

*Tom McGovern:**More detailed
info to follow.**DH*

TO: Mark Murray
FROM: David Holiday
RE: June 1-9, El Salvador Trip
DATE: June 13, 1990

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS ON
THE 1991 SALVADORAN ELECTIONS

Background

Since the beginning of May, the nine legally registered political parties in El Salvador have been discussing reforms to the current electoral law. These discussions have taken place at weekly meetings of the Interparty Commission (Interpartidaria) and twice weekly at meetings of the Subcommittee on Electoral Reforms. On May 18, that subcommittee reached a consensus and agreed to a series of reforms that would facilitate a massive voter registration and turnout with international observation and which would give all the political parties a greater role in the administration and oversight of the electoral system. These recommendations were then sent to the full Interparty Commission, but were not fully agreed upon.

Areas of Agreement and Dispute

The two main areas of dispute which had surfaced at the beginning of my trip were those of international observation and reforms that would allow for greater registration.

The first dispute was resolved on June 6, when the Interparty Commission agreed to ask for "prolonged international observation" (observacion prolongada internacional) beginning immediately, similar to that which took place in Nicaragua. The actual implementation of this agreement will have to be settled in the UN-sponsored negotiations between the government and the FMLN rebels.

The second dispute has to do with the difficulties of unregistered or newly registered voters in obtaining their electoral carnets (i.d. cards). The current system, if left unreformed, would probably mean that at least 400,000 eligible voters (and probably many more) would find it difficult to do so next March. The opposition parties proposed an alternative system whereby new voters could obtain an Electoral Identification Card (TIE) simultaneous with registering. The TIE could then be used to vote, in case the electoral carnet was not issued in time. ARENA proposes creating a greater incentive for people to get the electoral carnet, and not create a whole new system.

I met in San Salvador with a three-person delegation from the UNDP who was there at the invitation of the Salvadoran government to study the electoral system and make recommendations. They had a number of suggestions to make (which are not public yet), but in general they were inclined to recommend ways that the government could improve on the current system. This week, ARENA will be making recommendations to reform the electoral system; I imagine those will include what the UN mission recommended.

Financial Needs

At the moment, the Central Elections Council faces a cut in their budget for this year (see attached). They estimate that they would need another \$1 million for a special campaign to register new voters and deliver electoral carnets. In addition, they estimate over \$4 million over and above their normal budget will be necessary to fulfill their duties with respect to next year's elections. As I received this information shortly before the end of my trip, I have no way of independently verifying the accuracy of these figures. The point, however, is that a great deal more than \$2 million earmarked in previous bills will be required if this vote is to be massive and trustworthy.

According to OAS officials, they would need around \$4 million to carry out a 6-8 month-long observation beginning in September or October of this year.

Recommendations for Report Language

1. All money given to the electoral process should be conditioned on it being used in a nonpartisan manner. Funds should preferably be channelled through the Central Elections Council (CCE) with oversight by the Electoral Overseers Board (Junta de Vigilancia Electoral, which is composed of all the legal political parties), or should go through regional organizations such as CAPEL in Costa Rica.
2. Funds for the electoral process may well require much of the \$10 million earmark set aside for democratic political institutions. It is expected that the Administration will expend that amount necessary to insure the broadest possible participation in the elections.
3. Funds may be used for a massive registration drive, civic education campaign to promote registration, and for monitoring teams of the Organization of American States, the United Nations, the National Democratic Institute, the National Republican Institute, the Carter Center, and the Center for Democracy.
4. Funds made available should be consistent with agreements reached in the negotiations between the Salvadoran government and the FMLN rebels. It is the Committee's hope that these elections will take place within the context of a cease-fire and without interference by either the Salvadoran military or the FMLN in the electoral activities of the political parties.

NOTE: In discussions with Secretary Baker on a bipartisan agreement, the Administration should be pressed to commit itself to spending whatever is necessary for the electoral process.

ESTIMADO DE LAS NECESIDADES FINANCIERAS

DEL CONSEJO CENTRAL DE ELECCIONES

- 1.- Presupuesto Ordinario de Funcionamiento para finalizar el año 1990
¢ 12.7 MILLONES DE COLONES
- 2.- Presupuesto Especial para Empadronamiento y Entrega del Carnet Electoral a 600,000 ciudadanos para 1990
¢ 6 MILLONES DE COLONES
- 3.- Presupuesto para realizar las elecciones de 1991
¢ 38 MILLONES DE COLONES
- 4.- Presupuesto Ordinario de Funcionamiento para 1991
¢ 28 MILLONES DE COLONES
- 5.- Programa de Educación Cívico Electoral
¢ 2 MILLONES DE COLONES