

# In El Salvador, Bush administration backs terrorists against the Army

by Gretchen Small

In a little over five weeks in office, the Bush administration has entered into open collaboration with Moscow's terrorists in El Salvador, the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN), in a coordinated assault against the institution of the military.

This shocking policy goes to the point of the U.S. previewing FMLN "peace proposals" before their release. Such actions confirm *EIR's* charges that the Soviets have penetrated the highest levels of the U.S. intelligence and military establishment.

The United States has given orders that the military, and any political grouping which seeks to win a decisive military victory over the FMLN, are to be crushed. Instead, the way is being paved to install a coalition government between liberals and Moscow's allies through "free elections"—the flip side of Henry Kissinger's proposal (see page 67) that Moscow's Eastern European subjects give up all claim to sovereignty in exchange for the "right" to participate in "elections."

As of this writing, U.S. pressure has forced El Salvador's military to declare a unilateral ceasefire, even as FMLN irregulars continue their scorched earth strategy—including the slaughter of any mayors who "collaborate" with the national government. Because of U.S. actions, the FMLN is now determining the nation's political agenda: Debate has begun over changing the date of national elections and the possibility of restructuring the Armed Forces, while political parties and the government are on the defensive, answering to FMLN proposals, instead of national needs.

The El Salvador action shows that the Bush team has already gone a big step beyond the colonial policy of weakening the military institutions of Ibero-America in the hypocritical name of defending "democracy." That piece of criminal stupidity has been applied by every U.S. administration from Carter forward—with the hearty approval of the region's Soviet-directed narco-terrorists.

Yet even Jimmy Carter's wanton abandonment of Central America looks measured, next to the Bush team's rush to put Moscow at the center of Western Hemisphere affairs. Moscow and Washington agree that the future of Central America, like Afghanistan and Angola, is up for immediate negotiations, the *Washington Post* reported on March 3. The decades-long U.S. position, that the Soviet Union is not, and should not be considered, a major player in Western Hemi-

sphere affairs, has already been buried by the Bush administration, because Secretary of State James Baker III believes that the U.S. must "recognize facts," the *Post* reports.

## The pilot project: El Salvador

In early January, political attention in El Salvador focused on presidential elections scheduled for March 19. Although an FMLN front, the Democratic Convergence coalition, was taking part in the elections, the Convergence was widely seen as a minor player in a contest pivoted around the battle between the ruling Christian Democratic party and the leading oppositionists, the National Renovation Alliance (ARENA). The elections were believed too close to call, but the ARENA party—which won a majority of the Legislative Assembly in the March 1988 elections with its campaign for a decisive military victory over the terrorists—appeared to be taking the lead.

Then, on Jan. 24, the FMLN issued a new "peace proposal," which drastically changed the correlation of forces. The FMLN "offered" to run in the national elections directly, if the government agreed to their conditions: postponing the vote for six months until Sept. 15, confining the military to barracks during voting, and reorganizing the Electoral Tribunal overseeing election procedures along lines more acceptable to the left.

El Salvador's *El Diario de Hoy* detailed on Feb. 2 specific aims which the FMLN seeks to achieve during the demanded six-month delay. These include: the establishment of "liberated" territory under their control, a requisite in turn to achieve the status of a "belligerent force," so as to receive both foreign recognition and economic and military assistance; and a massive buildup of the Democratic Convergence through international propaganda and financing.

FMLN forces have targeted a strip in the center of the country (through the provinces of Chalatenango, Cabañas, Cuscatlán, and San Salvador) which they seek to "clear" as a "border" zone to the western zone of El Salvador, which they want to make liberated territory, *El Diario de Hoy* specified. They have already turned this strip into a "line of terror," where the FMLN now murders any mayor they deem pro-government.

By killing the heads of local governments, they seek to create the vacuum of power and conditions of anarchy in

which they can impose de facto rule. FMLN forces need not be strong enough to have permanent authority, *El Diario* cautioned, but only sufficiently strong to function as “mobile governments” with sufficient “image” of control to be recognized internationally.

The High Command of El Salvador’s Army met with the Political Commission of the Legislative Assembly to argue the insanity of accepting any postponement of the elections. The FMLN seeks merely to create divisions between the Armed Forces and the institution of the state, the military argued, divisions which will favor the FMLN’s military offensive, and buy time to create conditions for an insurrection. Army intelligence has identified FMLN plans to launch a major military offensive in July and August.

Salvadoran Defense Minister Gen. Carlos E. Vides Casanova warned on Feb. 13 that if the government put off presidential elections, it would violate the Constitution, and the military will have no choice but to defend constitutional law. “If the President stays one day over his term in the presidency outside of the constitutional order, the armed forces would have the obligation to remove him. . . . The political parties can talk about what they want. The constitution gives [the military] very clear responsibilities,” he stated.

### **Whose proposal is it, anyway?**

The U.S. State Department, however, issued a statement asserting that the FMLN proposal deserved close attention, and urging El Salvador’s government to “seriously consider” the offer. U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle paid a seven-hour visit to El Salvador on Feb. 3, on his way back from the gala Caracas summit which took place at the inauguration of Venezuela’s socialist President, Carlos Andrés Pérez. Quayle announced that he had been sent to deliver a “strong and very emphatic message” to El Salvador’s military, that U.S. support is henceforth “conditional” on the military accepting the United States’ definition of “human rights abuses.” His threat that if not, “there will be consequences,” was clear: a cut in the U.S. aid on which El Salvador has become dependent for the past eight years.

President José Napoleón Duarte signaled a new willingness to discuss the FMLN proposal. So, on Feb. 20 and 21, representatives of 13 political parties met with FMLN spokesmen in Mexico. Now, the FMLN revised its conditions for “peace.” Four new conditions were demanded, after which the FMLN promised to negotiate a ceasefire, recognize the legitimacy of elections, “ultimately” disarm its forces, and “accept” the existence of El Salvador’s Army.

The FMLN demands now focused entirely on the Army: The Army must be reduced in size by 80%, from its current size of 56,000 to a 12,000-man force; removed from all police functions, and currently existing police units (the National Guard, Treasury, and National Police) passed from military control to the Interior Ministry; forbidden from “per-

secution and repression for political causes”; and its officers prosecuted for alleged political crimes.

Democratic Convergence presidential candidate Guillermo Ungo told *New York Times* reporters flat-out that the FMLN proposal was an attempt “to corner and isolate the Army,” the *Times* reported on Feb. 26.

But the State Department had already “considered” the terrorists’ proposal very carefully indeed. FMLN commander and Communist Party chief Shafik Handel bragged that the FMLN had given a copy of the proposal to the State Department “some days” before it was released on Jan. 23, but “denied reports that the final proposal was tailored to meet the objections of State Department officials,” the *Baltimore Sun* reported on Feb. 27!

“Mr. Handel,” as the *Sun* calls him, noted that the FMLN decided to seek negotiations—with the United States, it appears—because of the “atmosphere that had ended the conflicts in Angola and Afghanistan.”

The State Department was not the only U.S. institution consulted on terrorist strategy. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on Feb. 1 that the FMLN “peace” plan had circulated in advance on Capitol Hill. The spring issue of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace’s *Foreign Policy* magazine publishes a lengthy appeal for Western aid, written by the FMLN commander whom Western agencies identify as the guerrillas’ top military strategist, Joaquín Villalobos.

The U.S. media went wild hailing the “revised” FMLN proposal as an opening for peace. A *Washington Post* editorial Feb. 26 praised the fact that “the whole country has been drawn into a broad discussion of the FMLN’s proposal.” The responsibility of the Bush administration now, the *Post* cautioned, is to “make sure the Salvadoran armed forces know that the United States will not stand for any sabotage” of negotiations with the terrorists.

“Military pressure from the guerrillas . . . will not be enough. . . . It’s up to the U.S. to try to change the army’s calculus,” Morris Blachman argued in a commentary published by the *Baltimore Sun* Feb. 26.

On Feb. 27, Duarte went on national television, to announce a “counter” proposal to the FMLN. He proposed the Legislative Assembly accept the FMLN proposal to delay the election, but do so only until April 30, and in conjunction with a national ceasefire effective immediately, until the June 1 end of Duarte’s term. The next day, the military announced a unilateral ceasefire.

Salvadoran nationalists have been left to warn, as Edgar Chacón told *El Diario de Hoy* on Feb. 7, that the U.S. and Soviet Union are carrying out a “conspiracy . . . which seeks to force them to submit to a totalitarian socialist regime, which implies an understanding between the great powers of East and West. . . . El Salvador’s Armed Forces must understand that . . . they are to be sacrificed . . . just as was done in Vietnam, Cuba, and Nicaragua, to name only a few of the most recent cases of treason by U.S. politicians.”