

September 1992

# AID TO EL SALVADOR

## Slow Progress in Developing a National Civilian Police



147695

---

---



United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and  
International Affairs Division

B-250336

September 22, 1992

The Honorable Robert G. Torricelli  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Western  
Hemisphere Affairs  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Alan Cranston  
United States Senate

A peace agreement signed January 16, 1992, by the government of El Salvador and the opposition Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) ended 12 years of civil war. In support of the ongoing peace process, the United States has pledged \$20 million to help establish a new police force and a police academy. In response to your request, we

- determined whether the U.S. assistance for the police development effort is consistent with the provisions of the peace agreement,
- assessed the progress made in establishing the police force and police academy, and
- evaluated the financial status of the police development effort.

We briefed your staffs on these issues on September 9, 1992. This report provides the results of our review.

## Background

Because of the numerous human and civil rights abuses that occurred during El Salvador's civil war, FMLN negotiators insisted that the United Nations brokered peace agreement provide certain security guarantees. The development of a new police force and the establishment of a new police academy are explicitly required by the peace agreement as fundamental elements of these guarantees. One chapter of the peace agreement is devoted to the establishment of the National Civilian Police and the police academy.

The agreement calls for the dissolution of three existing security forces and the establishment of a new police force within 2 years of the signing of the agreement. Two of the three security forces existing at the time the peace agreement was signed, the Treasury Police and the National Guard, have

---

been disbanded. The third force, the National Police, is to remain in existence during a 2-year transition phase to the new police force,<sup>1</sup> called the National Civilian Police.

The National Civilian Police is to be an entirely new police force, with new officers, training, organization, and doctrine, and is to be controlled by civilian authorities independent of the military. The force is expected to reach its full strength of 10,000 members by May 1999. The composition of the force is to be no less than 60 percent new members and no more than 20 percent each from the existing security forces and the FMLN.

Regardless of their background, all 10,000 members of the police force must be graduates of the new police academy, the National Public Security Academy. Each training class of approximately 330 members is to receive 6 months of basic police training. Within 2 years, the academy is expected to train 5,940 police officers, including 240 senior officers. United Nations Development Program officials are overseeing the establishment of the academy to ensure that the terms of the peace agreement are being carried out. In addition, a joint U.S. and Spanish technical team is providing assistance in developing the police.

---

## Results in Brief

U.S. assistance for the police development effort in El Salvador is consistent with U.S. policy to fully support the peace process and the individual provisions contained in the peace agreement. At the time of our review, the United States was helping to establish a police academy, but only a small amount of U.S. funds had been spent.

Limited progress has been made in establishing the new police force and police academy. The structure and resource needs of the police have not been determined, and equipment and facilities have not been provided. The installation of the first recruit class at the academy has been delayed 3 months due to several problems, including a lack of suitable facilities.

Efforts to establish the academy and the police are constrained by severe financial problems. The government of El Salvador has not provided the funds and property it promised for the academy, and while the United States, Norway, and Spain have pledged support, no other international

---

<sup>1</sup>With oversight from the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador, the National Police provides for public security only in non-conflictive zones. The U.N. mission provides for public security in the conflictive zones.

---

donors have responded to U.N. appeals for funds. According to U.S. officials, if no new operating funds are received from donors or the government, the academy could close in October 1992. Further, no funding except for \$6 million from the United States has been pledged to fund the development of the National Civilian Police. The United States purchased equipment for the existing National Police and other government entities over the last few years. However, it is not certain what equipment is on hand and may be available for the police development program.

U.S. and U.N. officials we spoke with were concerned about the slow progress and funding problems of the police development effort. They said that the peace process could be in jeopardy if the new police force is not established as called for in the peace agreement. According to U.S. officials, the FMLN has recently linked the full demobilization of ex-combatants, currently scheduled for October 31, 1992, with progress in the development of the National Civilian Police.

---

## U.S. Assistance Supports the Provisions of the Peace Agreement

On January 17, 1992, the U.S. Secretary of State announced that the United States fully supported the peace agreement because the reforms negotiated in the judicial system, the electoral system, the armed forces, and the police will strengthen El Salvador's democratic institutions, enlarge the scope of human rights, and promote national reconciliation. The \$20-million U.S. pledge will be used over a 2-year period to support the police development effort.

The U.S. assistance is being administered through the Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP).<sup>2</sup> Of the \$20 million pledged, \$10 million has been allocated for the academy, \$6 million for the police, and \$4 million for ICITAP's overhead costs as well as the salaries of its advisers in El Salvador. ICITAP estimates that as of September 4, 1992, it had spent between \$50,000 and \$100,000 to support the development of the academy with operational manuals, curriculum development, training for teachers, and classroom equipment. Until mid-September 1992, ICITAP had been drawing from its regional funds because the Department of State had not yet transferred funds to the Department of Justice. The \$6 million for the National Civilian Police will

---

<sup>2</sup>These AID-appropriated funds are transferred to the Department of State, and through an interagency Memorandum of Understanding, ultimately to the Department of Justice.

---

be used to develop institutional, administrative, and managerial capabilities.

---

## Progress of Police Development Effort Has Been Slow

Although development of the National Civilian Police is a key part of the peace agreement, progress has been slow to date. The agreement, in general terms, addresses the structure of the force and a new public security doctrine. The government is required to provide more detailed plans on the content and makeup of the force by October 1, 1992. However, as of early September, the government had not yet developed plans outlining the structure, operations, or resource needs of the police force. The Director General of the National Civilian Police is just beginning to develop the required plans. Compounding the difficulties of this task is the requirement negotiated by the FMLN that the Director General not have any affiliation with the prior public security forces. The Director General, although a successful businessman, has no prior police experience to draw on as he prepares the plan.

Two other problems that impede development of a professional police force are the current void in the command structure and the government of El Salvador's decision to keep salaries for police officers low. Since all members of the new police force must be trained at the police academy, there is expected to be an initial gap in leadership when the first class of recruits graduates. U.S. officials have suggested that as a stop-gap measure, 60 officers be sent to Puerto Rico for police management training at a cost of about \$500,000. The government of El Salvador intends to pay entry-level police officers 800 to 1,000 colones (approximately \$100 to \$125) a month, substantially less than other commonly low-paying jobs. For example, secretaries earn 4,000 colones (about \$500) a month and launderers 1,200 colones (about \$150) a month. U.S. and U.N. officials said this low pay sends a negative message to potential officers and the general public about the government's commitment to a professional police force.

The National Civilian Police does not yet have headquarters offices, equipment, or facilities. The new police force is not expected to inherit adequate equipment from the current police. At one precinct station we visited in San Salvador, which was responsible for the safety of 250,000 people, the police had one car, one phone, and no radios. Another station had been bombed during the civil war and still had no roof or beds, and lacked other equipment. Although the Salvadoran military is believed to have excess equipment, it has not provided any cars, radios, or usable

---

facilities, and U.S. and U.N. officials told us they do not expect the military to voluntarily support the police development effort.

---

## Police Academy Has Experienced Start-up Problems

Since all members of the National Civilian Police must be graduates of the academy, any significant problems with the academy will impede the development of the police force. The first class at the academy was to begin on May 1, 1992, under the terms of the peace agreement, but the first class of recruits was not installed until August 31, 1992. According to U.S. officials, the 3-month delay was caused by, among other things, the difficulty in finding an adequate site for the academy and the time needed for entrance examinations. They also said that the May start-up target date was unrealistic given the magnitude of the task. To compensate for the delay, the size of the initial class has been doubled from 330 to 660 members. The class is scheduled to graduate in February 1993.

The new academy does not yet have suitable or permanent facilities. It is temporarily located at a training site formerly occupied by the Salvadoran military. This site, however, is too small to accommodate the full training program. In addition, before the military personnel vacated the site, they stripped it of anything usable, including beds, door jams, windows, lockers, and light bulbs. The academy is scheduled to move to another interim facility that was not stripped by the Salvadoran military, but this site lacks classrooms. Ultimately, the academy is expected to occupy the site of a former Catholic school, but according to ICITAP officials, the government would have to spend at least \$10 million to purchase the site and improve earthquake damaged buildings.

According to U.S. officials, the lack of operational plans and other information about the new police force could hamper the effectiveness of the training program at the new police academy. For example, while the curriculum at the academy is based on past police academy assistance in Panama and elsewhere, it is being developed before the force's most critical needs are known. According to ICITAP officials, this may become a greater problem as specialized training is being decided upon. In addition, the Director General of the academy is not commanded by the Director General of the National Civilian Police, which, according to ICITAP officials may pose future problems.

---

## Funding Shortfall Projected

According to officials we interviewed, the most pressing problems facing the establishment of the National Civilian Police and the police academy are associated with funding. The government of El Salvador has not put a high priority on supporting the academy or the police force, international donors have not responded to appeals for funding support, and the police academy is expected to run out of operating funds in the near future. Although the total cost of the police development effort has not been determined,<sup>3</sup> officials we spoke with agreed that the amount provided or pledged to date falls far short of current and future resource needs.

---

## The Police Development Effort Not a High Priority in the Salvadoran Government

On the basis of interviews with U.S., U.N., and El Salvador officials, we found that the government has not made the police force a funding priority. The government of El Salvador has not pledged any funding for the National Civilian Police. It has pledged \$13 million in cash and in-kind assistance for the police academy, but has spent only \$200,000 and has not provided the promised permanent academy site. The \$200,000 was used to refurbish the temporary facilities housing the police academy. Moreover, the government has set low wages for entry-level members of the police.

In addition, the government has not obtained the cooperation of its military to provide equipment, facilities, and other support. U.S. officials told us that military inventories contain non-lethal equipment that could be used by the new National Civilian Police. The United States purchased some of the equipment for the military and the National Police under earlier economic and military assistance programs. While U.S. officials were not certain how many of these items are usable, none has been provided. However, according to U.S. and U.N. officials, the military is not likely to voluntarily assist in developing the police. The role of the armed forces in the peace process is a sensitive political issue in El Salvador. U.S. officials told us that the interests of the military must be considered in order to avoid the military taking action detrimental to the peace process. According to these officials, perhaps in 6 months the political climate in El Salvador would be such that appeals could be made to the military to help in the program.

The government also has had to direct its attention to other important peace issues, such as land ownership. While data was unavailable on how much the government has spent for other priority issues, we were told that

---

<sup>3</sup>On the basis of past experience, U.S. officials estimated that it could cost as much as \$48.5 million for the first year alone to cover procurement costs, salaries, and other operating expenses.

---

the land ownership issue will require a considerable amount of money. While the government was operating with a constrained budget, U.S. and U.N. officials told us that if police development was considered a national priority, the government would find the funds and resources necessary to make the program work.

---

### International Donors Have Not Responded to Appeals for Police Funds

U.S. and U.N. officials believe that the international community has a responsibility to financially support the police development effort because of the international community's key role in the peace negotiations. However, except for the United States, Spain, and Norway, international financial support for the police has been nonexistent.

In March 1992, 19 countries (including the United States), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund pledged approximately \$800 million to support the peace process. However, as of September 15, 1992, no donors other than the United States and Norway had provided funds to support the police development program. In June 1992, the United Nations asked member nations to provide financial support specifically for the police academy. No responses were received. Following up on this appeal in August 1992, the United Nations asked the five permanent members of the Security Council to donate funds and request donations from other member nations. However, no funds have been subsequently pledged.

U.S. and U.N. officials told us that international support has been lacking because donors view crises in other parts of the world as more serious and believe the United States has a primary interest in El Salvador because of its long involvement there. In addition (1) actions such as the military's stripping the site offered for the police academy, (2) the perceived general lack of support for the police development program by the government of El Salvador and the military, and (3) a donor expectation that some sort of peace dividend from the cessation of war should be available for this purpose were cited as affecting international donor support.

Officials we interviewed had mixed views on the prospects for future international support. U.S. officials from the Department of State and the Agency for International Development in Washington expressed some confidence in obtaining the needed international support. In contrast, U.S. and U.N. officials in El Salvador and U.N. officials in New York were pessimistic that international support would increase and said that the

United States would likely need to take on more of the financial burden if the police development effort is to continue.

### Operating Funds for the Police Academy Expected to Run Out Soon

As of August 1992, \$30.3 million had been pledged or provided for the new police force and police academy through the end of fiscal year 1993. The funding sources are shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Funding Pledged or Provided for Police Development in El Salvador**  
(Fiscal Years 1992-93)

Dollars in millions		
Source	Intended use of funds	Amount
United States	To cover the costs of curriculum development, instructor training, equipment, and supplies for the academy; planning, training, and organizational development for the police force.	\$16.0 <sup>a</sup>
El Salvador	To pay for the academy site, improvements to the police academy facility, and general academy personnel costs.	13.0
Spain	To support police academy operations.	1.0
Norway	To fund operating costs of police academy.	0.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$30.3</b>

<sup>a</sup>This amount excludes the \$4 million allocated for ICITAP's overhead and advisor costs.

We were told that only a small portion of these funds (the \$300,000 from Norway) have been made available to pay for operating expenses.<sup>4</sup> In mid-August 1992, U.S. officials told us these funds will be insufficient to keep the police academy open after October 1992. On September 15, 1992, a State Department official told us that the government of El Salvador reportedly found additional funds that will keep the academy operating through December 1992; however, we were unable to verify that funds would be made available. No funds for the operating costs of the National Civilian Police had been pledged as of September 15, 1992, from any source.

<sup>4</sup>The funds from Norway have been used by the United Nations to equip temporary office space; print documents; fund publicity; and pay the salaries of a guard, secretary, and driver since April 1992. Remaining funds are to be spent on uniforms, beds, lockers, office furnishings, and food.

---

While the U.S. funds administered by ICITAP are not prohibited by law from being used for recipient countries' operating expenses, according to ICITAP officials, ICITAP does not believe that providing operating funds is part of its mission. U.S. officials explained that funding recurring operational costs is not developmental and that once such costs are paid, it is difficult to stop paying them because the recipient government becomes reliant on continued operational support.

---

## Scope and Methodology

To assess the status of the police development effort in El Salvador, we interviewed officials of the U.S. Embassy, the Agency for International Development, ICITAP, the government of El Salvador, FMLN, the U.N. Observer Mission in El Salvador, and the United Nations Development Program in El Salvador. We also reviewed pertinent U.S., U.N., and government of El Salvador documents. In Washington, D.C., we interviewed officials from the Department of State, ICITAP, and the Agency for International Development.

We conducted this review in August and September 1992 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. As you requested, we did not obtain written agency comments on this report; however, we discussed it with agency program officials and incorporated their comments where appropriate.

---

We are sending copies of this report to the Chairmen, Senate and House Committees on Appropriations, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs; the Secretary of State; the Attorney General; the Administrator, Agency for International Development; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

---

I can be reached at (202) 275-5790 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this report. Its major contributors were Donald L. Patton, Assistant Director; Joan M. Slowitsky, Evaluator-in-Charge; and Bill J. Keller, Evaluator.



Harold J. Johnson  
Director, Foreign Economic  
Assistance Issues

---

### Ordering Information

The first copy of each GAO report and testimony is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.

U.S. General Accounting Office  
P.O. Box 6015  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Orders may also be placed by calling (202) 275-6241.

**United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington D.C. 20548**

**Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use \$300**

**First Class Mail  
Postage & Fees Paid  
GAO  
Permit No. G100**