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The United States in El Salvador
Argumentative Essay Prompt

What criteria should have guided the U.S. government's policies toward El Salvador during the 1980-1992 civil war? Was the U.S. intervention justified? Why or why not?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from the attached sources, your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Supporting evidence found in these sources or from other resources must be cited. You can cite the sources by document number (e.g. Document 1) or by using standard MLA in-text citations.

Document 1: When We Were Young / There Was A War

Goudvis, Patricia, and Alice Stone. "Why Do the Planes Say 'USA' on Them?" When We Were Young/There Was A War, 2018.

www.centralamericanstories.com/characters/yesenia/

Watch "[Yesenia's Story](#)," a short documentary that draws on interviews with a Salvadoran woman, which were filmed in the early 1980s and again in 2012. Then read the accompanying image and text from the website "When We Were Young / There Was a War."

Why do the planes say "USA" on them?



Child's Drawing, San José Las Flores, El Salvador.

Children wrote "USA" on the planes dropping bombs in their drawings because the United States provided large sums of money to the government of El Salvador during the civil war.

Between 1980 and 1992 the US sent more than \$6 billion in military and economic aid, an average of over 1 million dollars per day.

Years of repression and rebellion escalated into full fledged war in 1980, when a coalition of leftist guerrilla groups, called the FMLN, united to seek to overthrow the military dictatorship. They fought to implement social and economic reforms to benefit the poor, insure respect for human rights and promote a more democratic government. Yesenia's father was one of thousands of peasants, workers and ordinary citizens who joined the FMLN, convinced that armed struggle was the only way to bring about lasting change.

The US government did not see things that way. They saw it in their national interest to side with and finance the military dictators and conservative forces blocking reform, often in the name of anti-communism. They turned a blind eye to the atrocities they knew the armed forces were committing.

In 1992, UN sponsored Peace Accords finally brought an end to the war, in which 75,000 people died. A Truth Commission was established, which reported that the government deliberately terrorized, kidnapped, massacred and murdered civilians. It found the FMLN responsible for 5% of the human rights violations perpetrated during the war, while the government was responsible for 85%. Among the many atrocities attributed to the government security forces were: the assassination of the Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero; the abduction, rape and murder of four US churchwomen working in El Salvador; the massacre of over 1000 peasants near the village of El Mozote; and the slaying of 6 Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter.

Document 2: *Guerrilla poem*

Góchez Fernández, Delfy. "I'll Die Gladly/Con Gusto Moriré." *On the Front Line: Guerrilla Poems of El Salvador*, edited and translated by Claribel Alegría and Darwin J. Flakoll, Curbstone Press, 1996, pp. 28-31.

This poem was written by a member of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) on May 10, 1979. It is part of a collection of poems by Salvadoran revolutionaries, some who were poets before the war and others who "came to poetry by way of revolution" in the words of Roque Dalton.

CON GUSTO MORIRÉ	I'LL DIE GLADLY
a mí me van a matar. cuándo? no sé . . . lo que sí tengo claro es que moriré así, asesinada por el enemigo	they're going to kill me when? I don't know . . . what I do know clearly is that I'll die that way, assassinated by the enemy.
como quiero seguir luchando siempre estaré luchando para morir así	since I long to go on fighting I'll always keep fighting to die that way.
como quiero morir junto al pueblo nunca me separaré de él. como es nuestro grito el que llegará deberé gritarlo siempre.	since I want to die with the people I'll never be separated from them. since it's our shout that reaches out I have to keep shouting forever.
como el futuro y la historia están con nosotros, jamás me desviaré del camino.	since the future and history are with us, I'll never stray from the road.
como aspiro a ser revolucionaria mis puntos de vista y todas mis aspiraciones estarán a partir de ello.	since I aspire to be a revolutionary my viewpoints and all my hopes depart from that.
no tendré miedo nunca. todo lo que haga tiene que ser un golpe para el enemigo, en cualquier forma que se dé	I'll never be afraid. everything I do must be a blow against the enemy, however I give it.

<p>siempre estaré activa.</p> <p>lo que sí es seguro</p> <p>es que me van a matar. y mi sangre regará nuestra tierra y crecerán las flores de la libertad</p> <p>y el futuro abrirá sus brazos y caluroso, lleno de amor,</p> <p>nos acogerá en su pecho nuestra madre nuestra patria reirá feliz al estar de nuevo con su hijo con su pueblo con el niño que ayer lloraba un pedazo de pan y que hoy crece como río.</p> <p>con la madre que moría lentamente y hoy vive su lejano sueño de ayer.</p> <p>con el eterno combatiente cuya sangre alimentó el día que algún día llegará.</p> <p>sí, con gusto moriré, llena de amor, quiero morir de la manera más natural en estos tiempos y en mi país: asesinada por el enemigo de mi pueblo.</p>	<p>I'll always be active</p> <p>what is really certain</p> <p>is that they're going to kill me. and my blood will water our land and the flowers of freedom will grow</p> <p>and the future will open its arms and tenderly, filled with love,</p> <p>our mother, our fatherland, will press us to its breast will laugh happily to be once more with its child, with its people with the child that yesterday wept for a crust of bread, and who today grows like a river.</p> <p>with the mother who died slowly and today lives her far-off dream of yesterday.</p> <p>with the eternal combatant whose blood nourished the day that some day will arrive.</p> <p>yes, I'll die happily, filled with love, I want to die in the most natural way in these times and in my country: Assassinated by the enemy of my people.</p>
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Document 3: Archbishop Romero's Letter to President Carter

Romero, Oscar. "1980 Letter of Archbishop Romero to President Carter." Received by Jimmy Carter, Access to Catholic Social Justice, Just Peace, 17 Jan. 1980.
www.justpeace.org/romeroletter.htm

Full Text of the 1980 Letter of Archbishop Romero to President Carter.
Shortly after this letter was sent, Romero was murdered while celebrating mass.

San Salvador
February 17, 1980

His Excellency
The President of the United States
Mr. Jimmy Carter

Mr. President:

In these last days there has appeared in the national press a report that troubles me deeply. According to it, your government is studying the possibility of supporting and aiding economically and militarily the government junta [of El Salvador].

Because you are a Christian and because you manifested that you wish to defend human rights, I dare to expose my pastoral point of view regarding this news and make a concrete petition to you.

I am deeply troubled by the news that the government of the United States should be studying the way to favor the militarist path of El Salvador by sending military equipment and advisors to "train three Salvadoran battalions in logistics, communications and intelligence." In the event that this journalistic information is true, your government's contribution, rather than favoring greater justice and peace in El Salvador will make injustice and repression against the organization of the people, who have been struggling for the respect of their most fundamental rights, even more acute.

The current ruling Junta, and above all the armed forces and security forces, have unfortunately not demonstrated their capacity to resolve the grave national problems through political practice and structural means. In general, they have only resorted to repressive violence, producing a volume of dead and wounded that is greater than that of

recent military regimes whose systematic violation of human rights was condemned by the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights.

The brutal way in which the security forces recently evicted and assassinated the occupants of the headquarters of the Christian Democratic Party despite that the Junta and the government (it would appear) did not authorize that operation is evidence that the Junta and the Christian Democrats do not govern the country, but rather, the political power is in the hands of military men without scruples, who only know how to oppress the people and favor the interests of the Salvadoran oligarchy.

If it is true that this past November, "a group of six Americans spent time in El Salvador supplying two hundred thousand dollars worth of gas masks and bullet proof vests and instructing on their use against demonstrators," you yourself must know that clearly since then the security forces, acting with greater personal protection and effectiveness, have repressed the people even more violently, using deadly weapons.

As such, given the fact that as a Salvadoran, and as Archbishop of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, I have the obligation to watch so that faith and justice reign in my country, I ask that if you truly want to defend human rights:

- You prohibit this military aid to the Salvadoran government.

- You guarantee that your government not intervene directly or indirectly with military, economic and diplomatic pressure.

At this time, we are living through a grave economic and political crisis in our country, but it is doubtless that each time the people have increased their conscience and their organization and have empowered themselves to become the driving force which is responsible for the future of El Salvador, and the only one capable of overcoming this crisis.

It would be unjust and deplorable that by the interference of foreign powers the Salvadoran people were frustrated, they were repressed, and impeded in deciding with autonomy over the economic and political trajectory that our country should follow.

It would suppose violating a right that the Latin American bishops gathered in Puebla publicly acknowledged when we said: "The legitimate self-determination of our countries that permits them to organize according to their own disposition and history, and to cooperate in a new international order..." (Puebla Synod, 505.)

I hope that your religious convictions and your sensibilities in pro defense of human rights

will compel you to accept my petition, avoiding with it a major spilling of blood in my long-suffered country.

Yours truly,

+ Oscar A. Romero (Archbishop)

Document 4: Reagan speech to manufacturing group

Ronald Reagan: "Remarks on Central America and El Salvador at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers," 10 March 1983. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project.

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/31083a>

President Ronald Reagan delivered this speech, excerpted below, on March 10, 1983 at the Washington Hilton Hotel during the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). According to its website, the NAM is the "largest manufacturing association in the United States, representing small and large manufacturers in every industrial sector and in all 50 states."

America is meeting her challenge here at home. But there are other challenges, equally important, that we must face. And today, I'd like to talk to you about one of them.

Late last year, I visited Central America. Just a few weeks ago, our Ambassador, Jeane Kirkpatrick, also toured the area. And in the last few days, I have met with leaders of the Congress to discuss recent events in Central America and our policies in that troubled part of the world. So, today I'd like to report to you on these consultations and why they're important to all of us.

The nations of Central America are among our nearest neighbors. El Salvador, for example, is nearer to Texas than Texas is to Massachusetts. Central America is simply too close, and the strategic stakes are too high, for us to ignore the danger of governments seizing power there with ideological and military ties to the Soviet Union.

Now, let me just show you how important Central America is. Here—[referring to a map] here at the base of Central America is the Panama Canal. Half of all the foreign trade of the United States passes through either the canal or the other Caribbean sea-lanes on its way to or from our ports.

And, of course, to the north, as you can see, is Mexico, a country of enormous human and material importance with which we share 1,800 miles of peaceful frontier.

And between Mexico and the canal lies Central America. As I speak to you today, its countries are in the midst of the gravest crisis in their history. Accumulated grievances and social and economic change are challenging traditional ways. New leaders with new

aspirations have emerged who want a new and better deal for their peoples. And that is good.

The problem is that an aggressive minority has thrown in its lot with the Communists, looking to the Soviets and their own Cuban henchmen to help them pursue political change through violence. Nicaragua, right here, has become their base. And these extremists make no secret of their goal. They preach the doctrine of a "revolution without frontiers." Their first target is El Salvador.

Important? Well, to begin with, there's the sheer human tragedy. Thousands of people have already died and, unless the conflict is ended democratically, millions more could be affected throughout the hemisphere. The people of El Salvador have proved they want democracy. But if guerrilla violence succeeds, they won't get it. El Salvador will join Cuba and Nicaragua as a base for spreading fresh violence to Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica—probably the most democratic country in the world today. The killing will increase and so will the threat to Panama, the canal and, ultimately, Mexico. In the process, vast numbers of men, women, and children will lose their homes, their countries, and their lives.

Make no mistake. We want the same thing the people of Central America want—an end to the killing. We want to see freedom preserved where it now exists and its rebirth where it does not. The Communist agenda, on the other hand, is to exploit human suffering in Central America to strike at the heart of the Western Hemisphere. By preventing reform and instilling their own brand of totalitarianism, they can threaten freedom and peace and weaken our national security.

I know a good many people wonder why we should care about whether Communist governments come into power in Nicaragua, El Salvador, or other such countries as Costa Rica and Honduras, Guatemala, and the islands of the Caribbean. One columnist argued last week that we shouldn't care, because their products are not that vital to our economy. That's like the argument of another so-called expert that we shouldn't worry about Castro's control over the island of Grenada—their only important product is nutmeg.

Well, let me just interject right here. Grenada, that tiny little island—with Cuba at the west end of the Caribbean, Grenada at the east end—that tiny little island is building now, or having built for it, on its soil and shores, a naval base, a superior air base, storage bases and facilities for the storage of munitions, barracks, and training grounds for the military. I'm sure all of that is simply to encourage the export of nutmeg.

People who make these arguments haven't taken a good look at a map lately or followed the extraordinary buildup of Soviet and Cuban military power in the region or read the

Soviets discussions about why the region is important to them and how they intend to use it.

It isn't nutmeg that's at stake in the Caribbean and Central America; it is the United States national security.

Soviet military theorists want to destroy our capacity to resupply Western Europe in case of an emergency. They want to tie down our attention and forces on our own southern border and so limit our capacity to act in more distant places, such as Europe, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the Sea of Japan.

Those Soviet theorists noticed what we failed to notice: that the Caribbean Sea and Central America constitute this nation's fourth border. If we must defend ourselves against large, hostile military presence on our border, our freedom to act elsewhere to help others and to protect strategically vital sea-lanes and resources has been drastically diminished. They know this; they've written about this.

We've been slow to understand that the defense of the Caribbean and Central America against Marxist-Leninist takeover is vital to our national security in ways we're not accustomed to thinking about.

For the past 3 years, under two Presidents, the United States has been engaged in an effort to stop the advance of communism in Central America by doing what we do best—by supporting democracy. For 3 years, our goal has been to support fundamental change in this region, to replace poverty with development and dictatorship with democracy.

These objectives are not easy to obtain. We're on the right track. Costa Rica continues to set a democratic example, even in the midst of economic crises and Nicaraguan intimidation. Honduras has gone from military rule to a freely elected civilian government. Despite incredible obstacles, the democratic center is holding in El Salvador, implementing land reform and working to replace the politics of death with a life of democracy.

So, the good news is that our new policies have begun to work. Democracy, with free elections, free labor unions, freedom of religion and respect for the integrity of the individual, is the clear choice of the overwhelming majority of Central Americans. In fact, except for Cuba and its followers, no government and no significant sector of the public anywhere in this hemisphere wants to see the guerrillas seize power in El Salvador.

The bad news is that the struggle for democracy is still far from over. Despite their success in largely eliminating guerrilla political influence in populated areas, and despite some

improvements in military armaments and mobility, El Salvador's people remain under strong pressure from armed guerrillas controlled by extremists with Cuban-Soviet support.

The military capability of these guerrillas—and I would like to stress military capability, for these are not peasant irregulars; they are trained, military forces. This has kept political and economic progress from being turned into the peace the Salvadoran people so obviously want.

Part of the trouble is internal to El Salvador, but an important part is external—the availability of training, tactical guidance, and military supplies coming into El Salvador from Marxist Nicaragua. I'm sure you've read about the guerrillas capturing rifles from government national guard units. And recently, this has happened. But much more critical to guerrilla operations are the supplies and munitions that are infiltrated into El Salvador by land, sea, and air—by pack mules, by small boats, and by small aircraft.

These pipelines fuel the guerrilla offensives and keep alive the conviction of their extremist leaders that power will ultimately come from the barrels of their guns. Now, all this is happening in El Salvador just as a constitution is being written, as open Presidential elections are being prepared, and as a peace commission—named last week—has begun to work on amnesty and national reconciliation to bring all social and political groups into the democratic process.

It is the guerrilla militants who have so far refused to use democratic means, have ignored the voice of the people of El Salvador, and have resorted to terror, sabotage, and bullets, instead of the ballot box.

Document 5: CIA Report

https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000049067.pdf

This is a detailed 1983 CIA report on the organization and activities of a Salvadoran National Police death squad.

[REDACTED]

COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR

SUBJ: EXISTENCE OF RIGHTIST DEATH SQUAD WITHIN THE SALVADORAN NATIONAL POLICE; LOCATION OF CLANDESTINE PRISON USED BY THE DEATH SQUAD.

DOI: DECEMBER 1979-18 MARCH 1983

[REDACTED]

Approved for Release
NOV 1993

[REDACTED] 1920232 MAR 83 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

TEXT: 1. ACCORDING TO MEMBERS OF THE SALVADORAN NATIONAL ^{SECURITY SERVICES,} [REDACTED] A RIGHTIST DEATH SQUAD HAS EXISTED [REDACTED] SINCE DECEMBER 1979 AND HAS ENGAGED IN NUMEROUS POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS, INCLUDING THE MARCH 1981 MURDER OF ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ARNULFO ((ROMERO)). [REDACTED] GROUP IS HEADED BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL ARISTEDES ((MARQUEZ)), CHIEF OF THE INVESTIGATIONS DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL POLICE. IT MAINTAINS A CLANDESTINE PRISON IN THE CITY OF LA LIBERTAD, LA LIBERTAD DEPARTMENT. THE PRISON IS USED FOR DETENTION, INTERROGATION, AND EXECUTION OF SUSPECTED LEFTISTS AND LEFTIST SYMPATHIZERS. IT IS SUPERVISED BY CAPTAIN RAFAEL ((LOPEZ)) DAVILA WHO IS CHIEF OF THE POLITICAL SECTION OF THE NATIONAL POLICE AND MARQUEZ' DEPUTY. AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN HELD IN THE PRISON WERE THE ALLEGED KIDNAPPERS OF WEALTHY SALVADORAN, JEREZ DE ((GARCIA-PRIETO)). AT LEAST EIGHTEEN INDIVIDUALS HAVE BEEN EXECUTED IN THE PRISON WHICH CONSISTS OF A SERIES OF BUILDINGS IN A GUARDED COMPOUND LOCATED AT KILOMETER 38 ON THE PACIFIC HIGHWAY, LA LIBERTAD.

2. THE DEATH SQUAD HAS DRAWN MOST OF ITS MEMBERS FROM THREE SECTIONS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE: THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION SECTION (SIC), THE SPECIAL POLITICAL INVESTIGATION SECTION (SIE), AND THE NARCOTICS CONTROL SECTION. WHEN THE DEATH SQUAD WAS FORMED, IT WAS HEADED BY CAPTAIN AMILCAR

Document 6: The Commission on the Truth for El Salvador

From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador : Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador. New York: United Nations, 1993.

<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/ElSalvador-Report.pdf>

The Chapultepec Agreement signed in 1992 to end the civil war in El Salvador included the mandate from the Secretary-General of the United Nations for a Truth Commission to investigate and report on state-sponsored violence and violations of human rights. Commissioners were given six months to collect written testimonies, interview participants, and gather evidence documenting the atrocities.

The Commission on the Truth registered more than 22,000 complaints of serious acts of violence that occurred in El Salvador between January 1980 and July 1991. Over 7,000 were received directly at the Commission's offices in various locations. The remainder were received through governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Over 60 percent of all complaints concerned extrajudicial executions, over 25 per cent concerned enforced disappearances, and over 20 percent included complaints of torture.

Those giving testimony attributed almost 85 percent of cases to agents of the State, paramilitary groups allied to them, and the death squads.

Armed forces personnel were accused in almost 60 percent of complaints, members of the security forces in approximately 25 percent, members of military escorts and civil defence units in approximately 20 percent, and members of the death squads in more than 10 percent of cases. The complaints registered accused FMLN in approximately 5 percent of cases.

Despite their large number, these complaints did not cover every act of violence. The Commission was able to receive only a significant sample in its three months of gathering testimony.

This also does not mean that each act occurred as described in the testimony. The Commission investigated certain specific cases in particular circumstances, as well as overall patterns of violence. Some 30 of the cases dealt with in the report are illustrative of patterns of violence, in other words, involve systematic practices attested to by thousands of complainants.

Both the specific cases and the patterns of violence show that, during the 1980s, the country experienced an unusually high level of political violence. All Salvadorans without exception, albeit to differing degrees, suffered from this violence.

Patterns of violence by agents of the State and their collaborators. All the complaints indicate that this violence originated in a political mind-set that viewed political opponents as subversives and enemies. Anyone who expressed views that differed from the Government line ran the risk of being eliminated as if they were armed enemies on the field of battle. This situation is epitomized by the extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances and murders of political opponents described in this chapter.

Any organization in a position to promote opposing ideas that questioned official policy was automatically labelled as working for the guerrillas. To belong to such an organization meant being branded a subversive.

Counter-insurgency policy found its most extreme expression in a general practice of "cutting the guerrillas' lifeline". The inhabitants of areas where the guerrillas were active were automatically suspected of belonging to the guerrilla movement or collaborating with it and thus ran the risk of being eliminated. El Mozote is a deplorable example of this practice, which persisted for some years. In the early years of the decade, the violence in rural areas was indiscriminate in the extreme.

Roughly 50 percent of all the complaints analysed concern incidents which took place during the first two years, 1980 and 1981; more than 20 percent took place in the following two years, 1982 and 1983. In other words, over 75 percent of the serious acts of violence reported to the Commission on the Truth took place during first four years of the decade.

Document 7: New York Times article

Krauss, Clifford. "How U.S. Actions Helped Hide Salvador Human Rights Abuses." New York Times, 21 March 1993. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/21/world/how-us-actions-helped-hide-salvador-human-rights-abuses.html>

This newspaper article (excerpted here) was published in 1993, a year after the Chapultepec Peace Accords were signed.

The Reagan Administration knew more than it publicly disclosed about some of the worst human rights abuses in El Salvador's civil war and withheld the information from Congress, declassified cables and interviews with former Government officials indicate.

Charges that Reagan officials, and to a lesser extent the Carter and Bush Administrations, may have covered up evidence of abuses to win Congressional approval of aid to El Salvador were revived with the release this week of a United Nations-sponsored report documenting widespread human rights violations by the Salvadoran military.

In Congress, plans are under way to investigate the testimony of dozens of American officials in the last decade to determine whether, in their zeal to save Central America from Soviet influence, they misled lawmakers about what they knew.

A number of formerly classified diplomatic and intelligence documents obtained by The New York Times show that American officials knew far more about the workings of the military and the death squads in El Salvador than they told Congress or the American people.

For example, even as senior officials were denying that Salvadoran troops trained by the United States had massacred peasants at El Mozote in December 1981, an American Embassy officer interviewed a refugee couple who said they had seen dozens of bodies at the mountain hamlet.

In the case of the murders of four American churchwomen in 1980, a cable from the American Ambassador, Robert E. White, to Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. expressed incredulity that the Administration had complimented the ruling military junta in El Salvador for its investigation of the deaths.

The papers show that while Reagan officials were debunking evidence gathered by the

Carter Administration apparently linking Roberto d'Aubuisson, a right-wing politician, to the slaying of the Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero of San Salvador in 1980, President Reagan's own Ambassador, Deane R. Hinton, sent a cable describing Mr. d'Aubuisson's presence at a meeting where the murder plot was hatched.

Military 'Protects Its Own'

The Salvadoran military "protects its own, ignoring, suppressing, covering up" abuses, said a Pentagon report in November 1981 that established United States military policy in El



Salvador. The report, signed by Brig. Gen. Fred F. Woerner, was declassified last month. It concluded, "Unabated terror from the right and continued tolerance of institutional violence could dangerously erode popular support to the point wherein the armed forces would be viewed not as the protector of society, but as an army of occupation."

Reagan and Bush Administration officials justify their policy in El Salvador as a lesser evil compared with the alternative of allowing a victory by Marxist guerrillas. And they point out that the policy ultimately

brought peace and restored democracy to the country.

"Let them go have hearings," Elliott Abrams, a senior State Department official in the Reagan Administration dealing with Latin America and human rights, said of Congress on Friday. "This is an allegation that the entire top rank of the Foreign Service is filled with liars. It is a reprehensible McCarthyite charge."

But Mr. White, the Carter Administration's Ambassador in 1980 and 1981, said this week. "The Salvadoran military knew that we knew, and they knew when we covered up the truth, it was a clear signal that, at a minimum, we tolerated this."

'The Terrible Truth'

Representative Robert G. Torricelli of New Jersey, Democratic chairman of the House subcommittee on Western Hemisphere affairs, pledged this week to "review every word of the Reagan Administration," adding that he would press contempt of Congress charges against any official who lied under oath.

"It is now clear that while the Reagan Administration was certifying human rights progress in El Salvador they knew the terrible truth that the Salvadoran military was engaged in a widespread campaign of terror and torture," Mr. Torricelli said.

He and Representative Joe Moakley of Massachusetts, the Democratic chairman of the Rules Committee, plan to meet with other Congressional leaders next week to discuss asking the Clinton Administration to declassify all United States cable traffic and intelligence reports on the massacre at El Mozote and the other main human rights cases.

Mr. Moakley has now raised questions about the Bush Administration's handling of evidence in the slaying of six Jesuit priests in 1989, a case that he has personally investigated. The United Nations report says the murders were ordered by a group of senior military officers who included Defense Minister Rene Emilio Ponce, whose resignation a few days before the report came out has not yet been accepted by President Alfredo Cristiani.

Efforts at Reform

In the early 1980's, when the violence in El Salvador was most intense, Reagan officials said they helped to improve the country's human rights situation markedly and forced several purges of right-wing military officers. On two occasions, they said they blocked Mr. d'Aubuisson's rise to the presidency. In 1983, Mr. Bush, then the Vice President, traveled to San Salvador to deliver a list of 31 military officers Washington wanted dismissed for human rights abuses, and several were retired.

"We had to build up the military, reform it and stop it from seizing more power from the civilian Government," Mr. Abrams said this week.

Through the early 1980's, as a condition of continuing aid, the Reagan Administration was required by law to certify to Congress every six months that El Salvador was improving its human rights record, and did so. Officials repeatedly blamed shadowy forces uncontrolled by the army high command for death squad activity.

Document 8: The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder

Wilson, Michael G. "Reagan and Bush Policies Are Paying Off in El Salvador" The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder, 19 April 1994

<https://www.heritage.org/americas/report/reagan-and-bush-policies-are-paying-el-salvador>

This report, excerpted here, argues that the Reagan and Bush era policies supported Salvadoran democracy and economic reform, and are paying off, as illustrated by the recent elections. It recommends policies for the incoming Clinton administration to follow.

Introduction. Some fifteen months after a United Nations-brokered peace agreement between the government and the communist Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) was signed, El Salvador held presidential elections on March 20 and is due to hold a second round of voting this April 24 . Conservative candidate Armando Calderon Sol of the incumbent National Republican Alliance party, known by its Spanish acronym ARENA, is predicted to be the victor over the FMLN's Ruben Zamora. According to Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani, the elections are the culmination of the peace process and represent the consolidation of democracy for El Salvador. Added Cristiani, who was elected in 1989 and leaves office on June 1: "The FMLN [for the very first time] will be inside the system. They have become the second political force; they will have important participation in the [National] Assembly and municipalities."

A Victory for the Reagan Doctrine. The elections are good news for El Salvador and the United States. They are the culmination of the policy began by Ronald Reagan in 1981 to oppose the Cuban-sponsored communist insurgency and push for democratic reform of the political oligarchy. The twelve-year guerrilla insurgency cost some 75,000 Salvadoran lives and an estimated \$6 billion in U.S. assistance. The conflict in El Salvador became a major battleground of the Cold War and was a key element in President Reagan's decision to halt Soviet-inspired communist aggression in the Third World. The FMLN, which received assistance from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Cuba, and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, waged a ruthless campaign to defeat a series of U.S.-backed governments and establish a Cuban-style communist dictatorship.

However, the determination of both the Reagan and Bush Administrations -- against often bitter congressional opposition -- to support Salvadoran democracy and economic reform appears to be paying off. The elections, which have been peaceful and free of fraud,

will likely generate a new government that is committed to the market system, democratic rule, law and order, and human rights. In stark contrast to its neighbor, Nicaragua, El Salvador is leading the Central American charge toward economic growth, stability, and democracy.

Given that the U.S. has much at stake in the Salvadoran peace process and elections, there is also much that the Clinton Administration and Congress can do to facilitate a peaceful, democratic conclusion to the Reagan and Bush strategy. They should:

- Develop an aid program that is conditioned on free market reforms in El Salvador.
- Provide assistance to support El Salvador's land allocation program for El Salvador former combatants in the civil war to help reintegrate former soldiers and FMLN rebels into civilian society.
- Assist in the continued development of El Salvador's civilian police force.

... **CONCLUSION.** El Salvador has been a key test case for democracy and the battle against communism. After twelve long years of war, its recent successes demonstrate that the Reagan and Bush policies in Central America were right and are paying off. The Salvadorans see last month's elections and the upcoming runoff vote as a true test for the consolidation of their democratic and the peace processes. They also feel that if all goes well on April 24 and the elections are carried out in a tranquil way, without fraud, El Salvador will be firmly on track to promote economic growth and democratic stability. The next five-year presidential term will be a critical test for El Salvador. During this time the Cristiani government's programs should bear fruit as the results of the peace process are confirmed.