aid.

"Yes," he remarked, "but by means of other ways, by let's say friendship with some members of the American embassy, I think I can get not only equipment but training." He said he would obtain them through "outside channels," adding, "I don't know whether it would be wise to put this out for the knowledge of the American people."

Once the Treasury Police received the lie detection, fingerprinting, and ballistic equipment he requested, "we would have a better way of doing an investigation than putting pressure on the victim," Carranza

said. "Now when you have a prisoner, you have to put pressure on him, questioning him again and again, day and night."

This March, Francis Stanley Martinez, a corporal in the National Police intelligence department, said he and nine colleagues in the security forces—three from the Treasury Police, three from the National Guard, and three from the National Police—were about to depart for an in-depth CIA training course in the United States. He subsequently said the departure date had been postponed until some time in April. The course would cover investigation, surveillance, weapons, and interrogation, Martinez said.

"You have to know all aspects to work in intelligence here," he said. "It's very different from the United States. Here, intelligence is hard to get, and the delinquent is very different. Here, the first thing you have to do is grab them by the neck."

In the 1960s, when the United States was building a Salvadoran security system based on surveillance and assassination, the enterprise enjoyed unified support within the U.S. Government. With State Department officials and CIA operatives presiding, General Med-

rano and his counterparts from Anastasio Somoza's Nicaragua and Peralta Azurdia's Guatemala would gather around a table and give speeches about "who the communists were," as Medrano puts it, "what they were up to, and what we should do about them."

Over time, changing political conditions opened something of a rift between the State Department professionals and their Pentagon and CIA colleagues. During the Carter Administration, their disagreements were often clear and pronounced. Under Reagan, the State Department has been brought back into line. Public and Congressional pressures, however, have compelled the Administration to voice public criticism of the Death Squads even as it secretly funnels aid and intelligence to the military and security forces that run them.

U.S. complicity in the dark and brutal work of El Salvador's Death Squads is not an aberration. Rather, it represents a basic, bipartisan, institutional commitment on the part of six American Administrations—a commitment to guard the Salvadoran regime against the prospect that its people might organize in ways unfriendly to that regime or to the United States. ■