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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 24 February 1981 from the Head of the
Delegation of the United States of America addressed
to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights at
its thirty-seventh session

The Commission on Human Rights, under item 13 of its agenda, will consider the human rights situation in El Salvador, where the present régime is seeking to defend itself from terrorist attacks from both right and left. Interference from communist States, including a massive supply of arms to terrorist insurgents, has recently caused a sharp deterioration in the security situation, which in turn leads to increasing violations of the human rights of innocent people.

My Government has recently published new evidence of interference in the internal affairs of El Salvador. A summary of my Government's findings is attached.

I would be grateful if you would arrange for the circulation of this letter, with its enclosure, under agenda item 13.

(Signed): Michael Novak
Head of the Delegation of
the United States of America

COMMUNIST INTERFERENCE IN EL SALVADOR

SUMMARY

This special report presents definitive evidence of the clandestine military support given by the Soviet Union, Cuba and their communist allies to Marxist-Leninist guerrillas now fighting to overthrow the established Government of El Salvador. The evidence, drawn from captured guerrilla documents and war materiel and corroborated by intelligence reports, underscores the central role played by Cuba and other communist countries beginning in 1979 in the political unification, military direction, and arming of insurgent forces in El Salvador.

From the documents it is possible to reconstruct chronologically key stages in the growth of the communist development:

- The direct tutelary role played by Fidel Castro and the Cuban Government in late 1979 and early 1980 in bringing the diverse Salvadoran guerrilla factions into a unified front.
- The assistance and advice given the guerrillas in planning their military operations.
- The series of contacts between Salvadoran Communist leaders and key officials of several communist states that resulted in commitments to supply the insurgents nearly 800 tons of the most modern weapons and equipment.
- The covert delivery to El Salvador of nearly 200 tons of those arms, mostly through Cuba and Nicaragua, in preparation for the guerrillas' failed "general offensive" of January, 1981.
- The major communist effort to "cover" their involvement by providing mostly arms of Western manufacture.

It is clear that over the past year the insurgency in El Salvador has been progressively transformed into another case of indirect armed aggression against a small, third world country by communist powers acting through Cuba.

The United States considers it of great importance that the American people and the world community be aware of the gravity of the actions of Cuba, the Soviet Union and other communist states who are carrying out what is clearly shown to be a well-coordinated, covert effort to bring about the overthrow of El Salvador's established government and to impose in its place a Communist regime with no popular support.

I. A CASE OF COMMUNIST MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD

The situation in El Salvador presents a strikingly familiar case of Soviet, Cuban and other communist military involvement in a politically troubled third world country. By providing arms, training and direction to a local insurgency, and by supporting it with a global propaganda campaign, the Communists have intensified and widened the conflict, greatly increased the suffering of the Salvadoran people, and deceived much of the world about the true nature of the revolution. Their objective in El Salvador as elsewhere is to bring about -- at little cost to themselves -- the overthrow of the established government and the imposition of a congenial Communist regime in defiance of the will of the Salvadoran people.

The Guerrillas: Their Tactics and Their Propaganda

El Salvador's extreme left, which includes the long established Communist Party of El Salvador (PCES) and several armed groups of more recent origin, has become increasingly committed since 1976 to a military solution. A campaign of terrorism -- bombings, assassinations, kidnappings and seizures of embassies -- has disrupted national life and claimed the lives of many innocent people.

During 1980, previously fragmented factions of the extreme left agreed to coordinate their actions in support of a joint military battle plan developed with Cuban assistance. As a pre-condition for large scale Cuban aid, Salvadoran guerrilla leaders, meeting in Havana in May, formed first the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU) as their central executive arm for political and military planning, and in late 1980, the Farabundo Marti Peoples Liberation Front (FMLN), as the coordinating body of the guerrilla organizations. A front organization, The Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR), was also created to disseminate propaganda abroad. For appearances sake, three small non-Marxist-Leninist political parties were brought into the front, though they have no representation in the DRU.

The Salvadoran guerrillas, speaking through the FDR, have managed to deceive many about what is happening in El Salvador. They have been aided by Nicaragua and by the worldwide propaganda networks of Cuba, the Soviet Union and other communist countries.

The guerrillas' propaganda aims at legitimizing their violence and concealing the communist aid that makes it possible. Other key aims are to discredit the Salvadoran Government, to misrepresent U.S. policies and actions, and to foster the impression of overwhelming popular support for the revolutionary movement.

Examples of the more extreme claims of their propaganda apparatus -- echoed by Cuban, Soviet and Nicaraguan media -- are:

- That the United States has military bases and several hundred troops in El Salvador (The United States has no bases and fewer than 50 military personnel there);
- That the Government's security forces were responsible for most of the 10,000 killings that occurred in 1980 (in their own reports in 1980, the guerrillas themselves claimed the killings of nearly 6,000 people, including non-combatant "informers" as well as government authorities and military).

In addition to media propaganda, Cuba and the Soviet Union promote the insurgent cause at international forums, with individual governments, and among foreign opinion leaders. Cuba has an efficient network for introducing and promoting representatives of the Salvadoran left all over the world. Havana and Moscow also bring indirect pressure on some governments to support the Salvadoran revolutionaries by mobilizing local communist groups.

II. COMMUNIST MILITARY INTERVENTION: A CHRONOLOGY

Before September of 1980 the diverse guerrilla groups in El Salvador were ill-coordinated and ill-equipped, armed with pistols, a varied assortment of hunting rifles and shotguns. At that time the insurgents acquired weapons predominantly through purchases on the international market and from dealers who participated in the supply of arms to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

By January 1981 when the guerrillas launched their "general offensive," they had acquired an impressive array of modern weapons and supporting equipment never before used in El Salvador by either the insurgents or the military. Belgian Fal rifles, German G-3 Rifles, US M-1, and M-16 and AR-15 semiautomatic and automatic rifles and the Israeli UZI Submachine Gun and Galil Assault Rifle have all been confirmed in the guerrilla inventory. In addition, they are known to possess .30 to .50 caliber machine guns, the US M-60 Machine Gun, US and Russian hand grenades, the US M-79 and Chinese RPG Grenade Launcher, the US M-72 light antitank weapon and 81mm mortars. Captured ammunition indicates the guerrillas probably possess 60mm and 82mm mortars and 57mm and 75mm recoilless rifles.

Recently acquired evidence has enabled us to reconstruct the central role played by Cuba, other communist countries and several radical states in the political unification and military direction of insurgent forces in El Salvador, and in equipping them in less than six months with a panoply of modern weapons that enabled the guerrillas to launch a well-armed offensive.

This information, which we consider incontrovertible, has been acquired over the past year. Many key details, however, have fallen into place as the result of the guerrillas' own records. Two particularly important document caches were recovered from the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCEs) in November 1980 and from the Peoples' Revolutionary Army (ERP) in January 1981. This mass of captured documents includes battle plans, letters and reports of meetings and travels, some written in cryptic language and using code words. When deciphered and verified against evidence from other intelligence sources, the documents bring to light the chain of events leading to the guerrillas' January offensive. What emerges is a highly disturbing pattern of parallel and coordinated action by a number of communist and some radical countries bent on imposing a military solution.

The Cuban and communist role in preparing for and helping to organize the abortive "general offensive" early this year is spelled out in the following chronology based on the contents of captured documents and other sources.

Chronology: Initial Steps

The chronology of external support begins at the end of 1979. With salutations of "brotherly and revolutionary greetings" on December 16, 1979, members of the Communist Party of El Salvador, National Resistance (FARN), and Popular Liberation Forces (FPL) thank Fidel Castro in a letter for his help and, "the help of your party comrades... by signing an agreement which establishes very solid bases upon which we begin building coordination and unity of our organization." The letter, written in Havana, was signed by leaders of these three revolutionary organizations.

At an April 1980 meeting at the Hungarian Embassy in Mexico City, guerrilla leaders made certain "requests (possibly for arms). Present at this meeting were representatives of the German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria, Poland, Vietnam, Hungary, Cuba and the Soviet Union.

In notes taken during an April 28, 1980 meeting of the Salvadoran Communist Party, party leader Shafik Handal mentions the need to "speed up reorganization and put the Party on a war footing." He added, "I'm in agreement with taking advantage of the possibilities of assistance from the socialist camp. I think that their attitude is magnificent. We are not yet taking advantage of it." In reference to a unification of the armed movement he asserts, "The idea of involving everyone in the area has already been suggested to Fidel himself." Handal alludes to the concept of unification and notes, "Fidel thought well of the idea."

Guerrilla Contacts in Havana

From May 5 to June 8, 1980, Salvadoran guerrilla leaders report on meetings in Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. They proceed to Havana and meet several times with Fidel Castro; the documents also note an interview with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) Chairman Erich Honecker in Havana. During the Havana portion of their travels the Salvadoran guerrilla leadership meets twice with the Cuban Directorate of Special Operations (DOE, the clandestine Operations/Special Forces Unit of the Cuban Ministry of Interior) to discuss guerrilla military plans. In addition, they meet with the Cuban "Chief of Communications." During this period (late May 1980), the Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP) is admitted into the guerrilla coalition after negotiations in Havana. The coalition then assumes the name of the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU) and meets with Fidel Castro on three occasions.

After the Havana meeting, Shafik Handal leaves Havana on May 30, 1980 for Moscow. The other Salvadoran guerrilla leaders in Havana leave for Managua. During the visit of early June the DRU leaders meet with Nicaraguan revolutionary leaders (Sandinistas) and discuss: (1) a headquarters with "all measures of security," (2) an "international field of operations, which they (Sandinistas) control," and (3) the willingness of the Sandinistas to "contribute in material terms" and to adopt "the cause of El Salvador as its own." (The meeting culminated with "dinner at Humberto's house" (presumably Sandinista leader Humberto Ortega).

Salvadoran Communist Party Leader's Travels in the East

From June 2 to July 22, 1980, Shafik Handal visits the USSR, Vietnam, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ethiopia to procure arms and seek support for the movement.

On June 2, 1980, Handal meets in Moscow with Mikhail Kudachkin, Deputy Chief of the Latin American section of the Foreign Relations Department of the CPSU Central Committee. Kudachkin suggests that Handal travel to Vietnam to seek arms and offers to pay for Handal's trip.

Continuing his travels between June 9 and 15, Handal visits Vietnam where he is received by Le Duan, Secretary General of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Xuan Thuy, member of the Communist Party Central Committee Secretariat, and Vice Minister of National Defense Tran Van Quang. The Vietnamese, as a "first contribution," agree to provide 60 tons of arms. Handal adds that, "The comrade requested air transport from the USSR."

Handal visits the German Democratic Republic from June 19 to June 24, 1980, where he is received by Hermann Axen, member of the GDR Politburo. Axen states that the GDR has already sent 1.9 tons of supplies to Managua. On July 21, GDR leader Honecker writes the GDR Embassy in Moscow that additional supplies will be sent and that the GDR will provide military training, particularly in clandestine operations. The GDR telegram adds that, although Berlin possesses no Western-manufactured weapons (which the Salvadoran guerrillas are seeking), efforts will be undertaken to find a "solution to this problem." (Note: The emphasis on Western arms reflects the desire to maintain plausible denial.)

From June 24-27, 1980, Handal visits Czechoslovakia where he is received by Vasil Bilak, Second Secretary of the Czech Communist Party. Bilak says that some Czech arms that are circulating in the world market will be provided so that these arms will not be traced back to Czechoslovakia as the donor country. Transportation will be coordinated with the GDR.

Handal proceeds to Bulgaria from June 27 to June 30, 1980. He is received by Dimitir Stanichev, member of the Central Committee Secretariat. The Bulgarians agree to supply German-origin weapons and other supplies, again in an apparent effort to conceal their sources.

In Hungary, June 30 to July 3, 1980, Handal is received by Communist Party General Secretary Janos Kadar and "Guesel" (probably Central Committee Secretary for Foreign Affairs Andras Gyenes). The latter offers radios and other supplies and indicates Hungarian willingness to trade arms with Ethiopia or Angola in order to obtain Western-origin arms for the Salvadoran guerrillas. Guesel promises to resolve the trade with the Ethiopians and Angolans himself, "since we want to be a part of providing this aid." Additionally, Handal secures the promise of 10,000 uniforms to be made by the Hungarians according to Handal's specifications.

Handal then travels to Ethiopia, July 3 to July 6. He meets Chairman Mengistu and receives "a warm reception." Mengistu offers "several thousand weapons," including: 150 Thompson Submachine Guns with 300 cartridge clips; 1,500 M-1 rifles; 1,000 M-14 rifles; and ammunition for these weapons. In addition, the Ethiopians agree to supply all necessary spare parts for these arms.

Handal returns to Moscow on July 22, 1980, and is received again by Mikhail Kudachkin. The Soviet official asks if 30 communist youth currently studying in the USSR could take part in the war in El Salvador. Before leaving Moscow, Handal receives assurances that the Soviets agree in principle to transport the Vietnamese arms.

Further Contacts in Nicaragua

On July 13, representatives of the DRU arrive in Managua amidst preparations for the first anniversary celebration of Somoza's overthrow. The DRU leaders wait until July 23 to meet with "Comrade Bayardo" (presumably Bayardo Arce, member of the Sandinista Directorate). They complain that the Sandinistas appear to be restricting their access to visiting world dignitaries and demanding that all contacts be cleared through them. During the

meeting, Arce promises ammunition to the guerrillas and arranges a meeting for them with the Sandinista "Military Commission." Arce indicates that, since the guerrillas will receive some arms manufactured by the communist countries, the Sandinista Army (EPS) will consider absorbing some of these weapons and providing to the Salvadorans Western-manufactured arms held by the EPS in exchange. (In the month of January 1981 the Popular Sandinista Army indeed switched from using US-made weapons to those of Soviet and East European origin.)

The DRU representatives also meet with visiting PLO leader Yasir Arafat in Managua on July 22, 1980. Arafat promises military equipment, including arms and aircraft. (A Salvadoran guerrilla leader met with Fatah leaders in Beirut in August and November, and the PLO has trained selected Salvadorans in the Near East and in Nicaragua.)

The Guerrilla General Staff Delegation departs from Managua for Havana on July 27 where Cuban "specialists" add final touches to the military plans formulated during the May meetings in Havana.

Arms deliveries begin in mid-August, 1980, Shafik Handal's arms shopping expedition begins to bear fruit. On August 15, 1980, Ethiopian arms depart for Cuba. Three weeks later the 60 tons of captured US arms sent from Vietnam are scheduled to arrive in Cuba.

As a result of a Salvadoran delegation's trip to Iraq earlier in the year, the guerrillas receive a \$500 thousand logistics donation. The funds are distributed to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and within El Salvador.

By mid-September, substantial quantities of the arms promised to Handal are well on the way to Cuba and Nicaragua. The guerrilla logistics coordinator in Nicaragua informs his joint general staff on September 26 that 130 tons of arms and other military material supplied by the communist countries have arrived in Nicaragua for shipment to El Salvador. According to the captured documents, this represents one-sixth of the commitments to the guerrillas by the communist countries.

(Note: To get an idea of the magnitude of this commitment, the Vietnamese offer of only 60 tons included 2 million rifle and machine gun bullets, 14,500 mortar shells, 1620 rifles, 210 machine guns, 48 mortars, 12 rocket launchers, and 192 pistols.)

In September and October the number of flights to Nicaragua from Cuba increased sharply. These flights had the capacity to transport several hundred tons of cargo.

At the end of September, despite appeals from the guerrillas, the Sandinistas suspend their weapons deliveries to El Salvador for one month after the United States Government lodges a protest to Nicaragua on the arms trafficking.

When the shipments resume in October, as much as 120 tons of weapons and material are still in Nicaragua and some 300-400 tons are in Cuba. Because of the difficulty of moving such large quantities overland, Nicaragua -- with Cuban support -- begins airlifting arms from Nicaragua into El Salvador. In November, about 2.5 tons of arms are delivered by air before accidents force a brief halt in the airlift.

In December, Salvadoran guerrillas, encouraged by Cuba, begin plans for a general offensive in early 1981. To provide the increased support necessary, the Sandinistas revive the airlift into El Salvador. Salvadoran insurgents protest that they cannot absorb the increased flow of arms, but guerrilla liaison members in Managua urge them to increase their efforts as several East European nations are providing unprecedented assistance.

A revolutionary radio station -- Radio Liberation -- operating in Nicaragua begins broadcasting to El Salvador on December 15, 1980. It exhorts the populace to mount a massive insurrection against the government. (References to the Sandinista sharing the expenses of a revolutionary radio station appear in the captured documents.)

On January 24, 1981, a Cessna from Nicaragua crashes on take-off in El Salvador after unloading passengers and possibly weapons. A second plane is strafed by the Salvadoran Air Force and the pilot and numerous weapons are captured. The pilot admits to being an employee of the Nicaraguan National Airlines and concedes that the flight originated from Sandino International Airport in Managua. He further admits to flying two earlier arms deliveries.

Air supply is playing a key role, but infiltration by land and sea also continues. Small launches operating out of several Nicaraguan Pacific ports traverse the Gulf of Fonseca at night, carrying arms, ammunition and personnel. During the general offensive on January 13, several dozen

well-armed guerrillas landed on El Salvador's southeastern coast, on the Gulf of Fonseca, adjacent to Nicaragua.

Overland arms shipments also continue through Honduras from Nicaragua and Costa Rica. In mid-January, Honduras security forces uncover an arms infiltration operation run by Salvadorans working through Nicaragua and directed by Cubans. In this operation, a trailer truck is discovered carrying weapons and ammunition destined for Salvadoran guerrillas. Weapons include 100 US M-16 rifles and 81mm mortar ammunition. These arms are a portion of the Vietnamese shipment; a trace of the M-16s reveals that several of them were shipped to US units in Vietnam where they were captured or left behind by departing US units. Using this network, perhaps five truck loads of arms may have reached the Salvadoran guerrillas.

The availability of weapons and material significantly increases the military capabilities of the Salvadoran insurgents. While attacks raged throughout the country during the "general offensive" that began on January 10, it soon became clear that the DRU could not sustain the level of violence without suffering costly losses in personnel. By the end of January DRU leaders apparently decided to avoid direct confrontation with government forces and reverted to sporadic guerrilla terrorist tactics that would reduce the possibility of suffering heavy casualties.

III. THE GOVERNMENT: THE SEARCH FOR ORDER AND DEMOCRACY

Central America's smallest and most densely populated country is El Salvador. Since its independence in 1838, the country has experienced chronic political instability and repression, widespread poverty, and concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few families. Although considerable economic progress took place in the 1960's, the political system remained in the hands of a traditional economic elite backed by the military. During the 1970's, both the legitimate grievances of the poor and landless and the growing aspirations of the expanding middle classes met increasingly with repression. El Salvador has long been a violent country with political, economic and personal disputes often resulting in murders.

The Present Government, Aware of the need for change and alarmed by the prospect of Nicaragua-like chaos, progressive Salvadoran military officers and civilians overthrew the authoritarian regime of General Carlos Humberto Romero in October, 1979, and ousted nearly 100 conservative senior officers.

After an initial period of instability, the new government stabilized around a coalition that includes military participants in the October 1979 coup, the Christian Democratic Party, and independent civilians. Since March 1980, this coalition has begun broad social changes: conversion of large estates into peasant cooperatives, distribution of land to tenant farmers, and nationalization of foreign trade and banking.

Four Marxist-Leninist guerrilla groups are using violence and terrorism against the Salvadoran Government and its reforms. Three small non-Marxist-Leninist political parties -- including a Social Democratic Party -- work with guerrilla organizations and their political fronts through the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), most of whose activities take place outside El Salvador.

The Government of El Salvador -- headed since last December by Jose Napoleon Duarte, the respected Christian Democrat denied office by the military in the presidential elections of 1972 -- faces armed opposition from the extreme right as well as from the left. Exploiting their traditional ties to the security forces, and the tendency of some members of the security forces to abuse their authority, some wealthy Salvadorans affected by the Duarte Government's reforms have sponsored terrorist activities against supporters of the agrarian and banking reforms and against the Government itself.

A symbolic relationship has developed between the terrorism practiced by extremists of both left and right. Thousands have died without regard to class, creed, nationality or politics. Brutal and still unexplained murders in December of four American churchwomen, and in January of two American trade unionists, added U.S. citizens to the toll of this tragic violence. The United States has made clear its interest in a complete investigation of these killings and the punishment of those responsible.

Despite bitter resistance from right and left, the Duarte Government has stuck to its reform programs, and has adopted emergency measures to ease the lot of the poor through public works, housing projects and aid to marginal communities. On the political front, it has offered amnesty to its opponents, scheduled elections for a constituent Assembly in 1982, and pledged to hand power over to a popularly elected government no later than mid-1983.

The Government's pursuit of progress with order has been further hampered by the virtual breakdown of the law enforcement and judicial system and by the lack of an effective civil service.

The introduction of the reforms -- some of which are now clearly irreversible -- has reduced popular support for those who argue that change can only come about through violence. Few Salvadorans participate in anti-government demonstrations. Repeated calls by the guerrillas for general strikes in mid- and late 1980 went unheeded. The Duarte Government, moreover, has made clear its willingness to negotiate the terms of future political processes with democratic members of all opposition forces -- most notably, by accepting the offer of El Salvador's Council of Bishops to mediate between the Government and the FDC.

In sum, the Duarte Government is working hard and with some success to deal with the serious political, social and economic problems that most concern the people of El Salvador.

United States Support

In its commitment to reform and democracy, the Government of El Salvador has had the political support of the United States ever since the October 1979 Revolution. Because we give primary emphasis to helping the people of El Salvador, most of our assistance has been economic. In 1980, the United States provided nearly \$56 million in AID, aimed at easing the conditions that underlie unrest and extremism. This assistance has helped create jobs, feed the hungry, improve health, housing and education and support the reforms that are opening and modernizing El Salvador's economy. The United States will continue to work with the Salvadoran Government toward economic betterment, social justice and peace.

Because the solution in El Salvador should be of the Salvadoran's own making and non-violent, the United States has carefully limited its military support. In January mounting evidence of communist involvement compelled President Carter to authorize a resupply of weapons and ammunition to El Salvador -- the first provision of lethal items since 1977.

IV. SOME CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing record leaves little doubt that:

- The Salvadoran insurgency has become the object of a large-scale commitment by communist states outside Latin America.
- The political direction, organization and arming of the insurgency is coordinated and heavily influenced by Cuba with active support of the Soviet Union, East Germany, Vietnam, and other communist states.
- The massing and delivery of arms to the Salvadoran guerrillas by those states must be judged against the fact that from 1977 until January, 1981, the United States provided no weapons or ammunition to the Salvadoran Armed Forces.
- A major effort has been made to provide "cover" for this operation by supplying arms of Western manufacture, and by support a front organization known as the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) to seek non-communist political support through propaganda.
- Although some non-communist states have also provided material support, the organization and delivery of this assistance, like the overwhelming mass of arms, are in the hands of communist-controlled networks.
- In short, over the past year, the insurgency in El Salvador has been progressively transformed into a text-book case of indirect armed aggression by communist powers through Cuba.